Global Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) History
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**Turkish Baths 1667**
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Wilde Trials, International Significance of 1731
The trials of Irish-born writer Oscar Wilde for “gross indecency” in 1895 and their impact both in England and the world.

Witchcraft/Occult in Africa 1735
The practice of demonizing African LGBTQ individuals by associating same-sex practices with witchcraft and the occult.

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Influential report published in Great Britain in 1957 recommending that homosexual behavior between consenting adults no longer be considered a criminal offense.

Zheng He (1371–1433) 1743
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Zhongxing Phenomenon 1745
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Preface

To say that compiling an encyclopedia of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer history on a global scale is a daunting task is an understatement. First, of course, there is the sheer extent of coverage. The Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History in America (published by Charles Scribner's Sons in 2004) filled 3 volumes, with 545 entries on one country, albeit one with a very developed queer history. This new Global Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) History, in contrast, has nearly 450 entries and sidebars that deal with issues on every continent except Antarctica. Nearly 70 countries have substantial coverage in the set; in addition, the editors have demonstrated their commitment to highlighting places with a less developed historiography, such as Africa and Asia, by including more country-specific entries in those regions.

Topical entries, in contrast to the country-specific entries, span the globe: for example, Europe-focused entries include “Gentrification in Europe” and “Sexual Revolution in Europe”; North America has entries on “ACT UP” and “Bathhouse Raids, Toronto (1981)”; readers can find entries on “Cabaret Theater in Latin America and the Caribbean” and “Carnival and Sexuality in Brazil” as part of coverage on Latin America and the Caribbean; on the Middle East, “Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East” and “Human Rights and Queer Arab Refugees”; on Asia, “Conversion Therapy in China” and “Gay Marriage in Taiwan”; on Africa, separate entries on anglophone and francophone literature and four separate entries on different versions of Christianity in Africa. Topical entries range from quite specific—individuals, films, publications, organizations, court cases—to very broad: for example, “HIV/AIDS,” “Human Rights,” “Imperialism and Colonialism,” “Pornography,” “Queer Theorists,” and “Sex Tourism.” Some of these topics have an overview entry and then separate entries with a geographical focus, highlighting both the general and place-specific aspects of the topic.

A global encyclopedia must reach not only across time and place, but also attend to gender balance and sensitivity to racial/ethnic, class, regional, urban/rural, and other categorical distinctions within societies. Some attempts to think globally about same-sex sexuality have tended to construct a model based on men's experiences. That is definitely not the case here. We find entries focused specifically on women, such as “Boston Marriage and Women’s Romantic Friendships,” “Female Husband,” and “Femmes and Butches.” General entries include information on women and trans people as well as men. “Penis” is matched by “Clitoris,” and both of those entries also illustrate careful attention to racial/ethnic dimensions and trans and intersex bodies, as well as displaying an admirable global and historical reach.

The editors devised a number of strategies for attaining global coverage. They sought out authors for entries on topics specific to a time and place, such as “Florentine Codex and
Nahua Sexualities” and “Queen Boat Trials,” to name just two examples. They included some topics that are transnational by definition, such as “FTMInternational,” “Diasporas, Queer,” and “Refugees and Immigration Policies.” They asked authors to consider the global implications of topics such as “Asexuality,” “BDSM,” “Blackmail,” “Cisgender or Cis,” “Phone Apps,” “Urban Queerness,” and “Situational Homosexuality.” It is with such general categories, not focused on a specific time and place, that the biggest challenge of thinking globally arises. Such entries demand knowledge of different societies and debates in the literature, certainly, but sensitivity to the application of concepts developed in one context to another is also required. Can we, for example, talk of “situational homosexuality” in societies without the concept of homosexuality? What does “cisgender” mean in societies without the kind of binary gender system that gave rise to the concept?

As those questions suggest, in addition to the issue of the massive scope of a global history, there are the problems of inclusion and terminology. Who and what belongs in the categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer history? What do we do about times and places where those concepts, much less terms, did not exist? All historians confront the dilemma of categorizing people who lived in societies without conceptual distinctions between heterosexuality and homosexuality, but the problems are multiplied on a global scale. The editors’ and authors’ sensitivity to this issue is evident in the careful employment of the terminology utilized by specific groups of people in particular historical and geographical contexts. It is also evident in the inclusion of an entry on “MSM (Men Having Sex with Men) in Asia” and in the use of MSM for individuals who would not claim a non-heterosexual identity. The commitment to using the terms and understandings rooted in different cultures is also clear from entries on specific terms, such as tongzhi, bakla, and especially terms referring to transgender people, including hijras, kathoey, mukhannath, muxes, Two-Spirit, and waria.

So compiling a global history is admittedly challenging, but it is also important, and not just to expand the geographical scope of what we know about same-sex sexuality. It is important also because a global perspective provides key insights on a number of fronts. First of all, it undermines a whiggish view of progress—the notion that history is a story of inevitable improvement—that all too often clings to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer history. It can be hard to shake the sense that we have moved from the bad old days to the much better present (albeit with some ups and downs), and it is seemingly even harder to shake the idea that it is the West that has taken the lead on all fronts, shining a torch to light the way for other less enlightened societies. The wide variety of ways that societies, both in the past and around the world, have conceptualized and dealt with people with same-sex desires and/or non-normative gender is important in undermining those notions. The complex ways that societies conceptualize and categorize and deal with diverse sexualities and genders makes clear that there is no simple story of progress to be told.
This more complicated history also makes clear how socially constructed sexuality and gender are. What we can see by looking across time and place is how varied the possibilities are for thinking about both gender constructions and same-sex sexual desires, behaviors, and identities. The variety of third-gender identities recognized in various societies challenge the notion that there are two genders linked to two kinds of biological bodies. Instead we see a variety of bodies, including intersexed and surgically or otherwise changed, multiple genders, and both recognized and secret gender-crossing. In addition, we see how complicated the relationship between sexual desires, behaviors, and identities can be. The very term “same-sex sexuality,” while an attempt to apply to cultures with different understandings, calls attention to the fact that what is “same” and what is “sexual” is not fixed. A global perspective shows us that not all acts that, from a modern Western perspective, are considered sexual would be seen that way by the people involved. And sometimes they would not be seen as “same-sex,” since what was defining was not two genitally-alike bodies but rather difference in age, gender, or other factors. Age-differentiated interactions and relationships show us that the concept of “children” is socially constructed, with some societies considering quite young people sexual beings with their own desires and subjectivities. And gender-differentiated relationships between two people with genitally-alike bodies in a wide variety of contexts undermine any notion of a fixed relationship between sex, gender, and sexual identity.

A global history introduces such a wide variety of identities that we can no longer think in a binary way about “heterosexuality” and “homosexuality.” This is not only a question of the different terms that societies use to describe people with same-sex desires. In a variety of places across time and around the globe, same-sex and different-sex behaviors and relationships are considered utterly compatible. Sometimes this was because compulsory heterosexuality ensured that almost all women would marry and bear children, so it mattered little what they did with their hearts and bodies. In some places, men who fulfilled the responsibility to their family and nation to father heirs could also take male lovers. Not only can we see that “bisexuality” existed before it was named as a concept, but that societies organize love, desire, intimacy, and reproduction in a wide variety of ways.

Finally, at the same time that this encyclopedia decenters a modern Western concept of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer history, it also documents the impact of the creation of the category “homosexual” by European sexologists in the late nineteenth century, in the context of European imperial expansion, and its subsequent spread around the globe. The concept of “homosexuality” encompassed both men and women, while throughout much of time and in many places male and female same-sex sexuality were considered separate and discrete phenomena. In addition, homosexuality took on an association with the West, fostering the idea that same-sex sexual behavior was imported from abroad, despite existing indigenous forms of behavior and identity. A global perspective allows us to see not only the complex consequences of European sexology, but the ways that imperial and other global encounters played a formative role in the very
construction of the concepts of homosexuality and heterosexuality.

The entries in the *Global Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) History*, then, not only provide access to an incredible range of information about countries, people, institutions, representations, organizations, movements, events, and concepts. They also expand a vision of queer life based on one or another part of our world. An expansive view of global history, like a map of the world with Africa rather than North America at the center, decenters what is familiar, opening our eyes to the wide variety of ways gender and sexuality play out across time and place.

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Introduction

The Global Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History (GELGBTQH) is the product of two years of focused labor by hundreds of researchers and editors. The ambitious three-volume set, composed of nearly 450 commissioned articles and sidebars, reflects how the field of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) studies has engaged with social campaigns for equality, freedom, justice, and liberation worldwide since the 1970s. Work on GELGBTQH began in the autumn of 2016 with the appointment of the editor in chief (Howard Chiang) and the editorial board, which brought together scholars in African studies (Marc Epprecht), American studies (Emily Skidmore), Asian studies (Anjali Arondekar), European studies (Jennifer Evans), Latin American studies (Zeb Tortorici), Middle Eastern studies (Hanadi Al-Samman), and global/transnational studies (Ross G. Forman). Although there is no specific associate editor appointed for Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific Islands, the board made united efforts to include entries about or materials on these areas of the world.

That queer experience can be located across diverse regional, national, and global contexts and at different points in time is perhaps the most ordinary feature of human existence. The editors were thus tasked with adding intellectual rigor, political color, cultural vibrancy, and social relevance to this seemingly mundane observation. Initially conceived as a global companion to Scribner’s Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History in America (2004), GELGBTQH quickly became a different kind of intellectual pursuit. While interest in the historical experience of gender and sexual minorities remains the same, the question of how to translate that impetus into a reference guide meaningful on a planetary scale necessitated a rethinking of the key terms captured in the new title. In this rethinking, the conceptual polarity between rigidity and elasticity marks a recurring theme in the way that the editors maneuvered the interest of the different stakeholders for whom LGBTQ historical knowledge matters most.

To begin with, the concept of the global, like the concept of queer, contains a history of its own. A rigid view of the global might date its origin to a specific time period, typically referring to sometime in the post–World War II era (but some scholars go as far back as the fifteenth century if not earlier); a more flexible approach, on the other hand, might forego the task of temporal designation altogether and focus instead on the different ways globalization has manifested historically—sometimes in waves and cycles—across time and place. Similarly, some might cling to the stance that the transformation of “queer” from a derogatory term to a politically affirmative category is a relatively recent phenomenon (and thus not always applicable to the pre-Stonewall era or outside certain Western contexts). Others, on the contrary, might construe it as a flexible framework within which it is possible and heuristically valuable to grasp variations of social non-conformity—especially with respect to gender and sexuality—in both the past and the present.
While “queer” has come to be understood as an umbrella concept, terms such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender are employed in this encyclopedia to denote the interrelated histories of same-sex desire and gender variance. A rigid essentialist view would consider these terms as transhistorical and transcultural in nature and thus operate on the premise that LGBTQ historical knowledge is primarily concerned with finding actors and events in the past that match our current definitions of LGBTQ. In contrast, a constructive view would emphasize the definitional malleability and historicity of these terms and thus resist projecting them unconditionally onto the experience of gender and sexual minorities in distinct times and locations. The entries contained in this encyclopedia are mostly situated on a continuum between these two theoretical positions.

_GELGBTQH_ also presents an opportunity to rethink the role that the very workings of encyclopedia and history play in our retrieval of information about the human past. Researchers and students tend to think of an encyclopedia as a comprehensive repertory of information on a given branch of knowledge. In this sense, like encyclopedia, historical narration is static, because it only captures, synthesizes, and presents materials that reflect the current limits of human interpretation. Yet it is also possible to approach encyclopedias, like history, as a malleable epistemic flashpoint that draws attention to what remains unknown. If both encyclopedias and historical research satisfy the desire for human knowledge, LGBTQ studies has taught us—if nothing else—the importance of recognizing the unfamiliar and the otherwise. In this sense LGBTQ studies is as much a political project as an intellectual commitment; likewise, _GELGBTQH_ is as much a history about the future as an encyclopedia about what is yet to be known.

By bridging global history and LGBTQ history, _GELGBTQH_ responds to an interesting paradox—a nuanced friction between these two fields of historical inquiry. Yet before difference there was sameness. Having emerged out of significant historiographical precedents (world history and women’s history, to be more precise), both global history and LGBTQ history came of age in the 1980s. This was the time when historians became increasingly attuned to the importance of discourse, power, and representation under the influence of postmodernist and poststructuralist theory. The work of Michel Foucault played an important role in this regard, and the rise of global history and LGBTQ history thus shared some important intellectual genealogies. While global historians became growingly suspicious of the world historical approach to narrate the human past in terms of “civilization” units or “West-vs.-non-West” bifurcations, LGBTQ historians advocated the use of marginalized “sexuality”—and not just heteronormative “gender”—as a useful category of historical analysis.

Despite these similarities, global history and LGBTQ history have by and large envisioned a very different kind of agenda respectively. So, when global historians diverged from world historians by stressing the importance of routes, avenues of circulation and exchange, and the connectivity between regions, peoples, materials, and ideas, LGBTQ historians parted
company with early feminist historians by foregrounding difference, diversity, and multiplicity—ways of characterizing experience that cohere around social cleavages. It might be said that these parallel social and intellectual trends present notable obstacles for global history and LGBTQ history to bear on one another. GELGBTQH, however, raises a number of possible strategies to overcome this deadlock.

First, by involving specialists of different world regions, the board aimed for an even geographical spread in developing the list of entries. This accounts for the fact that queer history in certain regions—such as Europe and North America—have received more considerable scholarly attention than in the other regions represented by the board. Even within the European list, associate editor Jennifer Evans worked with a broadened notion of what constitutes European history. She attentively included entries on Russia, eastern Europe, and southern Europe in addition to the typical focus on Germany and England, two countries that have dominated the spotlight in the European history of sexuality. Moreover, the European list includes thematic entries that provide a pan-European or translocal perspective so as to debunk the importance of the nation-state as the central paradigm. Wherever possible, European entries explicitly integrated discussions of race and ethnicity, whether with respect to the politics of Whiteness or casting light on the construction of Europe’s various Others.

Second, the board gave particular analytical breadth and depth to issues surrounding colonialism and imperialism. This emphasis in consideration is intended to reflect the centrality of these issues to the making of the modern world. From a global viewpoint, the impact of colonialism and imperialism has been uneven depending on where one looks. Therefore, different area editors came up with distinct ways to engage with these themes. As suggested previously, the reach of European empires tends to translate into intersectional, racial, and ethnic politics within the borders of European countries. This kind of political controversy and contention also plays a crucial role in the coverage of North America, another region with a mature LGBTQ historiography. But for the North American list, an additional take on the question of sovereignty and how it affects the lives of LGBTQ individuals centers on the legacy of settler colonialism. Associate editor Emily Skidmore therefore endeavored to include the experiences of indigenous peoples, in addition to those of people of color, immigrants, women, and transgender individuals, and how they have organized and challenged the legal constraints in the United States and Canada.

In the history of Latin America and the Caribbean, colonization by early imperial giants such as Spain and Portugal (and incorporation into their empires) predates the expansion of Western powers and Japan into Africa and Asia. Whereas the former took place from the fifteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, the latter spanned the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This begins to point to the way that even the word colonialism connotes different historical formations and denotes varying consequences over time and place. Taking into
account the historicity of colonialism in the Latin American context, several entries in the list compiled by associate editor Zeb Tortorici discuss the methodological complexities of accessing indigenous Mesoamerican or Andean concepts of the body and desire in the precolonial and colonial pasts. They demonstrate how these complexities have made their way into the twenty-first century, highlighting the region’s unique relationship to North America and Europe in particular. Many entries on this list aim to be macrohistorical in content and scope, though they do so typically by focusing on a few locales, specific movements, and examples that are illustrative of broader themes throughout the region.

Thirdly, while colonialism must constitute a sustained object of critical investigation in queer history, it also enables the board to raise important questions about how and why we are studying gender and sexual diversity—in colonial contexts or otherwise—especially for regions where LGBTQ topics have received less systematic examination. For instance, studies of queer Africa south of the Sahara were dominated by white scholars until the early 2000s. Since then, the growing contribution of black African scholars and activists have remedied certain biases in the field driven by linguistic competence, geographical specialization, and epistemological preference. In formulating the African list, associate editor Marc Epprecht therefore explicitly sought ways to promote a form of scholarly “decolonization,” by nominating as many qualified black African contributors to the encyclopedia as possible, and by pressing them, if they relied too heavily on colonial sources in their research, to look for (or at least problematize) those sources with African voices. This approach decenters rhetorical and epistemic arguments that tend to emanate from the Global North.

The list for the Middle Eastern region, also an under-developed but growing area in queer history, similarly takes the issues of colonialism and imperialism to the very apparatus of scholarly knowledge production. Chief among the methodological challenges in capturing this region in all its complexity comes from the common perception that Western LGBTQ concepts and relevant practices such as “coming out” are foreign imports not comparable to or palatable in Middle Eastern contexts. At the same time, given the region’s complicated entanglement with Europe and the United States, it is not surprising that the Middle East has served as a touchstone in the development of several major theoretical neologisms in the field of queer studies, at once nuanced and contested, such as homonationalism and pinkwashing. Both of these concepts call attention to the ways in which discourses of queer liberation tend to camouflage underlying structures of political oppression (e.g., Israeli-Palestinian conflict or global Islamophobia) and to reinforce certain cultural and ethnic boundaries through the perils of economic (or “neoliberal”) practices. Addressing these challenges while aiming to undo Western centrism, associate editor Hanadi Al-Samman incorporates diasporic publics and a diverse literary, textual, and cultural canon to document queer experience within the contested political climate of the Middle East.

In modern global history, the rise of Japan since the late nineteenth century and the rise of
China since the late twentieth century provide the exception to the rule whereby scholars have readily equated imperialism with “the West.” The history of the Asian continent testifies to the uneven impact of colonialism and imperialism. Whereas countries such as China and Thailand were never colonized by a single regime, the Japanese empire ruled many parts of East and Southeast Asia at its zenith and competed successfully with Western powers through the end of World War II. Meanwhile, the majority of Asian countries, including most notably India, had indeed been dominated by a colonial power (European or otherwise) since the age of industrial capitalism. This domination has significantly altered the very nature and dynamics of interaction among various polities within Asia during the era of decolonization and beyond, contributing to, for instance, the recoding of homoerotic sensibility through inter-racial and trans-ethnic understandings. Accordingly, associate editor Anjali Arondekar has put together a list that registers the plurality of colonialism and its aftermath, pushing back against not just a monolithic “West,” however broadly construed, but also the various kinds of hegemony generated from regional centers in Asia that layer over queer linguistic, cultural, social, and political experience.

Last but not least, the board aimed for transnational coverage by thematizing the body and pleasure—analytical angles that are central but conceptually autonomous from LGBTQ concerns. Assuming the principal responsibility to globalize the scope of the encyclopedia, associate editor Ross G. Forman came up with a distinct list of entries that demonstrate how the uses of pleasure and its interpretation are deeply contingent and contextual. By situating the eroticized body and sexual pleasure in cross-cultural contexts, these entries provide crucial insight into the significance of the lack of consensus over what constitutes sex organs, erogenous zones, and pleasure and pain, as well as the interaction between the body corporeal and the body social, political, and cultural.

This global thematization was accompanied by several editorial tactics to move away from a Western-centric paradigm of queering global history. For instance, the board paid particular attention to global religions—especially Islam, Christianity, Judaism, but also Hinduism, Buddhism, and others—in planning and executing the entries. Complementary to the deliberate effort to reach out to native and non-white contributors, the editors also tried to ensure coverage of scholarship published in languages other than English. A related challenge was to cover global queerness in the age of the internet and new media. Acknowledging the import of this new millennial challenge to the productive tension between global connectivity and cleavages, the board devoted editorial energy to addressing questions of power, community, cultural exchange, the relationship between queer identities and literacy, and access to sex and sociality in an era when many of the world’s poorest regions still lag behind in technology.

Yet precisely because the transnational/global list differs from the other lists that tend to lean toward an “area studies” model (a debatable interpretation), the board quickly
recognized two problems. One involves bumping against the limit of current LGBTQ historical scholarship. For a variety of reasons (including the ones mentioned above), some topics had been well-studied, while others sent the editors searching for appropriate authors and then those authors for appropriate material. Another remains an enduring debate within the field of world/transnational history. Given the paramount obsession with imperialism among historians, it is often difficult to draw a clear line between “global” connections and “imperial” dominance. A closer look at LGBTQ experience reveals why such a distinction—or the friction between global history and LGBTQ history for that matter—can and should never find a straight-forward solution in a concerted effort to challenge the status quo.

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In the last two years, I often joke with friends and colleagues that there is something extraordinarily queer about this project: that it is edited by a native Taiwanese. As it is well known, Taiwan is an island whose international recognition as a sovereign state has been increasingly threatened by the People’s Republic of China. It is thus somewhat ironic—or fitting perhaps—that the editor in chief of an encyclopedia about global LGBTQ history is born somewhere without an official nation-state status. This might be the queerest thing about this work after all. Grateful for their support and encouragement, I dedicate this encyclopedia to my mother and father, both of whom deeply love Taiwan (though perhaps for different reasons due to their family background) and, hopefully from this point onward, will love me not for who I am but for who I have become.
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LITERATURE, AFRICAN (FRANCOPHONE)

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ARCHIVES IN NORTH AMERICA  
LESBIAN HERSTORY ARCHIVES  
STONE BUTCH BLUES (1993; LESLIE FEINBERG)

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COLD WAR AND SEXUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA

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FORTUNE AND MEN’S EYES

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LITERATURE, CARIBBEAN (ANGLOPHONE AND CREOLE)

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HATE CRIME LAW AND POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

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Kingdom
MALAYSIA
RURAL QUEERNESS

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WARIA

*María Ximena Dávila*
Researcher, Center for the Study of Law, Justice and Society, Dejusticia, Colombia
HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACTIVISM IN LATIN AMERICA

*Scott de Groot*
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BATHHOUSE RAIDS, TORONTO (1981)
MATTACHINE SOCIETY
TWO-SPRIT

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THE CLOSET

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FEMMES AND BUTCHES

*Paul R. Deslandes*
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PORNOGRAPHY
SITUATIONAL HOMOSEXUALITY

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BAKLA

*Jordi Díez*
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MARRIAGE, SAME-SEX, IN LATIN AMERICA
Héctor Domínguez Ruvalcaba
Professor, Department of Spanish and Portuguese, University of Texas at Austin
QUEER IN LATIN AMERICA

Lisa Downing
Professor of French Discourses of Sexuality, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom
DIAGNOSTIC AND STATISTICAL MANUAL OF MENTAL DISORDERS (DSM)

Gregg Drinkwater
PhD candidate, University of Colorado, Boulder
RELIGION AND SAME-SEX BEHAVIORS: JUDAISM

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KINSEY SCALE

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Professor, Media and Culture, Department of Media, Journalism, and Film, Miami University, Oxford, OH
HIV/AIDS

Karma Dupchen
LGBT Bhutan, Thimphu, Bhutan
BHUTAN
LHAK-SAM, BHUTAN'S NETWORK FOR HIV-POSITIVE PEOPLE (SIDEBAR)

Vicki Eaklor
Professor of History (retired), Alfred University, Alfred, NY
HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

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External Lecturer, Saxo Institute, University of Copenhagen, Denmark
THE UGLY LAW (1961–1965; DENMARK)

Franz X. Eder
Professor, Department of Economic and Social History, University of Vienna, Austria
PSYCHOPATHIA SEXUALIS (1886; RICHARD VON KRAFFT-EBING)

Iain Edwards
Independent researcher, South Africa
INXEBA (2017; JOHN TRENGOVE) (SIDEBAR)
Matthew J. Edwards
Associate Professor of Spanish, University of Missouri, Kansas City
EL BESO DE LA MUJER ARAÑA (1976; MANUEL PUIG)

Austin Eklund
PhD candidate, University at Albany, State University of New York
DEFENSE OF MARRIAGE ACT (1996)
SOUTHERN COMFORT CONFERENCE
WALTER MERCADO: QUEER DIGITAL ICON (SIDEBAR)

Richard J. Ellis
Mark O. Hatfield Professor of Politics, Willamette University, Salem, OR
SCOUTING

Fatima El-Tayeb
Professor of Literature and Ethnic Studies, University of California, San Diego
STRANGE FRUIT

Lukas Engelmann
Chancellor's Fellow, Science, Technology, and Innovation Studies, University of Edinburgh, Scotland
HIV/AIDS IN EUROPE

Marc Epprecht
Professor, Department of Global Development Studies, Queen's University, Canada
COLONIALISM IN AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA
ETHIOPIA
GANGS AND STREET KIDS IN AFRICA
HUNGOCHANI (SIDEBAR)
IN VOLUNTARY SERVITUDE AND SAME-SEX SEXUALITY IN AFRICA
NJINGA (R. 1624–1663) (SIDEBAR)

John Nguyet Erni
Fung Hon Chu Endowed Chair of Humanics and Head of the Department of Humanities and Creative Writing, Hong Kong Baptist University
W V. REGISTRAR OF MARRIAGES (2013)

Jorge Estrada
Visiting Assistant Professor, Women's and Gender Studies Department, State University of New York, Oneonta
JOTERÍA STUDIES

Jennifer Evans
Professor, Department of History, Carleton University, Canada
PHOTOGRAPHY IN EUROPE

Christopher Ewing
Assistant Professor, Department of History, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond
ACT UP IN EUROPE (SIDEBAR)
ANTI-RACIST ACTIVISM IN EUROPE
ARCHIVES IN EUROPE
ATTACKS ON PRIDE DEMONSTRATIONS IN MOSCOW (SIDEBAR)
PRIDE DEMONSTRATIONS IN EUROPE
VON MAHLSDORF, CHARLOTTE (1928–2002)

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Independent scholar, Alpharetta, GA
COMBAHEE RIVER COLLECTIVE
COMING-OUT/COMING-IN DISCOURSES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

HOMOSEXUAL ACTS IN SHARI’A
HUMAN RIGHTS AND QUEER ARAB REFUGEES
I LUV U BUT (2012–2014; FADIA ABOUOU)
LESBANESE (2008; ALISSAR GAZAL)
TRAVEL/TRAVELOGUES ON THE MIDDLE EAST

Stephen Farrier
Reader in Theatre and Performance, Royal Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London, United Kingdom
THEATER, QUEER

David William Foster
Regents’ Professor of Spanish and Women and Gender Studies, Arizona State University, Tempe
POETS IN LATIN AMERICA

Timothy Frasca
Research Project Manager, HIV Center for Clinical and Behavioral Studies, New York State Psychiatric Institute and Columbia University
HIV/AIDS IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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COMMUNISM AND QUEERS IN EUROPE
Andrea Friedman
Professor, Departments of History and Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, Washington University in St. Louis
LAVENDER SCARE

Elisabeth Jay Friedman
Chair and Professor, Politics Department, University of San Francisco, CA
DIGITAL CULTURES IN LATIN AMERICA

Stuart Frost
Head of Interpretation, British Museum, London, United Kingdom
MUSEUMS AND MEMORIALS

Kaciano Gadelha
Postdoctoral Fellow, Graduate Program in Arts, Federal University of Ceará, Brazil
GRUPO GAY DA BAHIA

Marcia M. Gallo
Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Nevada, Las Vegas
DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS

Flor de María Gamboa Solís
Professor–Investigator, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Mexico
LESBIAN MOTHERING AND ADOPTION IN LATIN AMERICA

Germán Garrido
Assistant Professor, Borough of Manhattan Community College, NY
ARGENTINA’S GENDER IDENTITY LAW

Rui Garrido
PhD candidate, ISCTE–University Institute of Lisbon (ISCTE-IUL), Portugal, and Researcher, Center for International Studies, University Institute of Lisbon (CEIIUL), Portugal
MOZAMBIQUE

Claudia Sofía Garriga-López
Assistant Professor of Queer and Trans Latinx Studies, California State University, Chico
TRANSFEMINISM

Johannes Lukas Gartner
Director of Programs, Humanity in Action, Germany
MIGRATION TO EUROPE

Alicia Gaspar de Alba
Professor, Department of Chicana/o Studies, University of California, Los Angeles
SOR JUANA INÉS DE LA CRUZ (1648–1695)

Patrizia Gentile  
Associate Professor, Carleton University, Canada  
"WE DEMAND" PROTEST (1971)

Dina Georgis  
Associate Professor, Women and Gender Studies Institute, University of Toronto, Canada  
ANÀ HIYA ANTİ (2000; ELHAM MANSOUR)

Mark Gevisser  
Independent scholar, South Africa  
REFUGEES AND IMMIGRATION POLICIES

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Associate Professor, School of Social Policy and Practice, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia  
HIV/AIDS IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

Geoffrey J. Giles  
Emeritus Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Florida, Gainesville  
SCANDALS IN EUROPE

Mwangi Githahu  
Journalist, South Africa  
RAFIKI (2018; WANURI KAHIU) (SIDEBAR)

Richard Godbeer  
Director, Humanities Research Center and Professor of History, Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond  
THE SODOMY CASE AGAINST NICHOLAS SENSION (SIDEBAR)

Jonathan Goldberg  
Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professor of English Emeritus, Emory University, Atlanta, GA  
CONQUEST AND SODOMY IN LATIN AMERICA

María Mercedes Gómez  
Assistant Professor, Department of Criminology, Saint Mary’s University, Canada, and Founding Member, Red Latinoamericana de Académicas/os del Derecho (Red Atlas)  
HUMAN RIGHTS AND ACTIVISM IN LATIN AMERICA
Billy Gong
PhD candidate, University of Hong Kong, China
QT V. HONG KONG IMMIGRATION DEPARTMENT (2017)

James N. Green
Director, Brazil Initiative and Carlos Manuel de Céspedes Chair of Latin American History, Brown University, Providence, RI
MADAME SATĀ (1900–1976)

Nathaniel Greenberg
Assistant Professor of Arabic, George Mason University, Fairfax, VA
IMARAT YA ‘KUBIAN (2002; ALAA AL-ASWANY)

Sophia Greene
Independent scholar, Indianapolis, IN
SUNIL BABU PANT AND OTHERS V. NEPAL GOVERNMENT (2007)

Craig Griffiths
Lecturer in Modern History, Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom
STONEWALL RIOTS, INTERNATIONAL EFFECTS OF

Lucinda Grinnell
Part-time faculty, Women's and Gender Studies, Montgomery College, Rockville, MD
LESBIAN FEMINIST ENCUENTROS OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Georgina Guzmán
Assistant Professor of English, California State University Channel Islands, Camarillo, CA
GENDERED VIOLENCE AND FEMINICIDE IN LATIN AMERICA

Samar Habib
Research Associate, School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, United Kingdom
ASWAT
BAREED MISTA3JIL: TRUE STORIES (2009)
NUZHAT AL-ALBĀB FĪMĀ LĀ YUJAD FĪ KITĀB (AḤMAD IBN YŪSUF AL-TIFĀSHĪ)
QUEER NAMES AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN THE ARAB WORLD

Chelsea E. Hall
PhD candidate, Harvard University
TIBET

Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila
Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom
GHILMAN
SAME-SEX RELATIONS IN ARABIC VERSIONS OF THE NIGHTS (SIDEBAR)

**Hanan Hammad**
Associate Professor and Director of Middle East Studies, Texas Christian University, Fort Worth
SHARAF (1997; SUN'ALLAH IBRAHIM)

**Kifah Hanna**
Associate Professor of Language and Culture Studies, Trinity College, Hartford, CT
BAYRŪT '75 (1975; GHĀDA AL-SAMMĀN)
HAJAR AL-DAHIK (1990; HODA BARAKAT)

**Stan Hawkins**
Professor in Popular Musicology, University of Oslo, Norway
POPULAR MUSIC AND QUEER IDENTITIES

**Dan Healey**
Professor of Modern Russian History and Director, Russian and East European Studies Centre, University of Oxford, United Kingdom
RUSSIAN GAY PROPAGANDA LAW

**Kadin Henningsen**
PhD candidate, University of Illinois
CISGENDER OR CIS

**Dag Henrichsen**
Department of History, University of Basel, Switzerland
NAMIBIA

**Rainer Herrn**
Lecturer and Researcher, Institute for the History of Medicine and Ethics in Medicine, Berlin University Hospital Charité, Germany, and Associate, Magnus Hirschfeld Society, Germany
ELBE, LILI (1882–1931)
TRANSVESTITES/TRANSSEXUALS

**Neville Hoad**
Associate Professor of English, University of Texas at Austin
THE QUIET VIOLENCE OF DREAMS (2001; K. SELLO DUIKER) (SIDEBAR)

**Emily K. Hobson**
Assistant Professor of History and Gender, Race, and Identity, University of Nevada, Reno

CENTRAL AMERICAN SOLIDARITY MOVEMENT
THE NICARAGUAN REVOLUTION
VICTORIA MERCADO BRIGADE (SIDEBAR)

Jacqueline Holler
Associate Professor, Department of History/Women's and Gender Studies Programs, University of Northern British Columbia, Canada
INQUISITION, CRIMINAL COURTS, AND SEXUALITY IN COLONIAL LATIN AMERICA

Michael J. Horswell
Professor of Spanish and Latin American Literature, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton
THIRD GENDERS

Adnan Hossain
Research Fellow in Social and Cultural Anthropology, VU University Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Affiliated Researcher, Amsterdam Research Centre for Gender and Sexuality, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
ROOPBAAN
HIJRAS IN BANGLADESH (SIDEBAR)

Ingrid Hotz-Davies
Professor for English Literature and Gender Studies, University of Tübingen, Germany
CAMP

Amory H. W. Hui
Independent scholar, Hong Kong
TONGZHI

Candy Hurtado
PhD candidate, Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton
CONFESSIONAL MANUALS IN COLONIAL LATIN AMERICA

William Maynard Hutchins
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AL-DIZIL (1994; THANI AL-SUWAID) MUFĀKHIRAT AL-JAWĀRĪ WA-AL-GHILMĀN (AL-JĀḤIZ)

Jan Simon Hutta
Assistant Professor, Institute of Geography, University of Bayreuth, Germany
PARADA DO ORGULHO LGBT DE SÃO PAULO, BRAZIL
Z'étoile Imma
Assistant Professor, English and Africana Studies, Tulane University, New Orleans, LA
BEV DITSIE (1971–) (SIDEBAR)
NKOLI, SIMON (1957–1998)

Robert MCKee Irwin
Professor of Spanish, University of California, Davis
EL BAILE DE LOS 41

Sureshi M. Jayawardene
Assistant Professor, Department of Africana Studies, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA
KUCHU (SIDEBAR)
LANGUAGE IN AFRICA

Régine Michelle Jean-Charles
Associate Professor of French, Boston College, Boston, MA
LITERATURE, CARIBBEAN (FRANCOPHONE)

Hoching Jiang
PhD candidate, American University, Washington, DC
MARRIAGE, SAME-SEX, IN TAIWAN

Adrian Jjuuko
Executive Director, Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF)–Kampala, Uganda, and LLD Candidate, Centre For Human Rights, University of Pretoria
KABAKA MWANGA (1866–1901) (SIDEBAR)
UGANDA

Tiffany Fawn Jones
Professor of African History, California State University, San Bernardino
ETHNOPSYCHIATRY

Rebecca Joubin
Associate Professor, Arab Studies, Davidson College, Davidson, NC
ZUQAQ AL-MIDAQ (1947; NAGUIB MAHFOUZ)

George H. Junne Jr.
Professor, Africana Studies Program, University of Northern Colorado, Greeley
EUNUCHS

Cristel M. Jusino Díaz
Assistant Director of Student Affairs, Graduate School of Arts and Science, New York
University
JESUSA RODRÍGUEZ (1955–) (SIDEBAR)
PUERTO RICANS IN THE DIASPORA

J. Miguel Kanai
Lecturer in Human Geography, University of Sheffield, United Kingdom
URBAN QUEERNESS

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SODOMY LAWS IN THE UNITED STATES

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Faculty, Department of Anthropology, University of California, San Diego
ASIA PACIFIC TRANSGENDER NETWORK
KATHOYE
THAI K-POP

Shuchi Karim
Researcher, Gender and Diversity Centre, Radboud University, Netherlands
SEX TOURISM IN ASIA

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Associate Professor, Hunter College, The City University of New York
AESTHETICISM AND DECADENCE, NINETEENTH-CENTURY

Séagh Kehoe
PhD candidate, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom
TIBET

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PENIS

Faris A. Khan
Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, State University of New York, Potsdam
PAKISTAN, “QUEER”

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ASIFA LAHORE (SIDEBAR)
DRAG, ASIAN

Irvin Kinnes
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GANGS AND STREET KIDS IN AFRICA

Gary Kinsman
Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Laurentian University, Canada
CANADIAN CRIMINAL CODE REFORM (1969)

Guillain Koko
Human rights lawyer and social justice activist, Safe Space for LGBTI refugees program at Church World Service (CWS), South Africa
REFUGEES AND ASYLUM IN AFRICA

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Postdoctoral researcher, Aleksanteri Institute, University of Helsinki, Finland
CHECHNYA, DETENTION CAMPS IN

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Lecturer, University of California, Riverside
SEX TOURISM IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

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TONGZHI

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SEX REASSIGNMENT SURGERY IN IRAN

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SLAVERY AND SODOMY IN BRAZIL

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HIV/AIDS IN SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

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ANTI-GENDER MOVEMENT IN EUROPE
METELKOVA MESTO (SLOVENIA)
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ATHLETES, TRANS AND INTERSEX, IN ASIA  
PINKI PRAMANIK (1986–) (SIDEBAR)

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KENYA

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EGYMÁSRA NÉZVE (1982; KÁROLY MAKK)

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FRANTZ FANON (1925–1961) (SIDEBAR)

Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes  
Associate Professor of American Culture and Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor  
LANGUAGE IN LATIN AMERICA

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TONGZHI

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SACRED BAND OF THEBES

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Bookseller, Gay’s the Word Bookshop, United Kingdom  
GAY’S THE WORD BOOKSHOP (SIDEBAR)

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Assistant Professor, Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst  
RÜLING, ANNA (1880–1953)

Brian Lewis  
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OFFENCES AGAINST THE PERSON ACT (1861)  
THE ORDER OF CHAERONEA
THE WOLFENDEN REPORT

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ZHONGXING PHENOMENON

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ARCHIVES IN AFRICA

Meghan Lundrigan
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AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT—THE NAMES PROJECT
BARBIN, HERCULINE (1838–1868)

J. Daniel Luther
PhD candidate, School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, SOAS University of London, United Kingdom

DISSIDENCE IN SINGAPORE
HONG LIM PARK: A CENTER OF LGBT DISSIDENCE (SIDEBAR)

Frida Lyonga
PhD Fellow, University of Basel, Switzerland

CAMEROON

Mehammed Amadeus Mack
Assistant Professor of French Studies, Smith College, Northampton, MA

HOMONATIONALISM IN AFRICA
MAGHREB
SEX WORK/SEX TOURISM/SEX TRAFFICKING IN AFRICA
TANGIER (SIDEBAR)

Vera Mackie
Senior Professor of Asian Studies, University of Wollongong, Australia

MILITARISM AND SEXUALITIES IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

Yesenia Madrigal García
Psychologist, Universidad Michoacana de San Nicolás de Hidalgo, Mexico

LESBIAN MOTHERING AND ADOPTION IN LATIN AMERICA

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Graduate Teaching Assistant, Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies, University of Oregon
BDSM (BONDAGE AND DISCIPLINE, DOMINANCE AND SUBMISSION, SADISM AND MASOCHISM)

*Miral Mahgoub al-Tahawy*
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*HENA MAYSARA* (2007; KHALED YOUSSEF)

*Nadeem Mahomed*
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RELIGION AND SAME-SEX BEHAVIORS: ISLAM

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INTERSEX IDENTITIES

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MIGRANT QUEER COMMUNITIES, US

*Kevin Markwell*
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GAY EUROPEAN TOURISM ASSOCIATION

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CAPE TOWN
QUEER THEORY, AFRICAN

*Pauline Mateveke*
Lecturer, University of Zimbabwe
ZIMBABWE

*Mark Mathuray*
Senior Lecturer, Royal Holloway, University of London, United Kingdom
LITERATURE, AFRICAN (ANGLOPHONE)

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Assistant Professor, Department of History, Queen’s University, Canada
FOUCAULT, INFLUENCE OF
Mandisa Mbali
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HIV/AIDS IN AFRICA
ZACKIE ACHMAT AND THE TREATMENT ACTION CAMPAIGN (SIDEBAR)

Aminata Cécile Mbaye
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KARMEN GEÏ (2001; JOSEPH GAÏ RAMAKA) (SIDEBAR)
SENEGAL

Babacar M'baye
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BENGA, FRANÇOIS “FÉRAL” (1906–1957)

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Senior Lecturer (retired), Department of English, University of Botswana
BOTSWANA

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ORGASM AND ORGASMOLOGY

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PHONE APPS

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Professor of International Human Rights Law, University of Nottingham, United Kingdom
HUMAN RIGHTS

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THE WELL OF LONELINESS (1928; RADCLYFFE HALL)

Mariela Méndez
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EL TEJE (SIDEBAR)

Thérèse Migraine-George
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**WOUBI CHÉRI** (1998; PHILIP BROOKS, LAURENT BOCAHUT) *(SIDEBAR)*

**Francisco Miguel**
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CABO VERDE

**Florian G. Mildenberger**
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MEDICINE, COMPLEMENTARY AND ALTERNATIVE

**Alfredo Mirandé**
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MUXES

**Gregory Mitchell**
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CABARET THEATER IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN
CRUISING AND CRUISING GROUNDS
SPORTS AND SEXUALITY IN LATIN AMERICA

**Navaneetha Mokkil**
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PORNOGRAPHY IN ASIA
A QUEER READING OF THE CHINESE SOFT-CORE FILM **SEX AND ZEN II** (1996) *(SIDEBAR)*
LEZHIN: SOUTH KOREAN WEBTOONS FOR MATURE AUDIENCES *(SIDEBAR)*

**Alison M. Moore**
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HISTORICAL SEXES

**Melina Alice Moore**
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QUEER THEORISTS

**Bonnie J. Morris**
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BOOKSTORES
THE LESBIAN MUSIC MOVEMENT

**Thabo Msibi**
Associate Professor, Curriculum and Education Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa
SOUTH AFRICA

Alan Msosa
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INTERNET IN AFRICA
MOST-AT-RISK POPULATIONS (MARPS) (SIDEBAR)

Stephen O. Murray
El Instituto Obregón, San Francisco, CA
E. E. EVANS-PRITCHARD (1902–1973) (SIDEBAR)

Kati Mustola
Researcher, University of Helsinki, Finland
TOM OF FINLAND (1920–1991)

Robert Myers
Professor, Department of English, American University of Beirut, New York, NY
TUQUS AL-ISHARAT WA-AL-TAHAWWULAT (1994; SA’DALLAH WANNOUS)

Subhi Nahas
Founder, Spectra Project
SPECTRA PROJECT

Catherine Jean Nash
Professor of Geography, Brock University, Canada
THE BODY POLITIC

Shad Naved
Assistant Professor, School of Letters, Ambedkar University Delhi, India
TRANSGENDER MUSLIMS

Sibongile Ndashe
Executive Director, Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa, South Africa
AFRICAN COMMISSION ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES’ RIGHTS

Basile Ndjio
Associate Professor of Anthropology, University of Douala, Cameroon
WITCHCRAFT/OCCULT IN AFRICA

Hassan J. Ndzovu
Senior Lecturer in Religious Studies, Moi University, Kenya
ISLAM IN AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA

W. Jake Newsome
Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, United States
Holocaust Memorial Museum
PINK TRIANGLE

Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi
Distinguished Professor, Department of English, North Carolina State University, Raleigh
FEMME NUE, FEMME NOIRE (2003; CALIXTHE BEYALA) (SIDEBAR)

Rictor Norton
Independent scholar, London, United Kingdom
MOLLY HOUSES

Alexandra Novitskaya
PhD candidate, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY
ANTISODOMY AND BUGGERY TRIALS
OTAKU SEXUALITIES IN JAPAN

Ofer Nordheimer Nur
Teaching Fellow, Department of General and Interdisciplinary Studies and the Gender and Women's Studies Program, Tel Aviv University, Israel
ANTI-SEMITISM IN EUROPE

S. N. Nyeck
Senior Research Fellow, Canterbury Christ Church University, United Kingdom, and Research Fellow, University of Amsterdam, Netherlands
NEOLIBERALISM IN AFRICA

Jorge Olivares
Allen Family Professor of Latin American Literature, Colby College, Waterville, ME
ANTES QUE ANOCHEZCA (1992; REINALDO ARENAS)

Anthony Oluoch
Programme Manager, Pan Africa ILGA
ACTIVISM IN AFRICA SOUTH OF THE SAHARA

Taiwo Adetunji Osinubi
Associate Professor of African Literatures, Department of English and Writing Studies, University of Western Ontario, Canada
CINEMA, AFRICAN (ANGLOPHONE)
LE DEVOIR DE VIOLENCE (1968; YAMBO OULOGUEM) (SIDEBAR)
NOLLYWOOD (SIDEBAR)
ONE DAY I WILL WRITE ABOUT THIS PLACE (2011; BINYAVANGA WAINAINA) (SIDEBAR)

Seth Palmer
Predoctoral Fellow, Carter G. Woodson Institute, University of Virginia, Charlottesville
RITUALS AND SAME-SEX AND TRANS EXPERIENCE

Shivaji K. Panikkar
Professor, School of Culture and Creative Expressions, Bharat Ratna Dr B.R. Ambedkar University, Delhi, India
THE ART OF IDENTITY IN INDIA

Dimitris Papanikolaou
Associate Professor in Modern Greek, University of Oxford, United Kingdom
CAVAFY, C. P. (1863–1933)

Sarah Parker
Lecturer in English, Loughborough University, United Kingdom
SAPPHO, NINETEENTH-CENTURY REDISCOVERY OF

Alpesh Kantilal Patel
Associate Professor, Contemporary Art and Theory, Florida International University, Miami
THE ART OF QUEERING ASIAN MYTHOLOGY

Geeta Patel
Associate Professor, Middle Eastern and South Asian Languages and Cultures and Women, Gender, and Sexuality, University of Virginia, Charlottesville
FIRE (1996; DEEPA MEHTA)

David Paternotte
Senior Lecturer in Sociology, Université libre de Bruxelles, Belgium
ANTI-GENDER MOVEMENT IN EUROPE

Kent W. Peacock
PhD candidate, Florida State University, Tallahassee
RURAL QUEER COMMUNITIES, US

Yaron Peleg
Kennedy Leigh Reader in Modern Hebrew Studies, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom
ANTI-SEMITISM AND ZIONISM

Lee M. Penyak
Professor Emeritus, University of Scranton, PA, and Director of Study Abroad, Diether H. Haenicke Institute for Global Education, Western Michigan University, Kalamazoo
SINS AGAINST NATURE IN COLONIAL LATIN AMERICA

Massimo Perinelli
Assistant Professor Emeritus, Historical Institute, Department of North American History, University of Cologne, Germany
QUEER THEMES IN ITALIAN NEOREALIST CINEMA

Michael F. Pettinger
Adjunct Instructor, New York University
RELIGION AND SAME-SEX BEHAVIORS: CHRISTIANITY

Svanur Pétursson
Adjunct Lecturer, Rutgers University, Newark, NJ
SEXUAL REVOLUTION IN EUROPE

Lindsay Parks Pieper
Assistant Professor of Sport Management, University of Lynchburg, Lynchburg, VA
ATHLETES, TRANS AND INTERSEX

Joseph M. Pierce
Assistant Professor, Department of Hispanic Languages and Literature, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, NY
FIN DE SIÈCLE SEXUALITY
INVERTIDO AND PEDERASTA (SIDEBAR)

Mariano Ben Plotkin
Senior Researcher, Centro de Investigaciones Sociales (CIS, CONICETIDES), Argentina, and Professor of History, Universidad Nacional de Tres de Febrero, Argentina
PSYCHOANALYSIS IN ARGENTINA

Ralph J. Poole
Professor, Department of English and American Studies, University of Salzburg, Austria
EUROVISION SONG CONTEST
TURKISH BATHS

Antonio Prieto-Stambaugh
Professor, Department of Theater, Universidad Veracruzana, Mexico
PERFORMANCE ARTISTS IN LATIN AMERICA

Ela Przybylo
Ruth Wynn Woodward Postdoctoral Fellow, Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies,
Simon Fraser University, Canada
ASEXUALITY

Caroline Radesky
PhD candidate, University of Iowa
HARLEM RENAISSANCE

George Baylon Radics
Lecturer, Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore
HUMAN RIGHTS IN ASIA

Kumud Rana
PhD candidate, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom
SEXOLOGY IN ASIA

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Professor Emeritus of Political Science and Sexual Diversity Studies, University of Toronto, Canada
PARENTING RIGHTS IN NORTH AMERICA

Gayatri Reddy
Associate Professor, Gender and Women’s Studies, Anthropology, and Global Asian Studies, University of Illinois, Chicago
HIJRAS

Peter Rehberg
Affiliated Fellow, ICI Berlin—Institute for Cultural Inquiry
BUTT MAGAZINE

Ragan Rhyne
Independent scholar, Brooklyn, NY
BFI FLARE: LONDON’S FIRST LGBTQ FILM FESTIVAL (SIDEBAR)
FILM FESTIVALS
FRAMELINE: THE WORLD’S FIRST LGBTQ FILM FESTIVAL (SIDEBAR)

Niall Richardson
Senior Lecturer, Media and Film, School of Media, Film and Music, University of Sussex, United Kingdom
MÄDCHEN IN UNIFORM (1931; LEONTINE SAGAN)

Noah Riseman
Associate Professor in History, Australian Catholic University, Australia
VIETNAM WAR, LGBTQ+ VETERANS
**Greg Robinson**  
Professor of History, University of Quebec, Montreal, Canada  
Wilde Trials, International Significance of

**Leticia Robles-Moreno**  
Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of Theatre and Dance, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA  
Hemispheric Institute Digital Video Library

**Juana Marí Rodríguez**  
Professor, Department of Ethnic Studies, University of California, Berkeley  
Tatiana de la Tierra (1961–2012)

**Sarah B. Rodriguez**  
Senior Lecturer, Global Health Studies Program, and Lecturer, Department of Medical Education, Northwestern University, Evanston, IL  
Clitoris

**Danielle Roper**  
Provost’s Postdoctoral Scholar, Department of Romance Languages and Literatures, University of Chicago  
Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (JFLAG)  
Museo Travesti del Perú

**Katrina C. Rose**  
Independent scholar, Moline, IL  
Compton’s Cafeteria Riot (1966)  
Darnell V. Lloyd (1975)

**Farhang Rouhani**  
Professor of Geography, University of Mary Washington, Fredericksburg, VA  
Diasporas, Queer

**Everett K. Rowson**  
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Mukhannath

**Dan Royles**  
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HIV/AIDS in the United States

**Ana Lúcia Sá**  
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International Studies, University Institute of Lisbon (CEI-IUL), Portugal

MOZAMBIQUE

Hanadi Al-Samman
Associate Professor of Arabic Language and Literature, University of Virginia, Charlottesville
ISIS GAY TRIALS
PASOLINI'S CINEMATIC ADAPTATION OF A THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS

Jordan Sanderson
Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, PA
LAMBDA LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND

Johanna M. Schmidt
Senior Lecturer, University of Waikato, New Zealand
SAMOAN FA’AFĀFINE

Paul A. Schroeder Rodríguez
Professor of Spanish, Amherst College, Amherst, MA
FRESA Y CHOCOLATE (1993; TOMÁS GUTIÉRREZ ALEA AND JUAN CARLOS TABÍO) (SIDEBAR)

Tammy S. Schultz
Professor of Strategic Studies, US Marine Corps War College, Quantico, VA
MILITARY LAW AND POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

Katherine Schweighofer
Visiting Assistant Professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA
LESBIAN LANDS, WOMEN’S LANDS, AND SEPARATIST COMMUNES

Ali-Asghar Seyed-Gohrab
Associate Professor, University of Leiden, Netherlands
SUFI TREATMENT OF SAME-SEX RELATIONS IN POETRY AND PROSE

Svati P. Shah
Associate Professor, Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies, University of Massachusetts Amherst, and Research Associate, African Centre for Migration and Society, University of Witwatersrand
SEX WORK IN ASIA

Nishant Shahani
Associate Professor, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program, Department of
English, Washington State University, Pullman
SECTION 377 IN SOUTH ASIA

**Jocelyn Sharlet**
Associate Professor of Comparative Literature, University of California, Davis
HOMOEROTIC POETRY OF ABŪ NUWĀS

**Yaron Shemer**
Associate Professor of Israel Cultural Studies, Department of Asian Studies, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
*EINAYIM PRUHOT* (2009; HAIM TABAKMAN)

**M.W. Shores**
University of Colorado, Boulder
MISHIMA, YUKIO (1925–1970)

**Pete Sigal**
Professor, Department of History, Duke University, Durham, NC
ETHNOPORNORAPHY
FLORENTINE CODEX AND NAHAU SEXUALITY

**Kemal Silay**
Professor, School of Global and International Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington
LITERARY DISCOURSES IN THE OTTOMAN MIDDLE EAST (1500–1900)

**Joseli Maria Silva**
Professor of Human Geography, State University of Ponta Grossa, Brazil
GRUPO GAY DA BAHIA

**Pawan Singh**
New Generation Network Scholar, Contemporary History, Deakin University and the Australia India Institute, University of Melbourne, Australia
THE HUMSAFAR TRUST: INDIA’S OLDEST LGBT ORGANIZATION (*SIDEBAR*)
NAZ FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL

**Nadine Sinno**
Assistant Professor of Arabic, Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures, Virginia Tech University, Blacksburg
‘AWDAT AL-ALMANI ILĀ RUSHDIH (2006; RASHID AL-DAIF)
JANNĀT WA-IBLĪS (1992; NAWAL EL SAADAWI)
MISK AL-GHAZAL (1988; HANAN AL-SHAYKH)

**Emily Skidmore**
Associate Professor, Department of History, Texas Tech University, Lubbock
FEMALE HUSBAND

Brice D. Smith
Independent scholar, Wauwatosa, WI
LOU SULLIVAN (1951–1991) (SIDEBAR)

Nadine Smith
Executive Director, Equality Florida, Saint Petersburg
MARCHES ON WASHINGTON

Michael Smyth
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HATE CRIME LAW AND POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES
LAMBDA LEGAL DEFENSE AND EDUCATION FUND

Che Sokol
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AL-AKHARUN (2006; SEBA AL-HERZ)

Mariela Solana
Assistant Professor of Cultural Practices, Institute of Initial Studies, Universidad Nacional
Arturo Jauretche, Argentina
PORNOTERRORISMO AND POST-PORN

Antu Sorainen
Researcher, University of Helsinki, Finland
GENTRIFICATION IN EUROPE
KINSHIP IN EUROPE
QUEER DOMESTICITY IN EUROPE

Michael Stambolis-Ruhstorfer
Assistant Professor, American and Gender Studies, University of Bordeaux Montaigne, France
ADOPTION AND SURROGACY IN EUROPE
ADOPTION, FOSTERING, AND SURROGACY (INTERNATIONAL)
MARRIAGE, UNIVERSAL, IN EUROPE
PACTE CIVIL DE SOLIDARITÉ (PACS) (SIDEBAR)

Jo Stanley
Honorary Research Fellow, Maritime Historical Studies Centre, University of Hull, United Kingdom
LANGUAGE IN EUROPE
MERCHANT NAVY (SIDEBAR)
MILITARY/NAVY IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Charles St-Georges
Assistant Professor of Spanish, Denison University, Granville, OH
CINEMA, LATIN AMERICAN (EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY)

Samhita Sunya
Assistant Professor of Cinema, Department of Middle Eastern & South Asian Languages & Cultures, University of Virginia
THE BUBBLE (2006; EYTAN FOX)

Amanda Lock Swarr
Associate Professor, Department of Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies, University of Washington, Seattle
CASTER SEMENYA (1991–) (SIDEBAR)

Getnet Tadele
Professor, Department of Sociology, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopia
ETHIOPIA

Steph Tai
Associate Professor, University of Wisconsin Law School, Madison
DARNELL V. LLOYD (1975)

Michael Thomas Taylor
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TRANSVESTITES/TRANSEXUALS

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CINEMA, AFRICAN (FRANCOPHONE)

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THE CUBAN REVOLUTION AND HOMOSEXUALITY
SEXILIO AND MIGRATION (SIDEBAR)

Liesl Theron
Cofounder, Gender DynamiX, South Africa
TRANS ISSUES IN AFRICA

Kate Thomas
Chair and Professor of English, Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, PA
BOSTON MARRIAGE AND WOMEN’S ROMANTIC FRIENDSHIPS

**Annette F. Timm**
Associate Professor, Department of History, University of Calgary, Canada
ELBE, LILI (1882–1931)

**Robert Deam Tobin**
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CLASSICAL STUDIES

**Amy Tooth Murphy**
Lecturer in Oral History, Department of History, Royal Holloway, University of London, United Kingdom
PULP FICTION, GAY AND LESBIAN

**Zeb Tortorici**
Associate Professor, Department of Spanish and Portuguese Languages and Literatures, New York University
CONFESSIONAL MANUALS IN COLONIAL LATIN AMERICA
SINS AGAINST NATURE IN COLONIAL LATIN AMERICA

**Otgonbaatar Tsedendemberel**
Former executive director, LGBT Centre, Mongolia
MONGOLIA

**Andrew D. Turner**
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MOCHE POTTERY

**Keja L. Valens**
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TRAVESTI AND TRANS ACTIVISM IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

**Geraldine Van Bueren**
Professor of International Human Rights Law, Queen Mary University of London; Barrister (Middle Temple); Queen’s Counsel (Honoris Causa), and Visiting Fellow, Kellogg College, Oxford
THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT (SIDEBAR)
THE HOLOCAUST AND LGBT VICTIMS (SIDEBAR)
HUMAN RIGHTS IN EUROPE
Adriaan van Klinken
Associate Professor of Religion and African Studies, School of Philosophy, Religion, and History of Science, University of Leeds, United Kingdom
CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA: LGBT FRIENDLY
DESMOND TUTU (1931–) (SIDEBAR)

Sherry Velasco
Professor of Spanish and Gender Studies, Department of Latin American and Iberian Cultures, Department of Gender and Sexuality Studies, University of Southern California, Los Angeles
ERAUSO, CATALINA DE (1592–1650)

Vinodh Venkatesh
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CINEMA, LATIN AMERICAN (LATE TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES)

Giovanni Vitiello
Professor of Chinese Language and Literature, Department of Asian, African, and Mediterranean Studies, University of Naples “L'Orientale,” Italy
PINHUA BAOJIAN (1849; CHEN SEN)

Hermann W. von Hesse
PhD candidate, University of Wisconsin–Madison
GENDER, FLEXIBLE SYSTEMS, IN AFRICA

Oskaras Vorobjovas-Pinta
Lecturer, University of Tasmania, Australia
HOUSEBOYS AT RESORTS (SIDEBAR)
RESORTS

Heather Vrana
Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Florida, Gainesville
EL VAMPIRO DE LA COLONIA ROMA (1979; LUIS ZAPATA)

Andrew Wackerfuss
Adjunct Professor, Georgetown University, Washington, DC
FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR (SIDEBAR)
NATIONALISM AND SEXUALITY IN EUROPE

Anna E. Ward
Independent scholar, Sacramento, CA
SEXPERTS AND SEX EDUCATION IN THE WEST
Kevin Ward  
Associate Professor in African Religious Studies, University of Leeds, United Kingdom  
CHRISTIANITY IN AFRICA: ANGLICAN

Max Weiss  
Associate Professor of History and Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, Princeton, NJ  
HALAT SHAGHAF (1998; NIHAD SIREES)

James Welker  
Associate Professor, Department of Cross-Cultural Studies, Kanagawa University, Japan  
BOYS LOVE (YAOI) MANGA

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BARS AND CABARETS IN EUROPE  
ELDORADO (SIDEBAR)  
FRIENDSHIP SOCIETIES IN EUROPE

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ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND ACTIVISM

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MARRIAGE, WOMAN-WOMAN, IN AFRICA

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ARCHIVES IN AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND  
AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

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WILDE IN SINOPHONE CULTURE

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JUANA AGUILAR: HERMAPHRODITISM AND COLONIAL COURTS (SIDEBAR)
Yang Yu  
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TRANSGENDER ORGANIZATIONS IN MAINLAND CHINA, HONG KONG, AND TAIWAN

Lindsay Zafir  
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ACT UP

Tarek Zeidan  
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HELEM

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FAMILY LAW IN ASIA

Jamie J. Zhao  
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NEW MEDIA IN ASIA

Jun Zubillaga-Pow  
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PEOPLE LIKE US (PLU)

Eileen Zurbriggen  
Professor, Psychology Department, University of California, Santa Cruz  
BIOLOGICAL ESSENTIALISM
Thematic Outline

This outline provides a general overview of the conceptual structure of the Global Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) History. The outline is organized under twenty-one major categories, which are further split into eleven subcategories. The entries are listed alphabetically within each category or subcategory. For ease of reference, the same entry may be listed under multiple categories.

ARCHIVES

Archives in Africa

Archives in Asia

Archives in Australia and New Zealand

Archives in Europe

Archives in Latin America

Archives in North America

Hemispheric Institute Digital Video Library

Lesbian Herstory Archives

ARTS AND POPULAR CULTURE: FILM, TELEVISION, AND THEATER

Asrar ‘Ailiyyah (2013; Hany Fawzy)

Brokeback Mountain

The Bubble (2006; Eytan Fox)

Cinema, African (Anglophone)

Cinema, African (Francophone)

Cinema, Latin American (Early Twentieth Century)

Cinema, Latin American (Late Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries)

Einayim Pkuhot (2009; Haim Tabakman)
Film Festivals

_Fire_ (1996; Deepa Mehta)

*Fortune and Men’s Eyes*

_Egymásra Nézve_ (1982; Károly Makk)

_Hena Maysara_ (2007; Khaled Youssef)

HIV/AIDS in Egyptian Cinema

Homoeroticism in the Plays of Ibn Daniyal

*I Luv U But_ (2012–2014; Fadia Abboud)

_Iskandariyya ... Leh?_ (1979; Youssef Chahine)

_Lesbanese_ (2008; Alissar Gazal)

_Mädchen in Uniform_ (1931; Leontine Sagan)

Masculinity in Iranian Cinema

Pasolini’s Cinematic Adaptation of _A Thousand and One Nights_

Queer Themes in Italian Neorealist Cinema

Theater, Queer

Transgender Identity in Iranian Cinema

_Tuqus al-Isharat wa-al-Tahawwulat_ (1994; Sa’dallah Wannous)

**ARTS AND POPULAR CULTURE: LITERARY WORKS AND MOVEMENTS**

Aestheticism and Decadence, Nineteenth-Century

_Al-Akharun_ (2006; Seba al-Herz)

_Aná Hiya Anti_ (2000; Elham Mansour)

_Antes que Anochezca_ (1992; Reinaldo Arenas)

_‘Awdat al-Almani ilá Rushdih_ (2006; Rashid al-Daif)
Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories (2009)
Bayrūt ’75 (1975; Ghāda al-Sammān)
El Beso de la Mujer Araña (1976; Manuel Puig)
Bom-Crioulo (1895; Adolfo Ferreira Caminha)
Boys Love (Yaoi) Manga
Brokeback Mountain
Cavafy, C. P. (1863–1933)
Al-Dizil (1994; Thani al-Suwaidi)
Hajar al-Dahik (1990; Hoda Barakat)
Halat Shaghaf (1998; Nihad Sirees)
Harlem Renaissance
Homoerotic Poetry of Abū Nuwās
Imarat Ya’kubian (2002; Alaa al-Aswany)
Jannát wālblīs (1992; Nawal El Saadawi)
Literary Discourses in the Ottoman Middle East (1500–1900)
Literature, African (Anglophone)
Literature, African (Francophone)
Literature, Caribbean (Anglophone and Creole)
Literature, Caribbean (Francophone)
Mishima, Yukio (1925–1970)
Misk al-Ghazal (1988; Hanan al-Shaykh)
Mufākharat al-Jawārī wa-al-Ghilmān (al-Jā⊠i⊠)
Nuzhat al-Albāb F:mā Lā Yujad F: Kitāb (A⊠mad ibn
Yūsuf al-Tifāshī

*Pinhua Baojian* (1849; Sen Chen)

Poets in Latin America

Pulp Fiction, Gay and Lesbian

Sappho, Nineteenth-Century Rediscovery of

*Sharaf* (1997; Sun‘allah Ibrahim)

*Stone Butch Blues* (1993; Leslie Feinberg)

Sufi Treatment of Same-Sex Relations in Poetry and Prose

*A Thousand and One Nights*

Tongzhi Literature, Taiwan

*El Vampiro de la Colonia Roma* (1979; Luis Zapata)

*The Well of Loneliness* (1928; Radclyffe Hall)

*Zuqaq al-Midaq* (1947; Naguib Mahfouz)

**ARTS AND POPULAR CULTURE: MUSIC**

Afropop Music

Eurovision Song Contest

Harlem Renaissance

The Lesbian Music Movement

Popular Music and Queer Identities

Thai K-Pop

Vargas, Chavela (1919–2012)

**ARTS AND POPULAR CULTURE: PERFORMANCE ART AND PORNOGRAPHY**
Benga, François “Féral” (1906–1957)

Cabaret Theater in Latin America and the Caribbean

Drag, Asian

Harlem Renaissance

Madame Sat â (1900–1976)

Museo Travesti del Perú

Orientalism in Gay Pornography about the Middle East

Performance Artists in Latin America

Pornography

Pornography in Asia

Pornoterrorismo and Post-Porn

ARTS AND POPULAR CULTURE: VISUAL ART

Aestheticism and Decadence, Nineteenth-Century

Amer, Ghada (1963–)

The Art of Identity in India

The Art of Queering Asian Mythology

Boys Love (Yaoi) Manga

Graffiti and Graphic Art

Khookha McQueer (1987–)

Moche Pottery

Ottoman and Persian Miniature Paintings

Photography in Europe

Tom of Finland (1920–1991)
BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILES

Amer, Ghada (1963–)

Barbin, Herculine (1838–1868)

Benga, François “Féral” (1906–1957)

Cavafy, C. P. (1863–1933)

Chevalier d’Éon or Mademoiselle Beaumont (1728–1810)

Elbe, Lili (1882–1931)

Erauso, Catalina de (1592–1650)

Khookha McQueer (1987–)

Madame Satã (1900–1976)

Mishima, Yukio (1925–1970)

Nkoli, Simon (1957–1998)

Rescalvo, Sònia (1946–1991)

Rüling, Anna (1880–1953)

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1695)

tatiana de la tierra (1961–2012)

Tom of Finland (1920–1991)

Vargas, Chavela (1919–2012)

Von Mahlsdorf, Charlotte (1928–2002)

Zheng He (1371–1433)

CONCEPTS: THE BODY

Clitoris

Intersex Identities
Orgasm and Orgasmology

Penis

Sex Reassignment Surgery in Asia

Sex Reassignment Surgery in Iran

**CONCEPTS: CULTURAL AND SOCIAL**

BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism)

Camp

The Closet

Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East

Cross-Dressing in the West

Rural Queerness

Situational Homosexuality

Urban Queerness

**CONCEPTS: GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITY**

Asexuality

Biological Essentialism

Cisgender or Cis

Femmes and Butches

Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa

Historical Sexes

Intersex Identities

Third Genders

Transvestites/Transsexuals
CONCEPTS: POLITICAL

Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara
Communism and Queers in Europe
Fin de Siècle Sexuality
Imperialism and Colonialism
Nationalism and Sexuality in Europe
Neoliberalism in Africa
Neoliberalism in Latin America
Pinkwashing
Treason and Queerness

EDUCATION, DISCIPLINES, AND THEORY

Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara Classical Studies
Ethnopornography
Ethnopsychiatry
Feminism, African
Fin de Siècle Sexuality
Foucault, Influence of
Higher Education and LGBTQ+ Communities in the United States
Jotería Studies
Psichopathia Sexualis (1886; Richard von Krafft-Ebing)
Queer Theorists
Queer Theory, African
Sexology in Asia
Sexperts and Sex Education in the West

Ubuntu

EVENTS, DEMONSTRATIONS, AND MEMORIALS

AIDS Memorial Quilt—The NAMES Project

Carnival and Sexuality in Brazil

Compton's Cafeteria Riot (1966)

Marches on Washington

Museums and Memorials

Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo, Brazil

Pink Triangle

Pride Demonstrations in Europe

Pride Parades and Marches

Southern Comfort Conference

Stonewall Riots, International Effects of

“We Demand” Protest (1971)

GEOGRAPHICAL PROFILES

Australia and New Zealand

Bhutan

Botswana

Cabo Verde

Cameroon

Cape Town

Côte d'Ivoire
Ethiopia
Ghana
Kenya
Maghreb
Malaysia
Metelkova Mesto (Slovenia)
Mongolia
Mozambique
Namibia
Nigeria
Senegal
South Africa
Tibet
Uganda
Zimbabwe

INSTITUTIONS

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Higher Education and LGBTQ+ Communities in the United States

Institut für Sexualwissenschaft

Lesbian Herstory Archives

Lesbian Lands, Women’s Lands, and Separatist Communes

Museums and Memorials
LANGUAGE AND TERMS

Bakla
Florentine Codex and Nahua Sexuality
Ghilman
Hijras
Kathoey
Language
Language in Africa
Language in Europe
Language in Latin America
MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia
Mukhannath
Queer in Latin America
Queer Names and Identity Politics in the Arab World
Pakistan, “Queer”
Tongzhi
Two-Spirit
Waria

LEGISLATION, LEGAL CASES, AND GOVERNMENT REPORTS

Antisodomy and Buggery Trials
Argentina’s Gender Identity Law
Canadian Criminal Code Reform (1969)
Darnell v. Lloyd (1975)
Defense of Marriage Act (1996)
Family Law in Asia
Hate Crime Law and Policy in the United States
Homosexual Acts in Shari’a
Inquisition, Criminal Courts, and Sexuality in Colonial Latin America
ISIS Gay Trials
Lavender Scare
Military Law and Policy in the United States
Offences Against the Person Act (1861)
QT v. Hong Kong Immigration Department (2017)
Queen Boat Trials (2001–2002)
Refugees and Immigration Policies
Russian Gay Propaganda Law
Section 377 and Section 377A
Section 377 in South Asia
Sins against Nature in Colonial Latin America
Sodomy Laws in the United States
Thomas/Thomasine Hall Court Case (1629)
The Ugly Law (1961–1965; Denmark)
W v. Registrar of Marriages (2013)
Wilde Trials, International Significance of
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The founding, achievements, international impact, and demise of this important AIDS activist group.

The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) was formed in March 1987, six years after the first cases of AIDS were identified in gay men in the United States. According to the statement read at the beginning of every Monday night membership meeting, ACT UP was “a diverse, non-partisan group of individuals united in anger and committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis” (Crimp and Rolston 1990, 13). The group initially focused on getting “drugs into bodies,” putting pressure on government agencies and pharmaceutical companies to make AIDS treatments available more quickly and at more affordable prices. ACT UP soon expanded its agenda to include a broader set of issues, including gender inequities, access to affordable health care and housing, sex education, and clean-needle exchange programs (Cohen 1998). The organization drew national attention to the AIDS crisis, transforming the government’s response to the disease and driving the development of more effective medications.

In the mid-1990s, scientists discovered that a new class of medications, called protease inhibitors, could effectively keep the virus at bay in most people when used in combination with other antiretrovirals. The development of this new “drug cocktail,” called highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART), was a credit to ACT UP’s work to pressure the government to produce more effective medications. But the cocktail was also prohibitively expensive for Americans without health insurance and most people living in the Global South, where the disease was now spreading at a rapid pace. Though the national movement declined during these years, the remaining branches of ACT UP turned their attention to the issue of inequitable treatment access, banding together with new groups in both the Global North and Global South to fight for affordable medications for everyone living with HIV/AIDS.

Origins

ACT UP was formed after a rousing speech by the writer and activist Larry Kramer at the Gay and Lesbian Community Center in New York City on 10 March 1987. Kramer asked two-thirds of the audience to stand: “At the rate we are going,” he argued, “you could be dead in less than five years,” a reference to the alarming rate at which gay men in New York...
City were dying of the disease (Kramer 1989, 128). He attacked the government’s response to the epidemic, particularly the slow approval process at the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), which held promising medications in limbo for years. But he also excoriated the gay community and existing AIDS service organizations for failing to mount a coordinated political campaign. He asked the audience, “Do we want to start a new organization devoted solely to political action?” (Kramer 1989, 135). Two days later, ACT UP was born.

Kramer’s speech provided the spark for ACT UP, but a number of direct-action AIDS organizations had already formed in New York, Chicago, and San Francisco, providing the basis for the group’s meteoric rise. Indeed, gay men and lesbians had become increasingly active in the wake of the 1986 US Supreme Court decision Bowers v. Hardwick, which upheld state sodomy laws criminalizing same-sex sexual activities. Already, the government had done little to address the AIDS crisis. As the political scientist Deborah B. Gould writes in Moving Politics (2009), many states were considering mandatory testing and quarantine laws, and just one week before the Bowers decision, the US Justice Department legalized employment discrimination against HIV-positive individuals. Now, the Supreme Court was attacking gay people’s privacy as well. Gay men and lesbians were angry that the nation seemed to care so little for their lives and were desperate for effective treatments. They had little to lose, and much to gain, in turning to militant direct action (Gould 2009; Wolfe 1997).

**Culture and Organization**

ACT UP took off quickly, attracting new members and sprouting over 100 new chapters across the country. The group had international influence too, as ACT UP chapters formed in cities such as Paris, London, Montreal, and Sydney. But the New York chapter remained the group’s largest and most influential. At its height, ACT UP–New York’s Monday night membership meetings could draw as many as 800 people each week (Smith and Siplon 2006). Many remember these meetings as the heart of the organization, providing a space to socialize, share news and information, and vote on upcoming actions or other items of business. Smaller numbers of members also met throughout the week in affinity groups, such as the Women’s Caucus, the Housing Committee, the Treatment and Data Committee (which pushed for new drug development), and the Majority Actions Committee (which advocated for people of color with AIDS). The affinity groups allowed the organization to remain dynamic, decentralized, and effective, as members could focus on the issues that mattered most to them and develop their own actions or campaigns. These groups also helped to glue the larger organization together by fostering “close-knit communities within communities” that sustained members through risky political actions and painful personal losses (Jim Eigo, quoted in Gould 2009, 191; see also Crimp and Rolston 1990).
ACT UP IN EUROPE

Following its founding in New York in 1987, ACT UP quickly internationalized, with chapters appearing in Canada, Australia, and Europe by the end of the decade. These chapters were developed, however, through informal connections rather than through the concerted effort of a centralized organization. Arguably one of the most successful European ACT UP organizations was ACT UP–Paris, but chapters founded in European countries other than France also had a lasting impact on queer politics.

ACT UP–Paris was founded in 1989 by Didier Lestrade (1958–), Luc Coulavin (1961–1994), and Pascal Loubet (1958–) as a political response to both HIV/AIDS and institutionalized AIDS organizations in France (Nakayama 2012). From 1987 to 1989 Lestrade traveled numerous times to New York and reported on ACT UP–New York in the gay magazine *Gai Pied* (literally, “gay foot,” but also a homophone for the French word for “wasp's nest,” referring to the magazine's intention to disrupt the status quo), as well as the daily newspaper *Libération* (Eleftheriadis 2014). Much like ACT UP–New York, which was established in part in reaction to the political impotence of the AIDS service organization Gay Men’s Health Crisis, ACT UP–Paris emerged from criticism of France’s largest AIDS organization, AIDES (a play on the French word for “help”). Founded in 1984 by activist Daniel Defert (1937–) after the death of his partner, philosopher and theorist Michel Foucault (1926–1984), AIDES was a general organization that avoided making links between HIV/AIDS and homosexuality (Broqua 2015). Instead, it sought to build ties with the socialist government of François Mitterrand, which had avoided making connections to gay rights organizations since its election in 1981 (Ernst 1997).

ACT UP–Paris did not limit its criticism to AIDES, but instead took on a wide range of opponents including government officials, pharmaceutical companies, and the Catholic Church. Borrowing slogans such as Silence = Death (translated into French as Silence = Mort) and strategies from its counterparts in the United States, ACT UP–Paris sought to emulate the drama and the anger that were at the center of ACT UP–New York. In addition to its members’ participating in marches and staging die-ins, ACT UP–Paris also made large visual statements, such as placing a giant pink condom over the Luxor Obelisk at the Place de la Concorde on World AIDS Day in 1993 (Ernst 1997). The organization’s activism in the early 1990s gained further international attention when the docudrama 120 battements par minute (2017; BPM [Beats per Minute]), directed by Robin Campillo (1962–), a former ACT UP–Paris activist, won the Grand Prix at the 2017 Cannes Film Festival (Wise 2018).

During the late 1990s, however, ACT UP became a locus of controversy surrounding the practice of “barebacking” (having penetrative sex without a condom) when writers Guillaume Dustan (1965–2005) and Érik Rémès (1964–) published novels that called
into question the inevitability of safer sex practices (Rees-Roberts 2008). In response to the apparent increase in barebacking among same-sex–desiring men, ACT UP–Paris began targeting bars, clubs, and saunas that either encouraged or did not openly oppose barebacking (Castro and Girard 2015). In 2009, when AIDES hosted a series of workshops for same-sex–desiring men who engaged in barebacking, ACT UP renewed its criticism of the organization, calling the workshops a "political laboratory aiming at standardizing unsafe sex" (Castro and Girard 2015, 172).

ACT UP–London, founded in late 1988, adopted tactics similar to its counterparts in France and the United States for a specifically UK context. In 1989 ACT UP–London staged a demonstration at Pentonville Prison, catapulting condoms over the prison walls to protest prisoners’ lack of access to contraceptives (Wise 2018). Although ACT UP–London dwindled in the 1990s, it was revived in 2012 in the face of budget cuts to the National Health Service. After UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage (1964–) stated in 2014 that HIV-positive people should be barred from entering the United Kingdom, ACT UP–London dumped half a metric ton of manure on his doorstep (Wise 2018).

Globally, some AIDS activists have sought to politicize HIV/AIDS in a manner similar to ACT UP, borrowing some of ACT UP’s tactics while remaining unaffiliated with the group. At the 1998 World AIDS Conference in Geneva, a group of activists primarily from ACT UP–Paris interrupted the opening ceremony, and one activist from an organization in Côte d’Ivoire took the floor to read a speech, leading some to criticize ACT UP–Paris for imposing its tactics on African activists. Nevertheless, the activities of such groups as Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) in South Africa, which gained visibility during the 2000 World AIDS Conference in Durban and uses tactics similar to ACT UP’s, highlight the diverse range of activist approaches across African countries (Broqua 2015). Since its founding in 1998, TAC has acquired a reputation as one of the world’s most important AIDS organizations, underscoring the ongoing, if indirect, global influence of ACT UP (Broqua 2015).

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Through membership meetings, affinity groups, informal gatherings, and militant actions, ACT UP built a vibrant and empowering community. Meetings were loud, angry, and emotional, as members would scream, cry, chant, and laugh together. They could also be long and agonizing, as members talked through issues or debated new courses of action (Smith and Siplon 2006). But most members were excited to participate in such a democratic organization, and they remember the meetings as thrilling: full of energy, love, and a deep sense of solidarity (Gould 2009; Hubbard 2012; France 2012). Meetings were also a regular cruising ground. As ACT UP–New York member Jean Carlomusto remembers, “men were having sex with men, the women were having sex with women, men and women were having sex with each other” (quoted in Brier 2009, 161; see also Cvetkovich 2003). In ACT UP, practicing safe sex became an important political act, demonstrating that it was still possible to embrace queer sexuality in the midst of a deadly epidemic and virulently homophobic culture. This embrace of queer sexuality set ACT UP apart from other AIDS organizations and helped to spawn new queer movements in the 1990s (Brier 2009; Gould 2009).
ACT UP Poster “SILENCE = DEATH.” This iconic poster was created before the founding of ACT UP, but the organization quickly adopted the image as its own. The poster used a common symbol of gay liberation at the time, an upward-facing pink triangle, transforming a symbol of oppression into one of resistance.

**Actions**

ACT UP's actions were remarkably successful, drawing media attention and new members, and quickly effecting national change. The group relied on direct action, taking to the streets in massive numbers and often risking arrest to put pressure on those in positions of power. Especially in New York, a number of members came out of the theater, art, and media worlds—and they used their skills to great effect, creating actions filled with street theater and eye-catching posters. One of the most memorable graphics associated with the organization was an upward-facing pink triangle above the text “SILENCE = DEATH.” The pink triangle, a common symbol of gay liberation, evoked the badges given to gay prisoners in the Holocaust but were turned upward to signify “solidarity and resistance” (ACT UP–New York 2017).

ACT UP staged its first demonstration on Wall Street on 24 March 1987. Arguing that there could be “no more business as usual,” the group targeted the slow drug approval process at the FDA and the profiteering of drug companies such as Burroughs Wellcome, which had just released the first and only AIDS treatment, AZT, at the astronomical price of $10,000 a
year (AIDS Network 1987; Cohen 1998; Crimp and Rolston 1990). The demonstration attracted 250 people, 17 of whom were arrested, and produced an immediate response from the FDA. A few weeks after the action, the FDA promised to speed up the drug approval process (Crimp and Rolston 1990).

ACT UP gained national attention that October at the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, which featured the first viewing of the AIDS Memorial Quilt (Cohen 1998). (The quilt had been created earlier that year to remember those who had died of AIDS and to draw attention to the epidemic.) ACT UP members marched near the back, wearing SILENCE = DEATH shirts and holding AIDSGATE posters (Crimp and Rolston 1990). They also distributed leaflets urging those in attendance to take more militant action: “Before this Quilt grows any larger, turn your grief into anger” (quoted in Smith and Siplon 2006, 25). At the next ACT UP–New York meeting, the organization doubled in size (Crimp and Rolston 1990). Soon, over 100 chapters sprang up in cities across the country and around the world, each independently organized but committed to direct action to end the AIDS crisis (Smith and Siplon 2006).

This national movement came together the next October. Following the second viewing of the quilt on 11 October 1988, more than 1,500 activists convened in Rockville, Maryland, to “seize control of the FDA.” The protesters had a long list of demands, including a shorter drug approval process, access to clinical trials for all people with AIDS (because women and people of color were routinely excluded), an end to the use of double-blind placebo trials, insurance coverage for experimental drugs, and community involvement in decision-making. Activists had briefed the media in advance, ensuring sympathetic national news coverage (Crimp and Rolston 1990). And, like many of ACT UP’s actions, the theatrical tactics were made for the cameras. Protesters wearing white lab coats and blood-stained gloves plastered the FDA— which they renamed the Federal Death Administration— with posters featuring a bloody palm print and the text: “The government has blood on its hands. One AIDS death every half hour.” As workers looked on from within the building, the crowd chanted “Get to work,” “Guilty, guilty, guilty,” and “AZT is not enough; give us all the other stuff!” One group of protesters stormed the building, facing off with police in riot gear; another staged a die-in with mock tombstones. All in all, nearly 200 were arrested for civil disobedience. The action solidified ACT UP’s place as a serious player on the national stage (France 2012; Hubbard 2012; Crimp and Rolston 1990). Two weeks later, the FDA shortened its drug approval process, and within a year, the FDA and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) accepted a proposal from ACT UP’s Treatment and Data Committee for a “parallel track” program that would allow individuals excluded from clinical trials to access experimental drugs (Brier 2009, 166).
ACT UP commonly used civil disobedience to press for increased funding for AIDS research and treatment at the national, state, and local levels.

ACT UP kept up the pressure on federal agencies, scientific researchers, and pharmaceutical companies over the next couple of years. In September 1989, seven ACT UP members went back to Wall Street, sneaking onto the floor of the New York Stock Exchange to hang a “Sell Wellcome” banner urging traders to sell stock in Burroughs Wellcome, the company that manufactured the exorbitantly expensive AIDS medication AZT. An hour later, 1,500 members gathered outside demanding free AZT. ACT UP chapters in San Francisco and London staged simultaneous demonstrations. Four days later, Burroughs Wellcome dropped the price of AZT by 20 percent (Hubbard 2012; Crimp and Rolston 1990).

In May 1990, over 1,000 ACT UP members went to Bethesda, Maryland, to “storm the NIH.” Protesters drew attention to the dearth of scientific progress around the disease with chants such as “Ten years. A billion dollars. One drug. Big deal.” They also continued to push for clinical trials including women and people of color. A month later, ACT UP won another victory when the NIH formally included activists in an AIDS Clinical Trials Group meeting for the first time (Cohen 1998).

In March 1989 ACT UP's Women's Caucus began a four-year campaign to persuade the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) to change the definition of AIDS to include illnesses that most commonly affect women, such as cervical cancer. Women were routinely denied
Social Security benefits because they did not meet the CDC’s criteria for AIDS, meaning—in the words of one ACT UP poster—that “Women don’t get AIDS. They just die from it.” In 1993 the CDC changed the definition of AIDS to include cervical cancer, as well as tuberculosis (a common illness among poor people with AIDS). The number of women diagnosed with the disease immediately increased by nearly 50 percent (Brier 2009; Hubbard 2012).

Despite these victories, the epidemic raged on, with over 120,000 deaths in the United States by the end of 1990 (amfAR 2011). On 23 January 1991 ACT UP–New York called a “Day of Desperation” protesting the government’s funding of the Gulf War over the AIDS epidemic. The night before, a handful of activists infiltrated CBS Evening News, interrupting the live broadcast with the message “AIDS is news. Fight AIDS, not Arabs.” The next morning, 800 activists gathered on Wall Street for a two-hour march to city hall and the federal office building, where they left empty coffins to represent those who had died of AIDS. At the same time, 2,000 marched in Harlem to demand more housing and social services for people living with AIDS. Later that day, 500 members occupied Grand Central Station at the height of rush hour, covering information booths in red tape and releasing a banner with the message “Money for AIDS, not for war!” Over 250 protesters were arrested for blocking traffic outside the station (Hubbard 2012; Carroll 2015).

Demise of the National Movement

The national AIDS activist movement began to decline after 1992. ACT UP had achieved tremendous victories. Because of the group’s protests, the FDA shortened the drug approval process, the NIH gave people with AIDS a seat at the table in developing clinical trials, drug companies reduced the cost of treatments, and the CDC expanded the definition of AIDS—to name only a few of ACT UP’s many achievements (Gould 2009; Epstein 1996). But activists began to lose hope that scientists would soon discover a cure that would save their lives. In 1993 the Concorde study—the longest and largest study of AZT to date—showed that there was no significant benefit to giving the drug to asymptomatic patients. Other clinical trials released at the Ninth International AIDS Conference that year were just as disappointing (Epstein 1996; Gould 2009).

Meanwhile, the number of people dying of AIDS continued to climb, nearly doubling between 1990 and 1993 (amfAR 2011). As ACT UP–New York member Dudley Saunders remembers, “We’d won all these battles, but the war—we were all still dying” (quoted in Gould 2009, 424). The group began to stage political funerals to highlight their desperation, anger, and grief over a decade into the crisis. Most significantly, in October 1992 ACT UP staged a national Ashes Action, at which members from across the country convened to dispose of the ashes of friends and lovers on the White House lawn (Gould 2009; Hubbard 2012; France 2012).
At the same time, the movement began to fracture. As early as 1990, the ACT UP chapter in San Francisco—followed by those in Chicago and Portland—split over the question of whether the group should focus on the development of effective treatments or on the racial, gender, and class inequities that prevented many women, poor people, and people of color from accessing adequate health care and housing. In New York, tensions between the Women's Caucus and the Treatment and Data Committee came to a head in 1992 when the women proposed a six-month moratorium on meetings with government officials, who continued to dismiss their concerns. Outraged, a number of treatment activists left to found the independent Treatment Action Group (TAG)—a devastating blow to the New York chapter. These splits occurred primarily along the lines of race, gender, and HIV status: the treatment activists were mostly (though not exclusively) white, gay, HIV-positive men, whereas many of the women and people of color in the group advocated for addressing broader issues (Epstein 1996; Gould 2009). Others remember these splits as primarily about class. The male treatment activists tended to come from middle-class and upper-middle-class backgrounds, giving them easier access to decision makers and less interest in broader questions of access and affordability (Gould 2009; Cvetkovich 2003).

On top of these fractures, activists were burnt out after years of intense political activity and the loss of so many friends and comrades. Many hoped that the 1992 US presidential electoral victory of Bill Clinton, who had promised to meet a number of ACT UP’s demands and provide a voice for gay men and lesbians, would allow them to take a step back from activism. Clinton’s promises proved unfulfilled, however, and ACT UP struggled to regain momentum in the years following his victory (Gould 2009). By the mid-1990s the national movement had collapsed. Still, some ACT UP chapters persisted, and in 1996, the group’s efforts to push for drug development paid off with the introduction of a new drug cocktail that made the disease a manageable condition for those who had access to it.

**Global Treatment Access**

Many of the broader questions ACT UP raised about drug access and affordability, however, remained unaddressed. While many HIV-positive Americans saw their health rebound rapidly after they began taking HAART, the epidemic increasingly affected populations that did not have access to quality health care, including over 30 million people living in Africa south of the Sahara. Indeed, the vast majority of people living with HIV/AIDS around the world—95 percent by one estimate—could not afford the new medications and would likely die of the disease (Smith and Siplon 2006).

Though ACT UP had largely declined by the mid-1990s, remaining branches such as ACT UP–New York and Philadelphia refocused their activism to fight inequitable treatment access in the United States and abroad. As longtime ACT UP–Philadelphia member Paul Davis recalled, “To remain relevant, we’ve really had to follow the AIDS epidemic. It’s not accurate to say we’ve gone somewhere else because things are all fixed here. But the
corporate denial of medication to 25 million Africans resonates deeply with our members who have fought the same battles here” (quoted in Smith and Siplon 2006, 62). In 1999 a number of AIDS workers, activists, and organizations formed a new group to address global inequities in treatment access: the Health Global Access Project Coalition (Health GAP). A handful of former ACT UP members became involved with Health GAP, including Eric Sawyer, who had started ACT UP–New York's Global AIDS Action committee in the early 1990s. Under their influence, Health GAP quickly adopted ACT UP’s confrontational and media savvy tactics. One of its early campaigns targeted presidential candidate (and vice president) Al Gore, who had threatened trade sanctions against South Africa when the country announced that it planned to issue a compulsory license allowing it to manufacture cheaper, generic AIDS medications. Health GAP, along with ACT UP–New York and Philadelphia, infiltrated a series of Gore’s campaign events, where they knew they would receive heavy media coverage. As Gore spoke, activists blew whistles and held signs reading “AIDS drugs for Africa.” That June, they protested a fund-raising dinner held in Philadelphia, bringing along a large Gore marionette controlled by pharmaceutical companies. Next, they targeted the US trade representative (USTR) Charlene Barshefsky, including an action at the USTR office that October that drew over 700 people. The Clinton administration was so embarrassed by the campaign that they not only backed off the threatened trade sanctions but also increased funding to fight AIDS internationally (Smith and Siplon 2006).

Health GAP worked in tandem with a number of international organizations, including South Africa’s Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), which was founded in December 1998 to fight for affordable treatment for South Africans living with HIV/AIDS. When TAC was first formed, the group thought it would work alongside the South African government to fight the high cost of AIDS medications set by the pharmaceutical companies. Though TAC successfully battled the pharmaceutical industry to reduce the cost of a variety of AIDS medications, like ACT UP before it, the organization also had to address its own government’s willful neglect of the exploding epidemic (Geffen 2010; Nattrass 2007). In 1999, under the leadership of President Thabo Mbeki and his health minister, Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, the South African government began to deny that HIV caused AIDS. Even worse, the government failed to distribute antiretrovirals at public hospitals and clinics, arguing that the medications were not only costly but also dangerous.

TAC launched a multifaceted campaign to combat Mbeki’s denialism and expand access to treatment in South Africa. The group borrowed from ACT UP’s arsenal, staging several large, eye-catching demonstrations and, in 2003, launching a civil disobedience campaign called Dying for Treatment that “included demonstrations, invasions of police stations and government buildings (in order to spark arrests), disruption of speeches and heckling of the Health Minister, and even the laying of a culpable homicide charge against her and the Minister for Trade and Industry Alec Erwin (for failing to prevent the 600 AIDS deaths estimated to be taking place each day)” (Nattrass 2007, 114; Geffen 2010).
But TAC also drew on a wider range of tactics, pursuing successful legal action against the government and developing a grassroots treatment literacy program that countered the misinformation coming from Mbeki and Tshabalala-Msimang. Like ACT UP members, TAC volunteers quickly became experts on the science of HIV and AIDS. In its early days, the organization relied on the extensive knowledge that the TAG had developed, flying TAG members to South Africa to train TAC volunteers (Geffen 2010). In addition, TAC pursued alliances with religious and labor organizations, international scientists, and nongovernmental organizations like Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors without Borders) to create a broad movement within South Africa and around the world (Geffen 2010; Nattrass 2007).

TAC’s multifaceted strategy paid off. In 2002 the Constitutional Court of South Africa ruled in favor of TAC, arguing that the government had a constitutional obligation to provide treatment to HIV-positive pregnant women to prevent mother-to-child transmission of the disease. And, in 2003, the government announced that it would implement a treatment program at public hospitals and clinics. Still, the fight continued, as the government moved slowly to implement a treatment plan and continued to undercut the program by promoting alternative treatments for the disease (Geffen 2010; Smith and Siplon 2006; Nattrass 2007).

Though the national movement that ACT UP created largely dwindled in the early 1990s, the organization has had a lasting influence on the global AIDS crisis. Former members and newer activists have drawn inspiration from ACT UP’s early battles with the government and pharmaceutical industry to continue the fight for equitable treatment access and quality health care into the twenty-first century.

SEE ALSO AIDS Memorial Quilt—The NAMES Project; HIV/AIDS; HIV/AIDS in Africa; HIV/AIDS in the United States; South Africa

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As with any region, the history of LGBTQI activism in sub-Saharan Africa has varied widely across country, region, and time. During the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the majority of international media attention on LGBTQI activism in sub-Saharan Africa has focused on the hostile sociopolitical climates that many LGBTQI activists face. However, the contexts facing LGBTQI activists across the region are varied; while moral panics, state-sponsored homophobias, and state repression significantly limit the rights of LGBTQI persons and activists at certain times and in certain countries, LGBTQI activists have also attained substantive gains in a number of national and regional forums. Although this entry uses the initialism LGBTQI, it should be noted that queer (Q) identities and theorizing continue to be seen as a predominantly Western concept in many parts of sub-Saharan Africa and that the concept or identity of “queer” is infrequently used by local activists.

Overview of Activism from the 1950s to the 1990s

The development of LGBTQI movements (or, more commonly, movements advocating for gay and lesbian rights) in sub-Saharan Africa dates back to at least the 1950s in South Africa, as has been most comprehensively documented in Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa (Gevisser and Cameron 1994). Following the police raid of a private home in Johannesburg in 1966, and the subsequent arrest of ten white men on charges of “masquerading as women” and, in one case, “indecent assault on a minor” (Gevisser and Cameron 1994, 30), a number of predominantly white, middle/upper-class gay men and lesbians mobilized against police harassment of adults engaging in consensual same-sex relations. However, this initial mobilizing did not result in the development of a long-term movement and certainly did not speak to the needs or concerns of South Africa’s black and Indian LGBTQI citizens, whose human rights were routinely violated as people of color in apartheid South Africa (Epprecht 2013).
The divergence between the anti-racism and anti-ho-mophobia movements in South Africa was profoundly challenged in the late 1980s, when a member of the African National Congress (ANC; the leading antiapartheid political organization), Simon Nkoli (1957–1998), came out as gay to fellow ANC comrades in prison. Around this same time, leaders of the ANC, in response to pressure from a London journalist, confirmed the ANC's commitment to remove “all forms of discrimination and oppression in a liberated South Africa,” a commitment that included “the protection of gay rights” (Thatchell 2005, 145). During the transition to democracy, activists succeeded in ensuring that sexual minorities were included in the equality clause of the 1996 constitution, making South Africa the first country in the world with constitutional protections from discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity.

The late 1980s and 1990s also saw the development of LGBTQI organizing in several other countries, including the founding of such groups as Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (1990), the Rainbow Project of the feminist organization Sister Namibia (1996), Ishtar MSM (1997; a Kenyan organization that originally served male sex workers and later expanded to include men who have sex with men [MSM] and transgender women), and Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals of Botswana (1998). The 1990s also featured some of the first instances of state-sponsored homophobia, particularly in southern Africa. Zimbabwe’s then president Robert Mugabe (1924–) first publicly decried homosexuals as “worse than dogs and pigs” in 1995 upon having learned about Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe at a book fair (Shoko 2010). Mugabe and, later, Namibia’s then president Sam Nujoma (1929–) decried homosexuality in a number of public speeches as an unnatural, Western imposition.

In addition to advocacy for legal rights such as constitutional protections or an end to police harassment, activism in this era also centered on health rights and needs, particularly related to HIV/AIDS. Before the end of apartheid, Gay Activists of South Africa was recognized by the minister of health as the official mouthpiece of the gay community, with which the National AIDS Advisory Group liaised. This was mainly a result of the group’s nonmilitant strategy. However, the most noteworthy and successful HIV/AIDS initiative in South Africa is almost undoubtedly the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC). This activist organization was founded in 1998 following the preventable death of Nkoli, who, along with most HIV-positive South Africans, was unable to afford antiretroviral therapy. Among other victories, TAC assisted the South African government in its successful legal case against the pharmaceutical industry regarding the development of generic (and, therefore, less cost-prohibitive) antiretroviral medications; TAC also successfully pressured the South African government to develop its HIV & AIDS and STI Strategic Plan for South Africa (2007–2011), which included significantly more funding than past government plans (Heywood 2009). Yet, even as HIV/AIDS was largely considered a gay man’s disease in North America during the early years of the epidemic, the possibility of male-to-male transmission of the virus was largely neglected during the first two decades of research and interventions for HIV in sub-Saharan Africa (Epprecht 2013).
Activism in the Twenty-First Century

Eventually, and partially in response to concerted efforts by LGBTQI and MSM organizations across the region, some HIV/AIDS international organizations (for example, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria) integrated a stronger MSM focus into research and programming. These efforts emerged in partial response to the demands of local activists and provided resources that, to a certain extent, helped sustain and expand the work of local MSM and LGBTQI organizations (Altman et al. 2012). Local LGBTQI organizations have also proliferated across many parts of sub-Saharan Africa in the twenty-first century. In 2017 Pan Africa ILGA estimated that there were at least 250 LGBTQI organizations spread across approximately forty countries in Africa. Certain countries with more exposure and/or backlash to LGBTQI issues (for example, Uganda, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa) tend to get more funding for programs and have the largest numbers of organizations. While some other countries, such as Chad or Djibouti, may not have any LGBTQI organizations at all, and in others, such as Ethiopia, individuals have to resort to online activism through social media, the majority of sub-Saharan African countries are home to discreet or hidden LGBTQI organizations.

Trans, gender-nonconforming, and intersex organizations have also become more visible in sub-Saharan Africa in the twenty-first century. For example, Gender DynamiX was formed in 2005 in Cape Town, South Africa, and has played a vital role in advancing advocacy, community building, and regional networks focused on the particular health needs and concerns of trans and gender-nonconforming people. Since then, trans advocacy organizations such as Trans* Research, Education, Advocacy and Training in Zimbabwe and Transgender Education and Advocacy in Kenya have emerged. In South Africa, Intersex South Africa has been active since 2008 as a successor to the Intersex Society of South Africa (founded in 2000). In addition to raising awareness and developing support groups for intersex persons, these organizations advocate for an end to the nonconsensual and unnecessary surgeries that are often performed on intersex babies (Klein 2009).

Continental and regional networks have also emerged and gained momentum, particularly from 2010 onward. Among others, these include the African Human Rights Coalition, the Coalition of African Lesbians, Africagay Contre le Sida, African Men for Sexual Health and Rights, and Pan Africa ILGA. These regional networks work with various target groups and tackle a broad range of LGBTQI issues. Relatedly, international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) focused on LGBTQI rights have also expanded their programming and relationships in sub-Saharan Africa in the twenty-first century. Among others, some of the most visible organizations include ARC International; COC Nederland; Hivos; the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA); and OutRight Action International (formerly the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights
Demonstrators March in Support of Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Act, Passed in 2014. The signs held by these marchers reflect the pervasive homophobic belief that homosexuality is a Western import and not native to Africa. Had the act not been nullified on procedural grounds, it would have expanded the criminalization of same-sex relations and would have penalized individuals, companies, and nongovernmental organizations who support LGBTQI rights.

**Political Backlash in the Twenty-First Century**

The twenty-first century also marked a shift in how a number of African states have engaged with LGBTQI issues, with state leaders and governments employing a variety of approaches. First, political actors in certain countries (particularly quasi-democratic countries) have used inflammatory rhetoric to denounce homosexuality and to condone violence toward LGBTQI individuals. Among other examples, this includes the stated intentions of Yahya Jammeh (1965–), the former president of the Gambia, to behead homosexuals and Mugabe’s rhetoric against gays and lesbians in Zimbabwe.

In addition to placing LGBTQI individuals at increased risk of state-sponsored and extrajudicial violence/discrimination, antihomosexual animus on the part of certain state leaders has also resulted in the introduction or expansion of legislation criminalizing same-sex relations. This includes Nigeria’s enactment in 2014 of the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act, which not only criminalized same-sex marriage but also outlawed the
creation of or participation in “gay clubs, societies, and organizations” and banned cohabitation or public shows of affection for same-sex couples. Perhaps most notoriously, the parliament of Uganda in 2014 passed the Anti-Homosexuality Act, which, had it not been ruled invalid on procedural grounds by the nation’s constitutional court, would have expanded the criminalization of same-sex relations and would have penalized individuals, companies, and NGOs who support LGBTQI rights. Additionally, Malawi amended its penal code in 2011 to extend the criminalization of same-sex relations to women and in 2015 to ban same-sex marriage, and Burundi enacted legislation criminalizing same-sex relations in 2009.

Not all state governments have condoned or fanned anti-LGBTQI sentiment within their countries. But in light of the generally high levels of anti-LGBTQI public opinion in most parts of sub-Saharan Africa, political leaders may not be in a position to publicly demonstrate their support for LGBTQI rights. In such instances, some politicians have supported LGBTQI populations in discreet ways that would avoid provoking public ire. For example, Festus Mogae (1939–), the former president of Botswana, claimed that he gave police secret instructions to not harass LGBTQI individuals during his presidency (1998–2008) but that he did not believe it possible to take a visibly supportive role while he was in office (Epprecht 2013). In 2016 Ghanaian activists expressed outrage when opposition politicians in Scotland refused to meet with the state leader, then president John Dramani Mahama (1958–), on account of Ghana’s ongoing criminalization of male same-sex relations; Mahama had, in fact, been very supportive of LGBTQI rights in discreet but meaningful ways.

Countries in the Global North, perhaps most notably the United States during Barack Obama’s second presidential term (2013–2017), also became more vocal about human rights violations facing LGBTQI persons in sub-Saharan Africa. Countries such as the Netherlands and Sweden had provided overseas development assistance and diplomatic capital to support LGBTQI activism in the twenty-first century. In contrast, the diplomatic engagement of the United Kingdom and the United States was more reactive and emerged particularly in response to a series of gruesome human rights violations late in the first decade of the twenty-first century and early in the second, including the murder of a prominent Ugandan LGBTQI activist, David Kato, in 2011. As is discussed in greater detail below, the optics and impacts of northern countries’ diplomatic relations have not always been well thought out or welcomed by local activists, who have sometimes faced heightened backlash as a result of northern interventions.

Accomplishments in the Twenty-First Century

In spite of the many challenges faced by LGBTQI activists in sub-Saharan Africa, some significant progress was made toward equality and nondiscrimination for LGBTQI individuals in the first part of the twenty-first century.
The South African Civil Union Act of 2006  The road to same-sex marriage in South Africa came through the landmark 2005 ruling of the nation's constitutional court in *Minister of Home Affairs and Another v. Fourie and Another*. In this particular case, the court declared that the common-law definition of marriage is inconsistent with the Constitution of South Africa and invalid to the extent that it does not permit same-sex couples’ enjoyment of the status and the benefits coupled with the responsibilities it accords to heterosexual couples. Following this decision, the parliament of South Africa passed the Civil Union Act, which came into operation on 30 November 2006. The act acknowledges that the family law dispensation as it existed after the commencement of the constitution did not provide for same-sex couples to enjoy the status and benefits that marriage accords opposite-sex couples. This act made South Africa the first and, as of 2017, the only country in Africa to recognize same-sex marriage.

MSM and HIV  As with the earlier era of LGBTQI organizing, health and HIV-focused interventions have remained an important area of LGBTQI organizing, with some notable successes. First, a number of countries’ national HIV prevention strategies include provisions to ensure that MSM are included in programming as an at-risk population. For example, Malawi’s National HIV Prevention Strategy for 2015–2020 includes measures to facilitate access to education and resources for men who have sex with men. In Kenya, after years of persistent attempts by activists from LGBTQI organizations to have MSM included among the most-at-risk populations, the National AIDS Control Council included MSM in the Kenya National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2009/10–2013 (now referred to as the Kenya AIDS Strategic Framework). This effectively means that the Ministry of Health has acknowledged the existence of this population and has committed to running MSM-specific programming. Indeed, even in Zimbabwe, where political homophobia was first pioneered in sub-Saharan Africa, the National HIV and AIDS Strategic Plan for 2011–2015 recognized MSM as a key population. In addition to providing vital health services and information to at-risk populations, the inclusion of MSM within these strategic plans may also facilitate activists’ subsequent pushing for legal reforms.

Registration of LGBTQI Organizations  In many sub-Saharan countries, organizations working on LGBTQI issues do so under vague organizational names with no explicit connection to LGBTQI identities in order to avoid provoking excessive scrutiny. Others have sought to register organizations whose names include explicit references to LGBTQI identities and have, on occasion, encountered barriers in formally registering their organization as a result. In 2012 Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals of Botswana filed an application for registration as an NGO, which the Department of Civil and National Registration rejected on the basis that the Constitution of Botswana does not recognize homosexuals and that the objectives of the organization are contrary to the Societies Act. Following a rejected appeal, the case was filed in 2013 before the High Court of Botswana, which declared that the decision was unconstitutional. This decision was then appealed by the attorney general. In a landmark ruling issued in 2016, the Botswana Court of Appeal
declared that human rights are universal and are enjoyed by every member of the society irrespective of the person’s gender or sexual orientation. It also declared that, although provisions of the nation’s penal code limit same-sex sexual activities, they do not extend to criminalizing LGBTQI people themselves. The court’s decision focused on the right to freedom of association, which is protected by Section 13 of Botswana’s constitution and by international human rights instruments.

In Kenya, Eric Gitari sought to register an NGO with the nation’s Non-governmental Organizations Coordination Board to address the violence and human rights abuses suffered by LGBTQI people. The organization he sought to register had the name National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. The NGO board quoted Sections 162, 163, and 165 of the Kenyan penal code as the basis for rejecting the name as unacceptable. These penal code sections criminalize “carnal knowledge ... against the order of nature.” After several failed attempts to register the organization, Gitari commenced litigation proceedings on the grounds that his constitutional rights to freedom of association and freedom from discrimination had been violated. In 2015 the High Court of Kenya held that the Constitution of Kenya does grant every person the right to form an association of any kind. It held that, regardless of the NGO board’s views toward LGBTQI people, it has a duty as a state entity to act in accordance with the constitution. These two legal victories enabled the organizations in question to register as domestic NGOs and have provided an encouraging precedent for other LGBTQI organizations in the region.

African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights

Established by the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights in 1987, the eleven-member African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights (ACHPR) serves the functions of protecting and promoting human and peoples’ rights and interpreting the African Charter. The ACHPR sometimes invites states, national liberation movements, specialized institutions, national human rights institutions, NGOs, or individuals to take part in its sessions. The commissioners’ engagement on LGBTQI issues arose following years of intense activist intervention.

In May 2014, at the commission’s 55th Ordinary Session, held in Luanda, Angola, the ACHPR adopted a resolution on protection from violence and other human rights violations against persons on the basis of their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. The adoption of this resolution was a momentous occasion in African LGBTQI activism insofar as it marked the first time that a Pan-African body recognized the existence of and the violence faced by persons of different sexual orientations and gender identities. The resolution strongly urged states to end all acts of violence and abuse, whether committed by state or nonstate actors, targeting persons on the basis of their imputed or real sexual orientation or gender identities.

In 2015, following the adoption of the resolution, the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL) was granted observer status at the ACHPR, an objective that CAL had sought since it first
submitted a (rejected) application in 2008, in part to raise awareness and visibility about the existence of African lesbians. Prior to 2015, the commission had rejected several other applications from CAL. In an intensely hostile session that year, Lawrence Mute, a commissioner from Kenya, reminded the other commissioners that “100 years ago, women didn’t have rights. We have a responsibility based on our mandate to protect the vulnerable” (quoted in Sekyiamah 2015).

**Trans and Intersex** In 2004 South African legislation that enabled trans persons to apply for the legal adjustment of one’s gender identity came into effect. More recently, a landmark 2014 court ruling in Kenya held that Audrey Mbugua, a prominent trans woman and activist, had the right to have her name changed on her official academic records. While this ruling pertained solely to the change of name in official documents and did not include changing an individual’s legal gender, this litigation provided a strategic opening for advocacy for the full realization of the rights of transgender people in Kenya. In South Africa, the intersex activist Sally Gross championed legislation that, in 2006, clarified that the constitution's equality clause’s definition of sex includes intersex and therefore extends constitutional protection against discrimination on the basis of sex characteristics.

**Other Legal Reforms** Notwithstanding some of the harsh legal reforms that certain countries have implemented, some countries have modified criminal codes and legislations in ways that have advanced the rights of LGBTQI persons. Significantly, Cabo Verde and Mozambique adopted new penal codes in 2004 and 2015, respectively, that removed previous provisions dating back to Portuguese colonial rule that had criminalized same-sex sexual acts as “vices against nature.” Similarly, the parliament of Seychelles voted to decriminalize same-sex sexual acts in 2016. Additionally, a range of countries have introduced provisions that protect LGBTQI persons from workplace discrimination. Such antidiscrimination measures originated with South Africa’s Employment Equity Act (1998) and Labour Relations Act (1995), which contain provisions protecting employees from unfair discrimination in the workplace based on sexual orientation and other grounds.

In 2010 an amendment to Botswana’s Employment Act was passed, adding sexual orientation and health status (including HIV/AIDS status) as prohibited grounds for discrimination. Even though both male and female same-sex activities are prohibited in the Botswana penal code, the termination of contracts of employment on the grounds of sexual orientation is prohibited. This provides the activists in the country a good legislative and litigation path on which they can pursue the reform of laws criminalizing same-sex conduct. The 2008 Labor Code of Cabo Verde—a country in which same-sex conduct is not criminalized—explicitly imposes sanctions on employers who dismiss employees based on their sexual orientation. Mauritius, Mozambique, and Seychelles have also introduced laws protecting LGBTQI individuals from discrimination at their workplaces based on their sexual orientation.
Issues and Debates in Sub-Saharan African LGBTQI Activism

Imbalances in LGBTQI Organizing As has been the case in most other regions, power imbalances, prejudices, and changing donor agendas have meant that certain LGBTQI identities (namely, gay/bisexual men and MSM) have tended to receive more attention, programming, and publicity than have other members of the region’s LGBTQI communities. For example, in her research with Kenyan activists, Kaitlin Dearham (2013) noted how three factors contributed to women’s underrepresentation within queer Kenyan spaces: (1) the reproduction of gender hierarchies and biases within LGBTQI organizations; (2) the greater difficulties women face in being open about their sexuality (for example, economic marginalization and pressures to marry and have children); and (3) LGBTQI organizations’ and donors’ emphasis on MSM and HIV/AIDS.

Trans advocacy has often received far less visibility or recognition within mainstream LGBTQI and/or MSM organizations. The limited visibility of trans advocacy has been compounded by an underemphasis on trans organizing on the part of LGBTQI scholars, who have tended to emphasize same-sex intimacies rather than issues of gender identity and expression (see, e.g., Theron 2013). Intersex activism in sub-Saharan Africa has been even less visible within or integrated into broader LGBTQI organizing across the region, even though intersex persons face substantive rights violations in the region. For example, reports of systematic intersex-specific infanticide have been documented in South Africa and Uganda (ILGA and ARC International 2017).

Poverty and the Inadequacy of Legislative Change for LGBTQI Rights Whereas LGBTQI activists in advanced industrialized democracies have generally limited their advocacy agenda to pressing for legislative changes (e.g., decriminalizing same-sex relations, legalizing changes to gender identity markers, legalizing same-sex marriage), a narrow, legislative-focused advocacy strategy has proven to be entirely inadequate in the context of sub-Saharan Africa, for several interrelated reasons. First, the majority of violence targeting LGBTQI individuals in sub-Saharan Africa occurs at the hands of family, friends, or other civilians rather than at the hands of law enforcement officials. Decriminalizing same-sex relations can certainly assist in protecting the rights of LGBTQI persons and should lead to a decrease in police harassment, blackmailing, and the incarceration of LGBTQI persons. As public opinion research in South Africa has suggested, however, legislative changes may have a negligible effect on overall public opinion (which, in the context of South Africa, remains overwhelmingly hostile to homosexuality in spite of legislative advancements in this country since 1996; see de Vos 2015). In such a climate, extrajudicial violence targeting LGBTQI persons has remained extraordinarily high, particularly for LGBTQI persons with multiple, intersecting marginalized identities. Black lesbians and black trans individuals from lower-income townships, in particular, continue to face extraordinary rates of
violence and murder (Currier and Cruz 2014). Some organizations have countered this general trend by developing campaigns focused on changing public opinion through community-based awareness-raising activities and through building coalitions with religious leaders, women’s movements, disability movements, and unions, among others. Some important accomplishments have been made in this regard, not the least of which include Archbishop Desmond Tutu’s remarks in 2013 that he “would not worship a homophobic God.” Nevertheless, the overall climate facing many LGBTQI communities in sub-Saharan Africa remains hostile, in particular for those LGBTQI individuals facing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination on the basis of race, class, income, ability, or gender, for example.

Relatedly, legislative change alone is unlikely to address the pervasive impacts of poverty on LGBTQI persons in sub-Saharan Africa. For many LGBTQI persons in sub-Saharan Africa, poverty contributes to a downward spiral of human rights violations: LGBTQI persons living in poverty face a disproportionate risk of violence or persecution (see, e.g., Dearham 2013), and they may encounter greater difficulty in accessing necessary medical services. At the same time, being LGBTQI also puts an individual at greater risk of experiencing poverty (for example, on account of being disowned by family, being discriminated against when looking for a job, and/or being fired when one’s sexuality, gender identity, or intersex status becomes known to a current employer). Advocacy that focuses solely on civil and political rights is unlikely to address or reverse the impacts of these negative spirals.

**LGBTQI Activism as “Un-African” and North-South Power Dynamics** The perception that LGBTQI identities—and, in particular, queer intimacies—are “un-African” remains one of the most consistent challenges that LGBTQI activists face across sub-Saharan Africa. This claim, which is frequently leveled by political and religious leaders, has been disproven by historians’ rigorous documentation of how queer intimacies emerged before and in response to colonialism among various cultures across the continent (see, e.g., Epprecht 2001; 2014; Moodie, Ndatsh, and Sibuy 1988). As Marc Epprecht (2013) observed, however, the mere existence of such historical precedents has not proven to be a particularly effective tool with which to convince those who decry homosexuality as un-African otherwise.

Furthermore, and as with other non-Western regions, local activists also engage in ongoing debates about whether the specific Western categories of “L, G, B, T, Q, and I” should be used in a region with a much greater range of endogenous forms of sexual diversity, gender identities, gender expressions, and sex characteristics. In this context, the tension lies not with whether diverse sexual and gender identities are “African” but, rather, with how these should be conceptualized and/or translated domestically and internationally (see Currier and Cruz 2014; O’Mara 2013; Theron 2013). Certain scholars (e.g., Massad 2002; Hoad 2007) have similarly criticized international NGOs that promote LGBTQI rights for doing so in a manner that exports Western models of gay rights without questioning how and/or
whether these may or may not conform to local realities.

The fact that local LGBTQI organizing is often financially supported by international NGOs and/or by foreign countries has certainly compounded the challenge of being perceived as un-African and has contributed to the perception that such activists are simply importing Western values for financial profit (Currier 2012). Funding considerations, therefore, place many local LGBTQI organizations in an uncomfortable situation: such organizations rely on foreign funding to deliver vital programming and services; however, these organizations also risk being seen as co-opted if their acceptance of foreign funding or the tenor of their organizational priorities is perceived to reflect too strong of a connection to foreign LGBTQI organizing. Moreover, as Liesl Theron, John McAllister, and Mariam Armisen (2016) elaborate on, a reliance on foreign donor funding often influences local NGOs’ agendas, with the result that the legal and policy-focused activities valued by funders (for example, training initiatives, writing shadow reports for United Nations or regional human rights processes, and documenting rights violations) may be privileged over activities with greater importance to local LGBTQI communities.

These North-South tensions have generally been further exacerbated when donor countries have threatened to take coercive measures such as cutting development assistance to countries that violate LGBTQI human rights. For example, in 2011, when then British prime minister David Cameron (1966–) threatened that the United Kingdom would cut aid to countries that persecuted LGBTQI persons, a group of over fifty organizations across Africa signed a joint statement cautioning that “the decision to cut aid disregards the role of the LGBTI and broader social justice movement on the continent and creates the real risk of a serious backlash against LGBTI people” (“Statement of African Social Justice Activists” 2011).

A related phenomenon, well known to scholars and activists who study social movements across the Global South, is the challenge of “NGOization.” This term refers to the pressures faced by local social movements/organizing to professionalize (for example, to demonstrate competency in managing budgets and conducting monitoring and evaluation) in order to secure external funding (Alvarez 1998). Yet, by professionalizing, social movements and grassroots organizers must take on more bureaucratic work and may also feel more obliged to deliver on donor-determined activities and outcomes, rather than prioritizing the needs and demands of local LGBTQI persons. Theron, McAllister, and Armisen (2016) demonstrate how these pressures to professionalize have contributed to individualistic organizational structures that overemphasize particular individuals’ roles and disincentivize grassroots movement-building. Furthermore, the roles and responsibilities of a professionalized NGO staff often require a level of education and formal training that many LGBTQI community members are unable to attain—in part because of discrimination in the education sector on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics.
Gift Trapence, Director of the Centre for the Development of People (CEDEP), in 2011. CEDEP is a nongovernmental organization established in 2005 to address the needs of sexual minorities in Malawi. Due to CEDEP’s efforts, Malawian president Joyce Banda suspended laws criminalizing homosexuality in 2012.

**Ways Forward**

Since the early 1990s, organizations serving and advocating on behalf of LGBTQI communities have proliferated across sub-Saharan Africa. Since their formation, a number of significant victories have been won, including constitutional reforms in South Africa, the explicit inclusion of men who have sex with men in national HIV/AIDS strategies, and securing the right to legally register as an LGBTQI organization. However, these victories have been accompanied by a number of challenges, not least of which include donor pressures, power inequalities within LGBTQI communities, and an overemphasis on legislative/legal reform. The dire need to address the effects of trauma and intolerance on LGBTQI communities, as exemplified through activists’ and individuals’ high rates of substance abuse, mental health concerns, burnout, suicide, and dysfunctional relationships (Theron, McAllister, and Armisen 2016), has also resurfaced during these first decades.

It is encouraging, as exemplified in Theron, McAllister, and Armisen's 2016 article, that there is a growing acknowledgment of the need to practice critical reflection and to interrogate the power dynamics within LGBTQI communities, as well as between organizations, the communities they serve, and donors. The possibility for a new generation of more self-critical organizations and donors exists, as does the possibility to expand LGBTQI activism to include more inclusive, creative, grassroots-relevant, and healing-centered organizing.
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Adoption and Surrogacy in Europe

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The availability and legal rights surrounding the issues of adoption and surrogacy for European LGBT persons.

Same-sex couples and individual LGBT people have been creating families and raising their children with and without official legal or administrative recognition for many decades. Thanks to increasingly positive social acceptance and their efforts to push European countries to give them equal access to techniques and laws enjoyed by heterosexuals—with varying degrees of success depending on the context—they have pursued evolving pathways to parenthood over time.

Previously, LGBT people most frequently became parents through heterosexual relationships before publicly revealing their sexual or gender identity. Since the 1980s, many have created “intentional families” through joint adoption; assisted reproductive technology (ART), such as donor insemination; and surrogacy (Moore and Stambolis-Ruhstorfer 2013). Some also pursue nonmedically assisted insemination and coparenting arrangements in which lesbian and gay couples or individuals have children together. Unlike in heterosexual relationships where family law usually automatically recognizes parental ties between children and parents, in many countries it recognizes only biological parents in same-sex couples — the mother in a lesbian couple who carries the child or the father in a gay couple whose sperm is used in a surrogacy arrangement, for instance—or the adoptive parent in the case of single adoption. For this reason, second-parent adoption is a crucial way for the other, not automatically legally recognized parent to guarantee their parental rights and secure their families more generally.

Yet, all of these different pathways to parenting for LGBT people vary significantly both across and within European countries. They also depend on legislation and jurisprudence relative to administrative, social service, bioethical, family, and international law. In addition to this legal complexity, case-by-case decision-making by judges and social services creates uncertainty and vulnerability for many European LGBT families (Mezey 2015). To overcome prohibitions, same-sex couples and LGBT people with sufficient financial resources often travel to international destinations within and beyond Europe to access services such as ART and surrogacy. International adoption, however, has decreased since the 1990s and has become especially difficult for sexual and gender minorities.
Legal Recognition of Adoption, Surrogacy, and Assisted Reproduction in Europe for different and same-sex couples (as of 2017)

Notes: Overall score is sum of forms of access to parenthood for same-sex couples/single LGBT people.

Variation across Time, Countries, and Pathways

ART for lesbians, surrogacy for gay men, and adoption for same-sex couples is unevenly available across Europe. This variation is related to, but distinct from, legal recognition of same-sex marriage and registered partnerships. Indeed, same-sex parenting tends to be more controversial than same-sex relationships in Europe. Portugal and Belgium, for example, legalized same-sex marriage several years before legalizing same-sex adoption. In general, these pathways to parenting have become available only in the last few decades.
ART for lesbians, either as individuals or as couples, is the most widely available pathway to parenting in Europe (27 out of 47 Council of Europe countries). Surrogacy is the least available. Only 12 European countries allow the practice, 8 of which do not restrict it to heterosexuals. Among European countries that allow joint adoption (17) and second-parent adoption (20), almost all are European Union (EU) member states. In contrast, half the countries permitting surrogacy and 37 percent permitting ART are outside the EU. Thus, although there is generally a more tolerant legal climate for LGBT parenting in the EU, there is still both strong resistance within and tolerance outside the EU. For instance, in 2017 France continued to ban surrogacy within its borders and limit ART to heterosexual couples but permit same-sex adoption. At the same time, Belarus does not explicitly prohibit either ART or surrogacy but does prohibit adoption for same-sex couples. Some countries, such as Russia and Ukraine, where ART and surrogate have been relatively unregulated, are considering measures to exclude LGBT people.

**Assisted Reproductive Technology and Surrogacy**

While ART is relatively accessible to single women and/or lesbian couples in Europe, surrogacy is controversial and limited. Surrogacy raises ethical questions about the potential for exploitation of surrogate mothers and requires more involved forms of gamete donation fertilization than do either artificial insemination or in vitro fertilization. To deal with bioethical issues related in part to reproduction, the Council of Europe’s Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with Regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine (entered into force in 1999)—also called the Oviedo Convention—sets a minimum, self-regulated standard for signatory countries. It takes no definitive stance on prohibitions over surrogacy or ART. Individual European countries must therefore make policies to deal with surrogacy contracts, commercial regulation of ART and surrogate services, and children’s access to the identity of surrogate and gamete donors. Although these questions affect all potential parents seeking these services, lawmakers often use heteronormative assumptions to guide their decision-making and therefore exclude LGBT people.

**European Court of Human Rights**

As with other fights for gender and sexual justice in Council of Europe countries, LGBT people have taken their claims to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) where they invoke Articles 8 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Wintemute 2015). They argue that these articles guarantee their private and family lives and shield them from discrimination on the basis of sexual and gender identity. Initially the ECHR was not receptive to these arguments and said states were justified in limiting pathways to parenting to heterosexual people or different-sex couples. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, that jurisprudence has shifted toward increasing recognition of LGBT
In the case of *Karner v. Austria* (2003), the court laid the framework for the principle that rights granted to unmarried different-sex couples should also extend to unmarried same-sex couples. In theory, this means that in places such as Andorra, Austria, Liechtenstein, Portugal, and Romania, where second-parent adoption is possible for unmarried couples, same-sex couples should also have that right. Local adoption authorities and courts, however, do not necessarily apply this principle. In a later ruling in the case of *X and Others v. Austria* (2013), the court made this principle explicit when it found that Austria violated Articles 8 and 14 of the convention by allowing partners in different-sex—but not same-sex—couples to adopt one another’s children. In so doing, the judges overruled *Kerkhoven v. Netherlands* (1992), which found that contrary to an unmarried man in a heterosexual relationship, the unmarried nonbiological mother in a lesbian relationship had no right to parental authority over her child conceived through donor insemination and carried by her partner. In addition, *X and Others v. Austria* made it clear that countries were not within their margin of appreciation (i.e., leeway that countries may exercise over certain areas of law) in discriminating between same-sex and different-sex unmarried couples over adoption. In theory, these decisions should also apply to access to ART where it is made available to unmarried different-sex couples, such as France and Italy (*Wintemute* 2015). In practice, these countries have denied lesbian couples such access.

This case law is limited, however, because of its narrow focus on the marital status of couples. Indeed, whereas countries are now in violation of the convention if they prevent unmarried same-sex—but not different-sex—couples from adopting, the ECHR finds no discrimination if married and unmarried couples are treated differently. Specifically, in *Gas and Dubois v. France* (2012), the court ruled that France could deny second-parent adoption to unmarried same-sex couples because it also denied that possibility to unmarried different-sex couples. Yet, at the time, only different-sex couples could marry and therefore adopt in France. Thus, in the court’s judgment, countries may limit adoption to married couples even if they prevent same-sex couples from marrying. Since 2013, same-sex couples can marry in France and indeed must do so in order to adopt, either jointly or each other’s children. Elsewhere, however, in the absence of universal same-sex marriage and the restriction of adoption to married couples, many European countries can continue to prevent same-sex couples from adopting without violating the convention.

The ECHR has also dealt with the issue of discrimination against individual LGBT people on matters of adoption by singles and custody after divorce. For example, in France, where singles can adopt, some local social service agencies would grant applications only to ostensibly heterosexual people. After initially finding that such discrimination was justifiable—in *Fretté v. France* (2002)—the court eventually determined in *E. B. v. France* (2008) that this violated Articles 8 and 14 of the convention. In *Mouta v. Portugal* (1999) and *P. V. v. Spain* (2010), the court ruled that gender identity and sexual orientation cannot
justify a refusal of custody, visitation, or parental authority. Taken together, these rulings also suggest that single lesbians must have access to ART when it is available to single heterosexual women. Yet, as with all ECHR decisions, countries unevenly apply the letter or logic of its rulings, if at all.

On the issue of surrogacy, the ECHR has examined whether countries that ban the practice must nevertheless recognize the ties between intentional parents and their children born through surrogacy abroad. In *Mennesson v. France* (2014), the court found that France, which had refused to recognize the French citizenship of two children born to an American surrogate mother and French father, had violated their rights. Despite this decision, France and other countries opposed to surrogacy have failed to consistently apply the ruling.

### Attitudes

Like laws, public opinion on parenting by same-sex couples and LGBT people varies significantly across European countries (*Takács, Szalma, and Bartus 2016*). In many European contexts people are more favorable of same-sex relationships than parenting. Indeed, a 2003 survey of respondents in twenty-five European countries found that 53 percent favored legalizing marriage, whereas 38 percent favored legalizing adoption (*EOS Gallup Europe 2003*). People in northern and western European countries, with the notable exceptions of France, Italy, Germany, and Portugal, tend to be more accepting of adoption than in other parts of Europe. Although trends have since shifted toward more acceptance, especially in places where it is or has recently become legal, LGBT parenting continues to incite resistance.

### Resistance and Backlash

Those opposing the full citizenship of LGBT people in Europe have used parenting by same-sex couples to stoke resistance. Indeed, many European antigay organizations have fought against laws recognizing same-sex marriage and domestic partnerships by arguing that such laws would make it easier for same-sex couples to adopt (*Kuhar and Paternotte 2017*). In some cases they draw on malicious stereotypes conflating homosexuality and pedophilia. Despite the scientific consensus to the contrary (*Adams and Light 2015; Bos and van Balen 2008; Goldberg 2010; Moore and Stambolis-Ruhstorfer 2013*), they also claim that children raised by same-sex couples fare less well than those raised by married heterosexual couples. Some organizations, such as the International Children’s Rights Institute and the European Centre for Law and Justice, have gone so far as to use the argument of human rights against LGBT people. They have attempted to use international law, including the European Convention on Human Rights and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to argue that countries have a legal obligation to ensure that children be raised by a mother and father. Furthermore, such groups oppose surrogacy in general and ART for lesbians—as well as anonymous gamete donation—
suggesting that children have a right to know their genetic origins.

SEE ALSO Adoption, Fostering, and Surrogacy (International); Family Law in Asia; Human Rights in Europe; Kinship in Europe; Lesbian Mothering and Adoption in Latin America; Marriage, Universal, in Europe; Parenting Rights in North America

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Adoption, Fostering, and Surrogacy (International)

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The legal and social challenges LGBTQ adults face to access intercountry adoption and surrogacy, as well as challenges LGBTQ youth face when rejected from their families.

This entry addresses issues that emerge when LGBTQ people cross national borders in order to create families via adoption or surrogacy. Specifically, it details the general process of intercountry adoption and the ways in which international and local authorities (most of whom explicitly or implicitly limit adoption to heterosexuals, cisgender people, and different-sex couples) take into account the sexual and gender identity of prospective parents. It further explains the political and social stakes around international surrogacy, a service some gay men use to have children. Finally, it also discusses how LGBTQ youth are more likely to be rejected by their families and thus be in need of emergency shelter, fostering, and adoption in different national contexts.

Intercountry Adoption by LGBTQ Persons

Intercountry adoption is the process whereby single people or couples in one country (the receiving country) adopt a child born in a different country (the country of origin or sending country). The complex process involves establishing formal parental ties between the child and the adoptive parent or parents in both countries, organizing the relinquishing of parental rights of the birth parents where applicable, and arranging immigration. Although it has often been portrayed as a way to provide families to orphans or children in impoverished or war-torn countries whose biological parents do not have the means to care for them, intercountry adoption is politically, ethically, and emotionally fraught. In the wake of World War II, wealthy nations in the Global North, especially the United States, saw intercountry adoption as a way to respond to humanitarian crises, but it eventually evolved into a way for parents from those countries to find alternatives to local adoption. Today, intercountry adoption is part of the global reproductive marketplace, which also includes surrogacy, to which parents with financial and cultural resources turn to create their families (Hofmann and Moreno 2016; Twine [2011] 2015). For these reasons, it is at the intersection of geopolitical problems and delicate family situations where questions around the best interests of the child, global inequality, discrimination, and neoliberal marketization of access to parenting animate actors on all sides (Breuning 2013; Efrat et al.
Indeed, even if it can bring parents and children together in a positive way, because of racial and economic inequality between families within and across receiving countries and countries of origin, intercountry adoption can also be problematic.

Within this broad context, concerns around the sexual orientation of potential parents in intercountry adoption became increasingly politicized just as LGBTQ parents were becoming more visible. As described in the following sections, authorities in the late twentieth century sought to better regulate intercountry adoption in order to avoid abuses and fraud, such as human trafficking. At the same time, the LGBTQ movement was organizing to protect queer families and, in many countries, to demand equal access to adoption and reproductive techniques. Rather than make intercountry adoption more open, policy makers in most countries of origin have responded by making heterosexuality a requirement for potential parents. Examples of countries with current explicit bans prohibiting adoption by LGBTQ individuals include Cameroon, China, Egypt, Ghana, India, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Madagascar, Marshall Islands, Panama, Paraguay, Russia, Togo, and Vietnam.

In addition to these explicit barriers, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, despite demand from hopeful parents, intercountry adoption has decreased somewhat as countries of origin have sent fewer children abroad. Factors that explain this decline include growing economic prosperity in major sending countries, including Russia, China, and India, as well as increased suspicion by parents and adoption authorities about the potential for human rights abuses generated by the demand for intercountry adoptions and brought to light through different scandals. Whether the decrease in intercountry adoption is temporary or not ([Breuning 2013](#)), the resulting increase in competition among prospective parents makes it even less likely that authorities in countries of origin will choose LGBTQ parents over straight, cisgender parents when making adoption decisions.

This situation makes it extremely challenging—and in many cases almost impossible—for single LGBTQ people and same-sex couples to adopt children from other countries ([Brodzinsky and Pertman 2012](#)). They face a range of legal barriers embedded within the multiple and overlapping jurisdictions, including the local or national law of their own countries and adoptee countries of origin, as well as international conventions, if the countries are signatories to them ([Dambach 2011; Mertus 2011](#)). They must be screened and approved as eligible to adopt in all of these jurisdictions. In theory, prospective parents could therefore adopt if they live in countries that permit LGBTQ individuals or same-sex couples to adopt and are found eligible in sending countries. In practice, the dearth of sending countries open to LGBTQ adoption means they have very few opportunities for intercountry adoption. In the hope that it will increase their chances, some potential parents turn to expensive private adoption agencies to navigate these legal complexities.

**International Law**
International legal frameworks that regulate intercountry adoption are technically neutral on LGBTQ parenting, but they were written in a context of more or less implicit heteronormative assumptions about suitable categories of parents (Dambach 2011). The first major text, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) of 1989, puts in place the principle that intercountry adoption should only be a last recourse if possible placement in adoptive or foster families is not possible in a child’s country of origin. All members of the United Nations are party to this treaty except the United States, which never ratified it. The UNCRC sets out broad codes relative to children’s rights.

In order to specifically reinforce guidelines and counter fraud on intercountry adoption, policy makers later established the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993. More than ninety-six countries had ratified it as of 2017, including the United States, and had created mandated systems in their adoption proceedings, such as a “central authority” in each country that monitors compliance. The preamble to the Hague Convention states: “intercountry adoptions [shall be] made in the best interests of the child and with respect for his or her fundamental rights, and to prevent the abduction, the sale of, or traffic in children,” and “each State should take, as a matter of priority, appropriate measures to enable the child to remain in the care of his or her family of origin.” In the original drafting, some countries sought to explicitly include language limiting intercountry adoption to married heterosexual couples. Even though this language was not ultimately included in the final draft, analysis of committee discussions reveals a consensus that LGBTQ people and same-sex couples ought to be excluded from intercountry adoption (Dambach 2011). Because laws and procedures in sending and receiving countries typically eliminated them from the pool of eligible parents anyway, specifying their exclusion in the convention was not considered necessary.

Today, advocates on both sides of LGBTQ adoption debates use the language of the UNCRC and the Hague Convention, especially the idea of the best interests of the child, to put pressure on their countries to lift or enact LGBTQ adoption bans. Opponents of LGBTQ adoption argue that these conventions guarantee a child’s right to be raised by a heterosexual couple. They say that signatory countries that allow such adoptions are in violation. Those in favor argue that categorical exclusions of LGBTQ people from adoption violate the ideals behind the language of the conventions because parental sexual and gender identity are arbitrary characteristics; they cannot determine suitability as a parent. Excluding LGBTQ people, they argue, prevents potential excellent parents from adopting and thus goes against the best interests of children.

**National Laws and Their Impact**

Each country determines whether local or foreign LGBTQ individuals and/or same-sex couples are eligible to adopt, as well as the number of children in need of placement. Countries vary widely in their stances, some of which are not codified in law but
implemented in practice and can change from one internal jurisdiction to another, making
generalization difficult. Moreover, since most adoption procedures involve decision-making
on a case-by-case basis in a context of relative legal uncertainty about LGBTQ adoption, it is
impossible to predict with certainty whether sexual orientation and gender identity will
constitute a barrier or not, even in jurisdictions that are relatively open.

Little research systematically compares sending countries that allow foreign LGBTQ people
and/or same-sex couples to adopt their children (see Dambach 2011 for an overview by
international region). Given this situation, potential parents spend significant resources
carefully looking for countries or jurisdictions—usually with the help of specialized
adoption agencies—that have a high demand for adoptive parents and that also permit
adoption by single people or that do not explicitly ban adoption by LGBTQ individuals or
same-sex couples. These include parts of the United States, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and
South Africa. Although adoption by same-sex couples and individuals is permitted in other
locations, such as some countries in Europe, few children there are eligible for adoption.

Relationship status has an impact on the likelihood of adoption. Same-sex couples—
especially those who are married in their home countries and thus cannot hide their
relationships—are ineligible to adopt children from most countries because they ban
adoption by same-sex couples. In contrast, single LGBTQ people are technically eligible to
adopt in countries where adoption by single people is not prohibited. However, legislation
in many of these places either explicitly or implicitly limits adoption to cisgender and
heterosexual people. In these situations, LGBTQ individuals can choose not to disclose their
sexual or gender identity, sometimes with the help of adoption professionals who do not
include that information in their paperwork (Brodzinsky 2015). By doing so, however, they
risk being found out by adoption agencies or authorities in sending countries that conduct
thorough background checks to thwart such practices. This strategy also raises a number of
other issues. They include ethical questions about violating local law, the impact of going
“back into the closet” on parents and children, and the way fear of disclosure can make it
more difficult for adoptive parents to adequately deal with problems that arise during and
after adoption proceedings (Brodzinsky and Goldberg 2017).

Some countries are relatively open to LGBTQ intercountry adoption. Technically, countries
that allow their own LGBTQ citizens to adopt are also open to intercountry adoption of
their children by LGBTQ people from abroad. However, most of these countries, primarily
in Europe and North America, receive rather than send adoptees. Only South Africa and the
United States, which is both a sending and receiving country, have explicit legislation
allowing intercountry adoption of their children by nonheterosexual people. Recently,
there has been some openness in intracountry adoptions among several countries that
have been among the top sending countries. In 2015 Colombia’s Constitutional Court lifted
a ban on adoption by same-sex couples, thus making adoption possible for local couples
and those abroad. Several Mexican states allow adoption by married same-sex couples. In
Brazil, case law in several states has been favorable to adoption by LGBTQ individuals and couples. There is evidence that LGBTQ singles have adopted children from a number of countries despite official prohibitions, including Haiti, the Philippines, and Vietnam, but usually by not disclosing their sexual and gender identities.

In contrast, most major sending countries have reinforced discrimination against LGBTQ intercountry adoption over time. For example, in 2007 China enacted regulations limiting adoptions to married heterosexual couples. Previously, singles could petition to adopt but only if they signed a statement declaring their heterosexuality. This decision was explicitly a reaction to the growing legalization of adoption by LGBTQ people in places such as the Netherlands. Similarly, Guatemala requires that all single adoption petitioners sign a declaration of heterosexuality, and single men are especially subject to scrutiny. Ethiopia excludes same-sex couples and LGBTQ individuals, though the latter have been approved in some rare cases. South Korea and Ukraine have been among the largest sending countries, but both limit adoption to married couples and neither permits same-sex marriage. Before 2014, many single LGBTQ people successfully adopted Russian children. That year, along with a rising tide of anti-LGBTQ legislation, Russia passed a law explicitly banning international same-sex couples, as well as single people in countries permitting same-sex marriage, from adopting Russian children.

**Queer Parenting and Transracial Adoption**

The parenting qualities of LGBTQ people and same-sex couples have always been at the center of debates about whether or not they should be allowed to adopt and have access to reproductive technology. Whether raising adopted children or those conceived through assisted reproductive technology, surrogacy, or other means, research finds that parents in same-sex relationships have children who achieve the same range of positive and negative outcomes as children raised by comparable heterosexual couples (Manning et al. 2014; Moore and Stambolis-Ruhstorfer 2013). Adopted children face a variety of social and psychological specificities related to the circumstances that led to their adoption. LGBTQ parents who adopt thus deal with the same kinds of parenting challenges as their heterosexual and cisgender peers.

Yet local and intercountry adoption is organized as a marketplace where prospective parents compete with one another to adopt, while children compete with one another to be adopted. In places with few eligible children needing adoption, authorities may more easily exclude LGBTQ people, despite their similar qualities as parents. In places where there are more children needing placement than parents willing to adopt, such as the United States (Raleigh 2016), authorities may, on the contrary, seek out LGBTQ people. Indeed, research suggests that LGBTQ people are more interested in adopting than heterosexuals (Brodzinsky and Pertman 2012). In the United States, in particular, many adoption and fostering authorities have encouraged adoption by gays and lesbians because of their
willingness to adopt older children, children with special needs, and children who are racial and ethnic minorities. However, this seemingly progressive inclusion has been premised on a neoliberal structuring of adoption where people with means—typically construed to be white—adopt children removed from working-class and poor families of color both in the United States and in the Global South (Briggs 2012; Rothman 2005).

In addition to the socioeconomic and geopolitical conditions that create a need for it, transracial adoption creates a number of specific issues that adoptive parents must address. These include understanding discrimination, forging identity, explaining origins, and ensuring safety and well-being in racist societies. Compared to heterosexuals, gays and lesbians confront these situations more often because they have higher rates of transracial adoption. They are also more likely to be in interracial romantic relationships (Farr and Patterson 2009; Steinbugler 2012).

Some research suggests that LGBTQ people’s experiences of marginalization make them better equipped to deal with transracial adoption than white heterosexual parents (Ausbrooks and Russell 2011). For example, recent research on intercountry adoption—much of which is interracial—finds that lesbian couples, on average, maintained contact
with birth parents after adoption proceedings at higher rates than heterosexual couples (Brodzinsky and Goldberg 2017). This suggests that they may be more willing to confront issues around race and inequality and the role they play in their adoptive children’s lives. Don Romesburg—a white middle-class gay man and professor of women’s and gender studies who adopted a black girl with his partner—describes the importance of creating a “queer transracial family” that acknowledges and works to overcome the systems of domination that contribute to the need for transracial and intercountry adoption by contesting “colorblindness, homonormativity, and the consumerist, privatized family” (Romesburg 2014, 1).

**Surrogacy**

In addition to adoption, LGBTQ individuals and same-sex couples—just like heterosexual people and different-sex couples who struggle with fertility issues—also pursue pathways to parenting that allow them to be biologically related to their children. For single women and lesbian couples, this typically means artificial and in-vitro fertilization. For gay men who have the means to afford it, surrogacy is an option. Although both practices can involve crossing international borders—as when lesbians living in countries that restrict medically assisted reproduction to heterosexuals travel to fertility clinics abroad, for example—surrogacy is legal in fewer places, thus driving gay men to the international marketplace. In addition, the biological, ethical, and financial stakes around surrogacy are higher (Twine [2011] 2015). Indeed, given the power imbalances across gender, racial, class, and global political lines between intentional parents and women practicing surrogacy, it is more susceptible to international scrutiny and criticism. Critics worry that the marketization of women’s reproduction will lead to their exploitation. Hostility toward surrogacy can be especially strong when those seeking surrogacy are gay men, because people are more suspicious of their desire to become fathers (Mamo 2007).

Surrogacy is not specifically regulated under any international treaties or organizations, though efforts to restrict or ban it have been gaining momentum (see, for example, a 2015 motion for a European Parliament resolution decrying it as a violation of the “human dignity” of women). In the absence of an international framework, countries have implemented legislation on both the legality of surrogacy within their borders and how to recognize—or not—the children born to their citizens via surrogacy abroad. Some countries, such as Australia and the United Kingdom, allow noncommercial surrogacy, which means that women can volunteer but not profit from being surrogates. Most intentional parents turn to countries that permit commercial surrogacy. India, Ukraine, and Russia, which used to be key destinations for future fathers, all now have explicit bans prohibiting gay men from seeking surrogacy in their countries. Other destinations, such as Mexico and, especially, the United States, have thus emerged as the primary destination for wealthy gay men. Indeed, the United States has gained a global reputation as one of the
more welcoming countries to gay men seeking the services of American surrogates. In most cases, gay men usually turn to specialized surrogacy agencies that put them in contact with potential surrogates and organize the medical aspects (egg donation in the case of gestational surrogacy, in-vitro fertilization, prenatal care, delivery, and postnatal care). The agencies also help gay men navigate the extremely complex process of establishing legal proof of parenthood. Fathers from abroad must then also manage to convince the embassies of their own countries to recognize their paternity and provide travel documents, allowing parents to return home with their children born via surrogacy.

Research reveals that gay fathers usually establish varying degrees of lasting connections with surrogates so that their children can know about and maintain contact with them (Côté et al. 2018). Despite the financial aspect of the relation between these men and the women who carry their children, gay fathers and surrogates invest emotionally in these relationships, which often continue after the children are born. Maintaining these ties can be complicated by distance. Evidence from the United States suggests that some fathers make an effort to organize visits in which they spend time with their children and their surrogates, many of whom are married and have children of their own.

**LGBTQ Youth, Fostering, and Homelessness**

Sexual and gender identity also play an important role in the family experiences of LGBTQ youth. They are more likely than their heterosexual and cisgender peers to face bullying in schools, rejection from their families, and discrimination in social services. Although overlooked for decades, research on the experiences of LGBTQ youth in the child welfare system, both in the United States and in other countries, shows that they confront challenges and disparities, including isolation, discrimination, maltreatment, and instability (McCormick et al. 2017). Many of these issues are related to both anti-LGBTQ attitudes among foster families and welfare systems unwilling or unable to recognize the LGBTQ youth in their care. When placed with accepting foster families, young LGBTQ people have better outcomes. Recruiting, educating, and training foster families is therefore crucial for creating an affirming environment for them (McCormick et al. 2016). Most LGBTQ youth are also resilient and resourceful themselves. They navigate a relatively unwelcoming system by organizing with one another and turning toward other LGBTQ people for solidarity and support.

Despite advances in formal rights in many contexts, LGBTQ youth—especially minors whom the welfare system has failed and young adults rejected by their families and social support systems—are some of the most vulnerable people. For example, in the United States, studies have found that over 40 percent of homeless youth are LGBTQ (Choi et al. 2015). Internationally, LGBTQ associations have organized to try to meet the needs of the youngest members of their communities in these desperate situations. Examples of organizations include the Pride Shelter Trust (South Africa), the Albert Kennedy Trust
(United Kingdom), Le Refuge (France), and the network of LGBT Centers and True Colors Fund (United States). To combat LGBTQ youth homelessness, these groups, which vary in scope and scale, establish emergency shelters, set up longer-term transitional housing, run professional training, and strive to create a sense of community and acceptance. Along with other social movement organizations, they also fight against the social conditions that contribute to the vulnerability of the young people they serve in the first place. Many LGBTQ people volunteer time and resources to make these efforts successful. They understand that the LGBTQ community can act as a kind of extended family to those who have been failed by their families of origin and governments.

SEE ALSO Adoption and Surrogacy in Europe; Family Law in Asia; Lesbian Mothering and Adoption in Latin America; Parenting Rights in North America

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Aestheticism and Decadence, Nineteenth-Century

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The important figures and works of these interrelated cultural movements that explored queer and erotic themes around the end of the nineteenth century.

Aestheticism and decadence were two interrelated but also distinct cultural movements at the end of the nineteenth century throughout Britain, elsewhere in Europe (particularly France), and to an extent in the United States. Aestheticism—sometimes described by scholars as an “art-for-art’s-sake” aesthetic program—sought to elevate aesthetic works above social and political agendas. That impulse was intensified in the decadent movement’s rejection of conventional Victorian ethical and social boundaries, thereby allowing artistic works to entertain dissident, “immoral,” or antisocial erotic themes, motifs, and scenarios. In the diverse writings of Algernon Charles Swinburne, Walter Pater, Oscar Wilde, Olive Schreiner, John Addington Symonds, Simeon Solomon, Aubrey Beardsley, and Vernon Lee, aestheticism and decadence became modes of exploring daring subject matter related to the erotic life and of experimenting with new formal strategies that are recognizably “queer.” Elsewhere in Europe and the United States, too, aesthetes insisted that artworks had a self-sufficient life, while decadents imagined lives and scenarios open to scandalously insubordinate social behavior, new sexual identities, and behavior deemed immoral and outrageous.

Among those new stylistic modes in the era known as the fin de siècle were a fascination with exquisite surfaces, tantalizing sexual ambiguities, subconscious states, anthropomorphized nature, and useless artifice. In highly coded ways, many British, European, and American writers and artists affiliated with the aestheticist and decadent enterprises endorsed same-sex erotics as a viable option, particularly between men. That these writers and artists sought to accomplish this in a nineteenth-century environment increasingly hostile to homosexual relations through legislation (and the categories of medical science) made their endeavors especially audacious. What certain streams of science were deeming an illness—homosexuality and other forms of nonnormative behavior—were embraced by decadent artists as glorious aberrations from late Victorian sexual norms. Thus, Arthur Symons, in his essay “The Decadent Movement in Literature,” first published in Harper's New Monthly Magazine in 1893, referred to decadence as a “beautiful and interesting disease” (859). Because Symons was writing at a historical moment when homosexuality was being viewed by many medical authorities as a disease
(as opposed to a sin), it is possible to see his comment as glamorizing dissident erotic
behavior. That Symons later revised his essay, retitling it “The Symbolist Movement in
Literature” (1899), indicates that in the ensuing six years decadence had come to accrue
disreputable associations. (Symbolism was a literary and artistic movement throughout
Europe that, much like aestheticism, aimed to resist the aesthetics of realism in order to
reinvigorate art with mystery, opacity, and strangeness.)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) and Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881) were partly
responsible for introducing an early iteration of the doctrine of aestheticism to Britain,
followed by William Morris (1834–1896) and John Ruskin (1819–1900), two important
precursors of late Victorian aestheticism. A socialist, Morris rejected the increasingly
prevailing economic values of industrialization in order to promote the virtues of
craftsmanship and simple, elegant design. Although by no means an aesthete, Ruskin
nonetheless sought to make a kind of religion of art, bringing the intensity of Christian
religious doctrine to a new enthusiasm for shared communal and national aspirations in
the creation of art and architecture. At the same time, both Morris and Ruskin viewed
aesthetic ventures as accruing value to the degree that they fostered a wider moral and
social vision, an earnest endeavor that would have troubled Pater, who considered the
aesthetic realm to be largely independent of ethical and social imperatives. It was Pater
who came to have the most powerful foundational effect on aestheticism and its unruly
offspring, decadence.

Walter Pater: The Godfather of British Aestheticism

Throughout his fiction and criticism, Walter Pater (1839–1894) repeatedly suggested that
the artist must be open to many new influences and sensations. His novel Marius the
Epicurean (1885) has as its central protagonist a young ascetic Roman of the second
century CE who embraces differing philosophical systems. Throughout his criticism, Pater
applauded the culture of ancient Greece, as well as that of the Renaissance, implicitly
promoting these moments in Western civilization as appealing alternatives to the
enervated and rigid social and ethical ethos of Victorian Britain. In his controversial
conclusion to The Renaissance (1873; which probably cost him an academic promotion at
Oxford University), Pater, a lifelong bachelor, insisted on the key role of the senses and
“perception” in an individual’s response to works of art as opposed to a universally agreed-upon
objective criteria. According to Pater, one must embrace the insurgent energies of a
given artistic work—and one must accept that all appreciation of art is subjective and
entirely dependent on individual responses (as opposed to objective criteria). Incendiary as
the conclusion was, Pater’s most influential piece of writing was the chapter of The
Renaissance devoted to the Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci’s (1452–1519) La Gioconda
(more famously known as the Mona Lisa), which Pater described in rapturous terms.

Pater’s aesthetic philosophy harbored implications for same-sex desire given that it was a
program that frequently insisted on the value of dissenting from common prejudices in order to cultivate individual self-enhancement. Thus, Pater’s program conceivably could allow for the possibility of escaping the rigidities of Victorian strictures against, for example, same-sex erotics. In his conclusion to *The Renaissance*, he insisted that individuals should go about “curiously testing new opinions and courting new impressions,” among them “any stirring of the senses, strange dyes, strange flowers, and curious odours, or the work of the artist’s hands, or the face of one’s friend” (quoted in Desmarais and Baldick 2012, 26). This sentence’s strikingly disparate list, with its doubling down on the word *strange* as a positive pursuit, along with its slip into an injunction to appreciate the face of a friend, could be read as an invitation to same-sex amours. The volume was denounced by many Victorian writers for its supposed sanctioning of immoral art and living, a view articulated in the English novelist George Eliot’s (1819–1880) dismissal of *The Renaissance* as “quite poisonous,” a remark that designated Pater as a philosopher of unsavory influence on disciples, a seemingly innocent aesthete but in fact a decadent master (Eliot 1980, 92).

Aestheticism denoted a total belief in the value of the aesthetic realm. “We spend our days, each one of us, in looking for the secret of life,” Wilde once remarked. “Well, the secret of life is in art” (1908, 156). The word *decadence*, meanwhile, is derived from the medieval Latin word *decadentia* (itself derived from *de*, meaning “down” or “apart,” and *cadere*, meaning “to fall”), a rubric that has been used to characterize civilizations that have fallen from a glorious apex to excess, decay, and decline. Throughout the nineteenth century in Britain and the United States, the phrase denoted physical degeneracy, moral decline, and sexual deviance, much of which was associated with the fall of ancient Rome. At the same time, many men and women embraced the term *decadence* as a way of describing a creative way of exploring and expressing different sexualities, male and female homosexuality chief among them. For aestheticist and decadent writers, the sinister influence that Eliot detected in Pater was the positive effect of a person or work of art on an individual.

Although he is frequently associated with the decadent movement, the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837–1909) is more a flamboyant, neoromantic precursor to decadence. Swinburne’s themes—cannibalism, lesbianism, sadomasochism, and theism, among others—were often conveyed in highly technical poetic diction that gave him a reputation as a risk-courting, difficult poet who was eager to scandalize. Part of his importance for the decadent movement lay in his provocative assertion that no subject should be off-limits for the artist, an argument that would rouse many aesthetes and decadents. Inspired by Swinburne’s example, the new decadent movement was fueled by small magazines such as the *Yellow Book*, the *Savoy*, and the *Artist and Journal of Home Culture*, all of which often published coded homoerotic fiction, poetry, and essays. Even a mainstream, popular magazine such as *Punch*, which often parodied the decadent movement in cartoons and articles, helped bring decadence to the attention of a larger British reading public.
Symonds, the Homoerotics of Greek and Renaissance Civilizations, and Queer Autobiography

Another writer linked to the cause of aestheticism was the English critic John Addington Symonds (1840–1893), who wrote passionately about Greek culture and of the art of the Renaissance. His essay "A Problem in Greek Ethics" (1883) explored same-sex relations in ancient Greece as an admirable, everyday feature of Hellenic life. Symonds's argument was remarkable in examining male homosexual relations not so much as a psychological problem—increasingly standard in late Victorian scientific and medical discussions of same-sex erotic desire in what came to be known as “sexology”—but as a positive cultural force. For Symonds, Western civilization itself was based on idealized social conditions that promoted idealized male same-sex relations, although he was careful to note in the “Greek Ethics” essay that in the male hierarchy of ancient Greece erotic affection between women was difficult to detect and held in lesser regard. His works examining Italian Renaissance civilization, among them The Renaissance in Italy (1875–1886) and a biography of the artist Michelangelo, valorized the culture and society of the Renaissance, even referencing the “sinfulness, treason ... enormous vices, and intolerable mischief of the Renaissance” as the sources for its achievement. Thus, in evoking what he called the “decadence of Italy,” Symonds claimed that the Italian political thinker Niccolò Machiavelli (1469–1527) saw the country’s “regeneration” as resting on the “very vices which he indicated as the cause of national degeneracy” ([1875–1886] 1935, 2:417).

Even more daringly, Symonds wrote the most forceful, detailed, and moving account of homosexuality of the Victorian era, an autobiography that was first published in part in 1984 and not in its entirety until 2016. These memoirs represented an extensive account of Symonds’s often tormented—but also fulsomely satiated—experience as a married man and father who had a secret life as the lover of men. With its tales of homosexual relations between teachers and students at Harrow, where Symonds had been a student, and its recollections of love affairs with Italian men, the autobiography doubtless could not have been published during Symonds's lifetime. Unlike Wilde, the cautious Symonds was never ensnared in a public scandal. For him, aestheticism and decadence represented less an irresponsible or dissolute example than the possibility for a covert embrace of homosexual love. At the same time, he forged connections between aestheticism and those physicians and scientists seeking to dispense with an older, religious and moral comprehension of same-sex desire. With the pioneering sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), he pseudonymously collaborated on Sexual Inversion (1897), an attempt at a tolerant, science-based investigation of various forms of nonnormative sexualities.

Oscar Wilde at the Risky Frontiers of Queer Aestheticism and Decadence
The most internationally celebrated figure representing the conjoined causes of aestheticism and decadence in late nineteenth-century Britain was Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), an Irish-born writer who had studied under Pater at Oxford. Famous as a dandy and wit even before he had published any significant piece of writing, Wilde wrote in several literary genres: the theater, fiction, poetry, fairy tales, and criticism. In a sign of future conflict among aesthetes and decadents, Wilde insisted that his key influences were French writers affiliated with symbolism and decadence, among them Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867), Stéphane Mallarmé (1842–1898), and Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848–1907, whose 1884 novel À rebours (Against the Grain [1926])—the story of a dissolute, sickly aristocrat—was one of Wilde’s favorite books.

Wilde also admired Japanese art and design, as is evident in the luxurious opening pages of The Picture of Dorian Gray (1890), in which Basil Hallward’s bachelor studio contains “tussore-silk curtains that were stretched in front of the huge window, producing a kind of momentary Japanese effect, and making him think of those pallid, jade-faced painters of Tokyo who, through the medium of an art that is necessarily immobile, seek to convey the sense of swiftness and motion” (2007, 5). Elsewhere he quipped that Japan had become sheer Orientalist fantasy: “The whole of Japan is a pure invention. There is no such country, there are no such people…. If you desire to see a Japanese effect, you will not behave like a tourist and go to Tokio. On the contrary, you will stay at home and steep yourself in the works of certain Japanese artists” (1970, 65). As editor of Woman’s World magazine, which published articles on home design, decor, and other issues of interest to its largely female readership, Wilde gave serious attention to the Victorian home as a sphere of aesthetic innovation and female achievement.

At a personal level, the domestic realm was not unfamiliar to Wilde. Despite his reputation today as a dauntless “gay” writer and queer icon, in his early thirties Wilde was a middle-class husband and the father of two young sons. In his writing he almost always referenced homosexuality indirectly, covertly, or ambiguously. Many of his clever witticisms were coded barbs directed at the limitations of heterosexual marriage (“How marriage ruins a man! It’s as demoralizing as cigarettes, and far more expensive”) or waggish appreciations of masculine physical perfection (“There is something tragic about the enormous number of young men there are in England at the present moment who start life with perfect profiles, and end by adopting some useful profession”).

With similar cagey indirection and fascination with male beauty, Wilde’s only novel, The Picture of Dorian Gray, focuses on a physically stunning, supernaturally ageless young man who transfixes both men and women in London society but whose own sexuality seems indeterminate, just as Dorian’s alleged crimes toward the end of the novel are vague. Although Dorian Gray’s opening scenes depict two men who seem to compete for the attention of Dorian—in Victorian terms, indulging in an “unnatural” vice of sodomy, as several contemporary reviewers detected—the novel increasingly turns on a supernatural
plot, and none of these male relations comes to fruition. At the same time, one may see in the character of Lord Henry a perfect example of the aesthete, just as Henry's disciple, Dorian, exemplifies aestheticism's transformation into a more personally and socially destructive decadence. Arguably one of Wilde's boldest explorations of homosexuality was his short story "The Portrait of Mr. W. H." (1889), which freely speculated that the sonnets of the English playwright and poet William Shakespeare (1564–1616) were addressed to a male lover, an adolescent boy actor.

In Wilde’s play Salome (1893), originally written in French and initially banned from the London stage, several forms of nonnormative or perverse desire are flamboyantly on display: Herod's lust for his stepdaughter, the princess Salome; Salome's erotic obsession with John the Baptist (which takes on a necrophilic tinge when she lustily demands—and then kisses—his severed head); and a pageboy's yearning for a male Syrian soldier. In his 1987 biography of Wilde, Richard Ellmann notes that the play's merry-go-round of illicit desires includes John the Baptist's devotion to Jesus. At the center of Wilde's play is the "Dance of the Seven Veils"—a striptease that Salome performs before her ogling stepfather. Because of its stylized saturation in aberrations of orthodox sexuality, over time Wilde's play has come to stand as an inherently “queer” work. Its popularity was considerably augmented in 1905 when the celebrated German composer Richard Strauss (1864–1949) adapted it as an opera. The play was the subject of a 1923 film starring the Russian dancer Alla Nazimova (1879–1945), with costumes and sets based on Aubrey Beardsley's illustrations. The dazzling allure of Salome, with its spotlighting of a femme fatale, came to appeal to many actresses and singers. Furthermore, Wilde's "daughter of Sodom" suggested that the sexual dissidence driving the aestheticist and decadent enterprises might have implications for women of artistically and socially rebellious inclinations.

**Women Writers and the Aestheticist and Decadent Coteries**

A number of British women writers sought to enter the male-dominated precincts of aestheticism and decadence. This was no easy task given that much in the way of aestheticist and decadent rhetoric valorized a Hellenic civilization in which eroticized male-male relations dominated and women held a subsidiary social position. Many decadent male writers were fascinated by women only to the extent that they could be worshipped as femmes fatales, exquisite corpses, doomed actresses, or tragic lovers. Furthermore, many British women writers were committed, like their mid-Victorian predecessors, to the three-decker novel made famous by the Brontës, George Eliot, and other Victorian women novelists, whereas male aesthetes and decadents increasingly were turning to the short story and short novels such as Wilde's Dorian Gray as an ideal literary mode.
A number of fin-de-siècle women writers, however, did thrive with short fiction and drew on that form to explore same-sex or ambiguous, sexualities. One of the most successful of these was the English writer Vernon Lee, whose real name was Violet Paget (1856–1935). A lesbian and a follower of Pater and Wilde, a friend of the American writer Henry James (1843–1916), and a contributor to the Yellow Book, Lee's critical writings revived an interest not only in the Italian Renaissance but in eighteenth-century literature, art, and music. Her fiction often explored supernatural themes related to ghosts and spiritual possession, while her short story “Lady Tal” (1896) depicted a Henry James–like novelist, the fussy aesthete Jervase Marion, whose feminized name marks him as a queer figure and who acts as the muse to an aristocratic woman writer, a relationship that unexpectedly stirs his long-repressed emotions. (James was so outraged by Lee's portrait of him that he broke off his friendship with her.) The English writer Victoria Cross, a pseudonym for Annie Sophie Cory (1868–1952), depicted a male narrator of enigmatic sexual preferences in her tale “Theodora: A Fragment” (1895). The story's heroine dons the narrator's Turkish attire, while the narrator's album of pictures includes his painting of a young Sikh male with a “lovely face” and “beautiful hair,” as well as a painting of a “handsome” Persian woman (Cross [1895] 1993, 26, 28). The “delicious intimacy” that the narrator declares as binding him and Theodora hints at the experimental excitement of an intimate relationship that thrives on bisexual desires, cross-dressing, and Eastern erotic fantasies (11).

One remarkable critique of male-defined decadence was Charlotte Mew's (1869–1928) short story “A White Night” (1903)—possibly a response to Joseph Conrad's (1857–1924) novel of masculine colonialist adventure, Heart of Darkness (1899)—in which a group of late Victorian travelers journey to Spain, where they inadvertently witness the ritualistic killing of a woman, an event that seems to titillate the male narrator. The writer Ada Leverson (1862–1933), a close friend of Wilde (she alone offered him sanctuary when he was released from prison), wrote several works of fiction celebrated as witty comedies of manners. Yet she also offered fictional critiques of Wildean decadence—for example, in her story “Suggestion” (1895), whose narrator is described by another character as “that intolerable, effeminate boy” (Showalter, 38) and who is depicted as a sexually manipulative prig. Ella D’Arcy (1857–1937), a frequent contributor to the Yellow Book, was the author of short stories whose psychological realism earned her comparisons to James. As noted, female aesthetes shared their male colleagues' fascination with the “Orient,” evident in the American writer Kate Chopin’s (1850–1904) “An Egyptian Cigarette” (1900) in which an architect, a traveler in the Orient, introduces a woman friend to the hallucinogenic pleasures of exotic smoking. Other aesthetically oriented women writers explored colonial concerns, although not always from enlightened perspectives. Ouida, a pseudonym of Maria Louise Ramé (1839–1908), the author of some forty novels, published the best-selling Under Two Flags (1867), set in French Algeria and a work that gave sympathetic attention to the French colonialists, the socalled pieds noirs.

A number of women writers of aestheticist and decadent leanings were skeptical of the
possibility for progress in the area of female social equality. Whereas so-called New Woman texts such as Sarah Grand’s (1854–1943) *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) and Grant Allen’s (1848–1899) *The Woman Who Did* (1895) forthrightly criticized a sexual double standard and welcomed a new era of erotic freedom and choice, the work of female aesthetes often stressed the impediments to a full liberation from Victorian moral and social shackles. The paradigmatic example of this conflicted view of erotic utopianism is the South African writer Olive Schreiner (1855–1920), whose lyrical *The Story of an African Farm* (1883) presented what some literary critics view as the first avowedly feminist heroine in English-language literature, Lyndall. Yet, in a reflection of the gloomy protocols of decadent fiction that won the novel Wilde’s admiration but with a deterministic logic that adhered to the “scientific” tendencies of literary naturalism, Lyndall spirals downward. She rejects an offer of marriage to pursue a university education while demanding parity with men. Ultimately, she abandons her studies and is stymied in all her aspirations, dying young in the novel’s concluding pages.

**Aestheticism and Decadence in Europe and the United States**

Outside Britain, aestheticism and decadence included important theorists, writers, artists, and followers, particularly in the United States, France, Italy, and Germany. The aesthetic program took much of its force from the German philosophical tradition as articulated by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832), Friedrich Schiller (1759–1805), and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775–1854), all of whom stressed art’s sovereignty over mundane reality. The German philosopher Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) maintained that works of art exist in a separate, inviolable sphere; can be judged only by highly educated, superior minds; must be distinguished from moral goodness and pleasure; and have no utility, what Kant famously described as “purposiveness without purpose.” That works of art might be lacking in utility could be seen as an endorsement not only of an aesthetics of artifice and frivolity but also of alternative, nonprocreative forms of erotic behavior.

In France, especially, aestheticism was entangled with nonnormative erotics. Thus, one of the earliest manifestos of the art-for-art’s-sake movement was Théophile Gautier’s (1811–1872) novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835), the preface to which endorsed creative endeavors without social or moral purpose and which derided critics seeing art as harboring an ethical dimension as philistines. For Gautier, aesthetic works could only be damaged by moral commitments. That the novel itself is a comic narrative of a young man who comes to question his sexual identity upon falling in love with his male page (who in fact is a young woman disguised as a boy) helped to forge a link between aestheticism and male same-sex erotics. Among aestheticism’s advocates in France were Madame de Staël (1766–1817), an admirer of German romanticist aesthetics and an advocate of what she called passionate “enthusiasm,” which she distinguished from mindless fanaticism and
which she saw as tied to a love of beauty, declaring with a combination of spiritual ardor and aesthetic passion that “enthusiasm signifies God in us” (1813, 3:388).

In the United States, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–1882) provided some intellectual support to the idea that works of art had their own justification for existing, a notion encapsulated in these pithily precise lines from Emerson’s poem “The Rhodora” (1834): “That if eyes were made for seeing / Then beauty is its own excuse for being” (Emerson, 10). The American writer with the greatest influence on decadent aesthetics and attitudes was the Boston-born Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849). Poe’s dark romanticist writing ranged from poems such as “The Raven” (1845), a supernatural narrative of a splendid, talking bird that visits a tormented lover, to his novel The Fall of the House of Usher (1839), set, like so many classic gothic texts, in a mysterious house and concerned with the spiritual and moral decay of a New England family. Poe’s disreputable personal life (he married his thirteen-year-old cousin) and early demise (he died at the age of forty after having been found wandering incoherently in the streets of Baltimore) gave him iconic status as a dissolute, death-bound young artist. The aestheticist movement in the United States was enhanced by the early fiction of Henry James, who sometimes depicted male artists whose devotion to their craft is linked to their bonds with other men, often bachelors, as in James’s first novel, Roderick Hudson (1875), which detailed a youthful sculptor’s apprenticeship under an older male connoisseur’s tutelage.

Poe’s erotically charged gothic sensibility had a greater impact in relatively libertine France than in a nineteenth-century United States greatly given over to Puritan values. The French poet Charles Baudelaire translated Poe’s work and helped disseminate the American author’s work in literary Paris. Other French decadent writers, such as Paul Bourget (1852–1935), Stéphane Mallarmé, Auguste Villiers de L’Isle-Adam (1838–1889), and Joris-Karl Huysmans, variously rebelled against the positivist assumptions of realism and the science-based claims of literary naturalism as they sought to extend the conventional boundaries of aesthetics. Bourget offered a definition of the decadent style as the independence of the parts from the whole, a formulation that could be seen as stressing erotic dissidence from norms and conventions. Arthur Rimbaud (1854–1891) and Paul Verlaine (1844–1896), poets and lovers who met early deaths, helped to define French decadence as a homosexual literary and personal adventure, one that flouted bourgeois conventions.

The influential German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860), beloved of the aestheticist movement and widely read in France, advocated for the renunciation of all the passions in favor of a life devoted to the pursuit of art. One can see a version of this idea in Huysmans’s novel À rebours (1884), the hero of which experiments with new erotic sensations (an affair with an acrobat, a ventriloquist, and a near-erotic encounter with a young male ruffian) but becomes increasingly chaste and hermetic. This strain of proud self-denial and sexual abstinence militates against the commonplace view of decadent men
as driven by carnal debauchery. In fact, many decadent characters in French fiction retreat from the social world, seeing it as vulgar, constricting, and bourgeois, and embracing the role of bachelor.

Other writers explored erotic extremism and the upending of traditional gender fixities. The French novelist Octave Mirbeau’s (1848–1917) novel Le jardin des supplices ([1899; Torture Garden [1931]]) offered a surreal depiction of a dominatrix who oversees a series of endless degradations of her male lovers. In much of French decadent writing there are outsized antiheroines with insatiable sexual appetites. One of the most successful French decadent writers was the woman novelist Rachilde, pen name of Marguerite Vallette-Eymery (1860–1953), whose novel Monsieur Vénus (1884) concerned a dominatrix noblewoman, Raoule, who gradually transforms her working-class lover, Jacques, into her mistress by emptying him of all his “masculine” traits. Wilde not only admired contemporary French writers but won their devotion. Mallarmé praised The Picture of Dorian Gray for its central conceit of a mutating painting. Mirbeau, meanwhile, not only lavished praise on Dorian Gray but also publicly defended Wilde during his prosecution and imprisonment in Britain.

**Wilde's Fall and the Exposure of Aestheticism and Decadence as Queer Criminal Practice**

Although Wilde’s writing created controversy among his contemporaries, it was only when the playwright elected to take the father of his lover Lord Alfred Douglas (1870–1945) to court for slander did Wilde’s fortunes and reputation implode. In a series of three 1895 trials that ended in Wilde’s conviction for the crime of “gross indecency,” Wilde was exposed as the lover of men, some of them young male prostitutes, who testified on the prosecution’s behalf. For much of Wilde’s testimony the courtroom laughed at Wilde’s acerbic responses to the prosecutor Edward Carson—until Carson asked Wilde if he had kissed a certain young man. Wilde’s reply—“Oh, dear no; he was a peculiarly plain boy”—by most accounts changed the course of the trial. Wilde was convicted and imprisoned for nearly two years of hard labor. It was in prison that he wrote De Profundis, a shattering, damning account of his lover Douglas that was posthumously published in 1905. Released from jail, Wilde ended his days in bitter, impoverished exile in Paris. His narrative poem The Ballad of Reading Gaol (1898) recounted memorably his experience in that prison, including this declaration:

Yet each man kills the thing he loves
By each let this be heard.
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word.
“The coward does it with a kiss, 
The brave man with a sword!”

(WILDE 2009, 16)

These lines represented at once a shattering self-revelation, bitter wisdom, a decadent’s lament, and an ambiguous disclosure of doomed homosexual love.

Wilde’s public fall from grace cast a long, destructive shadow over the aestheticist and decadent movements. Most of the playwright’s contemporaries had been unsympathetic and even hostile toward him amid his legal troubles. Henry James, whose private life included numerous emotionally close relationships with men, decried Wilde as an “unclean beast” and declined to defend him when the playwright was enmeshed in scandal. Likewise, the American novelist Willa Cather (1873–1947), whose personal life, according to some biographers, included several intense emotional and erotic relationships with women, endorsed Wilde’s prosecution.

There were, however, some notable exceptions to the opprobrium that hailed down on Wilde. The playwright George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) rallied to his fellow playwright’s defense, although he worried that his support would cause Wilde more harm given Shaw’s own reputation as an Irish-born provocateur. The American writer Stephen Crane (1871–1900) reportedly was appalled by the willingness of his literary colleagues to denigrate Wilde even as Crane himself claimed to be repelled by the playwright’s sexuality. “He abominated all the capacities of Oscar Wilde,” observed an early biographer of Crane, “but when that grand fakir was on trial at last, refused to allow exaggerations to be sent to his newspaper and turned loudly on a group of gossips in a club with, ‘Why do you sit and lie about the poor devil when he’s done for?’” (Beer 1924, 161).

Aesthetes, Decadents, and the Visual Arts

Perhaps the most important figure to establish the critical terms for the aestheticist movement’s valorizing of Greek art and culture was Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), often considered the “father of art history.” Winckelmann argued for the foundational greatness of Hellenic and Roman civilizations, seeing them as pinnacles of Western achievement. His own experience as a young man of same-sex erotic leanings who was forced to live in a Germany hostile to such relations, only to find himself fortunate to live a relatively open life in a more accommodating Rome, helped to shape his conception of art history as a series of rises and falls. The pinnacle of Western civilization, for Winckelmann, was Hellenic and Roman art, especially sculptures of male youths. (He described the Apollo Belvedere as “the highest ideal of art among the works of antiquity that have escaped its destruction” [quoted in Potts 1994, 61].) Inspired by Winckelmann’s ideas,
nineteenth-century aesthetes such as Pater (who devoted a chapter to Winckelmann in *The Renaissance*) maintained an intense devotion to ancient Western civilizations, finding in classical relations between men a model of same-sex erotic passion. The English painter Henry Tuke (1858–1929), while generally eschewing classical subject matter, depicted everyday scenes of youthful nude male bathers that evoked Greek and Roman sculpture.

With his devotion to Hellenic classicism, the hugely popular academic painter Frederic Leighton (1830–1896) (Queen Victoria was an admirer) frequently explored female and male homoerotic themes in his paintings, as in his *Garden of Hesperides* (1892), which depicted a trio of entangled sleeping females, and *Daedalus and Icarus* (c. 1869), a work that highlighted a weathered elderly Daedalus attaching feathers to his classically beautiful, nude young son. (Although well received by the Royal Academy, which exhibited the painting, the London *Times* fretted that Icarus resembled “more a maiden than a youth” [Barlow 2017, 38].) Another artist associated with the aestheticist and decadent movements was the Anglo-Jewish painter Simeon Solomon (1840–1905), a sometime-member of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of artists and writers that included Leighton, Edward Coley Burne-Jones (1833–1898), Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828–1882), Lawrence Alma-Tadema (1836–1912), and Christina Rossetti (1830–1894), most of whom celebrated Renaissance pictorial and literary ideals and whose works sometimes depicted both male and female homoerotic themes. In his painting *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene*
Solomon explored the intensities of lesbian eros, while his illustration “The Bride, the Bridegroom, and Sad Love” (c. 1865) focused on the poignant dilemma of a triangular romantic relationship in which a groom embraces his bride even as he grasps the hand of an androgynous male figure, a daring display of homoeroticism for the period. Solomon penned illustrations for Swinburne’s pornographic novel *Lesbia Brandon* (1859–1868), a work that dealt with themes of homosexuality, sadomasochism, and transsexualism. As was the case with Wilde, Solomon’s unruly personal life exposed him to legal prosecution; he was arrested for public lewdness in London and Paris. The painter Burne-Jones, a sometime supporter of Solomon’s work, fretted that Solomon’s imbroglios would draw scorn on the Pre-Raphaelite program.

Other artists affiliated with aestheticism and decadence avoided classical subject matter and sought inspiration in Asian art and design. The most noteworthy figure in Britain to take up the twinned mantles of these two movements in the visual arts with little regard for Greek or Roman models was Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898), celebrated for his strikingly original black-and-white illustrations much influenced by Japanese woodcuts. Often depicting grotesque and erotic subjects, Beardsley’s images for Wilde’s *Salome* and Thomas Malory’s (c. 1405–1471) medieval *Le Morte d’Arthur*, fomented dismay among social puritans for their unorthodox stylized method and sexually mischievous motifs. Privately, Beardsley drew pornographic illustrations depicting men with huge phalluses and women in lecherous poses. In 1895 the English critic Harry Quilter derided the artist for the androgynous quality of his figures, which Quilter described as “grotesques, in which the types of manhood and womanhood are, as it were, mingled together, and result in a monstrous sexless amalgam, miserable, morbid, dreary, and unnatural” (765). Beardsley’s death from tuberculosis at the age of twenty-five, along with the early demises of English decadent writers such as Ernest Dowson (1867–1900), contributed to the idea that decadent artists were sickly, doomed, or self-destructive. Not all artists associated with the aestheticist movement died young, of course. The English artist and designer Charles Ricketts (1866–1931) was a versatile book illustrator (he illustrated works by Wilde) and theater designer (he designed the sets for a 1906 production of Wilde’s *Salome*), while his longtime lover Charles Haslewood Shannon (1863–1937) was a successful painter and lithographer. Forging a link between the burgeoning aestheticist and Socialist movements, the English artist Walter Crane (1845–1915) designed several iconic Socialist posters. He was, as well, one of the most influential children’s book illustrators of his generation.
In France, the Goncourt brothers, celebrated literary siblings, insisted that painting had no other purpose than to bring pleasure to the eye and the senses and “not to aim to much beyond the rejuvenation of the optic nerve” (Goncourt and Goncourt 1859–1875, 2:211; translation by Richard A. Kaye). French painters such as Odilon Redon (1840–1916), Gustave Moreau (1826–1898), and Pierre Puvis de Chavannes (1824–1898) were drawn to the depiction of mysterious counterworlds and reveled in classical subjects, androgynous nudes, and Christian arcana. Popular decadent subjects included Salome, the biblical character popularized by the French novelist Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880), Mallarmé, and Wilde; and Saint Sebastian, the young third-century Roman soldier condemned to an execution by arrows for announcing his Christianity. Sebastian was frequently depicted as a Christian Adonis by Renaissance artists, and this, along with his confession of a dangerous secret, helped determine his status as a widespread turn-of-the-century homoerotic icon. The French composer most wedded to aestheticism and decadence, Claude Debussy (1862–1918), in addition to adapting musical scores based on the poems of Baudelaire and Verlaine, created a 1911 orchestral work, *The Martyrdom of Saint Sebastian*, written by the Italian writer Gabriele D’Annunzio (1863–1938) and starring the Russian dancer Ida Rubinstein (1885–1960), a performance denounced by the Catholic Church for featuring a Jewish woman in the role of a Christian saint. (The production was attended by the French homosexual writers Marcel Proust and Jean Cocteau.)
Critics sometimes link the American painter James McNeill Whistler (1834–1903) to the history of aestheticism, in part because of his numerous portraits of writers and artists affiliated with the aestheticist movement and also because the magazine *Punch* satirized Whistler along with Wilde as unrepentant, self-preening dandies. Less celebrated was the art photography of the Massachusetts-based F. Holland Day (1864–1933), a member of the so-called pictorialist coterie of photographers at the turn of the century, who sought to imbue photography with classical, Christian, and Renaissance themes. Day’s images often drew on homoerotic scenarios, as in his photographs of Saint Sebastian based on working-class models or his controversial depictions of himself posed as Jesus on the cross. One of his more extraordinary achievements as an art photographer lay in his burnished portraits of African Americans, whom he sometimes depicted in historically anachronistic African garb as a way of exalting his subjects’ cultural legacy. As brilliantly original as Day’s photography was, the impact of American aestheticism is more apparent in the realm of interior design, innovative architecture, and consumer culture. Whistler’s 1876 *Peacock Room*, for example, exploited a popular emblem of aestheticism for the interior of a Kensington town house in London, a masterpiece of Anglo-Japanese design.

**The Backlash against Aestheticism and Decadence**

Well before Wilde’s and Solomon’s skirmishes with the law, there were those who detected an unsavory dissident sexual politics at the core of the aestheticist and decadent movements. The Hungarian-born writer Max Nordau’s (1849–1923) diatribe *Degeneration* (1892) attacked aesthetes and decadents as fomenting a diseased civilization throughout Europe. Shaw wrote a lengthy critical attack on Nordau’s argument, but *Degeneration* became a best seller across Europe and helped solidify a critique of aestheticism and decadence as jointly corrupting artistic social forces.

A number of women writers detected a misogynistic streak in the dandies and bachelors affiliated with the aestheticist and decadent movements. In an 1899 article in *Cosmopolitan* magazine titled “The Woman Question,” Olive Schreiner mocked the male aesthete as that “curled darling, scented and languid, with his drawl, his delicate apparel, his devotion to the rarity and variety of his viands” (192). The theme of women detached from or horrified by the implications of art-for-art’s-sake values is dramatized in much of Henry James’s fiction. James’s novel *The Portrait of a Lady* included a blistering portrait of a pernicious aesthete, Gilbert Osmond, who traps his wife Isabel Archer in a sadistic, loveless marriage. In James’s short story “The Author of Beltraffio” (1884), narrated by an acolyte, aestheticism must be sequestered from female readers, who can only misconstrue its aims as immoral. The narrator’s homoerotic, sycophantic relation to a famous novelist, Mark Ambient, along with the tale’s shattering ending—in which a child is literally and metaphorically sacrificed to the art-for-art’s-sake cause—represents a rebuke to aestheticism as fomenting decadence. (James claimed that he had conjured up the story after hearing an “air-borne rumor”
revealing that John Addington Symonds's wife refused to read her husband's writings.

Other objections to aestheticism and decadence came from the homosexually oriented English visionary Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), who rejected the two entwined movements as beholden to educated, urban elites, at the same time that Carpenter—an advocate of rural life and simplicity in all things, as well as an avid nudist—argued that the “homogenic attachment” was an entirely natural, universal form of erotic feeling that merited both social acceptance and legal protection.

It was the Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) who influentially offered a retrospective judgment concerning the aestheticist and decadent movements, labeling their adherents members of the “tragic generation.” Certainly, Wilde's ignominious fate as the unjustly persecuted lover of men had some of the pathos of the last act of a tragedy. What Yeats could not see, however, was the far-reaching generative possibilities in the erotic dissidence and queer artistry promoted by both aesthetes and decadents, whose claims on the attention of contemporary readers and audiences show no sign of waning.

SEE ALSO Classical Studies; Fin de Siècle Sexuality; Sappho, Nineteenth-Century Rediscovery of; Wilde Trials, International Significance of

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Officially inaugurated on 2 November 1987, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR) is a quasi-judicial body that was established by the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights to “promote human and peoples' rights and ensure their protection in Africa,” according to Article 30 of the charter. Drafted by a committee of the Organisation of African Unity (which was later replaced by the African Union), the charter was considered so momentous a development in the recognition of individual rights on the continent that the date it took effect, 21 October 1986, was declared African Human Rights Day. The ACHPR is composed of eleven members who are nominated by state parties to the charter, although they serve independently and not as representatives of their countries. As part of its mission to “sensitise the population and disseminate information on human and peoples’ rights in Africa” (ACHPR 2017), the commission includes among its duties undertaking studies, organizing seminars and conferences, and serving as a mechanism for individuals to report on human rights violations and for escalating these complaints to state authorities.

Before 2006, the ACHPR had made only passing reference to the rights of LGBTQ individuals in Africa despite widespread discrimination against and persecution of the LGBTQ community throughout the continent. In May 2006, however, the ACHPR met with the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (later renamed OutRight Action International), the Coalition of African Lesbians, Behind the Mask, and All-Africa Rights Initiative in Banjul, Gambia, for a workshop to investigate whether there could be cooperation between the groups to advance the then nascent LGBTQ movement. During the workshop, some activists became aware that Cameroon was under review and decided to prepare a shadow report listing some violations of human rights of LGBTQ persons in that country. The shadow report was submitted to the commissioners, and during the review process some of the commissioners referenced the shadow report and actively questioned representatives from Cameroon about the mistreatment of gay men. This initial success was an affirmative answer to the question of whether the ACHPR should partner with African LGBTQ advocacy organizations.

Formal Engagement
In 2006 the ACHPR had decided that the category “other status” in its listed grounds for discrimination could be broadly interpreted to include sexual orientation. In 2008 the Coalition of African Lesbians (CAL) applied for observer status with the commission. This application was supported by other LGBTQ groups and seen as part of a broader strategy to recognize LGBTQ individuals and groups who were advocating for human rights with the commission. Yet, even though other organizations that applied for observer status in 2008 saw their applications granted, there was no response to CAL’s application. After numerous inquiries on the status of the application, the ACHPR asked its secretariat to develop a position paper on the justiciability of LGBTQ rights under the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights. There was also another position paper that was developed by civil society organizations, including LGBTQ advocacy organizations. Both papers reached the conclusion that LGBTQ people received protection under the charter. In 2010 the ACHPR requested a meeting with activists working on sexual orientation and gender identity and expression (SOGIE) in order to gather more information prior to making a decision.

THE COMMISSION CONDEMNS VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION AGAINST LGBTQ PERSONS

The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights passed Resolution 275 at its 55th Ordinary Session held in Luanda, Angola, from 28 April to 12 May 2014. Officially titled “Resolution on Protection against Violence and Other Human Rights Violations against Persons on the Basis of Their Real or Imputed Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity,” the resolution marked the first time that the commission publicly voiced support for LGBTQ rights.

Recalling that Article 2 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (the African Charter) prohibits discrimination of the individual on the basis of distinctions of any kind such as race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or any status;

Further recalling that Article 3 of the African Charter entitles every individual to equal protection of the law;

Noting that Articles 4 and 5 of the African Charter entitle every individual to respect of their life and the integrity of their person, and prohibit torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment;

Alarmed that acts of violence, discrimination and other human rights violations continue to be committed on individuals in many parts of Africa because of their actual or imputed sexual orientation or gender identity;

Noting that such violence includes “corrective” rape, physical assaults, torture,
murder, arbitrary arrests, detentions, extra-judicial killings and executions, forced disappearances, extortion and blackmail;

Further alarmed at the incidence of violence and human rights violations and abuses by State and non-state actors targeting human rights defenders and civil society organisations working on issues of sexual orientation or gender identity in Africa;

Deeply disturbed by the failure of law enforcement agencies to diligently investigate and prosecute perpetrators of violence and other human rights violations targeting persons on the basis of their imputed or real sexual orientation or gender identity;

1. Condemns the increasing incidence of violence and other human rights violations, including murder, rape, assault, arbitrary imprisonment and other forms of persecution of persons on the basis of their imputed or real sexual orientation or gender identity;

2. Specifically condemns the situation of systematic attacks by State and non-state actors against persons on the basis of their imputed or real sexual orientation or gender identity;

3. Calls on State Parties to ensure that human rights defenders work in an enabling environment that is free of stigma, reprisals or criminal prosecution as a result of their human rights protection activities, including the rights of sexual minorities; and

4. Strongly urges States to end all acts of violence and abuse, whether committed by State or non-state actors, including by enacting and effectively applying appropriate laws prohibiting and punishing all forms of violence including those targeting persons on the basis of their imputed or real sexual orientation or gender identities, ensuring proper investigation and diligent prosecution of perpetrators, and establishing judicial procedures responsive to the needs of victims.

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After the meeting the ACHPR wrote to CAL advising them that their application had been declined on the grounds that CAL did not deal with issues that are in the charter. In October 2010 SOGIE activists requested that other civil society organisations working with the ACHPR with observer status publicly denounce the commission’s decision. They also asked other civil society organizations to write to the commission and express their dissatisfaction with the decision.
In the aftermath of the decision and on the strength of the United Nations Human Rights Council’s SOGIE violence resolution (Resolution 17/19), activists decided to advocate for a similar resolution from the ACHPR on ending violence based on SOGIE. In 2012 the African Men for Sexual Health and Rights (AMShEr) and CAL prepared a report on the prevalence of SOGIE-based violence in Africa (AMSHeR and CAL 2013). In 2013 the report was presented during the nongovernmental organizations (NGO) forum that traditionally meets before the ordinary session of the ACHPR, and some of the commissioners participated and supported the advocacy. (The forum is a space that has been created for NGOs to discuss pertinent human rights issues on the continent and prepare for the sessions of the commission.) The resolution was adopted in 2014 (Resolution 275) and requires states to answer the following, which is one of eighteen “Indicative Questions to State Parties” for the preparation of biannual state reports: “Has the State taken measures to address acts of torture or ill-treatment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and also provide effective redress to such victims?”

Emboldened by this success, CAL in 2014 decided to apply for observer status again. The following year, after a tense and long public debate by the ACHPR, CAL was granted observer status, which enabled it to participate in the biannual commission sessions and the preceding NGO forum. A few months later, the executive council of the African Union requested that the ACHPR review its criteria for granting observer status and withdraw the observer status that had been granted to CAL. CAL and the Centre for Human Rights challenged this by seeking an advisory opinion from the African Court on Human and Peoples’ Rights on whether the African Union had the authority to request the reversal of the commission’s decisions. The advisory opinion was still pending at the court as of 2017, and CAL’s observer status had not been withdrawn.

Organizing on the Sidelines

Despite the ACHPR’s failure to engage fully with LGBTQ advocacy organizations, SOGIE activists continued to draft resolutions with other civil society organizations to present to the commission for possible adoption. The organizations present these resolutions under the auspices of the aforementioned NGO forum. Historically, the NGO forum would adopt draft resolutions and forward these to the ACHPR, and the commission would decide whether they wanted to adopt the resolutions.

In 2008 some civil society groups at the NGO forum objected to the inclusion of a draft resolution condemning violence and the culture of impunity with respect to SOGIE-based violence. The NGO forum steering committee suggested that the draft resolution should be put to a vote. Although the draft resolution narrowly passed, there was dissatisfaction among SOGIE activists that this particular draft had to be put to a vote because resolutions typically were adopted without a vote. The NGO forum invited the SOGIE activists to prepare panels for the following session in order to have a conversation about SOGIE with
the rest of the civil society groups that attended the NGO forum. There was recognition that this was an issue that many groups had little information about, as it was not a human rights issue on which the NGO forum had previously engaged.

In 2009—with the support of the United Nations Development Programme—AMSHeR, CAL, the International Centre for the Legal Protection of Human Rights (Interights), and the Heartland Alliance's Global Initiative for Sexuality and Human Rights coordinated the panels. After that session the four organizations continued to coordinate SOGIE advocacy at the ACHPR. They hosted training sessions on advocacy that provided updates to current and emerging activists. They also conducted workshops on the African human rights systems to orient new activists to the various advocacy opportunities that existed at the commission.

Initially, the organizing primarily involved activists from southern Africa, but organizations from other parts of Africa soon joined. UHAI (East African Sexual Rights Initiative), an activist fund advocating for Africa’s sex workers and sexual and gender minorities with a focus on East Africa, facilitated the participation of activists from that region. The Heartland Alliance and AMSHeR facilitated the participation of activists from francophone Africa, as most of the activists were from anglophone Africa. Despite the obstacles it creates or are put in its way, the ACHPR is enabling the expansion of activism that promotes the rights, health, and dignity of sexual and gender minorities on the African continent.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Human Rights; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Human Rights and Queer Arab Refugees; Human Rights Campaign; Human Rights in Asia; Human Rights in Europe

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Afropop is a generic term for popular music generated in Africa. Afropop music was formed through the interaction of cultures before and after colonialism, and the different genres of Afropop music reflect the continent’s diversity. Nevertheless, Afropop songs share some common characteristics. Generally, Afropop songs use strong percussion, relaxed vocal timbre, rhythms and polyrhythms, and repetitive song structures. A close association of melody with linguistic contour is also common for this music genre. Afropop is less complex in structure than traditional African music because it was generated out of syncretization (i.e., the process of combining or attempting to combine characteristics of distinct musical genres).

Afropop is rooted in traditional African music and shaped by a shared colonial heritage. Afropop music draws inspiration from African American, Afro-Latin, Afro-Caribbean, European, and regional African music. Additional influences include Arabic/Islamic music and Western technology. Sean Barlow and Banning Eyre describe Afropop as “an endlessly creative conversation between instruments and players, singers and their fans, the village and the city, the living and their ancestors, between generations and changing attitudes, local roots and international pop culture” (1995, 7). Afropop’s varied influences makes it dynamic, and research frequently lags behind new developments in this genre (Manuel 1988), but increasing smartphone usage on the continent has created a larger international market for Afropop (Parke 2016). Modern styles of Afropop include azonto, coupé-décalé, and kwaito, while Afrobeat, kuduro, highlife, juju, Afro-reggae, soukous, makossa, zemenawi, chimurenga, and mbube are more classic forms.

Afropop Music as Resistance

Music can be used for political purposes, including influencing the behavior of others and giving a voice to opinions most people cannot express (Pratt 1990). Afropop music is viewed as being useful for several purposes beyond entertainment. The juju legend King Sunny Adé (1946–) commented that Afropop is a useful tool for education (Bergman 1985). Afropop music has served as a “source of moral sustenance” (Irele 1993, 71) in the midst of
challenges encountered during colonialism and periods of political instability. Afropop singers have been known to engage in political conduct, with the most famous example being Fela Kuti (1938–1997), the father of Afrobeats. Kuti pushed societal boundaries and criticized Nigerian governments, resulting in incarceration and his mother’s death. It has been argued that Kuti is proof of Afropop’s revolutionary nature (Murphy 2007), whereas others assert that direct political commentary is rare in Afropop because double entendre is preferred (Cloonan 2006). Music is a helpful avenue for discussing issues relating to sexuality in Africa, because in most African societies there is a veil of silence pertaining to public discussions of sexual matters, and same-sex interactions often occur under this cloak of silence.

Despite most countries on the African continent criminalizing homosexuality and/or same-sex acts in some form, there are a few queer musicians that have come to the fore. The following is a discussion of some of the most famous and/or critically acclaimed queer Afropop singers, as well as artists who are challenging heteronormative standards. There is, additionally, a discussion of a few Afropop singers who have been vocal advocates for sexual minorities on the continent.

**Nakhane Touré (1988–)**

Nakhane Touré is a gay South African singer born Nakhane Mavuso. (Nakhane changed his surname Mavuso to Mahlakahlahaka after being adopted by his aunt and her husband. He subsequently changed his surname again to Touré, once he became a musician.) His adopted surname, Touré, pays homage to the Malian singer Ali Farka Touré (1939–2006). Nakhane Touré is a Christian and incorporates his sexuality and faith into his songs (Ncube 2015). His first album, *Brave Confusion* (2013), features songs such as “In the Dark Room,” which was inspired by Touré’s first gay club visit; the album has been described as both homoerotic and sociopolitical (Owen 2014). In 2017 Touré won an award at the Durban International Film Festival for his role in the South African film *Inxeba* (The wound), which explores Xhosa initiation rites and homosexuality. Touré received multiple death threats after playing this role (Blignaut 2017).

**Titica (1986–)**

Titica is an Angolan singer who performs *kuduro* songs, a fusion of African beats with rap and techno. Titica is trans and experienced abuse for failing to conform to heteronormative standards, including being beaten and stoned (Redvers 2012). Titica’s songs address issues that are not often discussed because of social mores. For example, in “Olha o boneco” (Look at the doll) from her 2012 album *Chão* (Floor), she advocates for LGBT rights, and she condemns sexual harassment in “Don’t Touch Me” from her 2015 album *De última à primeira* (From last to first). Titica was appointed as a goodwill ambassador for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS in 2013. In 2014 Titica starred in the award-
winning *I Love Kuduro* documentary, produced by Coréon Dú, son of José Eduardo dos Santos, the former president of Angola.

[Image of Afropop Singer Nakhane Touré in 2017]

© MAARTEN DE BOER/GETTY IMAGES PORTRAIT

_Afropop Singer Nakhane Touré in 2017_. Touré is a South African singer who is both gay and a Christian. He incorporates his sexuality and his faith into his songs.

**Art Attack**

Art Attack is a Kenyan art and rap collective famous for producing an Afropop remake of Macklemore, Ryan Lewis, and Mary Lambert's 2012 hit “Same Love,” bearing the same name as the original. The 2016 video portrays the struggles of sexual minorities in Kenya and advocates for an end to “vilification,” leading to a backlash from Kenyan authorities. Notably, the Kenya Film Classification Board asked Google to block the video in Kenya for being “irresponsible,” a request Google refused (Klein 2016). Art Attack's “Same Love” video featured Noti Flow, a bisexual and Kenyan female rapper born Florence Kutoto. Noti Flow shares a kiss with Soila Cole, her rumored girlfriend, in the video; she subsequently reported receiving threats on social media (Ruyaga 2016). Additionally, “Same Love” featured the gay Kenyan gospel singer, writer, and activist Joji Baro, born George Barasa, who has been assaulted on multiple occasions because of his sexuality (Baro 2014), as well as the Tanzanian couple Lorenzo Cruz and Dayon Monson (a model).

**Challenging Heteronormative Standards**
Artists who are challenging heteronormative standards include the openly gay Angolan *kuduro* performer Edy Sex, who infuses his performances with a feminine flair ([Afropop Worldwide 2012](http://www.afropop.org/4695/kuduros-effeminate-flair-with-edy-sex)); the lesbian Namibian singer Shishani, who uses her songs to promote equality ([Speaks 2013](http://www.netshop.ng/gay-kenyan-artiste-joji-baro-narrates-his-ordeal-in-touching-blog-post/)); and the lesbian Ugandan singer Shivan Pavin, who released “Back Off” on YouTube in 2016 despite being blackballed by producers and other singers because of her sexuality ([Kuchu Times 2016](http://www.channel24.co.za/Movies/News/nakhane-toure-reacts-to-death-threats-over-new-movie-20170827)). Afropop artists combating homophobia include Charly Boy (1951–), whose real name is Charles Oputa. He was nicknamed “Nigeria’s Boy George” for wearing androgynous clothing, makeup, and braids. In a 2017 interview, Oputa claimed that he created the Charly Boy persona “to shock timid, myopic, arrogantly ignorant, and ‘mongo-parkish’ [mentally colonized] Nigerians into being their authentic selves” ([Olonilua 2017](http://www.channel24.co.za/Movies/News/nakhane-toure-reacts-to-death-threats-over-new-movie-20170827)). Charly Boy has been vocal in his support for Nigeria’s sexual minorities ([Oputa 2017](http://www.channel24.co.za/Movies/News/nakhane-toure-reacts-to-death-threats-over-new-movie-20170827)). Similarly, the Ghanaian Afropop singers Efya (1987–) and Wanlov the Kubolor (1980–) have regularly condemned criminalization of same-sex acts in Ghana, as well as discrimination against LGBT individuals ([Krejcova 2015](http://www.channel24.co.za/Movies/News/nakhane-toure-reacts-to-death-threats-over-new-movie-20170827)).


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The NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt—often referred to simply as the AIDS Memorial Quilt—is an enormous quilt that serves as a memorial to celebrate the lives of those who have died of AIDS-related causes. It was conceptualized by the NAMES Project Foundation in 1987. Since its first display in October 1987, it has been seen by more than 18 million visitors (Literat and Balsamo 2014). As of 2016, it was the largest piece of community folk art in the world and weighed roughly 56 tons (DeLuca et al. 2007). More than 48,000 individual memorial panels—each measuring 3 by 6 feet—have been sewn together by friends, lovers, and family members of the deceased, and today the quilt serves as a powerful visual reminder of the AIDS pandemic (Literat and Balsamo 2014). Erin J. Rand and others have noted that the formal organization of the quilt intended to “counter the anonymity and secrecy that surrounded AIDS deaths by specifically naming—and by naming, providing a means for mourning—the dead” (Rand 2007, 659; Gambardella 2011).

The AIDS Memorial Quilt Archive also preserves the images and stories contained within the quilt. Today, the NAMES Project Foundation strives to effectively illustrate the enormity of the AIDS epidemic and increase the general public’s awareness of HIV/AIDS by providing a creative means for remembrance and healing. With the transformation of the New York branch of the NAMES Project into the International AIDS Prevention Initiative in 2004, the NAMES Foundation’s US and international chapters continue to assist others with HIV infection-prevention education, as well as raise funds for community-based AIDS service organizations.
The AIDS Memorial Quilt on Display at the National Mall in Washington, DC, in 2012. The quilt is the largest piece of community folk art in the world and serves as a powerful visual reminder of the AIDS pandemic. More than 48,000 individual memorial panels—each measuring 3 by 6 feet—have been sewn together by friends, lovers, and family members of those who died.

In addition to serving as an active reflection on the impact of the AIDS pandemic, the AIDS Memorial Quilt has shifted modes of active contemporary commemoration in the United States and around the world. Cleve Jones, founder of the project, notes, “The Quilt was and is an activist symbol—comforting, yes, but mortally troubling. If it raised a single question, it was, ‘What are you going to do about it?’ That was the challenge we laid at the national doorstep” (2007a, 591). Ioana Literat and Anne Balsamo reinforce this notion, noting, “The political and activist use of the AIDS Quilt must be understood as a direct response to the lack of visibility that plagued AIDS-affected communities (mostly gay men and intravenous drug users) in the 1980s” (2014, 139). Therefore, since the mid-1980s the quilt has served both documentary and performative purposes, increasing the visibility of the impact of the AIDS pandemic in contemporary society and providing a space for the enactment of that memory. Nonetheless, it has also garnered criticism for its place in history. As Kyra Pearson notes, when the California Senate passed legislation requiring public schools to adopt social science textbooks that teach about “sexual diversity” in 2006, the quilt came under attack in the media for its “obsolescence.” Critiques centered on its “attachment to white gay male lives and history” and its lack of representativeness, given the shifting global demographics of the AIDS pandemic and its disproportionate effects on African Americans in the US context (Pearson 2011, 280). Portrayals centered on the quilt as a relic and an “aging
snapshot,” whatever the realities of its actual evolving composition (Pearson 2011, 281).

Quilts have a particular symbolic resonance. As folk art that can be produced by people without formal artistic training, “quilts possess a decidedly local, vernacular, and populist voice—one that is especially suited to commemorate personal loss” (Ott et al. 2011, 105–106). They have a long political history in American culture; the freedom quilts, for example, contained crucial markings for the Underground Railroad that helped slaves flee their plantation (Ott et al. 2011). Such resonances are crucial to the AIDS Memorial Quilt’s function to confront the political exclusion and to provide an alternative site of memory.

History of the Quilt

The origins of the quilt can be traced back to 1985, when it was conceived by Cleve Jones (1954–), a longtime gay rights activist based in San Francisco (NAMES Project Foundation 2018). Jones had helped to organize the candlelight march honoring Harvey Milk (1930–1978), who became the first openly gay elected official in the state of California with his election to San Francisco’s Board of Supervisors, and San Francisco mayor George Moscone (1929–1978), both of whom had been assassinated (Jones 2007b). While planning the 1985 march, Jones learned that more than 1,000 San Franciscans had died of AIDS (Literat and Balsamo 2014). He asked participants to write the names of friends, partners, and family members who had died of the disease on placards, and these placards were taped to the walls of the San Francisco Federal Building after the march. The result resembled a patchwork quilt (Jones 2007a).

Jones and friends made plans for a larger quilt. Their goal was to create a memorial for those who had died of AIDS, and to help people understand the impact of the disease (Jones 2007b). A little over a year later, Jones created his first panel for the AIDS Memorial Quilt in memory of his friend Martin Feldman. In 1987 Jones teamed up with Mike Smith and several others to formally organize the NAMES Project Foundation (Jones 2007a). People from all over the United States—particularly in the cities most affected by AIDS, including Atlanta, New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco—sent panels to San Francisco to be included in the quilt. Sewing machines, equipment, and other materials were supplied by generous donors, and many volunteered tirelessly to help bring the quilt together (Jones 2007a).

The conceptualization, creation, display, and growth of the quilt—as well as its “provocative appearance on the Mall” in the late 1980s, “gave the project’s leadership the opportunity to denounce the country’s indifference to the AIDS epidemic and to rally for greater attention to research support” (Hawkins 1993, 758, 760). Indeed, as Rand notes, “by utilizing a symbol of American folk art and mythology—the patchwork quilt—the Quilt was able to encourage nationwide mourning, even if those being mourned continued to be reviled” (2007, 664). The construction and display of the quilt—and its inspiration for the
design for the International AIDS Memorial Quilt and memorial quilts for other causes—has served as an essential visualization and vocalization of AIDS activism in the United States and the rest of the world (NAMES Project Netherlands Foundation 2018).

**Descriptions of the Quilt**

Individual quilt panels are typically very personalized and are created by the loved ones of someone who has died of AIDS-related causes. Each panel measures 3 feet by 6 feet—roughly the size of a human grave (Jones 2007a). When donated to the NAMES Project Foundation, the panels are grouped and assembled into eight-panel “blocks” measuring 12 feet by 12 feet. These blocks can be seen at local displays of the quilt.

Jones describes the techniques used in making the panels, as well as some of the materials used:

> There was every material from tweed to leather to silk, and of course ribbons and beads and glitter galore. And everything you could imagine was sewn onto fabric: locks of hair, record albums, souvenir postcards, a Barbie doll, whistles, crystals, a motorcycle jacket, a tuxedo, a shard of glass, foam rubber French fries, toy cars, a thimble, a cowboy hat, teddy bears, a pink Lacoste shirt, a Buddhist’s saffron robe, and even a padded jock strap. Notes were scribbled in corners; others were sewn in. Some panels held the ashes of the people they memorialized.

*(Jones 2007a, 588)*

Most panels are accompanied by letters, biographies, and photos, all of which speak to the experience of life in the age of AIDS, documenting the effects on those lost and those left behind (Jones 2007a). In the future, these “documentary” materials will be digitally photographed, contributing to the digitization of the quilt’s panels; when combined with the quilt’s panel images—currently displayed online—they will create a rich tapestry of information for future generations (NAMES Project Foundation 2018). The AIDS Memorial Quilt challenges the physicality of traditional monuments that are cast in stone or other permanent materials meant to withstand the passage of time. Kevin DeLuca and his colleagues interrogate the curious materiality of the AIDS quilt itself:

> So what do we make of the AIDS Memorial Quilt, a memorial made of the softest of materials—cloth, cotton? Well, first, that time already haunts the Quilt. The
As monument, memorial, archive, and active performance of mourning, the AIDS Memorial Quilt has called into question the ways in which communities can actively remember while moving toward the future.

The Quilt on Display and on Tour

The AIDS Memorial Quilt was displayed for the first time on the National Mall in Washington, DC, on 11 October 1987 ( NAMES Project Foundation 2018 ). Its display coincided with the Second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. The display included 1,920 panels and covered a space larger than a football field (Literat and Balsamo 2014). Roughly 500,000 people visited the quilt while it was on display that weekend ( Jones 2007a ).

Due to the overwhelming response to the quilt at its first display, a national tour was planned for spring 1988. By the end of the tour, the quilt’s size had tripled to include more than 6,000 panels ( NAMES Project Foundation 2018 ). The tour itself raised nearly $500,000 for hundreds of AIDS service organizations, and more than 9,000 volunteers from across the country helped the crew—of only seven people—move and display the quilt in each city ( Jones 2007a ). In October 1988, 8,288 panels were displayed on the Ellipse in front of the White House. Due to its sheer size and weight and the logistics required to transport the quilt, the last display of the entire AIDS Memorial Quilt was in October 1996, when the quilt covered the entire National Mall in Washington, DC (Literat and Balsamo 2014). The International AIDS Prevention Initiative and the Global AIDS Memorial Quilt took their first world tour in 2004 to 2005, stopping in Bangkok, Jamaica, Haiti, New York, Moscow, Berlin, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, and Melbourne before ending in Washington, DC ( NAMES Project Netherlands Foundation 2018 ).

The International AIDS Memorial Quilt

Today, the AIDS Memorial Quilt’s influence reaches beyond the borders of the United States, with independent quilt affiliates around the world. Since 2004 the former New York chapter has served as the International AIDS Prevention Initiative. The creation of an International AIDS Memorial Quilt began in 1998, when the NAMES Project Netherlands
and the New York chapter of the NAMES Project collaborated to bring a global perspective to the memorialization of AIDS and HIV (NAMES Project Netherlands Foundation 2018). Countries that have contributed to the International AIDS Memorial Quilt include Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, France, Germany, Guatemala, Haiti, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Russia, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, Venezuela, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (NAMES Project Netherlands Foundation 2018).

In 1989 the quilt was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, demonstrating the impact the quilt has had on the global community as a memorial project and performance of mourning. It remains the largest community art project in the world, and the American quilt been the subject of countless books, films, scholarly papers, articles, and theatrical, artistic, and musical performances. Common Threads: Stories from the Quilt won the Academy Award for the best feature-length documentary film in 1989. The quilt has redefined the tradition of quilt-making in response to contemporary circumstances, as well as the process of memorialization in the United States (Blair and Michel 2007). Carole Blair and Neil Michel argue, “We believe the AIDS Memorial Quilt still has the potential to be more than ‘a museum piece.’ Whatever its fate in the years to come, though, we believe a part of its legacy will (and should) be as an important commemorative artwork in its own right” (2007, 620). A memorial, a tool for education, and a work of art, the quilt is a unique creation, an uncommon and uplifting response to the tragic loss of human life.

The Digital Quilt: The AIDS Memorial Quilt Archive

To archive and preserve the quilt, the panels have been professionally photographed by the NAMES Project Foundation. These photographs have created a permanent visual record of the quilt itself, as well as a compelling symbol of the scale and significance of the AIDS pandemic. The digital images are currently available online, making the quilt more available to the international public than ever before. The digitization and archiving process is an ongoing project as new panels are submitted continually, and it adds an international dimension to the memorial nature of the quilt itself. Other digital initiatives related to the AIDS Memorial Quilt include a collaboration between the NAMES Project Foundation and the University of Southern California’s public initiatives research team to create a tabletop browser, an interactive timeline, and a mobile web app for the Quilt 2012 commemorations (Literat and Balsamo 2014).

The next goal of the archive project is to analyze and catalog each panel of the quilt for visual and textual content (NAMES Project Foundation 2018). This information will be combined with the letters, biographies, and photos submitted by the panel makers into an accessible and globally available database. In that vein, Christopher Capozzola notes, "while the American symbolism and nationalist rhetoric of the Quilt served it well in the 1980s, it is now time to more explicitly and more effectively acknowledge the global implications of
the AIDS epidemic” (2002, 97). Future ambitions of the archive project include collecting video interviews, stories, and testaments of panel makers. The archive project ensures that the quilt and those it remembers live on. The database and oral histories will chronicle the AIDS pandemic for generations to come.

SEE ALSO HIV/AIDS; HIV/AIDS in the United States; Museums and Memorials

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Seba al-Herz (or Sabā Hirz), author of *Al-Akharun (The Others)*, remains an enigma, her true identity a secret even as her only novel, published in Beirut in 2006, gains international popularity and recognition. Since its anonymous English translation was released in 2009, the author's identity has only become more mysterious. The only personal information about al-Herz given directly to the reader is two short lines on the back cover: “Seba al-Herz is the pseudonym of a twenty-six-year old Saudi woman from al-Qatif in Saudi Arabia. This is her first novel.” Everything else that the public can infer about this author comes from her book, written in first-person perspective by an unnamed young Shi’a woman attending university in al-Qatif. It is the protagonist-narrator's anonymity paralleling her own that contributes to a conflation of author and character, their lives intertwined in the public consciousness largely as a result of a morbid fascination with her character’s taboo existence. *Al-Akharun* is an introspective study in ambiguity, as its protagonist expresses and struggles with the aftermath of conflicting desires from her position of otherness. Not only is she a young woman in a strictly patriarchal and gender-segregated society, but al-Herz’s protagonist lives her life in the social and political margins as a result of her Shi’i minority religion, her isolating epileptic episodes, and her ambiguous sexual orientation and gender identity.
Religious Persecution

While al-Herz’s capricious protagonist grapples with understanding and defining her emotional and physical needs, her commitment to religion remains comparatively steadfast. As a student of both the sciences and Islamic jurisprudence in an all-women’s university, she actively participates in and even organizes the production and dissemination of politically dissident literature and joins her friends and colleagues in wearing open signs of Shi‘i resistance and protest. She constructs her semipublic persona by coordinating religious summer intensive courses, doing volunteer work, and writing for a magazine whose purpose is to share proper moral and cultural education with young people, all in line with Shi‘a ideology. Like the rest of her Shi‘a peers, she wears the traditional black shirt during the month of Muharram to commemorate the martyrdom of the Prophet’s grandson Husayn ibn ‘Ali, even though wearing black at this time is banned by the Sunni government to curb Shi‘a religious displays of mourning. This small resistance incurs regular fines for the one-third of students at the college who demonstrate their Shi‘a identities in the somewhat-public space of their private university.

Unlike the rest of the country, where Shi‘as compose only a small fraction of the population,
the eastern provinces are predominantly Shi’ā, with the city of al-Qatif as the epicenter containing roughly 95 percent Shi’ā demographics. Even with this overwhelming local majority, Saudi Arabia’s Wahhabi government creates an atmosphere and reality of institutionalized sectarianism that is decidedly anti-Shi’ā. Wahhabi Islam is an exceptionally conservative sect of the Sunni branch; however, since Wahhabism now carries a negative connotation of extremism, many practitioners prefer to use the term *muwahhidun*, or those upholding the doctrine of *tawhid* (absolute monotheism) (“Wahhabis”).

When *al-Akharun* was released in 2006, anti-Shi’ā sentiment on the part of the Saudi government and Sunni populace had returned in full force after a short four-year period of hollow, rhetorical commitments to political reform ([Jones 2005](#)). While open discrimination against Shi’ā citizens was prohibited, Shi’ās in the eastern provinces found that government funds and programs were habitually routed to Sunni residents and that, while jobs in the thriving oil industry near the oasis city of al-Qatif were not particularly difficult to come by, promotion to management and other higher-paying, white-collar jobs were reserved for Sunni employees. The religious oppression of Shi’ās is traditionally so extreme that many practice their faith in *taqiyya*, or hidden from the ruling party. In fact, there are no current statistics as to the precise population demographics of Shi’ā Saudis; sources disagree, indicating that they could constitute anywhere from 10 to 15 percent of Saudi citizens ([Jones 2005](#)).

**Ashura**

Al-Herz points to the tension and frustrations caused by the kingdom’s failure to implement and enforce this intended reconciliation in her protagonist’s rebellious yet loyal adherence to observing the entirety of the Muharram month. In 2004, two years before *al-Akharun*’s publication, the Saudi government conceded to Shi’ā protest, granting the opportunity to practice *Ashura*, or the tenth and most important day of Muharram, as part of this attempt at political reform. While the reform inevitably failed, with the relationship between Saudi Sunnis and Shi’ās only becoming more strained as a result of the Iraq War, the freedom to practice Ashura has, as of 2017, not been officially revoked ([Jones 2005](#)). Ashura is important to Shi’ā practitioners as a very public spectacle and reenactment of Husayn’s martyrdom, marked by self-mortification and self-flagellation in a display of mourning and continuation of his legacy of fighting for justice over personal well-being. Understanding the complicated political history behind this religious ceremony of self-harm is key to reading *al-Akharun* and observing the ways in which the narrator navigates her many experiences of marginalization as a queer, disabled Shi’ā woman.

Censoring the religious practice of Muharram only strengthens the Shi’ā cause in al-Herz’s novel. The current oppression of Shi’ās harks back to the original violent split that separated Shi’ā from Sunni as a result of Husayn ibn ‘Ali’s violent murder. Living on the
margins of society as a result of religious, political, and social persecution is, in many ways, a hallmark of the Saudi Shiʿa experience. As the narrator-protagonist says, “I have inherited a superabundance of weeping that goes back to an ancient era” (al-Herz [2006] 2009, 65). Thus, al-Herz links Shiʿa historical and contemporary religious identity through this theme of ostracization and the perpetual process of “othering,” both as resistance to governmental and religious authority—which are, in Saudi Arabia, one and the same—and as a means of illustrating the powerful community-building side effect of persecution.

### Gender Segregation

Rigid social norms and expectations in Wahhabi-interpreted Qurʿanic scripture—and thus Islamic and political law—keep men and women apart. This gendered segregation, however, often has the unintended side effect of strengthening homosocial relationships and emotional bonds between friends of the same sex, even unintentionally establishing space for homosexual attraction and interaction. Al-Herz’s anonymous protagonist demonstrates both the limitations and the freedoms associated with this homosocially divided society. While she grows up with several brothers and a father at home, the narrator has only very limited contact with men in general, especially those unrelated to her. Additionally, in her particular case, she has little to no chance of being set up in an arranged marriage because of her epilepsy, a disease that runs in her family—also carrying with it the connotation of inbreeding (although this is never confirmed by the author or translator)—and that prevents her from being appropriate marriage material. Even though same-sex relationships and activity are prohibited in Saudi Arabia, the narrator is introduced to and explores the world of sapphic pleasure largely because she has very little access to men and many private opportunities to build intimate relationships with other women. However, the exploration of her sexuality is not a positive process of self-realization for several reasons, which include governmental censorship and restrictions, her ambiguous feelings and interpretations of gender and sexuality, and her struggle to reconcile these nonheteronormative emotions and actions with her faith.

### Queerness under Islamic Law

An absolute monarchy, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia recognizes only shariʿa (Islamic law) and the Qurʿan as both constitution and legislation, with religious authority the only power over the royal family (Vogel 2012). Under shariʿa, and in the Qurʿan, there are six hudud (prohibitions or boundaries) that have fixed, indisputable punishments, including zina (illicit sexual relations), for which the punishment is either 100 lashes or death by stoning (Dubber and Hörnle 2014). Homosexual relations fall within the scope of zina and are punished to the full extent of the law. However, these punishments are divvied up differently based on gender. Because queer female encounters do not involve penetration like those of their male counterparts, the traditional penalty is only the 100 lashes, not
death by stoning. While this gendered differentiation may seem irrelevant or illogical in the domain of sexual deviance, there is a more telling underlying reason: in many cases, women are regarded as too weak and disenfranchised to even warrant stoning. Even though this punishment is extreme, it reveals an underestimation of women that many of the female characters in *al-Akharun* use to their advantage. Additionally, because spaces are gender-segregated—and women’s quarters are inherently private spaces—finding the four necessary, respected male witnesses to testify to these secret encounters can prove to be a challenge.

Because women are restricted from public view and interaction with unrelated men is largely prohibited, women are rarely questioned for spending time together alone, even behind closed doors and curtains. Although this forced privacy seems oppressive and prisonlike, it provides women—continually underestimated by a patriarchal society and government—the physical space for homosexual exploration and romance. Dai—the narrator’s lover, another young woman from her school and also an active participant in Shi’a programs and organizations—does not introduce the narrator to her first homosexual romantic and physical feelings, but she does expand the narrator’s knowledge and experience of a secret underworld of young Saudi lesbians. Throughout the duration of their relationship, they spend most of their time in their bedrooms, unquestioned even though their families are nearby. While the narrator’s bedroom is isolated because most of her family has left the home either through marriage or death, Dai’s bedroom shields and insulates their intimate moments from the world with heavy curtains, thick walls, and a one-way window looking out to the street. The narrator is still worried that she may be caught, which is always an underlying fear that propels her long, frequent periods of postcoital isolation. However, they remain relatively safe and secluded from watchful eyes, especially given their public religious devotion. After several months, Dai plans excursions to visit and spend time with a group of other queer or lesbian women. In this setting, the other women become witnesses to their romantic relationship, and Dai and the narrator to theirs. They can be open with one another about their identities in a space that is still private.

In addition to women’s physical spaces, the Saudi government also censors education and communication via the internet. When the narrator attempts to research *almithliyya al-jinsiyya* (homosexuality) and bisexuality, her limited search results have two effects, primarily grounded in language and culture of origin. When she searches in English, she feels detached and ostracized from the subject matter, as if it does not refer to her, her life, or her experiences. However, when she searches in Arabic, all she finds are restrictions, punishments, and confirmation of her “sin” in the eyes of God. Even though her attempts to learn more about herself only end up causing her more pain and emotional strife, the narrator continues to explore, using online chat rooms to try on different identities. Even though moral police monitor the chat rooms, she learns how to evade them by starting and responding to conversations only very late at night. Thus, the internet and other
technological advances, such as texting, provide more spaces that blur the line between private and public and establish opportunities for sexual and social dissidence.

**Sexual Ambiguity and Faith**

Even though she has many opportunities to experiment with her nonheteronormative sexuality and keeps returning to these experiences, *al-Akharun's* narrator struggles to define or categorize herself under neat, precise labels. As a result of her illness and subsequent relegation to unmarried life, she does not fit into the categories of gender and sexuality that she once understood. She writes that "ever since I was a semi-boy and a sexless child, I have gotten used to the idea, never challenged, that children do not gain the qualities of their sex until after marriage, when the girls give birth to children and the boys go out to work" ([al-Herz](#) 2009, 65). So, when she is confronted with her own sexuality, especially a sexuality that is inherently against her religion in its interpretation by the Saudi state, she does not understand how it can exist outside this framework. Researching the terms *homosexuality* and *bisexuality*, the narrator feels detached and cannot connect with them. Allowing her girlfriend Dai to take off her clothes, the narrator watches herself in the mirror, transfixed by both her own body and by the desire in her lover's eyes that sends her into a "state of rapture" and gives her a "feeling of bliss" (12). The narrator genuinely feels romantic attraction and attachment to Dai and to other women in the novel. In fact, she describes her electric, erotic experiences with them passionately, almost as if spiritually overtaken or possessed. However, after her internet research and attempts to narrow down or consolidate her identity, she reaches "a state of estrangement" from her body and self, no longer able to look at herself in the mirror or take off her clothes, even when bathing (23).

Although she tries to form long-term romantic and emotional connections with her lovers, the narrator quickly loses interest in their predictability and, more importantly, in their attempts to make her predictable and to confine her to the role of girlfriend. At the same time, however, she cannot stand the idea that her lovers might leave her, stop wanting her, or stop loving her. She holds on tightly to these moments of bliss with them, grasping for certainty and a future together, until they inevitably sour. While this struggle is in part because of her faith and the difficult process of being confronted and trying to come to terms with nonnormative sexual desires while retaining her connection to God, her problems with relationships and commitment also come from her ambiguous yet very intense and acute feelings of simultaneous, all-consuming lust, adoration, and disgust for her lovers. As a result of her fear of a loss of independence and individuality, in addition to her refusal to be categorized as a "we" and belong to a group's ideology, the narrator even quits her responsibilities at the *husayniyya* (where the Shi'a student organization prepares Shi'a-specific religious ceremonies and articles for dissemination). She explains her frustrations both to her friends Aqil and Dai and in more detail to the reader in a rebellious,
It’s my right to have my own individual voice, and staying in the Husayniyya prevents me from even having the opportunity to offer my view of things. I hate being beholden to one particular line of thinking. I hate that my conduct has to show that I endorse and follow it! I hate being told that I would be offending and maybe even hating the Husayniyya if I wrote what I believe, and what I think is a personal right!

(AL-HERZ [2006] 2009, 124)

Later, after ending her violent, jealous, and dysfunctional relationship with Dai, the narrator begins dating Dareen, who attempts to help her come to terms with her homosexuality. However, even when she accepts that she is not inherently “defective, corrupt, [or] depraved,” the narrator asks “How did God create me? In what form did God create me?” insisting that she has had “homo sex,” but that she is not a “homo” (al-Herz [2006] 2009, 193). Just like in her religious ideology and personal relationships, her inability to choose and restrict herself to a particular shared identity causes her overwhelming and stifling fears and depression.

One of the most controversial aspects of this novel is the final chapter, in which the narrator’s anxiety and anguish conclude in a sex scene with her male friend Umar, through whom she is happily able to reconcile her sexuality with her faith, demanding commitment with him. While this ending appears to suggest that she needed a man to fulfill her life, undermining all of her homosexual relationships and nonnormative sexual thoughts and experiences, it also leaves her future, and thus her identity, ambiguous. She adamantly refuses to be identified as either homosexual or heterosexual, and all of her sexual experiences ultimately represent personal assessments, as she tests the boundaries of her own identity to prove this true individuality to herself.

 Queerness and Shi’ā Faith

The narrator associates love with pain: “Love is painful, and all the words paired with it are parallel states that do not intersect with it. Love and loss, love and flight, love and absence, love and sorrow” (al-Herz [2006] 2009, 192). Not only does she fear losing her independence to another, but her experiences with all of her relationships indicate an inevitability of loss, abandonment, and betrayal. From the death of her elder (and favorite) brother Hassan, to her parents’ and other siblings’ painful absences, and the epilepsy that prevents marriage opportunities, the narrator’s childhood and adolescence foreshadow the
ephemeral nature of her future relationships. This sense of loss and isolation goes back to
the “superabundance of weeping” that characterizes the Shi‘a experience (62).
Fundamentally, the narrator cannot accept love, community, or dependence on other
people in any capacity. Even her closest physical and emotional relationships, with Dai and
Dareen, are influenced by this history, as they perpetuate the cycle of violence with self-
inflicted pain.

Recalling the Ashura ceremonies, in which Shi‘as participate in public ritualized self-harm
to commemorate Husayn’s martyrdom, the narrator’s relationships are characterized by
bondage, masochism, verbal slurs, and open obsessions about relationships with past
lovers that doom her relationships from the start. The narrator’s interior struggle with her
sexuality and religious faith also evokes this history as inherited mourning. Overcome with
guilt and shame over her sinful thoughts and desires, the narrator enacts her own rituals
for absolution. After giving in to her desires, she goes through periods of self-disgust, in
which she avoids her lovers as punishment, harshly overwashes her body to cleanse
herself, and lives in her brother’s old bedroom in order to avoid the place of her sin.
However, considering the history associated with Ashura and self-harm, these practices
demonstrate more complexity than mere guilt and shame. Because they parallel her
religious ceremonies, her sexuality—including both hetero- and nonheteronormative
experiences—reinforces her religion rather than contradicting it. Ultimately, her
queerness, or her ambiguous gender, sexual, and intellectual identities, is simultaneously a
rebellion from and an enactment of her spirituality as she defies categorization, refusing to
conform to any one gender norm or sexual orientation, and acting outside the expectations
of different social and religious groups.

SEE ALSO Homosexual Acts in Shari‘a; Lesbianese (2008; Alissar Gazal); Misk al-Ghazal (1988;
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**alQaws**

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*Palestinian organization that promotes queer acceptance combined with advocacy against Israeli pinkwashing.*

alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society (in Arabic, Lil-taʿaddudiyya jinsiyya wal-jindariyya fil mujtamaʿa al-filastini) is a queer grassroots movement that has worked since the late 1990s to build LGBTQ communities and promote new ideas about gender and sexual diversity across Palestine ([alQaws 2018c](#)).

### Origins and Reorientation

alQaws, which is Arabic for “rainbow,” was first established in 2001 as a small service-oriented group within a larger Israeli organization, the Jerusalem Open House, that focused on tolerance for LGBTQ persons. Such collaboration ceased as the group gradually started to embrace the politics of what Walaa Alqaisiya ([2018](#)) has termed “decolonial queering.” In other words, the group underwent a process of queer reorientation ([Ahmed 2006](#)), growing increasingly critical of the Israeli approach, which treated LGBTQ advocacy as a “discrete site of oppression disconnected from Zionist settler colonialism” ([Alqaisiya 2018, 29](#)). This change occurred after the State of Israel began imposing harsher political conditions on Palestinians. For alQaws, the failure of the Oslo peace process in the late 1990s confirmed the inherent violence and brutality of the Israeli settler-colonial machine and revealed the inconceivability of any prospects for peace vis-à-vis its native Palestinian other. alQaws, therefore, posited a moment of “disorientations” ([Ahmed 2006, 11](#)), inscribing a move away from Israeli LGBTQ bodies because they did not allow queer Palestinian identities and political voices to be heard ([Maikey 2014](#)). This decision allowed alQaws to formulate a more expansive and politically effective self-definition. In 2007 alQaws officially separated from the Jerusalem Open House, marking the beginning of a queering praxis and complicating the exclusionary politics of gayness and the standard LGBTQ framework by becoming alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society ([Alqaisiya 2018](#)). In so doing, the group grounded its approach to issues of gender and sexuality in a sociopolitical context ([Maikey and al-ʿAris 2011](#)) that acknowledged and defied the colonial reality of Palestine.

### Opposition to Israeli Pinkwashing
One of the most important aspects of alQaws's decolonial queer approach is its effort to engender new forms of resistance to the political campaigns that Israel uses to brand itself as pink-progressive, or what Palestinian queer activist groups and their international allies call *pinkwashing*. Israel’s pinkwashing campaigns started in 2002, when the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked LGBTQ communities to take part in a video aimed at promoting Israel as a progressive country that was friendly to LGBTQ visitors and residents. The video was later distributed in San Francisco. In 2005 this campaign to “rebrand Israel” expanded, with millions of dollars invested in promoting Israel’s progressive gay image worldwide.

Israel’s deliberate use of this tactic produces a double effect. First, it promotes an image of Israel as a liberal gay haven. Second, it conceals Israel’s treatment of Palestinians, who are portrayed as backward and homophobic (Elias 2018). Pinkwashing reframes “the relationship between Israel and Palestine from ‘colonizer-colonized’ to one that distinguishes between those who are ‘modern and open,’ and those who are presented as ‘backward and homophobic’” (Alqaisiya, Hilal, and Maikey 2016, 131). This process of pinkwashing “simplifies and anesthetizes the fundamental violence on the basis of which [settler] colonialism thrives” (131).

In response to Israeli pinkwashing, alQaws and its queer transnational allies launched a campaign dubbed “pinkwatching,” which aimed to mobilize a global fight against Israel’s pinkwashing program. The goal of pinkwatching is to expose the colonial premise of Israeli pinkwashing and warn against efforts to “normalize Israeli occupation, settler colonialism, and apartheid” (Pinkwatching Israel 2018). For alQaws, the importance of pinkwatching lies in how it reveals the complex web of colonial, racist, Islamophobic, and homophobic elements that constitute the discourse and logic of pinkwashing and its supporters. The work of pinkwatching consists in creating a hub of activist analyses, press releases, and discussions that link gender and sexuality to the colonial reality of Palestine. For instance, pinkwatching efforts demonstrate how Israeli pinkwashing goes hand-in-hand with the propagation of political discourses that underpin support for masculinized, violent militarism and anti-Arab (that is, anti-Muslim) racism, which are the antithesis of “democracy,” “civility,” and “LGBT progress” (Pinkwatching Israel 2016; Maikey 2011). For alQaws and its supporters, pinkwatching reveals the colonial violence toward Palestinians that is condoned by those who blindly support “gay/modern” Israel and participate in Israel’s LGBTQ tourism industry.

Pinkwatching exposes how institutional or individual collaboration with and promotion of “gay Israel” permits the systematic and continued displacement, negation of rights, and denial of recognition of Palestine and Palestinians, including queer Palestinians. For these reasons, Palestinian queer activists call upon international LGBTQ communities and tourists to boycott Tel Aviv Pride events, Israeli LGBTQ film festivals, and gay tourism in Israel (alQaws 2018a, 2018b). With these calls to boycott, alQaws urges others to challenge events and collaborations that normalize the Israeli state and its LGBTQ organizations by
failing to adhere to a politics of resistance and exposure of Israeli colonialism (PACBI 2011). In addition, alQaws warns LGBTQ groups and individuals against “promotion of a criminal and settler state” and seeks to work in tandem with “the 2005 Palestinian Call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS)” (alQaws 2018a). Lynn Darwich and Haneen Maikey argue that queer expressions of solidarity with Palestine become significant only when the fight against pinkwashing is seen as part and parcel of “the larger [fight against the] colonial Zionist project … challenging its hidden notion of mainstream gay politics” (2014, 284). alQaws contends that transnational queer solidarity with Palestine should start with decolonization rather than reification of the international homogenization of LGBTQ rights discourse and mechanisms.

Rejection of Single-Issue Approaches to LGBTQ Activism

These hegemonic forces tend to enforce mainstream singleissue approaches to LGBTQ organizing that are detrimental to Palestinian queer activism. When international donors assign funding to organizations focusing solely on sexuality, they also participate in the (re)production of Palestine’s colonial reality (Maikey 2012). alQaws, therefore, complicates mainstream discourse and policies related to coming out, homophobia, pride, and visibility (Maikey and Shamali 2011) by proposing the abandonment of a single-issue approach to sexuality. alQaws urges activists to adopt an intersectional lens that pays attention to how diverse elements, including class, race, and gender, affect and contribute to the redefinition of LGBTQ identities. The group further opposes top-down mechanisms that impose predetermined models of gender and sexuality, arguing that such approaches to LGBTQ rights obliterate more fundamental political dynamics. Instead, alQaws favors a bottom-up approach that emphasizes the value of grassroots mobilization and community participation, and thus the wider and most pressing political and social needs of Palestinian society (alQaws 2014a). The repercussions of this approach also lie in how alQaws, by identifying connections between various forms of oppression and their perpetuation, provides a platform that stretches beyond LGBTQ communities and reaches out to the whole of Palestinian society (Alqaisiya, Hilal, and Maikey 2016).

At the local level, alQaws translates its politics into numerous activities that entail working across “historic Palestine,” meaning the geography of Palestine prior to Zionist colonization and border creation between what became known as the “State of Israel” and the “occupied Palestinian territories.” alQaws members pursue a range of activities reaching out to all Palestinians, thus defying the colonial fragmentation of Palestine (alQaws 2018a). alQaws strives to build a national LGBTQ Palestinian leadership that works toward “a decolonized Palestine” (alQaws 2018a), disavowing legal and socioeconomic categories that have been used to divide and displace Palestinians (i.e., West Bankers, Jerusalemites, Palestinian citizens of Israel, Gazans, refugees, etc.) and facilitate Israeli colonial control. For these reasons, while alQaws has established a physical presence across hub locations, such as
Jerusalem, Haifa, and Ramallah, it also maintains a website (www.alkhat.org) that permits all Palestinians to access its national Listening and Information Line.

Other alQaws initiatives include professional training for civic organizations, advocacy, and youth groups; multimedia and artistic projects; and psychosocial support (alQaws 2018d). All these activities not only provide fundamental support to local communities but also enable the emergence of a Palestinian queer agency that aims to reach out to “youth, women, and transgender individuals, as well as [work] with civil society institutions/organizations and society at large” (alQaws 2018c). Local communities and the “society at large” are encouraged to come together for open and challenging discussions about the need to combat gender hierarchies and sexual norms of oppression within Palestine. alQaws promotes those discussions in order to challenge the power paradigms that constitute Israeli colonialism and are reproduced in the very vision for liberation that many Palestinians, including the Palestinian Authority, have come to uphold. In centering questions of gender and sexual diversity on Palestine, alQaws stresses the link between queerness and liberation, unfolding and practicing new ways to live and imagine anti-colonial queerness from Palestine to the United States and beyond (Maikey 2014).

SEE ALSO Aswat; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Helem; Meem; Pinkwashing

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Egyptian artist whose work challenges conventional representations of women, particularly in its depictions of same-sex desire.

Ghada Amer’s art stems from ancestral techniques that women have practiced and passed on to each other for thousands of years. Sewing and embroidery bind this contemporary work to forgotten cultures of the past. Stretching from East to West, touching all the points of the globe, Amer’s stitches are the brushstrokes of thread paintings on canvas.

Product of Two Worlds

Amer’s art is the product of two cultural worlds. It inscribes itself in the middle ground between the East and the West and initiates a dialogue between these cultures that undoes all preconceptions and questions all foundational pillars of cultural and sexual identities. This intercultural approach to art is a testament to the vivacity of contemporary artistic production in a globalized world that, with Amer, a female artist of Egyptian origin, finds itself liberated from all geographical or cultural restraints. Amer refutes the idea that her work is framed from a queer perspective. Yet she does not privilege a fixed position in her art when it comes to gender, and she explores a diverse range of approaches that question normalcy and cultural hegemony, as well as representations of lesbian love. Her artistic strategy diverts conventional expectations of love between women and opens up a multiplicity of readings of same-sex desire. She also resolutely demystifies the clandestineness of lesbian love in art through the showcasing and constant destabilization of gender and sexuality. In doing so, she blurs the frontiers between sexual identities and embraces “otherness.” It is from this standpoint that one may read and frame her work from a queer perspective. Woman and her body, as it is affirmed in this context, can be understood only as a cultural hybrid in the making; the feminine pictorial characters in Amer’s work become the heir of a modernity that is henceforth confronted by contradictory and conflicting sexual ideologies of the East and the West. Her female pictorial women stand against normativity and sexual dominance.

However, it is neither in Egypt, Amer’s birthplace, nor in France, the place of her artistic education, that Amer’s work takes form. This original body of work, avant-garde and often provocative, was born elsewhere, in another cross-cultural space, that of Spanish Harlem, a
favorite space of the artist, where she now works with her Persian collaborator, Reza Farkhondeh (1963–), with whom she signs certain works “RFGA.” According to Amer, “In Europe, it was difficult to paint. There was a negative attitude towards painting post-1970. I had gone to art school to learn painting, not to learn of the decline or the end of painting. Since I’ve been in the United States, I’ve been able to paint with needlework” (interview by Martine Antle, 2010).

Harlem—another space of cultural in-betweenness—is transformed into a fertile space for this artistic creation. The in-betweenness that Amer asserts both disrupts and undoes in one fell swoop the stereotype of the woman imprisoned under the yokes of the heteronormative pornographic press and Orientalist representations. Moreover, this liminal space confronts the tropes of imprisonment and objectification of women in the East as well as in the West. It is in this pictorial space, in the perpetual motion of the paintbrush, needle, and thread, that Amer’s new choreographic writing of the body is born. In Fifi—The Goodbye (2002), a work whose title identifies it as the representation of a departure, the feminine forms undo themselves, mingle with each other, come together, and take off toward a new state of being. This ludic artistic space evolves into a space of mediation and one that invites dialogue on queer identities and desire.

Amer engages numerous literary, artistic, and cultural traditions in her art. She revisits the universal themes of tales with her Alice in Wonderland (2003) and those of myths with Belles and the White Kiss (2006). The fluidity of the feminine figures in her Perfumed Garden (RFGA, 2005) makes use of a contrast with the sixteenth-century Arabic erotic manual Kitab al-rawd al-ʿatir fi nuzhat al-khatir (The Perfumed Garden [1886]) by Muhammad al-Nafzawi, in which the author attempts to enumerate and codify the modalities of the sexual spectrum. Amer’s The Turkish Bath (2006), in which the hairs and the threads in perpetual motion mingle with the contours of the bodies and fuse together, alludes to Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres's Turkish Bath (1862), in which the passive and immobile bodies of the odalisques remain fixed. The Purple Lady and the Princesses (RFGA, 2005) and The Big Black Kansas City Painting (RFGA, 2005), as waking dreams, evoke the ephemeral quality of woman and of pleasure and the spectral dimensions of representation. Like a palimpsest, these figures lead the spectator into a dynamic and disorienting relationship with the canvas.

Deconstructing Fairy Tales and Pornography

If Amer turns to fairy tales and to pornographic motifs again and again, it is only to deconstruct them as she invites the viewer to place them in new contexts. Fundamental questions constantly recur: How can women be taken out of the conceptual boxes that imprison them, both in the East and in the West? How can societal constraints on the female body be denounced for what they are? How can queer desire be represented? According to the premise of Amer’s pictorial universe, the first step is to make women
visible and to free them from the stereotypical representations sensationalized by the media—the exploitation of their fetishized bodies in pornography in particular. In short, Amer “unveils” women, so to speak—unties them and frees them from the domestic enclosures to which they have so long been relegated. By unveiling women, she tears down the veil of societal control and lets the viewer glimpse or even experience a new language of desire and pleasure. To enter into Amer’s universe requires the viewer to maintain a lucid gaze on both the past and the present. For if, in Amer’s art, women’s bodies remain in the center of representation, and if corporeal language takes form via the pornographic model, these serve only to undo and dismantle the mechanisms of heterosexual power and framing that are imposed on women in order to free them and to reveal their new potentials.

The story of daily life that Amer tells begins simply, like in a fairy tale. The four works of the 1991 series titled Five Women at Work already reveal the essential aspects and the acuity of her vision. Women were busy with domestic work: cooking and ironing, for example (La femme qui repasse [The woman who irons], 1992). They have left their beauty secrets embroidered on kitchen rags (Conseils de beauté du mois d’Août: Vos jambres, votre corps, vos cheveux et vos ongles [Beauty tips for the month of August: Your legs, your body, your hair, and your nails], 1993). So these activities traditionally associated with women’s domestic roles are brought into the public realm of art, as Amer blurs distinctions between private and public space. It matters little in Amer’s universe whether women are represented in the act of performing housework, or if they are prisoners of Western harems. These two modes of representation of women fall back on one issue: women’s subordination and fantasies by European voyeurs and consumers throughout history. It is from this seemingly familiar feminist terrain that the artist weaves her radical challenge of gender. While dismantling the strategies of the Orientalist harem, Amer tears down another locus of objectification of women: the pornographic space. She deliberately denounces taboos and religiosity, destroying the cultural icons that obsessively codify the difference between the sexes and establish normative heterosexual rules and modalities of sexuality in contemporary societies.

The poses that she copies from pornographic magazines and that she reproduces ad infinitum progressively lose their form, and they disintegrate under the threads that she lets hang over the edge of the fabric. The form and poses of the bodies, while recognizable, are in fact in motion, in the direction of “otherness.” Here, her art takes form simultaneously from stereotypical motifs (pornographic forms and poses) and from the progressive deconstruction of these motifs. Amer’s challenging and bold research on sexuality culminates in her sculpture titled The Encyclopedia of Pleasure (2001), composed of fifty-seven embroidered boxes inspired by the erotic texts known as Jawamiʿ al-ladhdhah, by the medieval Arab writer ʿAli ibn Nasr al-Katib (c. late tenth century). Amer’s art is not simply a (re)production of pornographic or even erotic images or texts, as critics have suggested. It is rather a reflection on what constitutes sexuality, an invitation for the
viewer to think about and critique the various definitions, strategies, and practices of sexuality and desire.

**A New Feminine Body Cartography**

The *Encyclopedia of Pleasure* (2001) by Ghada Amer. Amer embroidered translated selections from the earliest extant Arabic erotic work by tenth-century writer ʿAli ibn Nasr al-Katib on 57 canvas boxes for this work. She specifically chose the selections in which al-Katib defines women’s sexuality in an encyclopedic way, reflecting how women’s desire has been framed by men.

Through ironic imitation, reproduction, and derivation of pornographic and religious texts and models, Amer slowly deconstructs clichés associated with the Orientalist stereotypes of the odalisques and women’s sexuality and creates a new feminine body cartography, which is one of her key strategies. In her *Private Room* (1998) she embroiders all the words associated with women and the rhetoric of love throughout the Qur’an and renders them in French. In doing so, she also deconstructs the stereotypes associated with women in Islam. Moving away from the 1960s notions and ideologies of the European women’s liberation movement, which often implied in art little more than liberating women of their clothes in order to reveal their bodies and make them visible, Amer is concerned with undermining societal controls in order to free women from the veils that hide their identity. Her intercultural investigation denounces the multiple mechanisms of repression of women on
a global scale. Their provocative poses and their mocking glances decry such labels as “erotic,” “sexual,” “pornographic,” “feminist,” “abstract,” and “figurative.” All suggestions of corporality slip away into some undefined space between color and cloth, between painting and sewing, in this “choreographic writing,” where forms fall away from colored threads and paint, juxtaposed or intermingled until a new stitch accentuates their different textures at the height of Amer's painterly embroidery. In her 2008 exhibition *Love Has No End*, an embroidered inscription first draws the viewer’s gaze to the center of a flowered landscape. It gives a nod to the final kiss that ends Hollywood films and which, for more than a century, has formed, modeled, and colonized Western imaginary to the point where people project themselves and identify with this final kiss and its promise of eternal heterosexual love. Yet, the work of Amer and her collaborator, Farkhondeh, resolutely puts an end to this promising and misleading message. The message “Love Ends” awakens the spectator by putting an end to the normative Hollywood myth. This artistic message references the end of love, signals finality, and also marks another point of departure from which to think and imagine queer desire without the restrictive and repetitive constraints of the mediated screen.

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*Love Ends (2006) by Ghada Amer and Reza Farkhondeh.* The embroidered message “Love Ends” on a watercolor background stands in contrast to the Hollywood myth of romantic love, signaling both the end of love as well a point of departure from which to think and imagine desire without the restrictive and
repetitive constraints of the mediated screen.

Nonetheless, if the work of Amer and Farkhondeh deliberately turns its back on the empire of media, it is through the slow deconstruction of media clichés that they evoke new means of queer desire. It is in the evanescent moment of the almost spectral disappearance and appearance of commonplaces of humanity’s modernity (such as the fetishized heterosexual woman offering limitless pleasure), as well as in the interstices of form, color, and the fairy-tale artificiality of stickers, that the viewer can now interrogate new gender identities, their rhythms, their colors, their movements, and a new cartography of queer aesthetic episteme.

SEE ALSO The Art of Identity in India; The Art of Queering Asian Mythology; Graffiti and Graphic Art; Khookha McQueer (1987–); Ottoman and Persian Miniature Paintings; Tom of Finland (1920–1991)

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Anā Hiya Anti (2000; Elham Mansour)

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One of the first novels published in the Middle East to represent lesbianism in a way that is not hetero-normative.

Samar Habib (2005–2006) describes the novel Anā hiya anti (I Am You [2007]) by Elham Mansour as the first lesbian novel to come out of the Middle East. That is because until 2000, when the novel was first published, in Arabic, by the Beirut publisher Riad el-Rayyes, no other literary work from the Middle East had represented lesbian love in a way that was
not disparaging, conservative, or guilty of reproducing heterosexist norms (al-Samman 2008). At the time, Mansour was already a published feminist novelist and scholar, and her motivation in writing Anā hiya anti was to open a Platonic mode of dialogue in the hopes of challenging and changing accepted social attitudes and beliefs about lesbians among Arabs (Habib 2005–2006).

According to Habib (2005–2006), who translated the novel into English in 2007, the book’s arrival was not greeted with glowing reviews. Many critics (according to Habib’s account of the novel’s literary reception in Arabic-language literary circles) commented on how poorly it is written and how it uses weak literary techniques. The book most certainly has literary weaknesses and flaws: the dialogue is stilted and contrived, and Mansour’s protagonists, lesbians who do not change or grow much over the course of the novel, are somewhat caricatured. They are also oddly stubborn and obsessive with their desires and express exaggerated emotions of both love and suffering that are hard to believe. Indeed, her protagonists do not always summon the empathy the author might want to effect in her readers. But as Habib insists, the value of this book is elsewhere, in its pedagogical potential. She refuses to evaluate it for its literary accomplishments or failures. Indeed, in Habib’s translated edition of the novel, she includes notes and exercises for students. This entry similarly evaluates it for what it does accomplish, especially in light of the dismissal or absence of representation of lesbianism in the contemporary Arab world.

Background on Arab and Middle Eastern Sexualities

The representation and practice of same-sex love has a rich history in medieval Arabic literature. It is important to account for this historical context before a discussion of the novel because it, along with European colonialism, left a complicated legacy in contemporary manifestations of Arab sexualities. The Arab medieval tradition depicts a range of homoerotic expression, from the Platonic concept of love to homoerotic sex (al-Samman 2008). Even though Islam poses constraints on same-sex love, Hanadi Al-Samman (2008) argues that the literature demonstrates that Arabic society also made space for homoerotic love. Notwithstanding the questionable practices of the ghilman system of the time wherein male slaves were used for sexual gratification, Al-Samman argues that it “offered an avenue to freely and scrupulously express homoerotic desires, and to legitimize the enactment of these desires albeit within the context of a ‘normative’ heterosexual society” (2008, 276–277). In this way, homosexuality was not a threat to heterosexuality but resided alongside it.

European colonial domination changed the naturalized expression of same-sex love into demeaning sexual hierarchies and binaries. Colonial domination, as Edward W. Said famously argued in Orientalism (1978), had not only an economic agenda but an intellectual/cultural one as well. Orientalism refers to the lens through which Europe imagined itself superior to the East, or the Orient as it was called, by constructing it as
primitive and culturally backward. A significant feature of Orientalism was the discourse on sexuality that depicted Arabs and Islamic people as oversexed, promiscuous, and barbaric. Indeed, in depicting the East as “exotic” and deviant in literature, photography, and travelogues, Europe “rewrote” the history of Arab sexuality. The construction of deviant homosexuality played a significant role in the Orientalist sexual fantasies of the Middle East (Boone 2014). Not only did Orientalist thinking disparage and attack medieval Islam for its so-called debauchery, its discourses led to the criminalization of homosexuality through the imposition of colonial penal codes in the Arab world (and other nations that originated under British colonial control in South Asia and Africa). As can be expected, the criminalization of homosexuality via sodomy laws stifled same-sex expression and arguably left a lasting legacy of secrecy and containment in relation to same-sex practice. Joseph A. Massad (2007), however, views the silence surrounding same-sex relations in the Arab world less cynically and argues that Arab cultures have a long-standing practice of giving permission to and tolerating same-sex sexual relations as long as they remain unnamed. He takes issue with Western human rights discourse and the “Orientalist impulse” (2007, 161) behind initiatives that seek to “save” and “liberate” Arabs out of the closet and in so doing undermine traditional expression of same-sex love. Following Michel Foucault’s 1978 critique of modern Western sexuality, these interventions, Massad argues, are shaming in that they reduce Arab sexualities, depicting them as psychically repressed and socially oppressed. Worse, the human rights interventions of the Gay International, as he calls the LGBTQ nongovernmental organizations, are problematic not only because they make universal assumptions about same-sex practices, but also because the imposition of LGBTQ identities (an acronym that itself is a Western construction) and the pressures to come out and live openly expose LGBTQ individuals to hostility and jeopardize their safety. Whereas they were once treated with indifference, allowing for a degree of freedom, the increased visibility of homosexual activities in the region (by members of an affluent class that frequents clubs and bars) has now raised the ire of nation-states, jeopardizing the safety of LGBTQ individuals through juridical surveillance and punishment (Massad 2007; Awwad 2010). The effect is therefore not liberation, but ironically oppression.

Massad certainly raises important concerns. Missing in his analysis is the question of whether Arabs who were having same-sex relations felt satisfied doing so under the particular conditions that sanctioned them, even if no other way of expressing and living same-sex desire could be imagined. The advent of globalization, and the concomitant access to the internet and social media, has exposed the Global South to gay epistemologies, destabilizing traditional knowledge. As Al-Samman and Tarek El-Ariss insist, however, Arab and Middle Eastern sexualities should not be viewed as “exclusively symptomatic of imperialist and colonial agendas” (2013, 205), which is to say as simply subscribing to Western ideologies and terminology. Indeed, they suggest that sexualities in the region should be read beyond easy binaries of East/West and understood through a multiplicity of “layers, discourses, and cultural models within a diverse landscape where identities are not
fixed or neatly associated with particular ideological models or traditional practices, but are often in a state of tension and uneasiness" (205). Understanding Arab and Middle Eastern sexualities through "moments of play, performance, contradiction, dissonance, and evanescence" (205) opens up the possibility of recognizing how Arabs, and in particular Arab women, are negotiating the traumatic legacies of Orientalism and the pressures of Western hegemony and gay imperialism.

**The Novel's Plot and Its Meanings**

Mansour’s novel begins with the turbulence of the civil war in Lebanon and two of her protagonists coming out of their hiding places. This is an apt metaphor for the importance of making the lives of lesbians known and exposed to the Arab world. When the novel was published in 2000, Meem, an organized group of queer women, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender people founded in 2007, did not yet exist. And Helem, a human rights advocacy organization for the LGBTQ community in Lebanon, was founded in 2004, a few years after the publication of *Anā hiya anti*. To say that the novel was a bold and significant step toward opening up the topic of lesbianism and homosexuality is therefore not an understatement.

The story revolves around the intertwined lives of three female characters—Siham, Layal, and Mimi—all of whom in different ways have lesbian tendencies. The reader is first introduced to Siham’s life story. Although the narrator offers an objective account of her life, much of Siham’s story is told in the first person in lengthy quotations as she reflects on her past. Reaching for answers to make sense of her attraction to women, she recalls her isolation when girlfriends started to call her a tomboy. When she got her period, “a natural matter” (Mansour 2007, 3), as her mother explained, she felt it was anything but that. Siham, it would seem, had no framework or terminology through which to understand her experience. The inability to name her sexual inclinations caused her suffering. In her search for truth, she looks for explanations and attributes her lesbianism to a sexual assault incident by her father, only to refute it later in the novel. Perhaps to dissuade the reader from thinking that Siham was influenced by Western ideas, Mansour’s narrator explains that Siham noticed her inclinations toward the same sex at a young age, suggesting that her homosexuality cannot be explained as simply a political choice or an outcome of being exposed to Western gay epistemologies but rather as a desire that ran deeply in her and evolved over time. In this way, Mansour discourages the reader from making stereotypical assumptions that a cause must exist; but that is not to say that her sexuality is not influenced by ideological frameworks.

Indeed, after the narrator’s short introduction to Siham’s early years, the novel turns to her first sexual relationship with a young woman in Paris, Claire, a fellow student at the school Siham is sent to by her mother. It is in Paris and with Claire that Siham experiences both freedom and oppression. Siham is initially happy and exhilarated with Claire, but her
relationship soon turns sour after her mother comes to visit, and Claire declares that she cannot “put up” with Siham’s secrecy and obedience to her mother (9). When Siham’s mother calls Claire on the phone, accusing her of being a “lesbian,” “dirty and diseased,” and “contaminating her daughter,” an upset and crying Claire roars at Siham: “Get away from me. You are a barbaric people.... Are you that backwards in Lebanon.... You should either stand up to your mother and defend your rights or get out of my life. Get out of our movement that fights for our rights” (15). Not only is the human rights discourse here used to shame and punish Siham, Claire’s Orientalist lens also forecloses any possibility that there are ways of imagining freedom beyond the logic of “coming out” that elevates the individual over family, community, and culture.

Siham is caught between a shaming Arab mother, whose description of lesbianism as dirty is no less complicit with an Orientalist viewpoint that depicts Arab homosexuality as deviant, and Claire’s shaming racist discourse that disregards how her so-called freedom was built on a history of manufacturing civilizational hierarchies and differences. Shunned for being too Arab and not “out” enough in France, in Lebanon Siham suffers because she refuses to be anything but a lesbian. Indeed, when she returns home and befriends, and subsequently falls in love with, Layal, an open-minded university professor, Siham rejects Layal’s persistent advice to try to socialize with young men, arguing that lesbianism may or may not be her nature and could be an outcome of the circumstances in her life. Mansour’s Siham embodies the tensions experienced by many Arab lesbians for whom neither a traditional Arab life nor a modern Western existence is possible or desired. Her sexuality, like the sexuality of many in the Global South, is entangled with the legacies of traditional practices, colonial violence, Western epistemology, and the present-day political and social realities of war and religious extremism. Mansour’s novel does not resolve these confusing entanglements with a stable identity but instead seems to map out the challenges faced by Siham and the other protagonists.

In Layal, who claims to have a boyfriend in Paris and is against marriage, Mansour depicts a woman who may not know or is unable to acknowledge her lesbian desires or fears. Unlike Siham, who is passionate and emotional, Layal is coolheaded. Her attitude toward lesbianism is entirely intellectual; however, Mansour offers hints that perhaps she is not a reliable narrator of her life. Though strong willed with a tough exterior, Layal is rendered helpless when the bombing and shelling erupts in Beirut. One gets the impression that her intellect is a shield that belies her dangerous desires. When asked her opinion on homosexuality by her infatuated next-door neighbor Mimi, her general position is that she is neither for it nor against it:

“*These situations occur in nature and in society .... These relationships aren’t part of the norm, but they exist.*”
After more prompting, Layal tells Mimi that she is against moral evaluation and does not view homosexuality as shameful or an illness, just a deviation from the norm that she accepts. In a later conversation with Siham, Layal provides an extended account of the Platonic concept of love as a manifestation of complementarity and completion from lack, via the opposite gender. But what underlies Layal’s rational words are unarticulated emotions. Although she finds Mimi “simple-minded” (152) and an annoying neighbor, she notices her beautiful body and seems to take pleasure in it. As a university professor, Layal is an independent woman who protects her time and has boundaries; yet as annoyed as she gets with Mimi, she accedes to her flirtations and spends time with her. In other words, Layal has some form of attraction to Mimi despite her insistence that she is not a lesbian. In Layal, Mansour is perhaps debunking the idea of political and philosophical orientation as an explanation for homosexuality. Indeed, perhaps the opposite is true with Layal; her intellect and rationalizations may arguably defend her from her lesbian inclinations and from a hostile society that would be in judgment of her. Her character, one might say, is in contrast to that of Siham, who has absolute clarity that she is a lesbian and can eloquently express her feelings and desires in poetry but is much less articulate in her conceptualizations of homosexuality.

In the contemporary Arab cultural context, secrecy defends people against homophobia. Mansour’s title, translated as “I am you,” suggests that the reader consider the theme of similarity. All three women similarly live with a secret, but in each it is articulated differently. In Layal, arguably, the secret lives inside herself. In Siham, the secret is primarily kept from her mother. And in Mimi, who is bisexual and a housewife with children, the secret has more cultural and class implications. Mimi, the reader learns, no longer enjoys sex with her husband; and upon meeting Layal she loses interest in her lover and neighbor, “the old hag.” Mimi’s lesbian proclivities for masculine women go unnoticed by her husband, even though they play out under his nose. It is often safe for women to have same-sex encounters without arousing too much concern, especially if they are not declaring a preference for women (al-Ghafari 2002–2003; Whitaker 2006). That is because, as Iman al-Ghafari points out, “erotic relations among women are devalued as a temporary substitute for the love of men, and are considered of no real threat to the dominant heterosexual system as long as they remain undercover, or in the closet” (2002–2003, 86).

Leading a double life, however, is not ideal for many (Whitaker 2006). Mimi wishes she
were educated and independent like Layal. Mimi’s situation is not unlike that of many women who live normative lives in adherence to social expectations but subsequently fall into lesbian relationships, often in the absence of preconceived desires or identities. But also like Mimi, many are not satisfied with sustaining the illusion of normativity and would rather not live their homosexual lives in secret. Siham—who is younger, identifiably masculine, and decidedly not bisexual—suffers more. She represents the demographic of lesbians in the Arab world that would most benefit from a change in societal attitudes. Layal, and many others like her, refrain from exploring nascent desires in the absence of social acceptance and a discourse that would make it more possible.

Through these three characters, Mansour offers a palette of lesbian desire in the Arab world. In an interview with Habib (2005–2006), she states that her goal in the novel was to explain her Platonic concept of love, which in her analysis similarly affects heterosexuals and homosexuals in that people desire what they are not to complete themselves. For Mansour, the roots of desire are founded in gender—not biological sex. Whether one agrees philosophically with Mansour’s argument is not significant for the purposes of this entry. What the novel inadvertently accomplishes is an argument for desire that exceeds normative and oppressive expectations. In describing the difficult implications of secrecy, Mansour breaks the code of silence.

SEE ALSO Asrar ‘Ailiyyah (2013; Hany Fawzy); Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories (2009); Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Hena Maysara (2007; Khaled Youssef); Jannāt wa-Iblīs (1992; Nawal El Saadawi); Lesbianese (2008; Alissar Gazal); Orientalism in Gay Pornography about the Middle East

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Reinaldo Arenas (1943–1990), arguably the most important writer to come out of the Cuban Revolution, wrote his autobiography, *Antes que anochezca* (1992; *Before Night Falls* [1993]), shortly before his death in the United States. The autobiography brought greater international attention to Cuba's harsh treatment of gay men and others who engaged in same-sex sex.

**Overview of Arenas's Life**
Growing up in abject poverty in the eastern Cuban countryside, Arenas was a sensitive and precocious child whose family found him odd at an early age. He found solace delighting in the joys of nature; having sex with farm animals, girls, and boys; and composing endless songs and writing poetry on tree trunks. To escape the boredom of Holguín, the city to which his family moved when he was an adolescent, the teenaged Arenas briefly joined Fidel Castro’s guerrillas, who were fighting against the dictator Fulgencio Batista (president 1940–1944 and 1952–1959). After the triumph of the revolution in 1959, Arenas received a scholarship to attend a provincial polytechnic institute. In 1962 he moved to the capital and enrolled at the University of Havana, from which he was expelled, according to Arenas, because of his homosexuality and incipient dissident political views. Notwithstanding this setback, Arenas pursued his literary aspirations while working at the Biblioteca Nacional José Martí (José Martí National Library) and the Unión de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (National Union of Cuban Writers and Artists). In 1967 his first novel, Celestino antes del alba (Singing from the Well [1987]), became the only one of his many books to be published in Cuba, despite resistance from ideologues who objected to its fantasy world and subtle homoeroticism.

By this time, Arenas had become disillusioned by what he considered the collapse of a hopeful revolutionary struggle in his country. He objected to the communist regime's political repression, institutionalized homophobia, and imposition of socialist realism, which enforced an ideological norm on cultural production. In the mid-1960s Arenas smuggled some of his manuscripts off the island, publishing them abroad in their original Spanish and in translations, angering Cuban authorities. Ostracized beginning in the late 1960s and more forcefully after the revolution's Stalinist turn in the early 1970s, Arenas defiantly carried on in Havana with his promiscuous gay life and his nonconformist writing. Because of the government's resolve to contain the dissident writer and sexual outlaw, Arenas was arrested on a trumped-up sex charge, for which he was convicted and incarcerated from December 1974 to January 1976. After his release from prison, he led a precarious and vagabond life in Havana, but he was internationally recognized as a major voice in Latin American letters. Managing to escape from Cuba during the Mariel boatlift, Arenas arrived in the United States in early May 1980. He established residence in New York City, where he lived until 7 December 1990, when, suffering from AIDS, he committed suicide.
The Writing of the Book and Its Structure and Content

Arenas began writing the story of his life in Lenin Park, a botanical garden on the outskirts of Havana, where he lived as a fugitive for six weeks in 1974. After this first version was confiscated when he was arrested, Arenas did not resume writing his autobiography until 1987, when he was living in exile and had been diagnosed with AIDS. If the title initially referred to the fact that Arenas had to write literally before nightfall, years later it referred to a metaphoric and more insidious nightfall—the inevitable darkness of death. Because of his frail health, Arenas dictated his autobiography and had a friend transcribe the cassettes for him. The typescript, part of the Reinaldo Arenas Papers at Princeton University’s Firestone Library, has been sealed until further notice at the author’s request to protect people he named in it from retaliation by the Cuban regime. The original Spanish version of the autobiography was published posthumously in Spain in 1992; the English translation was published one year later in the United States.

Unlike most of Arenas’s novels, which are structurally complex, Antes que anochezca follows a simple, linear narrative. After an introduction, which addresses the author’s suffering from AIDS and the book’s genesis, the autobiography proceeds chronologically in sixty-nine chapters, beginning with Arenas’s childhood and adolescence in eastern Cuba, continuing with his Havana years, and concluding with his exile in the United States. Arenas’s suicide letter closes the text. Written in New York and on the brink of death, Antes que anochezca captures Arenas’s commitment to writing, the joys and challenges of being a dissident gay writer, his nostalgia for his beloved country, his disappointment with life in exile, and his condemnation of the Castro regime.

By most accounts, Antes que anochezca is the first openly gay autobiography by a major Latin American writer who unabashedly wrote about his erotic life: his pansexuality as a child growing up in Cuba’s countryside; his promiscuous gay life in Havana, where he daily had sex with multiple male partners; and his sexually active—and conflicted—erotic life in the United States. Arenas had memorable adventures in his new country, but he felt increasingly dissatisfied with both the sexual reciprocity that seemed to be the norm among gay-identified men and the greater sexual distance between gay- and straight-identified men. Longing for the gender-differentiated sex of his Cuban years, Arenas waxed nostalgic about his sexual life on the island, where gay men normally were sexually penetrated by “real men” (Arenas 1993, 108). According to Arenas, despite the repressive measures imposed by the Cuban state or precisely because of them, same-sex sex was pervasive in Cuba, where Arenas had his most sexually fulfilling experiences. In the United States Arenas was able to have an active sexual life without fear of persecution, but the kind of sex accessible to him was largely unsatisfying.

Antes que anochezca begins by referring to Arenas’s AIDS diagnosis in 1987 and to a scene in a public toilet where a visibly ill Arenas, made to feel undesirable by other men, comes to
the conclusion that death is his only option. Despite the reference to the syndrome in the opening lines of the introduction, where Arenas also writes about his struggles with the US health-care system and his determination not to die before completing a literary oeuvre on which he had been working for almost three decades, Arenas does not privilege AIDS as a sustained and overt theme in the body of *Antes que anochezca*. “I do not know what it is” ([1993, xvi]), says Arenas about AIDS, explaining his reticence about it in his literary works. Only occasionally mentioned, AIDS is undeniably present in the autobiography’s elegiac tone.

With his characteristically caustic humor, Arenas quipped that “the difference between the communist and capitalist systems is that, although both give you a kick in the ass, in the communist system you have to applaud, while in the capitalist system you can scream. And I came here to scream” ([1993, 288]). Arenas’s autobiography “screams” at the materialism and consumerism of US culture, to which the author felt other exiled Cubans too happily subscribed; at the non-Cuban Latin American exile community, primarily from countries with totalitarian regimes of the Right, that shunned him for being an exile from a totalitarian regime of the Left; at what he considered Castro-supporting organizations and institutions; and at the homophobia and anti-intellectualism of Cuban Americans. In 1988, inspired by the plebiscite in Chile that ended Augusto Pinochet’s dictatorship, Arenas took the lead in writing an open letter to Fidel Castro demanding a similar plebiscite. Although the letter failed in its goal, Arenas was proud of the fact that many prominent figures had signed it and that it had been widely disseminated in the international media. Arenas’s political activism was closely bound to his writing, which for him was his most lethal and effective weapon in the fight against Castro, whom he blamed for all his troubles: “There is only one person I hold accountable: Fidel Castro. The sufferings of exile, the pain of being banished from my country, the loneliness, and the diseases contracted in exile would probably never have happened if I had been able to enjoy freedom in my country” ([1993, 317]). Only death silenced Arenas, but *Antes que anochezca* and his vast literary production continue to scream for him, loudly expressing his views on justice, equality, and freedom.

**Influence and Adaptations**

*Antes que anochezca* and its translations, widely reviewed in both the mainstream and gay press, immediately received international acclaim and inspired writers, artists, choreographers, dramatists, filmmakers, and composers. In 2000, for instance, Julian Schnabel turned it into a film, *Before Night Falls*, for which Javier Bardem, the Spanish actor who played Arenas, was nominated for an Academy Award. In 2010 Cuban American composer Jorge Martín’s opera based on Arenas’s autobiography had its world premiere in Fort Worth, Texas. In Cuba, *Antes que anochezca* has been widely read, even though books critical of the regime are not published or made readily available to the public. In fact, Arenas has become entrenched in the Cuban literary imagination, appearing in the texts of
admiring writers on the island. A case in point is Ronaldo Menéndez’s “Money,” a tale about political disaffection that prominently features Antes que anochezca and highlights its “value” in the Cuban literary marketplace. That the short story collection in which this homage to Arenas is included, El derecho al pataleo de los ahorcados (The right of the hanged to complain), was awarded the Casa de las Américas Prize for short fiction in 1997 is both significant and frustrating. This is so because, despite changes in Cuban society since the early 1990s, politically and institutionally the regime has not ceased to be totalitarian, continuing to subordinate cultural matters to official ideology.

SEE ALSO El Beso de la Mujer Araña (1976; Manuel Puig); Bom-Crioulo (1895; Adolfo Ferreira Caminha); The Cuban Revolution and Homosexuality; El Vampiro de la Colonia Roma (1979; Luis Zapata)

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Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara

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Historical and contemporary anthropological perspectives on nonnormative sexualities in Africa.

The status of anthropology in the study and representation of Africa(ns) in general has generated considerable scholarly debate and controversy. Particularly among many African scholars across various disciplines, anthropology is challenged as a construction of the study of the Other in an unequal power symmetry. For example, Ugandan creative writer and social anthropologist Okot p’Bitek (1971) charged that (Western) social anthropologists were accomplices of Western dominance. There is a very strong strand that suggests that British and French (as well as American) anthropologists were in the service of the empire (Mafeje 2001). Therefore, many African scholars question the publications of these anthropologists, under the conviction that they were not neutral scholars motivated solely by the quest for knowledge. In turn, this suspicion about anthropology has limited the number of African scholars who have been actively involved in the discipline. However, some African anthropologists (as well as ethnographers, scholars of religion, and educators) have conducted research into the area of sexuality in order to present more contemporary perspectives. The writings of anthropologists and contemporary African scholars constitute the bulk of the material on same-sex relationships in the region.

One of the major arguments against the recognition of same-sex relationships in postcolonial Africa is that such relationships are “unAfrican.” This term is unpacked as meaning “not indigenous, not emerging from within Africa, and not having been present in Africa prior to the colonial encounter” (Chitando and Mateveke 2017). African political leaders such as Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, Yoweri Museveni of Uganda, and Sam Nujoma of Namibia have argued that “foreigners” and “outsiders” introduced same-sex relationships to Africans. They have taken up a decidedly counterhegemonic strategy as they feel that the West tends to dictate to Africans on various matters, including how to handle sexual diversity (Endong 2016).

In contrast, proponents of same-sex relationships in Africa and human rights defenders have sought to counter this stance by demonstrating the presence of same-sex relationships prior to the colonial encounter. In a real sense, therefore, the disciplines of
anthropology and history have become “sites of struggle” (Ibrahim 2015, 267) in interpreting same-sex relationships in Africa (although the two disciplines have their own tensions and contradictions). The past is contested for its meaning and relevance to the present. For example, the nongovernmental organization Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) maintains, “Historical and anthropological evidence shows that same sex relationships existed throughout Africa, including the territories that now make up Uganda, long before colonisation by European powers” (SMUG 2014, 7). Gabriel R. Du Plessis (2014) also refers to the role of historians and anthropologists (as well as sociologists) in challenging the notion that same-sex relationships are unAfrican.

Anthropological findings on same-sex relationships in Africa must be read against the backdrop of the influence of colonialism and missionary religions (particularly Christianity and Islam). Whereas African traditional religion (ATR) had more tolerant attitudes toward diverse sexualities, missionary religions were (are) more prescriptive. Anthropological literature on same-sex relationships in Africa have been appropriated to destabilize the fixation with heteronormativity that has been influenced by religion. Sylvia Tamale, one of the leading African scholars, clarifies the impact of missionary religions (“Messianic faiths,” in her parlance):

"A good example to illustrate how the Messianic faiths supplanted African cultural values pertaining to sexuality is seen in the labelling of same-sex relationships as deviant. Indeed, the strength and influence of hegemonic sexual discourse is demonstrated in the area of homoeroticism. In Africa, not only does the discourse construct same-sex erotic relationships as “unnatural,” but also as distinctly “unAfrican”—an import from decadent Western societies. Political religions and reinterpreted culture are the chief inscribers of same-sex sexuality as “unAfrican” and deploy it within the discourse of “sin.” Hence, Africans engaged in same-sex sexual practices as undeserving aping sinners."

(2014, 165)

The insistence on an exclusively heterosexual Africa (Epprecht 2008) has been challenged by appropriating anthropological literature. What must receive emphasis, however, is that the anthropological literature that has featured in debates on same-sex relationships in Africa comes from a period when heteronormativity was more pronounced. Consequently, the gaze of some of the anthropologists was principally on heterosexual relationships. In such instances, when references to same-sex relationships were made, they were mostly in passing. Furthermore, they were described in the context of their “deviance” from the “norm.” It must also be borne in mind that the anthropologists’ own sexual orientations and
gender identities were a(n unacknowledged) factor in their descriptions of the sexuality in African societies (Kullick and Willson 1995). Effectively, however, two categories of anthropological approaches to same-sex relationships in Africa can be identified. In the first instance are those authors who described same-sex relationships in particular communities. The second group constitutes those anthropologists who denied that same-sex relationships were present in the African communities they were researching. An emerging group is less interested in what traditional societies may or may not have condoned, but focuses on contemporary cultures in relation to global trends and political economy.

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Kuagbiaru, Zande informant for E. E. Evans-Pritchard, between 1927 and 1930. Kuagbiaru provided Evans-Pritchard with information on homosexual practices in the traditional Zande culture.

**Anthropological Descriptions of Same-Sex Relationships in Africa**

Against heteropatriarchal assumptions that sexual orientation and gender identities are fixed, studies on gender in Africa have highlighted that these are highly fluid and complex. Whereas heteropatriarchy assumes that leadership is the preserve of middle-aged heterosexual men, studies have shown that young men, women, queer, and other categories of leaders have emerged and continue to emerge across time. In many ways, this destabilized the views of European researchers who tended to hold normative views regarding sexual orientation and gender identity. One celebrated case is that of the Angolan
queen Njinga (1583–1663), who ruled in the north of the country in the seventeenth century. An astute warrior queen, she outwitted her male competitors and had both male and female lovers. She continues to be celebrated in folk religion for her legendary military prowess (Heywood 2017). It was such complexities that greeted anthropologists who sought to make sense of African cultural realities and social life.

Appearing on the African scene after European traders and travelers who had offered intimate details about aspects of life (Epprecht 2013), such European anthropologists as E. E. Evans-Pritchard provided some details relating to sexual practices among different ethnic groups. Evans-Pritchard was immersed among the Azande in southern Sudan. In response to the unAfrican argument, he maintained that male and female homosexuality existed among the Azande prior to the arrival of Europeans. As expressed by Evans-Pritchard,

> It is beyond question that male homosexuality, or rather a sexual relationship between warriors and boys, was common in pre-European days among Azande.... There is no reason to suppose that it was introduced by Arabs as some have thought. All Azande I have known well enough to discuss this matter have asserted also that female homosexuality (lesbianism) was practiced in polygamous homes in the past and still (1930) is sometimes.

(1970, 1428–1429)

As the above citation confirms, Evans-Pritchard was convinced that both male and female same-sex relationships were present among the Azande. In an earlier article, he had drawn attention to “obscenities” found in different African societies, including boys’ initiation into adulthood and secret society where the initiates had to copulate with one another in order to demonstrate their capacity to do so with a woman (Evans-Pritchard 1929, 318). Similarly, a quarter of a century later, Victor Turner, who was studying the rites of passage of the Ndembu (in northern Zambia), drew attention to the liminality and ambiguity that characterized such rituals. In the liminal stage, the social conventions relating to gender and sexuality were eliminated and limitless possibilities emerged. According to Turner, the male senior official in charge of the ritual process would be regarded as the husband of the novices. He proceeded to indicate the changes in social roles that occurred during the liminal stage. According to Turner,

> Among the Ndembu a chief is called mwadi on the night before his installation ceremony, and he is treated “like a slave” by his people and reviled without
being able to reply. In all these instances there is a marked element of passivity, of receptiveness, of “femininity.” The chief is “feminine” to his people, as an immediate prelude to assuming male authority over them. The novices are “feminine” to the instructors and shepherds. Some anthropologists have mentioned homosexual practices between senior men and novices during seclusion, among the West Central Bantu.

(1962, 152–153)

References to same-sex relationships were made by various other anthropologists in different parts of the continent. The emerging pattern is that some anthropologists were keen to draw attention to same-sex relationships and challenged the idea of exclusive heterosexuality in Africa. An overview of anthropological writings shows that researchers in different parts of the continent encountered evidence of same-sex relationships (Murray and Roscoe 1998). Proponents of same-sex relationships in Africa have drawn on this body of writing to challenge the notion that same-sex relationships did not exist in Africa prior to encounter with colonialism.


Edward Evan Evans-Pritchard was born in Crowborough, England, in 1902. Following undergraduate study of history at Oxford University, his graduate studies were supervised by the Africanist C. G. Seligman (1873–1940) at the London School of Economics, and he participated in the famed seminars of Bronisław Malinowski (1884–1942). He remains best known for explicating the logic of the Azande of southern Sudan (among whom he began fieldwork in 1926) regarding why bad things happen in his 1937 book, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*. In 1930 he answered an administrative call to study the Nuer, producing another classic ethnography, *The Nuer*, in 1940, followed by books on Nuer religion and on Nuer marriage.

After World War II (1939–1945) service in Sudan and Libya (the Sanusi of Cyrenaica were the subject of a 1949 book), and converting to Roman Catholicism in 1944, Evans-Pritchard took up a position at All Souls College within Oxford University in 1946. He remained at that college until his retirement in 1970. He died in Oxford in 1973.

In his last decades, though he was writing a general, highly critical book on theories of “primitive” religion (1965), Evans-Pritchard returned to his field notes on the Azande. Not having shown any interest in sexology, he astonished many by publishing on (female and male) homosexuality among the Azande in a 1970 article in *American
Anthropologist. It was not actually the case that he waited for decades, until he was near death, to write about boy-wives in the Azande court; he had written about the institutionalized role of boy-wives (pages to princes, attendants to warriors, with the man paying bride-price to the fathers of the boys in both cases) in a 1957 article in the specialist journal Zaire and in 1962–1963 published texts from men who had taken boy-wives. He also wrote about Nuer woman-woman marriage (with the female husband having the rights of a father to his wife’s children) in 1951.

Evans-Pritchard married Ioma Heaton Nicholls in 1939 and sired five children. His own homosexuality was apparently well known within the guild of English social anthropologists. Yet the only known published mention—one indicating that it was common knowledge—is in an article by Edmund Leach published in American Ethnologist (1989).

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Minimizing Same-Sex Relationships in Africa

Despite the presence of a sizable corpus of anthropological literature confirming the presence of same-sex relationships in Africa, other anthropologists either glossed over the same-sex relationships in the communities they studied or sought to explain them away. The most common explanation for male-male sexual relationships has been that they are due to the absence of women. In other instances, anthropologists made declarations to the effect that homosexuality was rare among indigenous communities. For example, Michael Gelfand (1979) asserted that homosexuality was rare among the Shona. It was always going to be unlikely that Gelfand would have encountered individuals who self-identified as homosexuals in communities where heterosexual marriage was an ideal to be fulfilled. As Marc Epprecht (1999) has argued, the moral prejudices of some of the anthropologists must be taken into account when analyzing their comments on the absence of same-sex relationships in Africa.

In other instances, anthropologists tended to play down or not go into detail about same-sex relationships they had observed in African societies. Although they may be criticized for not highlighting the same-sex relationships they encountered, it is also important to acknowledge that the next generations of scholars will critique contemporary researchers for not drawing attention to the issue(s) that will be of interest to them. For example, it would not be fair for a researcher in 2150 to criticize contemporary scholars researching African same-sex relationships for not making reference to the popularity of soccer/football. To say this is not to reject the critique of anthropologists, but to put it into its proper context. In other words, it is problematic to accuse earlier researchers of bias or minimization because they did not give a central place in their publications to the specific topic of interest to the current researcher. Same-sex relationships were not the core concern of such researchers as Evans-Pritchard and Turner. According to Till Förster,

> What connects Evans-Pritchard and Turner, despite the years that lie between them and all their other differences, is a common critical interest in these “natural” assumptions made by their Western contemporaries about the nature of “savage” thought. Besides this, both are interested in the same topics. At the beginning of these topics were magic, divination, and ritual, as well as theories on the nature of such ritual activity.

(2004, 246)

Furthermore, it is strategic to acknowledge that anthropological accounts emerge from societies that were almost always in transition. The idea that it is possible to retrieve some
pristine African past is not based on reality. Thus, there is a high probability that the African communities that the anthropologists described were themselves already in contact with the outside world (Kahn-Fogel 2013). Again, to make this observation is not to suggest that same-sex relationships in Africa must have been influenced by outsiders. Every culture has its own internal dynamics, including mechanisms for enabling nonnormative practices to survive, or even thrive. Zambian theologian Chammah Kaunda argues that there is a high probability that although Ndembu homosexuality might have initially taken place in the liminal space, it soon moved into the larger society and became “part of the common experience upon which the community is founded” (2015, 33).

**Ethnographies of Contemporary Struggle**

An emerging field of study focuses on contemporary ways of being queer, including how sexual minorities and sexual rights activists really behave in specific contexts (as opposed to the generalized critique of them as avatars of Western cultural colonialism). Ryan Thoreson (2014), for example, spent a year embedded with the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (since renamed OutRight Action International). He participated in the production of several important reports from Senegal, South Africa, and Uganda by the commission while observing and interviewing his colleagues. The result is a close and empathetic ethnography of an organization and the type of people that Joseph Massad (2007) famously excoriated as the “Gay International.” Ashley Currier (2012) also offers a close study of activists’ decision-making processes around when to use or to avoid visibility (outness) as a political strategy in gaining sexual rights in Namibia and South Africa. Turning the ethnographic gaze on the gazers, David A. B. Murray (2016) examines the immigration and refugee process in Canada (wherein Africans need to perform to certain stereotypes of Africanness and gayness in order to convince officials of their bona fides).
People, of course, do not stand still in some kind of ethnographic present, and indeed, African LGBTQI people are often quite oblivious to claims made about the cultures they hail from and look instead to new technologies, new discourses, and new ways of being. For several anthropologists it is these emerging cultures that fascinate. Melissa Hackman (2018), for example, examines the culture and internal politics of an “ex-gay” Pentecostal sect in Cape Town, whose mission is to “heal” gay men into heterosexuality. She elicits extremely personal insights from her subjects, in some cases letting them hang themselves with their own words, and in others allowing us to share the pain, confusion, and cruel optimism of the men seeking to convert their sexuality. The work of Thomas Hendricks (e.g., 2014, 2017) also offers an intimate window into the nuances of desire and identities in flux in relation to race, gender, and sexuality in contemporary Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Whereas anthropology as a field historically tended to otherize the objects of study, or to fix categories of normative and other, these researchers actively disrupt stereotypes and dualisms (like hetero- and homosexuality, Africa and the West, traditional and modern, male and female). Their work attests to people’s complexities, contradictions, uncertainties, and mutability over time.
Anthropological Literature on Same-Sex Relationships

While there is a sizable body of evidence of same-sex relationships among different African groups, there is no unanimity regarding its interpretation. Although the evidence may be sufficient to silence the extremist position that there were no same-sex relationships at all in Africa, it is not enough to lay the foundation for the (social/communal) acceptance of same-sex sexuality in contemporary Africa. This is due to the complexities of the major concepts that are in vogue at the time of writing (2018). Terms such as homosexuality, gay, LGBTQI, queer, and others are largely culture-specific. They are predominantly Western concepts that may not readily fit into other contexts, such as in Africa (Tamale 2011).

The dominance of Western scholars and concepts in studies on African sexualities emerges as a major challenge when interpreting anthropological literature on same-sex relationships in Africa. There is the concern that local realities are being forced to fit into a preexisting format. The phenomenon of the ‘yan daudu in northern Nigeria is a case in point. Although the emphasis has been on the homosexual identity of the ‘yan daudu, it is necessary to appreciate the challenges that come with such descriptions. This is principally because in the particular context of northern Nigeria, sexual orientation may not be the most important dimension (Sinikangas 2004). However, it remains important to acknowledge that the existence of such a phenomenon challenges the ideological position that insists that there is only one African sexuality and it is decidedly heterosexual.

There were some methodological issues that compromised the reliability of anthropological writings on same-sex sexuality in Africa. One of the major issues was and continues to be that the anthropologists were very much interested in the “bigger picture” or in building/testing explanatory frameworks. As a result, they were not too keen on focusing on individual behavior. Due to the complex nature of sexual relations, there should have been greater investment in terms of time spent cultivating friendships for the anthropologists to establish sexual patterns. African (and other) scholars studying same-sex sexuality have navigated this hurdle by spending more time with individuals and noting their behavior in different contexts. African researchers usually have the advantage of sharing the same language as the individuals whose sexuality they are researching. Anthropologists from outside the community have to contend with the challenge of language, and although they can utilize the services of local translators/research assistants, often these have their own agenda. This can have a negative impact on the results from the field.

Anthropological literature on same-sex relationships in Africa has also been contested on the basis that instances of same-sex sexuality do not immediately translate to social acceptance of same-sex relationships. Critics maintain that same-sex sexuality was associated with specific individuals (e.g., traditional healers), or that it was allowed in particular ritual settings. Here, the critique is directed not so much at anthropologists as at
those who have sought to deploy their findings in support of the struggle for the rights of homosexuals in Africa. The argument is that traditional societies allowed homosexuality only in the performance/fulfilment of ritual processes. Many of these relationships would not be compatible with modern-day notions of human rights—for example, they might involve sex with “children.” In this regard, the occurrence of same-sex relationships in traditional African societies does not provide an adequate basis for contemporary struggle, although it does destabilize the notion of an exclusively heterosexual Africa.

The strategy of utilizing anthropological literature to promote the rights of homosexuals in Africa has been challenged on the basis that it reinforces the use of Western categories. Many activists tend to emphasize gay and lesbian identities at the expense of all other identities because in sub-Saharan Africa, there are more varied gender ideologies than in the West. Johanna Bond argues,

Within the region, many people refrain from identifying publicly as gay or lesbian because of the centrality of heterosexual marriage in child rearing and the perpetuation of kinship ties. They may, however, engage in same-sex sexual activity that is viewed as supplementary to traditional family roles. An exclusive focus on gay and lesbian identity fails to address the many ways in which gender expression and gender stereotypes enforce heteronormativity and prevent the public embrace of LGBTI identity within sub-Saharan Africa.

(2016, 69)

African Anthropologists and Same-Sex Relationships

Although research on same-sex relationships in Africa has been dominated by scholars from the West, there is a growing interest in the subject among African anthropologists and researchers from other disciplines. In some ways, these African scholars have been influenced by the publications of Western scholars, and they seek to build on, as well as respond to, the data on same-sex relationships in Africa by Western anthropologists. They have made use of valuable information on the phenomenon, locating it within the intricate religious, social, political, economic, and other factors that shape it.

Although anthropology is not popular among African scholars due to its association with colonialism, it has attracted some scholars who have contributed to the growing body of literature on same-sex relationships in the region. Stella Nyanzi, a medical anthropologist, has undertaken fieldwork in the Gambia and Uganda as part of her research into indigenous African sexuality. Nyanzi carried out an ethnographic study of same-sex–loving individuals in Uganda and presented valuable material on how they negotiate hostile
contexts. Nyanzi concluded:

Local allies among national and religious leaders, mainstream organizations, friends and family highlight the availability of support accorded same-sex-loving individuals in the country. Uganda’s self-identified homosexual individuals variously assert their Africanness through multiple routes, including actively laying claims to their ethnic group belonging, membership to kinship structures, civic participation in democratic processes, national identity, social organizing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and questioning-support groups, language and lexicon, visibility and voice in local communal activities, solidarity, adherence to and participation in cultural rituals.

(2013, 963)

Other African scholars who have researched same-sex relationships in Africa include anthropologists such as Serena Owusua Dankwa (2009), who carried out fieldwork on female same-sex intimacies in two urban centers in southern Ghana. Another anthropologist, Patrick Awondo (2010), has studied same-sex relationships in Cameroon. Similarly, anthropologist Nelson Muparamoto has undertaken a study on the impact of religion on same-sex-loving people in Zimbabwe. His findings challenge the dominant narrative of religion as always sponsoring homophobia. Muparamoto writes:

Significantly, gay and lesbian Christians are not just passive recipients of homophobic utterances in Christian circles. The observation challenges the misconceptions of a straightforward link between religion and homophobia. Some participants developed and drew on narratives that counter and challenge the mainstream church narratives that promote condemnation and criticism. For example, they drew on their understanding of God as creator of all human beings. Within a framework that acknowledges God’s creatorship, sexual orientation is an immutable attribute that people are born with, and one for which they cannot be blamed. Other counter-narratives are based on their answered prayers, as well as their ability to continue working for God in various capacities.

(2016, 154)
The research into same-sex relationships by African anthropologists is helping to clarify the phenomenon. African anthropologists have the advantage of being “cultural insiders,” and they have largely succeeded in describing the lived experiences of same-sex–loving individuals in Africa. Their descriptions have challenged the notion that “outsiders” were responsible for introducing homosexuality into Africa. Furthermore, African anthropologists have managed to avoid presenting exotic images of same-sex–loving individuals, instead describing them in the context of their other family and social relationships. This has gone a long way in depicting same-sex–loving individuals as indigenous Africans whose identity is not dependent on external sponsors.

The work of African anthropologists has been complemented by that of African researchers from other disciplines who have utilized anthropological approaches to collect data on same-sex relationships in Africa. These include practicing traditional healers such as Lindiwe P. Mkasi, who utilized her insider status to research same-sex relationships among women traditional healers in South Africa (2016). Mkasi (2013, 2016) has highlighted how some women traditional healers practice same-sex relationships under the guise of their profession. Other researchers, including theologians and scholars of religion, educators, and philosophers, have examined same-sex relationships in Africa. Building on the insights of anthropologists, historians, and others, they have contributed to removing the veil of secrecy surrounding same-sex relationships in Africa. Although more research is required, particularly in relation to the lives of same-sex–loving individuals in rural Africa, an appreciable body of literature has emerged. Furthermore, researchers from diverse disciplines have helped to challenge the myth of a homophobic Africa. They have provided more nuanced descriptions of same-sex relationships in Africa, acknowledging the challenges and highlighting the advances that have been made in accommodating same-sex–loving individuals.

SEE ALSO Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara; Ethnopornography; Ethnopsychiatry; Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa; Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa

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Anti-Gender Movement in Europe

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Conservative campaigns against so-called “gender ideology” or “gender theory.”

Since 2013, Europe has experienced a new wave of campaigns against the rights of women and LGBTI people. Although such mobilizations had started earlier in countries such as Spain, Italy, Croatia, and Slovenia, 2013 appears as a turning point, with two events propelling the European conservative agenda. The first is the French mobilizations against same-sex marriage. Headed by the organization La Manif pour Tous (Demonstrations for Everyone), these mobilizations, which count among the most important and the largest ones in France since the mid-1980s, have been emulated across the continent. The second is the success of the constitutional referendum in Croatia in 2013 to define marriage as a “union of a man and a woman,” thereby barring same-sex marriage and fueling a wave of marriage referenda in the region. While this entry discusses this phenomenon in the European context, it is important to note that similar movements are occurring in other regions, including Latin America, Africa, and Australia.

Background on the Movement

These mobilizations regard gender as the ideological matrix of a set of abhorred ethical and social reforms, such as sexual and reproductive rights, same-sex marriage and adoption, new reproductive technologies, sex education, gender mainstreaming, and protection against gender violence. These anti-gender campaigns should not be regarded as a mere continuation of previous forms of opposition to the rights of women and LGBTI people, even when ancient institutions such as the Roman Catholic Church are involved. Instead, they mark a renewal of conservative activism in the region, with the adoption of a new discourse and a new repertoire of action. In brief, anti-gender campaigns should be regarded as a new strategy designed to face new challenges. Interestingly, the East-West divide does not offer a particularly useful analytical lens to understand these mobilizations, which mostly happen in European countries with, historically, a significant Catholic or Orthodox population. The parts of Europe under Russian influence experience a specific
version of such campaigns, which are directly engineered from the Kremlin with the support of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Despite a wide variety of targets (abortion and reproductive rights, same-sex marriage, LGBTI parental rights, gender mainstreaming, gender violence, sex education, antidiscrimination policies, etc.), all these movements claim to combat what they call “gender ideology.” Sometimes called “gender theory” or “genderism,” it is presented as the matrix of the various policy reforms they oppose and should not be confused with gender studies or specific post-structural theories about gender. These movements not only share a common enemy but also display similar discourses and strategies and a distinctive style of action. Although national triggers vary, the modes of mobilization look alike across borders, allowing a specific type of mobilization to be identified: anti-gender movements.

The notion of “gender ideology” was invented in Catholic circles in the mid-1990s. Building on broader Catholic projects such as Pope John Paul II’s theology of the body (Garbagnoli 2016) or the new evangelization (Paternotte 2017), it not only puts Catholic theology into motion but also offers both an interpretative frame and a strategy of action. It should be read as a response to two United Nations (UN) conferences: the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the 1995 World Conference on Women in Beijing, which mark the entrance of the notions of reproductive rights and gender into the UN vocabulary. Indeed, both steps were fiercely combated by the Catholic Church.

Following Dale O’Leary’s pioneering analysis (1997), the term gender ideology first appeared in Vatican circles as a frame to understand what had happened in Cairo and Beijing (Buss 1998; Case 2011). Gender was therefore understood not only as the social construction of sexes but also as a hidden plan mounted by radical feminists, LGBTI activists, and gender scholars. It became the “strategic tool” used by these minorities to establish a postgender society and seize power at the UN and more broadly.

Claims and Strategies

Numerous authors—among whom Tony Anatrella, Jutta Burggraf, Gabriele Kuby, Marguerite A. Peeters, and Michel Schooyans are the most prominent—have contributed to the elaboration of this body of thought, whose main claims have been put together in Lexicon: Ambiguous and Debatable Terms Regarding Family Life and Ethical Questions, published in 2003 by the Pontifical Council for the Family. They all claim that gender aims at an anthropological revolution, in which biological facts about men and women will be denied and the fluidity of gender will be promoted, threatening the family and the survival of humanity. They also see in “gender ideology” a covert totalitarian project, which is sometimes deemed more dangerous than Marxism. Finally, primarily in eastern Europe, “gender ideology” is depicted as a neocolonial project in which the decadent West would
impose its gender delusion on the rest of the world (Graff and Korolczuk 2018).

"Gender ideology," however, was also designed from the start as a strategy of action. Reclaiming the theory of cultural hegemony developed by the Italian intellectual and politician Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937), it aims at propagating alternative ideas by using and subverting the notions it repudiates in order to contest the supposed cultural and political hegemony of “postmodern gender.” The Catholic Church has consequently reclaimed progressive notions such as gender or feminism to change their meaning, resignifying what liberal voices have been trying to articulate over the last decades. As mentioned above, the notion of “gender ideology” is part of a Catholic project. Furthermore, the Catholic Church has offered a space where intellectuals and activists could meet and exchange views and strategies, while also providing a powerful mobilization and diffusion network.

Contemporary mobilizations, however, cannot be reduced to a return of Catholicism in the public sphere but intersect nowadays with other political endeavors (Hark and Villa 2015). As noticed by Stefanie Mayer and Birgit Sauer (2017), “gender ideology” functions as an “empty signifier” that can tap into different fears and anxieties in specific contexts and therefore be shaped in different ways to fit into other political projects. As a result, anti-gender movements include a complex constellation of actors that goes far beyond specific religious affiliations. The intersections with contemporary right-wing populism are of crucial importance. As stressed by Eszter Kováts and Maari Põim (2015), the vague notion of “gender ideology” operates as a symbolic glue that makes cooperation between different actors possible despite their numerous differences. In this context, intersections with populist projects offer a springboard to anti-genderists, for instance by using common attacks against corrupt elites or claiming to defend the “innocent child.”

Anti-gender campaigns include a wide variety of actors, which allows this movement to conceal its Catholic origins in favor of the secular and more appealing image of “concerned citizens” or “concerned parents.” This movement presents itself as modern, young, and hip, and the demonstrations it organizes are reminiscent either of a family picnic or of a gay pride parade. It is also extremely present on the internet, and it promotes referenda as a means to be heard, invests in litigation, and develops “alternative” knowledge, based on false methodologies (Kuhar 2015), while not neglecting more traditional political lobbying. Using gender-specific color codes such as blue and pink and the imagery of a nuclear family, it creates a secularizing self-image that cannot be reduced to previous forms of resistance to gender and sexual equality. It also projects itself as a rational, moderate, and commonsensical actor, who raises its voice because things have simply “gone too far.” Often using a self-victimization strategy, it depicts itself as the true defender of oppressed people, of a majority that is silenced by powerful lobbies and elites, as well as the savior of national authenticity against international powers. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, anti-gender campaigns have undoubtedly contributed to a modernization, a
professionalization, and a transnationalization of conservative activism in Europe.

SEE ALSO Human Rights in Europe; Nationalism and Sexuality in Europe; Pride Demonstrations in Europe; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity; Scandals in Europe

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Anti-racist activism and its relationship to LGBT organizing in Europe can be characterized principally by its heterogeneity. While anti-racism has often been seen as deeply entwined with sexual rights activism, mainstream LGBT rights groups have, since the late 1990s, come under critique for complicity in and perpetuation of anti-Muslim racism. At the same time, queer-of-color activist organizations, which began to form in western Europe on a larger scale in the 1980s, have developed creative strategies for challenging postcolonial and post-Holocaust legacies of racism and homophobia. Through performance, archives, and political organizing, queer Europeans of color have made claim to space in countries that often purport to be color blind. However, not only have queer-of-color groups and activists occasionally run into conflict with mainstream, largely white LGBT organizations, but they have sometimes also struggled to build coalitions while maintaining a movement that rejects the exclusionary effects of Euro-American liberalism.

Postwar Organizing, 1945–1962

Following World War II (1939–1945), anti-racist movements began to organize across western Europe. These movements sought to overcome the continent’s legacy of murderous nationalism and were grounded in western Europe’s ambiguous historical position as both the center of colonial power and a universal measure of progress (Lentin 2004). Germany adopted a policy of color blindness that removed the term Rasse (race) from official rhetoric, vacating the possibility for grassroots, anti-racist movements to organize despite the persistence of racist behaviors and policies (Chin and Fehrenbach 2009). France, by contrast, saw the establishment in 1949 of the Mouvement contre le Racisme et pour l’Amitié entre les Peuples (Movement against Racism and for Friendship between Peoples) by Jewish resistance groups troubled by the failures of denazification. The Ligue Internationale contre le Racisme et l’Antisémitisme (International League against Racism and Anti-Semitism) was reestablished in 1944 and focused on legal measures to combat anti-Semitism. These early movements emerged against the backdrop of international attention to anti-racism. Europe's commitment to antidiscrimination and the defense of human rights was concretized in the United Nations Educational, Scientific,
and Cultural Organization’s first conference on race (held in 1949), which attempted to debunk the political legitimacy of biological race theories (Romeyn 2017). However, racialization of immigrants and people of color based on perceived differences in culture remained fully compatible with opposition to biological racism.

The 1950s and 1960s were widely experienced as a period of sexual conservatism across western Europe. Although possibilities existed for Europeans to explore diverse sexual desires in such cities as London, Paris, and Hamburg, Germany, social attitudes and the continued criminalization of male homosexuality made it difficult for postwar activists to develop political arguments based on sex. In this context of sexual conservatism and legal persecution, some homosexual men and women turned to anti-racism as a political strategy. In German-speaking countries, homosexual men and women argued both that they deserved the same protections as racial minorities around the world and that homosexuals ought to be antiracist, as they understood what it meant to be oppressed. However, other same-sex-desiring men understood their “homophile” identity as implicitly white, pointing to the plurality of opinions surrounding race and racism at this moment (Boovy 2016).
Postcolonial and Transatlantic Orientations, 1962–1989

In France, the Algerian war for independence between 1954 and 1962 and the following period of student unrest in the later 1960s brought about a different constellation of sexual and anti-racist politics. Postcolonial migration of Algerians triggered anxieties among the Far Right that Algerian men were inciting sexual deviance among white French students. The Front Homosexuel d’Action Révolutionaire (FHAR; Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action), founded in 1971, repurposed these accusations to claim that French homosexuals were at the forefront of revolutionary action and that they, as an oppressed group, held a revolutionary bond with colonized Algerians (Shepard 2012).

Not only was this link between gay rights and antiracism postcolonial, but it was also transatlantic. Gay rights movements in western Europe were heavily influenced by the burgeoning postwar labor movement, which, by the 1960s, was often viewed as constitutive of a general transatlantic leftist movement. However, gay activists linked Marxist sentiments to race in different ways. Whereas the FHAR in France cast sexual relations with Algerian men as leftist political praxis, in West Germany, gay activists rarely saw Turkish guest workers as political subjects, despite many gay organizations’ purported commitment to labor. This was also true for the larger labor movement, as evidenced in 1973, when 3,000 Turkish workers at a Ford factory in Cologne went on strike to protest mass firings. Because of the “unorganized” nature of the strike and the use of nontraditional modes of resistance, including poetry readings and singing, many West German labor activists dismissed this moment as apolitical. It was only in the early years of the twenty-first century that queer activists of color situated this strike in its longer history of immigrant resistance (El-Tayeb 2011).

In addition to transatlantic Marxist leanings, the Black Panther Party, a US black militant group that drew inspiration from the writings of anti-colonial thinkers such as Frantz Fanon and Léopold Sédar Senghor, offered a popular model for gay rights and anti-racist activism in France, West Germany, and the United Kingdom. Black Panther Party leader Huey Newton’s 1970 “Declaration in Support of the Just Struggle of Homosexuals and Women,” which was widely translated and circulated among European left-wing gay rights groups in the early 1970s, encouraged further emulation.

The connections between anti-racism, gay rights activism, and feminism persisted through the following decades. By the late 1970s, many German feminists were already familiar with the work of the African American poet Audre Lorde. Through friendships with Afro-German women writers such as May Ayim, Helga Emde, and Ika Hügel-Marshall, Lorde helped organize an Afro-German movement to articulate the experiences of Afro-German women and to resist antiblack racism in West Germany (Michaels 2006). Lorde’s outspoken discussions of her lesbian identity and her criticisms of homophobia were often absent in the Afro-German women’s movement. Nevertheless, the leading role black
German lesbians have played in the Afro-German women's movement is undeniable. Lorde's impact was not limited to just West Germany, as her 1984 visit to the Netherlands led to the formation of the black lesbian group Sister Outsider in Amsterdam (Michaels 2006). That same year, emergent feminist and anti-racist immigrant organizing in France led to the founding of the Collectif Féministe contre le Racisme et l’Antisémitisme (Feminist Collective against Racism and Anti-Semitism), from which the Collectif Lesbien contre le Racisme et le Fascisme (Lesbian Collective against Racism and Fascism) emerged. Although they addressed xenophobic rather than antiblack racism, both collectives laid the groundwork for a similar joint critique of racism, misogyny, and homophobia in France (Bacchetta 2010).

**The Multicultural State, 1989–2017**

By the early 1990s, European governments had begun incorporating the rhetoric of anti-racism, a step some activists saw as an attempt to co-opt the anti-institutional movements of the 1980s. State-sponsored anti-racism often took the form of multiculturalism, an ideology based on the tolerance of different racial, ethnic, and national groups within the framework of the liberal nation-state. Already in the early 1980s the Dutch government had institutionalized multiculturalism through a series of laws and regulations intended to reform integration policies and improve the social and economic standing of immigrants in the Netherlands. In the United Kingdom, local initiatives that emerged in the 1980s and criticized institutionalized racism were adapted during the 1990s by municipal governments that preferred dealing with race-relations officers and sponsoring cultural initiatives (Lentin 2004). In Germany, where Muslim Turks represented the largest racialized group, the institutionalization of anti-racism had similarly ambivalent effects. While the European Network against Racism, established in 1997 as a result of the European Commission's Year against Racism, provided greater opportunities for minority participation, internal conflicts and unequal resource allocation meant that minority-run organizations continued to be marginalized within the network (Salazar 2008). Across the European Union, the institutionalization of anti-racism promoted an understanding of racial inequality that relies on cultural explanations and, as some argue, seeks to affirm cultural identities while largely ignoring economic and political contributors to marginalization (Lentin 2014).

In a striking reversal from the sexual conservatism of the 1950s or even the anxieties of the 1980s related to HIV/AIDS, some western European countries since the 1990s have attempted to incorporate certain “good” queer citizens while rejecting a supposedly homophobic and sexist Islam. In 1996 the city of Amsterdam published a survey of local high schools that claimed to show rampant homophobia among students with a Muslim background. This survey was followed by a 2003 report by Forum (Institute for Multicultural Development) that focused on same-sex-desiring immigrants to establish the
same dichotomy between supposed Islamic repression and the need for queers of color to liberate themselves into a “Dutch” queer identity (El-Tayeb 2011). Scholars and activists alike have noted similar trends in countries with recent spikes in immigration, such as Spain and Ireland, which have coupled limited affirmation of certain LGBT citizens with increasingly restrictive immigration policies.

Criticism has also been extended to mainstream European gay rights activists and activist groups both for maintaining this dichotomy and for supporting increasingly restrictive immigration policies. Since the late 1990s, the Lesben- und Schwulenverband in Deutschland (Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany) has pursued stronger hate crimes legislation, which some argue has stereotyped young Turkish men as the main perpetrators of homophobic attacks (Haritaworn 2015). In 2005 the organizers of the Dublin Lesbian and Gay Film Festival invited Michael McDowell, then serving as Ireland’s minister for justice, equality, and law reform, to deliver the opening address. The selection of McDowell, who had successfully pursued a referendum to restrict citizenship to descent in 2004, triggered protests by and heavy criticism from many anti-racist and queer activists (Mulhall 2011). In 2010 the queer theorist Judith Butler declined Berlin Pride’s Civil Courage Award, citing the event’s complicity with anti-Muslim racism, offering the prize instead to queer-of-color organizations GLADT, LesMigraS, SUSPECT, and ReachOut, all of which participated in Berlin’s alternative pride event. The following year, the queer Muslim organizations Safra Project and Imaan mobilized against London’s East End Gay Pride, organized by the right-wing English Defence League to march in neighborhoods racialized as Muslim. Although the event was canceled, it was quickly reorganized, this time by left-wing activists (Bacchetta, El-Tayeb, and Haritaworn 2015).

**Queer Resistances, 1989–2017**

This tension mandated new forms of queer activism that did not involve an artificial dichotomy between “good” LGBT (white) Europeans and “homophobic” (straight) Muslims and that articulated the experiences of queer people of color. One of the first European groups to do this was Strange Fruit, established in 1989 in the Netherlands by a dozen young LGBT people of color. Many of the founders were of Muslim Turkish or Moroccan descent, placing them at the intersection of two supposedly irreconcilable categories. Because Strange Fruit was formed with few resources, it was originally a workgroup of the Amsterdam branch of the European LGBT rights organization COC (Ontspannings-centrum [Center for Culture and Leisure]). Strange Fruit began some of its earliest work in the field of HIV/AIDS activism, using safer sex performances in clubs frequented by queer people of color to access groups heavily affected by HIV/AIDS yet often marginalized by the white gay scene. Changes to the management structure of COC during the 1990s and the perception that COC promoted a Eurocentric gay identity clashed with Strange Fruit’s deliberately nonhierarchical structures and attention to sexual identities rooted in
diasporic cultures (El-Tayeb 2011). Following its split with COC, Strange Fruit reorganized as an official foundation and continued to serve as a hub for Dutch and European activists, feminists, AIDS educators, refugees, and queer people of color until 2002.

The 1990s saw similar forms of queer-of-color activism emerging in Germany. Salon Oriental, founded in the late 1980s by Sabuha Salaam and Fatma Souad, also engaged with spaces frequented by queer people of color, particularly the Berlin club SO36. Salon Oriental used a mixture of classic drag, physical comedy, parody, and pastiche to challenge racism and homophobia while building a multiethnic community (El-Tayeb 2011). Taking a direct-action approach, groups such as Kanak Attak, founded in 1997, and Karawane für die Rechte von Flüchtlingen und MigrantInnen (Caravan for the Rights of Refugees and Migrants), founded in 1998, made radical claims for the right of migrants to exist in Germany and Europe. Basing its political stance on the assertion that migrants and people of color did not have to justify their presence in Europe, Kanak Attak worked to make visible historical forms of migrant resistance in Germany. However, these challenges to postcolonial power structures resulted in unexpected tensions. Karawane’s argument that exploitation of the Global South was the reason for the presence of migrants in Europe was seen to reinforce the dichotomy between “us” and “them” that Kanak Attak was attempting to undermine (El-Tayeb 2011).

While anti-Muslim racism has been the primary focus of queer anti-racist activism on the continent, the United Kingdom’s history of postcolonial migration from the Caribbean and Africa south of the Sahara, as well as its history of anti-racist activism that often relied on blackness as an all-encompassing term for people of color, has required a different approach. In 2000 the queer photographer and activist Ajamu X and the filmmaker Topher Campbell founded the rukus! Federation as a black queer arts organization and archive. The archive, now held at the London Metropolitan Archives, was designed to challenge a lack of visibility that has historically made it possible to deny a black and gay experience, while showcasing the work of black LGBT artists in the United Kingdom (Flinn and Stevens 2009).

The turn to the extreme Right across Europe during the second decade of the twenty-first century required new forms of coalition building. In 2016, sixteen Berlin-based LGBTI groups with diverse political orientations formed an alliance against the radical Right parties. Queer anti-racist activism continues to take a transnational bent. Berlin’s alternative pride event in July 2017 was coupled with a Black Lives Matter protest. Two weeks later, No Man’s Art Gallery in Amsterdam exhibited black women activists’ work centering on human rights violations against LGBTI people and LGBTI counter-organizing in South Africa, which was heavily advertised by the Parisian organization Lesbiennes de Color. Protests at the G20 summit in Hamburg in July 2017 dramatically highlighted transnational alliances between queer, feminist, anti-racist, and anticapitalist groups. Nevertheless, divisions still exist, and local-level activism continues to be important, as
immigration issues and rightwing populism take center stage in Europe.

SEE ALSO Anti-Semitism in Europe; Black Freedom Movement and Sexuality; Human Rights in Europe; Migration to Europe; Strange Fruit

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Anti-Semitism and Zionism

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The relationship between anti-Semitism and largely male homosexuality in Europe and its influence on Zionism and the State of Israel.

Although homosexuality, anti-Semitism, and Zionism (initially, the movement to establish a Jewish homeland in historical Palestine) are not inherently connected, the association between them lies in the emergence and development of European modernity, which tied them together. The history of modern anti-Semitism begins in Europe in the nineteenth century, when profound changes in the legal and civil status of Jews took place. With the spread of liberalism after the French Revolution (1789–1799) and in the wake of Napoleon’s campaigns, European society opened up to Jewish minorities, who were hitherto excluded from full participation in it. One by one, European societies began to admit Jews as equal members into the various nation-states that began to take shape on the Continent. Most of these Jews were of Ashkenazi background and settled in western, central, and eastern Europe; Sephardic Jews, who originated in Spain and Portugal, formed a small part of the European polity. In addition, Jews became key participants in European colonial expansion in other parts of the world. However, while there was an increasing willingness to include Jews as part of various national and imperial communities, the growing familiarity with them also bred a new kind of contempt. Unlike the former resentment of Jews in Europe, which was mostly religious in nature, the age of reason saw the development of a more “scientific” resentment—an antipathy based on alleged racial differences between Jews and Christian Europeans. Although elements of this “scientific” resentment differed across regions of Europe with Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox versions of Christianity, its contours were similar.

Anti-Semitism, Homosexuality, and European Modernity

The new antagonism toward Jews was shaped by four major revolutions that came to define European modernity: the secular revolution, the national revolution, the scientific revolution, and the gender revolution. The development of all four in the nineteenth century gave rise to and formed what is now called anti-Semitism, a term that bears witness to its pseudoscientific basis. The secular revolution made the old religious antagonism toward Jews obsolete. The creation of the nation-state rebranded Jews as the ultimate Other. The scientific revolution provided a rational framework for identifying the Jewish
Other scientifically. The gendering of the European bourgeoisie and the creation of the nuclear family as a way to ensure the stability of the new national community was another defining argument in support of the so-called Jewish difference (Gilman 1995).

The scientific, national, and gender revolutions were also instrumental for developing homosexuality and sexual aberration more widely as scientific categories in Europe and Europe’s imperial possessions. It was the homogenizing process of creating national communities and especially the gendering and policing of these communities that first defined and then problematized “deviant” sexualities. And it was science that provided the empirical tools for identifying and then controlling these deviations from newly established norms. Thus, toward the end of the nineteenth century, both Jews and homosexuals found themselves increasingly isolated from the ethnie, the nation-state, as aberrant minorities whose difference became progressively more problematic in various ways and to various degrees, depending on time and location. Eugenics—which involved programs and actions to enhance the quality of a particular “race”—offered an additional “scientific” framework through which sexual minorities and the Jewish Other were linked as undesirable. Eugenics also placed renewed, secular emphasis on sex for the purposes of procreation, enhancing the rationale for the “deviance” of same-sex practices.

Yet, even if anti-Semitism and homosexuality were shaped by similar historical forces, the connection between them was not necessarily predetermined. What eventually linked them, albeit in a lopsided way, was the process of Othering to which both minorities were subjected by the modern nationalization of European society: while homosexuals were accused of being Jewish-like, Jewish men were often accused of being homosexual-like—that is, effeminate, blurring the boundaries of the gender binary.

**Feminity, Misogyny, and Effeminacy**

Although most of the focus during this period was on men, Jewish women were also accused of transgressing boundaries of womanliness. As Daniel Boyarin and colleagues explain, the manliness and self-promotion characterizing the “female sexual invert” featured in some stereotypes of the “Jewess.” At the same time, the “Jewess” was associated with excessive femininity, resulting in a paradox of hyperfemininity and hypofemininity. “In this we also see,” Boyarin and colleagues note, “as with the workings of misogyny, homophobia, and antisemitism more generally—that contradictions, far from incapacitating stereotypes, may actually energize and enable them” (Boyarin et al. 2003, 6).

The accusation of male “effeminacy” and the negative meaning it carried emanated from the ingrained prejudice against women, which was enshrined in the very shape of the new middle classes that formed the new nation-states. Within this class, under the doctrine of “separate spheres,” women were relegated to the domestic realm, while men were consigned to activity outside it, shaping the world and controlling it. The connection
between homosexuality and femininity was based primarily on the simplistic reference to the sexual partners of both groups. Because homosexuals are men who are attracted to other men, they were considered womanlike, especially if they were the receptive partners in anal intercourse. Consequently, many people believed homosexual men were inferior to heterosexual men socially, politically, culturally, and morally.

The perceived connections between Jewishness and femininity were complex. There were various medieval stories about menstruating Jewish men, and the division of labor in traditional Jewish communities as well as the practical or procreative attitude toward sex in Judaism differed from certain Christian traditions, with their penchant for asceticism and sexual abstinence. These differences were confusing to non-Jews, who often regarded Jews as effeminate because of them. Jews themselves also had a tradition of "soft" masculinity that the subsequent development of the "muscle Jew" sought to counter (Boyarin 1997). Moreover, the minority status of Jews in Europe throughout history, which carried into the nineteenth century, rendered them weak, subordinate, and politically passive as a community, traits that were considered feminine as well, especially from the perspective of modern nationalism, and especially as it developed in eastern and central Europe.

This nexus of Jewish men, effeminacy, and homosexuality emerged publicly in slurs against Jews who were visible because of their prominent positions in the civil society and politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Scholarship of the Dreyfus affair in France in the 1890s (in which a Jewish artillery officer was court-martialed on charges of treason) underscores the strong analogy between Jews and homosexuals that was operative at the time. Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935) was convicted, in part, because of the ways in which the joint forces of anti-Semitism and homophobia were motivated against him. Love letters between two male military attachés were part of a secret dossier presented to the court that was used to frame Dreyfus. So powerful was the association between homosexuality and anti-Semitism that when writer Émile Zola turned the Dreyfus affair into fiction in his 1903 work Verité (Truth), he changed the crime with which the innocent Jewish protagonist is wrongly charged from treason to homosexual rape and murder (Carlston 2002). A few decades later, in another conflation of homosexuality and Jewishness, the satirical journal Le Charivari depicted Léon Blum (1872–1950), the Popular Front leader and prime minister of France from 1936 to 1937, as a “wandering Jew” in drag (Mosse 1996).

The partial conflation of Jewishness and homosexuality took place precisely at this juncture and can be exemplified by two contemporaneous revolutionary Jewish thinkers: Otto Weininger (1880–1903) and Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935). Weininger was the tortured writer of a mean philosophical treatise that combined misogyny and anti-Semitism in a pernicious concoction that was later appropriated by the Nazis. Hirschfeld pioneered the study of human sexuality and laid the foundations for queer political activism. Whereas the self-hatred and self-destruction of Weininger exemplified the tragic consequences of
mixing misogyny and anti-Semitism, Hirschfeld exemplified the vision and inspiration that can come from these very issues.

**Masculinity and Zionism**

Yet it was the political ideology of Zionism that these tortuous connections affected most profoundly. The very idea of a Jewish politics outside of Europe was inspired by the obstacles these negative associations created for the civic acculturation of Jews into Europe. And while Zionism was never preferred by a majority of European Jews, their eventual near-extirmination during the Holocaust, coupled with the foundation of the state of Israel in 1948, solidified the legacy of these problematic connections, which continue to reverberate in Israel today.

The power and allure of Zionist ideology resided in its revolutionary interpretation of the problematic connections between anti-Semitism and homosexuality or effeminacy. Since the challenge of surmounting these connections in Europe seemed impossible, Zionists suggested establishing a country of their own outside of Europe, in Palestine. By imitating European non-Jewish (“gentile”) culture, especially the “manly” aspects of European nationalism—such as action, power, independence, and self-reliance—Zionists hoped to shake off connotations of passivity and effeminacy and to prove the masculinity of Jews on personal as well as communal levels. The establishment of a sovereign state would prove the enterprise, the boldness, the fortitude, and the agency of Jews, who would join other nations as equals on the world stage, declared Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), the founder of political Zionism (Boyarin 1997).

While a multitude of reasons contributed to the articulation and establishment of Zionism, the nagging sense of insult at being ridiculed as effeminate and, thus, inferior remained a key element in the Zionist psyche. It shaped the nature of Zionist ideology, of Zionist politics, and finally also of the Zionist state, Israel, whose popular militarism is perhaps the most enduring example of it. At first, the masculine revolution of Zionism was directed more at the physical development of Palestine—such as establishing new settlements and developing agriculture and industry—which gave rise to the image of the pioneer, the so-called New Jew or New Hebrew. The appellation “new” was inspired by European masculine models, whose ready adoption by Zionists prompted them to label those who remained behind in the European diaspora, “Old Jews.” This was also the birth of the Zionist “negation of exile,” which, ironically, labeled diasporic Judaism with many of the old anti-Semitic tropes (Boyarin 1997; Dekel 2011).

With the growth of the *Yishuv*, the prestate Jewish community in Palestine, the image of the pioneering farmer was eventually joined by another masculine model: the Jewish fighter or soldier. Originally, militarism was not part of mainstream Zionist ideology, whose founders did not foresee an armed opposition to their national aspirations. It was only later, with the
growth of the Yishuv and the growing resistance of Palestinian Arabs to it, that the
aggression inherent in the Zionist masculinization program found expression. By 1949,
after a long and bloody war for independence, the image of the New Jew as a soldier
assumed ever larger proportions as Israel’s armed conflict with its Arab neighbors
persisted throughout the twentieth century and into the present.

The hypermasculinization of the New Jew in the Yishuv did not inspire a similar liberation
of women. Although socialism, egalitarianism, and communalism played important roles in
early Zionist ideology and praxis, as can be seen by the unique invention of the kibbutz,
women did not benefit from these progressive ideologies commensurate with their
promise. Despite the intention to revolutionize gender relations in the new Jewish society
in the Yishuv, in practice, most pioneering women found themselves occupying roles they
had hoped to escape in the old, patriarchal societies they left behind. For Jewish men, the
Zionist revolution opened up a host of activities and professions that were closed to them
in Europe; it had an equally significant impact on Jewish women by solidifying their lack of
opportunity and mobility, even as women’s roles were evolving in postwar Europe and
North America.

LGBTQ+ in the Yishuv and the State of Israel

But while the Zionist cult of masculinity inherited many problematic aspects of the
European nationalism it mimicked, anxiety about homosexuality was not one of them.
Although the fear of being seen as effeminate and, thus, inferior was a powerful motivation
for the founders of Zionism, associations of homosexuality played little role in the history of
Zionism. Some of the reasons for this include the relatively minor role of homosexuality in
Jewish history and law, the Spartan conditions in the Yishuv and, later, the state, and the
social cohesion of the small and beleaguered Jewish community.

Since family life was of supreme importance to a precarious minority as the basis of
stability and continuity, homosexuality did not play a visible role in Jewish history. As
Hirschfeld himself noted during his 1932 visit to Palestine, Yishuv society was particularly
unconducive to homosexual relationships, as the efforts of state building were all-
consuming. Since Palestine also lacked an urban environment, it did not provide the space
for visible queer subcultures to flourish. Lastly, the small size of the Jewish community in
Palestine/Israel and its ethnic and ideological cohesion, which were strengthened by the
many challenges it faced from inside and out, mollified attitudes toward sexual infractions
and elided them.

For these reasons, the fight for gay and lesbian rights in Israel was relatively short and
lacked drama. The legal process itself was brief and swift and initiated by the government
itself rather than prompted by public pressures. It was stewarded by a center-left coalition
that came to power in the early 1990s on a civic agenda strengthened by various peace
initiatives that changed Israel profoundly. Religious legislators abstained from challenging it because they believed the matter had little relevance for their voters.

But if the legal process was swift, social acceptance of queer people has taken a longer time. Even today, many Jews from Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox backgrounds still leave or are forced to leave their communities if they come out and want to live openly as gay, lesbian, or trans; under rabbinical jurisdiction, they may lose the ability to see their children or families. And whereas Tel Aviv's status as a gay and lesbian center is well established, many Israelis continue to believe that the more religious city of Jerusalem should not visibly celebrate queerness. Jerusalem's gay pride parade has faced opposition from religious groups and Israeli Arabs. Meanwhile, the Zionist cult of masculinity has been deployed against Palestinians and Israeli Arabs by, for instance, positing the Arab male body as passive and effeminate or, conversely, as inappropriately masculine through an association with irrational violence and terrorism.

An important example of these complicated dynamics occurred in the late 1990s. The Israeli press and the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) engaged in intense debate about whether trans pop star Dana International (1972–) was fit to represent the country at the Eurovision song contest in 1998—a competition she eventually won. A right-wing religious party attempted to gain a court injunction to prevent her participation and threatened to bring down the government if she were allowed to sing for Israel (Solomon 2003). As Alisa Solomon notes, Dana International’s self-fashioning relied on a critique of the masculinizing and heterosexualizing project of Herzlian Zionism: where Jews went to Palestine to become “normalized” as men, Dana International went to Europe to turn from man into woman. She changed her original “priestly, Israeli” surname of Cohen into “the moniker of a rootless cosmopolitan” (International), and she challenged the right of Zionism to redeploy queerness for the purposes of what is often called homonationalism (Solomon 2003, 151).

**Masculinity in the IDF and in the Orthodox Community**

The decriminalization of homosexuality was followed by a vigorous cultural campaign to legitimize other aspects of gay life, in which the Israeli military played an important role. Because the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is a venerable institution that is almost universally esteemed in Israel, military credentials became one of the surest ways for gay men to gain legitimacy, not only as worthy members of the besieged national community but also as men. If homosexuality feminizes, soldiering makes one manly, so went the argument that is still prevalent in Israel today. The country’s cinema was especially supportive of these associations, which it articulated extremely well in a string of popular films that featured handsome and brave gay soldiers, most notably Eytan Fox’s 2002 hit Yossi & Jagger. Unlike gays in the militaries of other countries, the service of gay men in the IDF has seldom been debated in Israel, where the intimate size of the national community, its perceived state of
emergency, and the powerful ethnoreligious identity of its Jewish citizens has precluded such questions. Nevertheless, the IDF was initially more equivocal regarding trans men; Dana International, for instance, was rejected as unfit to do compulsory military service when she turned 18. (Its policies were changed in 2014 and are considered more progressive today.)

Thus, at end of the twentieth century, homosexuality and Jewishness met once again in ironically similar circumstances. At the dawn of Zionism, allegations of effeminacy prompted the establishment of a national movement to refute the charges, and one hundred years later, the spectacular success in creating muscular Jews was used similarly to legitimize homosexual (read: effeminate) Israelis. Unfortunately, what could have been a positive development was tainted by an old wrong—misogyny. The antipathy toward women that stimulated Zionism's masculinization program shaped the efforts to legitimize Israeli gay male life through military associations.

The depth and pervasiveness of the Jewish anxiety about masculinity, which contributed to the eventual centrality of the IDF in Israeli culture, has also affected Israeli women, who have been fighting hard for equality in the military since its establishment. At first, these efforts were a continuation of the attempts by pioneering women for gender parity in the movement. But although that fight was lost early on, it has revived in recent decades in the form of a campaign to allow women to serve in combat roles in the IDF. The precedence for women’s combat service was set in 1994 in a Supreme Court of Israel decision that opened all roles in the IDF to women. Since then, the number of women combatants has gradually risen, proving the enduring power of the masculine neurosis in Zionist history and adding another dimension to it: the masculinization of Israeli women. At the same time, in Israel's deeply conservative society, the service of women in combat roles is still regarded as masculine and therefore not entirely appropriate for real (read: feminine) women.

One sector of Israeli society that remains relatively impervious to the Zionist masculine allure is the Orthodox Jewish community. Preserving many of the religious traditions that were developed in the diaspora and that divide men and women into holy and profane, the Orthodox masculine ideals focus on religious study rather than on worldly affairs, which are largely carried out and supported by the work of Orthodox women. Consequently, Orthodox Jews reject homosexuality and transgenderism on old-fashioned religious grounds—a position more secular Israelis may see as homophobic and transphobic. The growth of Orthodox communities in Israel and the cultural pressures it brings with it are challenging the views on gender identity and sexuality held by both members of these communities and persons outside of them in multiple ways. For instance, members of some Orthodox groups may be becoming more “tolerant” of LGBTQ+ people, whereas some non-Orthodox people may be becoming more conservative in their beliefs about gender and sexuality, or in their acceptance of the public visibility of LGBTQ+ communities.
While the convergence of anti-Semitism, homosexuality, and misogyny more than a century ago played a meaningful part in the process that led to the establishment of a state, it is also responsible for some of the persistent problems of that state. The creation of new Jews under Zionism was greatly motivated by the masculine revolution of nineteenth-century Europe—a cultural revolution that led to the bloodiest period in Europe’s history. As an inheritor of this legacy, the state of Israel continues to pay its price and has not yet learned how to challenge it.

SEE ALSO Anti-Semitism in Europe; The Bubble (2006; Eytan Fox); Einayim Pkuhot (2009; Haim Tabakman); Nationalism and Sexuality in Europe; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Judaism

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Although Jews and same-sex behaviors have been around for millennia, “homosexuality” and “anti-Semitism” as concepts are quite new, and both terms were coined in roughly the same period. The term *homosexuality* was coined in 1869 and *anti-Semitism* in 1879. Both neologisms come from the German cultural space, and they proved to be long lasting, foundational, and at the core of Western modernity, its crises, and its self-understanding.

**Historical Conjuncture of Jews and Homosexuals as “Others”**

While the term *anti-Semitism* is relatively modern, hatred, suspicion, and exclusion of Jews has a very long history and has appeared with various degrees of intensity. It is a defining aspect of Christian Europe, culminating in an attempt at total genocide, the Holocaust, during World War II (1939–1945).

The most important transformation of this long hatred occurred during the nineteenth century when the age-old, premodern religious antagonism to Jews and Judaism changed its character into what is currently termed modern anti-Semitism. European nations opened up to Jews and other religiously stigmatized groups after the French Revolution (1789–1799) and the rise of liberalism, promising to admit them as equal members of society. This shift gave rise to the desire on the part of various minorities to assimilate into host societies; they wished to become equal citizens. It also gave rise to a host of anti-Semitic views and initiatives, now secularized in their outlook and motivation. Anti-Semites tried to account for what made Jews different and so detestable. They claimed that Jews are disloyal, arguing that because they did not belong to the nation, they could not be patriotic. They were convinced that there was something beyond their religion that made Jews difficult or impossible to assimilate and that their assimilation would cause harm to the nation. As of the mid-nineteenth century, this antagonism became extreme with the rise of modern race theory, which claimed that races existed and that these should not mix, as miscegenation would be fatal and cause the decline of nations and civilizations. More important than the impact of racial doctrine was the idea of a world conspiracy theory. This
claimed, among other things, that Jews conspired to reach world domination by triggering a destructive world war. Throughout the nineteenth century, Jews became the quintessential Other of European nations.

Alongside Jews as outsiders arose the awareness of homosexuals as another outsider group—a second Other. As Jews were outside the nation, homosexuals—termed perverts, inverters, degenerates, pederasts, and so on—were outside normative life and outside the respectability of the rising bourgeois middle class. Many Jews and homosexuals wished to become respectable. Respectability demanded self-control and restraint of reckless impulses, purity, physical and mental health, and sexual moderation. From the 1860s onward, many societies became aware of homosexuals as discrete persons, in good part because of the rise of the field of sexology alongside medical science and because of the efforts of those who advocated equal civil rights and tolerance for sexual minorities. Medical discourse developed a stereotype for homosexuals, fixing them outside respectable society. Their abnormality, no longer deemed by these scientists as a sin before God, also went beyond individual sexual acts that could be shamed or punished by society. The homosexual was now a psychological makeup, a person, and an object of scientific inquiry that could be viewed as a distinct “third sex,” as promiscuous, as decadent, as spreading diseases, as female souls in male bodies, and so on. Many homosexual men chose suicide as a consequence of this condition. While lesbianism, unlike male homosexuality, was not criminalized, the social taboo of love between women and the pressures exercised on women to make them conform to heterosexual norms created difficult living conditions for lesbians and also led to suicide (Bauer 2015).

With the rise of urban, industrial, and increasingly secularized Europe, hateful images of Jews and homosexuals began to circulate. By smearing these Others, these new stereotypes served to help define what each of the various European nations wished to think of itself. National movements in Europe made both Jews and homosexuals their quintessential others, as opposed to contemporary Islamophobia in Europe, which is articulated in defense of a unified Christian European culture. In contemporary western Europe, neither gays nor Jews are still perceived to be a threat to state and society. In eastern Europe, however, this sense of threat is by and large still present.

**Denial of Their Masculinity**

One of the main problems both Jews and male homosexuals grappled with was a denial of their masculinity. As a result, many Jews and homosexuals aspired to this value and used various strategies to prove their manliness. Discussions of homosexual and Jew at the turn of the twentieth century involved a profound and pervasive anxiety about male performance and masculinity. Stereotypes came into their own with the modern age as part of a general quest for symbols, especially visual symbols (Mosse 1996). This included the masculine stereotype, as male beauty and virtue were now instrumental in symbolizing the
nation. This stereotype was now strengthened by the existence of negative stereotypes of men (Jews or homosexuals) who not only failed to measure up to “real” masculinity but also projected the exact opposite of this true masculinity. Their misshapen bodies became a sign of degeneration, immorality, and weakness. With the rise of the European nationalist movements, in the context of bourgeois society, masculinity was idealized as the foundation of the nation and society. Masculinity symbolized the nation's spiritual and material vitality—its striving for moral purity. All those who diverted from the norms of bourgeois comportment and strict gender roles were considered abnormal or strangers. Sexual minorities as well as strangers were looked upon with suspicion, which was coupled at times with bitter hatred. Sexuality outside the heterosexual monogamous norm was viewed as dangerous to the health of society and the state. This was because it was also perceived as leading to depopulation. The secrecy that characterized "deviant" sexual behavior resembled a conspiracy, now seen as sowing confusion and promoting betrayal of the state.

The alleged femininity of the male Jewish body and its degeneracy in turn-of-the-century anti-Semitic discourse have been highlighted in research since the 1990s. Perhaps the most notorious and influential “scientific” and “philosophic” treatment of this subject is Otto Weininger’s Geschlecht und Charakter (1903; Sex and Character [1906]), published a few months before the Viennese author (himself a Jew) committed suicide at the age of twenty-three. In this profoundly misogynistic pseudoscientific treatise, Weininger claimed that Jews were purely materialistic, devoid of any spiritual or creative promise. For him, they were hysterical inferiors, lacking any personality. There is no dignity in women, and therefore Jews too have no dignity. Both have no potential for humor, only mockery. Judaism is saturated with femininity, he declared, echoing leading nineteenth-century German Jewish rabbis who prided Jewish men as committed to family values (Baader 2012). For Weininger, the Jew was unable to elevate himself from domestic commitment. Moreover, the Jewish man as woman, or no better than woman, was a sign and significer of the age. Max Nordau (1849–1923), the Hungarian Jewish physician who published the worldwide best-seller Entartung (1892; Degeneration [1895]), was the deputy of the Zionist leader Theodor Herzl (1860–1904). At the Second Zionist Congress in 1898, Nordau called on Jews to become “muscle Jews” instead of pale, thin-chested “coffeehouse Jews.” Zionism tried to defend Judaism against this stereotype by transforming Jews into a modern nation, with a territorial nation-state and with real men, capable of defending themselves. But, if in other national movements manliness was made to serve the nation and symbolize its virtues, for Herzl and Nordau, nationalism was an instrument in the search for manliness (Boyarin 1997).

Central Role of German-Speaking World in Europe

Coming to terms with homosexuality took place most importantly in Berlin and in the
German-speaking world of central Europe. It was here that the jurist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs founded the modern Western tradition of gay rights activism by publishing numerous pamphlets between 1869 and 1879 that called for the abolition of the infamous Paragraph 175 criminalizing homosexual sex, claiming that homosexuals did not choose their fate but were simply born that way. Here too, the rise of homosexual cultural consciousness and homosexual subjectivity was entwined with considerations about Jewishness and Jews, the other minority desperate for recognition and inclusion. This involved two controversial, sometimes reviled Jewish men. One was the liberal sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935), founder in 1897 of the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee), which advocated the rights of sexual minorities. The other man was the controversial Jewish zoologist Benedict Friedlaender (1866–1908) who, together with Adolf Brand (1874–1945), founded in 1903 the Gemeinschaft der Eigenen (Society of the Self-Determined), which could be seen as the “right-wing” flank of the German homosexual movement.

Hirschfeld, both Jewish and homosexual, sexologist and social activist, had a straightforward approach to sex reform. He treated homosexuality as a “third sex,” an intermediate stage between masculine and feminine. As such, it was a natural and legitimate variant. While Hirschfeld promoted his third sex model of homosexuality, Friedlaender came up with a conception of a hypermasculine homosexuality involving manly desire purged of any stain of effeminizing difference. This difference he connected to a Jewish essence. Friedlaender considered erotic love between men as much higher and nobler than love toward women. For Friedlaender, the homosexual desire of men for other men was the pinnacle of manliness and virtue. He maintained that men are attracted to other men, an attraction that ranges from friendship to sexual contact. The Berlin homosexual movement that rose in the last decade of the nineteenth century was now split into two camps: the liberal camp that accepted and tolerated sexual and gender difference and the masculinist camp that stressed Aryan virility, celebrated male-male erotic attraction, and excluded Jews. Friedlaender (not unlike Weininger, a self-loathing Jew who also committed suicide) considered erotic ties between men as the foundation of male socialization and of civilization in general. Like Weininger, he distinguished between the female family sphere and the political, state-building sphere that was exclusively male. The latter sphere excluded the Jewish male, whose masculinity was so deficient that he could never amount to the lofty task of state building. State building was, instead, the domain of real men who erotically bonded with other men and gathered around the Männerheld, the hero of the men, the supervirile charismatic leader. Pitting one minority against another, even by a person who belongs to both groups, is a device of self-exoneration. A few years before taking his own life, Friedlaender founded a small association of men who promoted male-male love. One of Friedlaender’s followers, the German thinker Hans Blüher (1888–1955), summarized this Jewish deficiency succinctly: “With the Jews it is as follows: they suffer at one and the same time from a weakness in male-bonding and a hypertrophy of the
family. They are submerged in the family and familial relations. Loyalty, unity, and bonding [the quintessential manly virtues] are no concern of the Jew” (quoted in Geller 2003, 105).

The scientific and cultural invention of the modern homosexual indeed indexed anxieties over Jewish racial or other difference. This pertained not only to men and the question of masculinity: the “Jewess” and the “sexual invert,” the predecessor of the “lesbian,” deviated from normalcy. Both shared an excess, both went beyond the bounds of female virtue and sexual propriety and respectability, too active in their desire, a peculiar transgression of womanliness. At the time, an invert was understood as someone whose psyche was the opposite of his or her biological sex—someone with a female psyche in a man’s body, or vice versa. Desiring women instead of men offered proof of this inversion. This lack of womanliness and a strong sense of self-promotion also featured in some stereotypes of Jewish women: Jewesses as pushy and unladylike, deceitful, and sexually voracious. As a failure, the Jewess was both too feminine and not enough of a woman (Boyarin, Itzkovitz, and Pellegrini 2003).

Conjunctures in the Contemporary Period

Beyond this historical conjuncture of homosexual and Jewish identities, subjectivities, and stereotypes as the quintessential Other that defined the modern European, there are other conjunctures with the present. The queer theoretician Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) equates the “epistemological distinctiveness” of gay and Jewish identities. Both are analogous in that

the stigmatized individual has discretion over other people’s knowledge of their membership of the group—that is, they can hide their orientation or identity. The consequence of this structure is that both have the option of living in the closet. As opposed to people of color, for example, they can choose to hide and discreetly blend in. We see how at the core of queer theory, in one of its most profound moments, lies a homology to the Jewish experience: what coming out of the closet means. Jews, especially Jews who believed in assimilation, lived in closets, or in the words of [Hannah] Arendt: “As a child I did not know that I was Jewish.... The word ‘Jew’ was never mentioned at home when I was a child. I first met up with it through anti-Semitic remarks ... from children on the street. After that I was, so to speak, ‘enlightened.’”

(WOLIN 2001, 39)
The Jew, especially as immigrant, between nations, forced out of one role that no longer fits and into the role of a stranger, resembles the male homosexual in being indistinguishable from the urban crowd. Living in dosets is easier in sprawling, anonymous cities, a destination for immigrants from economically undeveloped areas (Jews) and suffocating social backgrounds where one could not hide effectively from prying eyes of hostile neighbors. European cultures often linked both Jews and homosexuals to the city—to the urban social and cultural landscape. And the anonymous big city, in the eyes of the respectable bourgeoisie, also presented “temptations” such as ballrooms, dance floors, cabarets, and red-light districts—all enabling illicit sexuality, away from social surveillance. These threatened to sap uprooted and restless individuals of their strength. Now, more than ever, sex needed to be under control, but so did immigrant neighborhoods. It was the poor and uncouth east European immigrant Jews in the poor districts of Vienna that shaped Adolf Hitler’s view of Jews around World War I as rootless, cosmopolitan city dwellers, ready and willing to parasitically sap the vitality of the nation. As a result of this stereotype, both Jews and homosexuals were afflicted by self-hatred, and the combination of homosexuality and Jewish self-hatred was now articulated in literature by both Jewish authors (such as Marcel Proust [1871–1922]) and others, notably James Joyce (1882–1941) and the Jewish protagonist of his masterwork Ulysses (1922), Leopold Bloom.

The ways in which the LGBTQ community in Israel expresses itself publicly and asserts itself politically somewhat continues the older tensions of being an Other, both Jewish and homosexual. Gay pride, the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem gay parades, the wish to be accepted by the military as manly men, the participation in new family structures, and the willingness to participate in what is termed “pinkwashing” (promoting Israel as a gay-friendly, liberal democracy with the intent to conceal human and civil rights abuses in the Palestinian occupied territories) all beg for a further critical analysis, taking into account the nexus of the older, historical homophobia and anti-Semitism.

SEE ALSO Anti-Semitism and Zionism; The Bubble (2006; Eytan Fox); The Closet; Einyim Pkuhot (2009; Haim Tabakman); Human Rights; Institut für Sexualwissenschaft; Nationalism and Sexuality in Europe; Pinkwashing; Urban Queerness

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Throughout history, charges of sodomy have frequently been used either politically or for scapegoating. Formally defined as a “crime against nature,” sodomy was initially an umbrella term for various sexual transgressions policed by Christian law in Europe. These included both male-male and male-female anal intercourse, bestiality, masturbation, and even any sex outside of procreation (Wiesner-Hanks 2010, 45). Depending on the historical period and location, other sexual acts and sometimes even sexual positions were included in the definition of sodomy, but gradually it came to be interpreted primarily as male-male sexual acts.

In European societies, prohibitions on sodomy were rooted in ecclesiastical (church) law and date to the fourth century CE, when the Roman Empire became Christian and adopted the death penalty for male homosexuality from the Old Testament Book of Leviticus (Crompton 2003). In medieval Europe, sodomy was associated with heresy and Islam, both considered anti-Christian (Boswell 1981). A combination of sodomy and heresy charges served to discredit and destroy the Order of the Templars in 1307. They were used against subdeacon Arnaud de Verniolles (or Arnald de Vernhola), who was brought before the Inquisition in 1323 in France on charges of heresy. Arnaud’s case reveals the complicated negotiations around the definition of sodomy and its potential association with identity categories in medieval Europe. In surviving records of the case, he claimed sex between men was a mortal sin, but no more serious than fornication with a woman or with female prostitutes (Arnold 2001). But the sex he was practicing was probably intercrural (rubbing the penis between his partner’s legs) rather than penetrative, and he also stated that “if a man lay on top of another man as if he was a woman, or the said sin was committed through the rear,” it would be a much greater sin (quoted in Arnold 2001, 219).
Atherton, an unpopular Anglican bishop in a primarily Roman Catholic see, and his steward Childe were the second pair of men executed for sodomy under England's Buggery Act of 1534. Accusations of sodomy were sometimes leveled against religious minorities, with Catholics being targeted so that monastery lands could be confiscated.

Like sodomy, *bougre* was a name given in Middle French to a sect of heretics thought to have come from Bulgaria in the eleventh century; it then morphed into the English word *bugger*, meaning a person who penetrates someone's anus during sexual intercourse (OED Online 2018). *Buggery*, too, gradually came to mean primarily male-male sexual acts.

**Antisodomy and Buggery Trials in Europe**

In the aftermath of the Protestant Reformation, sodomy was brought under civil jurisdiction in most European societies. In England, Henry VIII (1491–1547) introduced the Buggery Act in 1534, which was originally intended to be a temporary measure. Despite being the first civil law of its kind, the Buggery Act relied on religious terminology, defining sodomy as the “detestable and abominable vice committed with mankind or beast,” and punished it with death (Statutes Project 2018). The motivation behind the Buggery Act was anti-Catholic, as Henry VIII sought to justify breaking away from the Catholic Church in order to secure his divorce and remarriage. Louis Crompton (2003) notes that under the Buggery Act charges of sodomy were used to prosecute Catholics, in particular clergy who had previously been immune to secular law, and to confiscate monastery lands. Henry's son
introduced a new Buggery Act in 1548, but when Henry's Catholic daughter Mary I (1516–1558) became queen, she repealed it in 1553; after Henry's daughter Elizabeth I (1533–1603) took the throne, she passed a new version of the act in 1563 (Trumbach 2007).

The Elizabethan Buggery Act was rarely applied during the first century and a half of its existence, and when it was, most cases seem to have involved rape of prepubescent boys (Trumbach 2007). Indeed, as Harry G. Cocks (2003) observes, before the 1720s the Buggery Act was hardly enforced at all. Matt Cook (2003) writes about English "molly houses" (in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, usually taverns, pubs, or coffee-houses) that remained in business long enough to attract a steady patronage among men seeking sex with men or looking for social networks, despite periodic raids.

In 1828 the Buggery Act was replaced with the Offences Against the Person Act, whereas capital penalty for sodomy remained intact, to be abolished in the 1861 amendment. Throughout these changes, buggery was understood as anal penetration between men or between man and woman. Between 1806 and 1900, 8,921 men were charged with sodomy, gross indecency, or related misdemeanors in England and Wales (Cook et al. 2007). Most of them were imprisoned, yet between 1806 and 1861, of the 404 men sentenced to death, only fifty-five were executed, with the rest exiled to Australia or imprisoned (Cook et al. 2007). James Pratt and John Smith, two working-class men who had been reported to have committed buggery with each other by the landlord of the rooms they rented, were the last to be executed for sodomy in Britain, in 1835. In 1885 Member of Parliament Henry Labouchère proposed an amendment that would replace sodomy with “gross indecency,” broadly defined to include all forms of same-sex erotic activity between men, thus eliminating the burden of proof that an act of anal penetration had taken place. The outcome of his proposal, Section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, was soon used against Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), famous Irish author and playwright. In 1895 Wilde sued the Marquess of Queensberry for libel after he accused Wilde of "posing as Somdomite [sic]." Following three highly publicized trials, Wilde was found guilty of gross indecency and sentenced to two years of hard labor. Apart from ruining Wilde’s life and career, his trials resulted in greater visibility of homosexuality across Europe.

Some argue that the dramatic turn the Wilde scandal took not only made homosexuality a part of public discourse, but it also might have set back the liberalization of laws against same-sex acts for decades; such acts, previously tolerated as long as they took place in private, were now associated with a predatory behavior, provoking widespread conservative responses in Europe and North America (Hattersley 2006). Simultaneously, queer subcultures flourished in major European cities by the early twentieth century, bringing about not just new sexual identities but also new forms of social control. In the interwar period, the British police frequently arrested men for “cottaging” (cruising) in public urinals, sometimes resorting to entrapment (Houlbrook 2000). In 1927 Constable E. Hartford arrested schoolmaster and war hero Frank Champain for importuning (verbal
propositioning) in London urinals. Champain was sentenced to three months of hard labor under the 1898 Vagrancy Act but appealed and had his conviction overturned. Matt Houlbrook (2000) notes that the police were eager to arrest cottaging men because they viewed them as an easy way to earn a promotion.

At the beginning of the Cold War, male homosexuality became policed even more harshly. While in 1938 there were 719 court cases involving gross indecency in England and Wales, the number was 2,504 in 1955 (Bauer and Cook 2012). In the 1950s police in the United Kingdom raided individuals' homes, seizing their diaries and address books, “snowballing” the pool of potential convicts (Cook et al. 2007). Among those convicted was mathematician Alan Turing (1912–1954), whose codebreaking work was instrumental to the Allies’ victory over Nazi Germany in World War II. After Turing was charged with gross indecency in 1952, his lawyer proposed chemical castration, or organotherapy, as a means to spare someone so gifted from imprisonment (Doan 2017). Turing killed himself in 1954. Laura Doan notes that from today's perspective, organotherapy is demonized, but “what is now termed 'chemical castration' held different meanings in 1952” (2017, 122). Doan cautions against making the past intelligible today at the expense of understanding historical actors' ways of being in the world, and historians therefore need to treat trials
such as Turing’s and the punishments they meted out with circumspection. Sexual acts between consenting men over twenty-one in private were decriminalized in 1967 in England and Wales, but in some of British territories, such as the Isle of Man, homosexuality remained criminalized until 1992.

In late medieval and early modern Catholic Europe, sodomy came to be closely associated with heresy and witchcraft and was punished by burning at the stake. In France, “sodomites” were burned and their property confiscated. In the Italian cities Perugia, Bologna, and Ancona, a form of people’s militia was created in 1233 to ensure religious and sexual conformity, with particular attention to sodomy (Norton 2008). In fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Florence, adults convicted of sodomy were castrated, and youth publicly ostracized and fined (Norton 2008). In Spain and Sicily (under Spanish rule from the fifteenth through the eighteenth centuries), sodomy and bestiality were initially prosecuted by the Holy Inquisition, but in 1509 Ferdinand II of Aragon (1452–1516) placed sodomy under secular jurisdiction. Some historians believe that in Iberian societies sodomy was not widely prosecuted until the late fifteenth century, when the Inquisition focused on general prosecution of heresy and Jews, as well as crimes against royal authorities (Nesvig 2001). The “doubled” activity of the Holy Inquisition and secular courts resulted in 380 cases of sodomy in Valencia, 791 in Zaragoza, and 433 in Barcelona recorded between 1540 and 1700, as well as over one hundred executions in Madrid from the 1580s to the 1650s, and at least eighty-three public executions in Sicily between 1567 and 1640 (Tortorici 2012). In Portugal, sodomy was under the jurisdiction of the Inquisition, and between 1587 and 1794, four hundred individuals were charged with sodomy, with about thirty of them executed for their crimes (Tortorici 2012).

In Holland, a large-scale persecution of homosexual men took place in the eighteenth century, starting in 1730 in Utrecht (Crompton 2003). The Dutch Republic had been through a series of natural disasters in the preceding decades, and the men accused of sodomy became public scapegoats. In April 1730 the authorities began to arrest and interrogate men who had been using the ruins of Utrecht’s Dom Church as cruising grounds. Their confessions showed the existence of a widespread network of homosexual men in the republic, prompting a nationwide witch hunt in July of the same year. In Utrecht, around forty men were arrested and tried, and eighteen of them were executed by hanging or drowning. In other Dutch cities, the persecution of “sodomites” was used politically: for example, the mayor of Zuidhorn used the charges against his enemies, convicting and killing twenty-two men (Norton 2011). Overall, between 250 and 300 men were prosecuted in 1730, and more waves of persecution followed in 1764, 1776, and 1797 (Crompton 2003). The word Utrechtenant (resident of Utrecht) became a synonym for homosexual in the Dutch slang.

In Germany, secular legislation had a long and uneven germination period over several hundred years, with many Germanic law codes not considering same-sex relations a felony
The meaning of sodomy itself was unstable; Maria R. Boes (2002) notes that depending on time and place, it could include sex between Christians and Jews or Turks and Saracens or be used interchangeably with bestiality. However, when the Holy Roman Empire’s 1532 *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina* (criminal code) made same-sex activities, along with bestiality, punishable by death, the climate had changed (Boes 2002). In 1721 Catharina Margaretha Linck, a Prussian woman who presented herself as a man and married another woman, was convicted of sodomy and executed by beheading at the order of King Frederick William I (1688–1740), despite the prosecutors’ initial confusion about whether Linck’s use of a leather dildo on her partner constituted “sodomy” (Crompton 2003). Unlike Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium, and Holland, which dropped antisodomy laws following the example of France’s Napoleonic Code in the nineteenth century, Germany preserved prohibitions on sodomy in various jurisdictions until the mid-twentieth century.

Regarding all nonprocreative sex as sinful, the Russian Orthodox Church, however, did not follow Western Christian tradition in singling out sodomy. In pre-1700 Russia, male anal intercourse was considered sinful but was punished with a penance similar to that for heterosexual adultery, and nonpenetrative same-sex erotic activity was treated with even lesser severity (Healey 2001). Secular statutes banning sodomy in the military were introduced by Peter the Great (1672–1725) in 1716 in a move to imitate western European military laws (Healey 2001). In 1835 Nicholas I (1796–1855) extended the prohibition to all males in the Russian Empire, making sodomy an offense punished by exile to Siberia.

Yet, the relatively weak social position of the Russian Orthodox Church and the influence of the “high”/“low” class division in Imperial Russia resulted in a nonsystematic and selective enforcement of the antisodomy law. High-ranked individuals could bribe officials or use their connections to escape conviction, and people of lower social standing were affected disproportionately. Dan Healey reviews the 1882 story of Prince Obolenski from the provincial town of Uman, who became infatuated with Petr and Fedor Filonovskii, coachmen brothers. Obolenski convinced the Filonovskiis to leave their employer and join his staff, then provided the brothers with new phaetons and horses and rented for them a lavishly furnished flat where he could visit them. When the news of his and the Filonovskiis’ “debauchery” became public, the prince and the coachmen were taken to trial in Moscow. The trial’s outcome is unknown, yet there is a record of the prince’s sophisticated medical defense provided by forensic doctors (Healey 2001). According to Healey’s estimates (2001), from 1874 to 1904, 1,066 persons were indicted for sodomy, with 911 more indictments from 1905 to 1913. Only 5 percent of those prosecuted belonged to the upper classes. The number of convictions rose from 440 between 1874 and 1904 to 504 between 1905 and 1913, likely due to the period of social instability between the 1905 Revolution and World War I. With the exception of the pre-1700 punishment by the church for mutual masturbation between women, female same-sex activity was never subject to criminal law in Russia.
After the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, male sodomy was decriminalized briefly from 1922 to 1933. By 1933, however, homosexuality did not fit in with the newly promoted ideal of Communist family values included in the process of social unification initiated by Soviet leader Joseph Stalin (1878–1953). To the Communist leadership, male homosexuality had come to be associated with foreign influences ranging from bourgeois lifestyle and espionage to fascist ideology, and as such was outlawed. Healey states that from 1933/1934 to 1993, between 60,000 and 250,000 men were convicted under Article 121, which defined muzhelozhstvo (male sodomy; literally, “lying down with men”) as a sexual crime punishable by up to five years of hard labor in prison. Most trials took place behind closed doors.

The Soviet antisodomy legislation was often used in targeting Stalin's political opponents and those considered enemies of the people, as well as social and intellectual nonconformists. Thus, between 1934 and 1937, Article 121 was used to prosecute “anti-Soviet” peasant poet Nikolai Klyuev (1884–1937); in 1944 (and again in 1959) it targeted famous singer Vadim Kozin (1903–1994) after he had fallen out of favor with the head of the secret police, Lavrentiy Beria (1899–1953); and in 1948 and 1974 sodomy charges were brought against Armenian film director Sergei Paradjanov (1924–1990), who was critical of Soviet cultural politics (Healey 2001, 2014; Makin 2010). Like most men convicted under Article 121, Paradjanov was subjected to torture and sexual violence in prison. Adi Kuntsman (2009) argues that mass mistreatment of homosexual men in Soviet gulags had lasting effects on homophobia in contemporary Russia. Arrests and sentencing of men under Article 121 continued after the Soviet Union's dissolution in 1991 until 1993, when Russian president Boris Yeltsin (1931–2007) repealed it, seeking admission to the Council of Europe (Essig 1999). Former Soviet republics Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan never decriminalized homosexuality.

In Scandinavia before the mid-nineteenth century, sodomy, often grouped together with bestiality, was regulated by the series of laws on “fornication against nature” and punished by death. Starting with Norway in 1842, Nordic societies replaced death penalties for sodomy with “modern” penal codes that punished it with a prison sentence. Finland was the last state to do so, in 1894. Unlike Great Britain and Russia, in Scandinavia women were also subject to sodomy prohibitions. Jens Rydström and Kati Mustola (2007) discuss the 1845 case of female sodomy in which the District Court of Helgeland, Norway, sentenced sixty-eight-year-old Simonette Vold to eighteen months of hard labor for engaging in sexual activities with her two female servants, who in turn received two weeks of bread-and-water diet and seclusion. The verdict was appealed, as Vold confessed only to imitating sex acts with the women. The case went up to the Supreme Court of Norway, which—given the evidence produced by witnesses, such as the description of the loose velvet dildo Vold was said to have used during sex—concluded that she was guilty of the “intercourse against nature.” The court upheld the servants’ punishment and reduced Vold’s sentence to a year of hard labor. Between 1879 and 1999, 8,801 men and 86 women were convicted for
“unnatural fornication” and same-sex sexuality across Scandinavia, with the majority of convictions taking place in Denmark between 1935 and 1964 and involving sex with minors, homosexual sex work, age-of-consent violations, or sex in public (Rydström and Mustola 2007).

Prosecution of Sodomy in the Colonies

European colonial expansion brought antisodomy laws to the colonized lands of Africa, Asia, Australia, and the Americas. The Buggery Act of 1534 applied to the British colonies in North America and elsewhere, either inherited directly or used as a basis for local antisodomy legislation; twenty prosecutions are known to have taken place in the American colonies (Eskridge 2002). Around 1623 or 1624 a ship’s master, Richard Cornish, was hanged in Virginia for sodomy with the twenty-nine-year-old cabin boy William Couse (Norton 2008); William Plaine was executed in New Haven in 1646; the same year saw the execution of Jan Creoli, a black man from Manhattan (then the Dutch New Netherland colony), who had had sex with a ten-year-old black boy, who was also condemned to death (Katz 1992). Nicholas Sension of Windsor, Connecticut, was brought before the colony’s General Court on sodomy charges several times from the 1640s to 1677. Despite Sension’s well-known history of propositioning men for sex, offering to pay for sex, and assaulting male servants, the court did not formally charge him for decades, probably due to his high standing in the community (Bronski 2011). In 1677 Sension was convicted of attempted sodomy and sentenced to whipping, public shaming, and having his entire estate “placed in bond for his good behavior” (Bronski 2011, 10).

Following independence, most US states moved away from the death penalty for sodomy, yet between 1610 and 1900, every state had a criminal prohibition against “sodomy,” “carnal knowledge,” or the “infamous crime against nature,” punished by whipping, imprisonment, confiscation of property, and castration (Bronski 2011, 7; Norton 2008). However, until the late nineteenth century, the prosecution of sodomy was rare and usually involved sexual assault. In New York City, there were only twenty-two sodomy cases between 1796 and 1843, increasing first in the 1880s due to efforts to protect children from sexual exploitation and again in the early twentieth century as the public understanding of homosexuality changed from viewing it as an immoral activity to associating it with an immoral type of personality (Donovan 2016). In 1903 New York police charged sixteen men with sodomy following a bathhouse raid; according to surviving records, the subsequent trials resulted in three men being found guilty, one pleading guilty with a recommendation for leniency, and one mistrial—outcomes determined by the defendants’ social status (Donovan 2016). In subsequent years, during Prohibition and the Cold War, there was an increase in the state surveillance of same-sex desire, which frequently corresponded to the lines of social inequality. In the 1940s and 1950s the main targets of sodomy laws in New York City were Puerto Rican and African American men.
One key area of law involved the limits of the US Constitution’s protection of privacy. In the high-profile 1986 case *Bowers v. Hardwick*, the US Supreme Court upheld a Georgia law outlawing consensual oral and anal sodomy. Justice Byron White (1917–2002), who wrote the majority opinion, asserted there was no constitutional right for “homosexuals to engage in sodomy.” However, as Morris B. Kaplan notes, Justice Harry Blackmun's (1908–1999) dissent shifted the argument from “defining the scope of an individual right of privacy to articulating the grounds and limits of public enforcement of morality in a society committed to individual liberty and moral pluralism” (1997, 21). In 2003 the landmark case *Lawrence v. Texas* resulted in all remaining sodomy laws in the United States and its territories being declared unconstitutional.

In colonial Latin America, sodomy was often understood as *pecado nefando* (nefarious sin) or *pecado contra natura* (sin against nature) and was prosecuted by the Holy Office of the Inquisition and by secular courts. Unlike Brazil, where all sodomy cases were handled by the Portuguese Inquisition, in New Spain sodomy was persecuted by the Inquisition only if it was interpreted as heresy; yet, laypersons would often view all same-sex sexual acts as such heresy (Tortorici 2012). For instance, in 1621 a twenty-year-old mestiza woman named Augustina Ruiz confessed to her priest that she regularly masturbated to sacrilegious fantasies of having sex with the Virgin Mary and other saints. The priest denounced Ruiz to the Inquisition, which sentenced her to spend three years in a Mexico City convent (Tortorici 2012). The earliest known sodomy trial in colonial Mexico dates back to 1542, and all that is known about it is that it was prosecuted by Mexico’s Inquisition and involved sailors (Nesvig 2001). A century later, a huge scandal broke out in 1658 in Mexico City and Puebla, when over 120 alleged “sodomites” were arrested and interrogated, resulting in fourteen young men being burned to death (Nesvig 2001).

In keeping up with metropolitan Holland, same-sex erotic activity was prosecuted in the Dutch colonies. In 1644 in Batavia, the capital of Dutch East Indies (now Jakarta in Indonesia), following a complaint, a wealthy Dutch East India Company employee named Joost Schouten was caught forcing himself upon a young acquaintance. Schouten was arrested, charged, convicted of sodomy, and strangled. His case stands out in history because his high social status and wealth did not help him avoid capital punishment—perhaps because in the colonies sodomy was associated with local Asian traditions and therefore was viewed with an additional colonialist contempt (Murrell 2013). Yet, by the early eighteenth century the approach to sodomy in Dutch colonies had become more varied, and social status mattered again in who would face conviction and who would not. In 1716 at the Cape of Good Hope (now part of South Africa), ship’s master Pieter Berkman was accused of attempted sodomy by two ship’s boys, whose written confessions were used as evidence against him in trial. Berkman denied any sexual misconduct and was acquitted, while the boys were punished by whipping, withholding of wages, and
banishment. According to Susie Newton-King (2002), Berkman’s high rank as a Dutch East India Company employee, and the fact that he had never succeeded in sodomizing his accusers, possibly mattered in his acquittal.

By contrast, in a sodomy trial that took place just one year later, five men of equally low social standing faced accusations of consensual sodomy; three were found guilty of the “full performance” and executed by drowning, one was charged with attempted sodomy and punished by severe whipping, and the last one was acquitted (Newton-King 2002). Fellow soldiers reported Adam Vigelaar, a soldier stationed in the Cape bastion, and his four lovers for having sex in the barracks, sometimes during daytime and in the presence of others. Such “flaunting” of Vigelaar's transgressive sexuality, the fact that the acts of anal penetration had been proven by eyewitness testimony, and his lack of social power as a mere soldier all contributed to the guilty verdict and death penalty for two out of his four lovers and himself (Newton-King 2002).

Likewise, transgressive male sexuality was policed at sea. Beginning in 1627, capital punishment for buggery was officially instituted in the British Navy. Barry Richard Burg (1995) argues that, at first, it would usually take more than just buggery itself to instigate prosecution at sea, as surviving seventeenth-century trial records testify. Of the six preserved cases of maritime sodomy trials reviewed by Burg, two involved repeat offenders, Robert Hewitt and Robert Stone, who must have disrupted the ship community by assaulting cabin boys; another one was possibly a revenge attempt by a victim of flogging upon his abuser, the ship minister Richard Kingston; another was the result of a power struggle when pirate Edmund Cook of the Trinity was accused of buggery by another crewman to discredit Cook from taking the ship’s command; another was prompted against Samuel Norman, a ship captain, by a complaint from the alleged victim’s father; and another was a result of a consensual interracial arrangement involving an English boy, John Durrant, and his Hindu lover, Abdul Rhyme. What might have incited Durrant’s captain to prosecute both Durrant and Rhyme, according to Burg, was not the sodomy itself but that Durrant, a white man, allowed a “heathen” to penetrate him (1995, 146). Even so, despite numerous sworn-on-the-Bible eyewitness testimonies provided by Durrant and Rhyme’s crewmates, the mariners were convicted but punished only by whipping and being put on a diet of bread and water—a far cry from the death penalty. Overall, between 1690 and 1900 there were at least 490 sodomy trials in the British Navy (LeJacq 2015).

**Present Day**

As of April 2018, seventy-four countries maintain laws against homosexuality. About half are former British colonies that carry legislative remnants of the British antisodomy law (Stuart 2018). In Singapore, “gross indecency” laws (Section 377A) are rarely enforced, while in India Section 377 of the criminal code proscribes voluntary “carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal,” punishing it by life
imprisonment (Thomas 2016). Struck down in 2009 and reinstated in 2013, it was enforced widely until the Supreme Court ruled it could not be used to prosecute same-sex sexual activity in September 2018: in 2015 Indian police arrested 1,491 people under Section 377, including 207 minors and 16 women (Thomas 2016). When not enforced directly, Section 377 promoted homo- and transphobia and was used by police to harass LGBT Indians, especially hijras (third gender) and kothis (effeminate men), and as a justification for conversion therapy (Narrain and Bhan 2005). In Malaysia, Section 377B of the Penal Code punishes sodomy (sex acts between men) by whipping and up to twenty years in prison.

Worth noting is a series of highly publicized and controversial trials of Malaysian politician Anwar Ibrahim (1947–). Anwar was first charged with sodomizing his employees in 1998. Mahathir Mohamad (1925–), then the prime minister of Malaysia, was instrumental in bringing charges against Anwar, who had been previously seen as his anointed successor but had become his critic. The evidence against Anwar included his employees’ statements (later retracted) and DNA collected from the semen stains on his mattress. Despite Anwar's claims of innocence, he was found guilty and sentenced to nine years in prison. Carried out under constant government interference, the trial attracted international criticism, and Anwar was declared a “prisoner of conscience” by Amnesty International. In 2004 all charges against him were dropped, and Anwar was released and immediately became a leader of the national opposition. In 2008, when Anwar was about to challenge the governing coalition in the upcoming elections, his aide accused him of forced sodomizing, later changing the accusation to “homosexual conduct by persuasion.” Anwar’s response was that the complaint was completely fabricated and politically motivated. His second sodomy trial, which started in 2010, resulted in his acquittal in 2012, but then the acquittal was appealed and dropped in 2014, forcing Anwar to return to prison to serve a five-year sentence. In both the 1998 and 2010–2014 trials, Anwar's alleged homosexuality was used against him by his political enemies. Douglas E. Sanders (2009) suggests, however, that Anwar’s prosecutions do not represent the general pattern of Section 377B’s application in Malaysia, because it rarely targets consensual sexual acts taking place in private. In May 2018, after a change of government that brought Mahathir back to power as prime minister, Anwar was released from prison and pardoned. As of June 2018, Mahathir has pledged to hand over his position to Anwar in the future.

SEE ALSO Conquest and Sodomy in Latin America; Inquisition, Criminal Courts, and Sexuality in Colonial Latin America; Offences Against the Person Act (1861); Queen Boat Trials (2001–2002); Scandals in Europe; Section 377 and Section 377A; Section 377 in South Asia; Sodomy Laws in the United States; Treason and Queerness; Wilde Trials, International Significance of

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Archival research on the history of African same-sex sexuality is fraught with a number of challenges related not only to the constitution of the archive itself but also to the lack of standardization of terminology, practices, and identities. In the twenty-first century, research has shifted away from a heavy emphasis on public health studies to a more ethnographic focus on local communities, thus expanding our knowledge of diverse practices and identities and enriching the theoretical and analytic vocabulary that helps us understand local expressions in the African continent and also situate African expression in a broader global framework. New media and technologies have redressed the limited African participation in the production of archival texts, while also providing a more nuanced and expanded approach to the visual, aural, and performance-art data they contain. Indeed, the use of new media and technologies, with their emphasis on nonwritten expression, offers an alternative to the mostly written archive while developing the potential of African oral traditions to create and sustain meaningful ongoing dialogues around queer sexuality led by Africans themselves. New media and technologies have also sought to decenter the archival authority of academics and public health resources and center African agency and performance.

Missionary and Explorer Texts

The earliest texts that might be considered to constitute an archive are those by missionaries and explorers, dating, in greater proliferation, from the late nineteenth century. As a project driven by curiosity about African societies and embedded in colonialism, these early descriptions of African social practices are heavily shaped by emphases on either exoticizing African sexuality or demonstrating how “primitive” it is. Both sides of this binary create challenges for evaluating the value of these data and their effectiveness for constructing a history of queer African sexuality. Perhaps its greatest value is vindicationist; the few and scant references that exist in this literature are useful for challenging claims that same-sex sexuality was introduced by Arab or European foreigners, or that queer formations on the African continent are a relatively recent phenomenon. These accounts, in their focus on describing African societies to a Western audience, and in making their data useful to colonists, were not concerned with a
systematic investigation of sexuality, if it figured as a topic of discussion at all. Embedded in these accounts is a construction of African societies as “close to nature,” and thus, from this perspective, African sexuality is oriented exclusively toward reproduction (Hoad 2007; Arnfred 2004; Epprecht 2008). The Christian backgrounds of these missionaries and explorers also shaped their interest in focusing on heterosexuality, and nonheterosexual practices and expressions—if they were remarked on at all—were dismissed as deviant or given little to no attention. Missionary and explorer accounts should not be overburdened with charges of bias, but the salient social constructs that animated their production, and their lack of a systematic method for recording and analyzing African social behavior, problematize their use for a historiography of African same-sex sexuality. Issues surrounding translation pose an additional challenge for the inclusion of these texts in an archive, because most of the literature on the history of same-sex sexualities is written in English and disseminated in a largely Anglophone world; texts produced in French and Portuguese are often ignored or even overlooked in favor of English texts. The result of this nearly English-only process of discursive production leads to the marginalization of non-Anglophone areas in ethnological synthesis and theory building, and it creates a discourse shaped by the values of the English-speaking world. Thus, drawing upon these data in an attempt to deduce queer-related terminologies and local forms of identity constructs would be a nearly impossible task at worst, or impacted by a number of significant limitations, at best.

Unfortunately, for the greater part of the twentieth century anthropologists’ and ethnographers’ references to same-sex sexuality did little to overcome the biases and lack of systematic research by missionaries and explorers (Epprecht 2006). Anthropological accounts that mentioned same-sex sexuality usually made only fleeting references as part of a broader survey of social practices and belief. With a few notable exceptions (Herskovits 1938; Evans-Pritchard 1970), sexuality as a topic in its own right, and certainly queer sexuality as a legitimate variant or a subject of systematic academic inquiry, did not figure into these ethnographic discussions. Driven by dominating disciplinary interests in subjects such as politics, religion, and economics, and influenced by a discourse that African sexuality was exclusively oriented toward reproduction, this archival literature missed opportunities to interrogate a history of terminologies and identities that fell outside the received categories that were the central concern in research projects. Sometimes it missed opportunities to illuminate practices altogether, as in the case of female-female practices that were dismissed as being nonsexual because no penis was involved (Arnfred 2004). Information communicated to anthropologists about expressions of same-sex sexuality were dismissed either as incidental or as temporary expressions of bisexuality (Epprecht 2006), and so this literature did little to uncover a history or establish the sociocultural significance of African queerness. More sustained discussions by anthropologists such as Melville Herskovits (1938), E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1970), and others offer fuller discussion of same-sex sexuality and experiences, but these studies do not place their discussions in a
larger framework of sexuality, and they avoid more systematic interrogations into the history or the historical situatedness of these practices.

Several studies focused primarily on southern Africa have drawn upon missionary accounts and other written historical documents such as criminal court records to more explicitly construct a history of same-sex practices in Africa (Epprecht 2002, 2004). The greater research attention paid to same-sex expressions in southern Africa, and the more visible presence (and attendant stigmatization) they have had in a variety of colonial contexts in this region, have made these historiographic efforts compelling in their attempt to offer a historical dimension to local queer communities and identities. These attempts at historical reconstruction are also useful for illuminating a historical background and trajectory to both local terminologies and queer identities in the southern African region. Criminal court records, for example, seem most abundant and illustrative for the southern African region. They reflect the policing of African bodies as European social values came to displace local norms of identity and self-expression. As an archive, these records help illuminate gendered expressions that Europeans found offensive, but also reveal specific sexual practices. However, little attention has been given to carrying out similar types of historical studies elsewhere in Africa.

The notion of African sexuality as exclusively heterosexual is a long-standing construction that the archival research has been slow to resist (Hoad 2007; Johnson 2001; Kiama 1999; Lorway 2006; Epprecht 2004, 2006, 2008; Tamale 2007). While the historical and theoretical literature had regularly written against this, arguably it is only since the 1990s that the ethnographic literature has begun to deconstruct this notion in compelling and fact-based ways. These ethnographic accounts paved the way for same-sex sexuality to be seen as a valuable subject of inquiry in its own right, which not only refined our understanding of African sexuality more generally but also helped to deconstruct the myth of a heterosexual Africa in its more nuanced attention to gender, local specificity, and the cultural meanings attached to various practices and expressions. Increasingly, however, situated ethnographic studies have probed the local sociocultural formations around same-sex sexuality, elucidating local approaches to queer identity formation, social practices, and the extent to which local expressions of sexuality have been influenced by transnational flows (Teunis 1996, 2001; Tucker 2009; Donham 1998; Banks 2011, 2012; Dankwa 2009; Gaudio 2009). These studies rely on participant observations of queer social life and also draw on penetrating life histories of queer Africans.

**Life History and Oral History**

Life-history research has been an important part of oral history projects that seek to establish subjective understandings of African queer experience, as evidenced in a number of publications that focus on this medium (Gevisser and Cameron 1995; Watson 2010; Epprecht 1999). Oral histories are an important bridge between the archival literature
produced by academics and researchers and what is being produced by new media and technologies. Oral histories offer an opportunity for Africans to construct their own narratives and provide useful autobiographical data that are crucial for opening up new modes of constructing the archive and the new forms this construction might take.

Given the earlier dismissal of erotic experiences between women as not constituting sex, it should not be surprising that examinations of same-sex sexuality in the archive have been dominated by a focus on men. This has largely been true for ethnographic accounts, with some notable exceptions (Morgan and Reid 2003; Dankwa 2009; Nkabinde 2008), and this is another area where life histories have played a key role in redressing the comparative silence around female-female sexuality. This archive has also begun to move beyond the gender binary of male/female to explore queer formations that exist in a locally or globally influenced trans framework. The ethnographic archive has also attempted a standardization of queer terminologies, practices, and identities, which enriches the ability to make comparisons across time and space and thus establish a broader historical framework and trajectory for understanding queerness on the African continent.

**Public Health Data**

A larger body of potentially useful archival data comes from the public health sector, in which the vulnerability of MSM (men who have sex with men but do not necessarily identify as gay) to sexually transmitted diseases is examined in relation to broader social and cultural factors. This literature provides the largest amount of data of same-sex sexuality outside the region of southern Africa, with a number of important studies on populations in West and East African countries (Allman et al. 2007; Attipoe 2004; Binagwaho et al. 2009; Henry et al. 2010; Niang et al. 2003; Sanders et al. 2007; Wade et al. 2005). This public health literature helps to establish an archive of contemporary expressions and individual experiences, though its quantitative data were compiled for research about the health challenges or vulnerability of queer Africans. Indeed, the quantitative focus of many of these studies is unique in the literature on queer Africans and helps to enrich the largely historical or ethnographic accounts of the archive. Yet, although this literature is important for documenting the existence of same-sex experiences, it does not match the expanse of the ethnographic literature in examining sociocultural specificities and cultural practices. With its focus on contemporary social dynamics, it does little to establish a history of same-sex practices on the continent, but it does provide insights and data for ethnological comparison. Dominated by a focus on quantitative data, the limited qualitative interviews that these studies offer do provide some useful information about the specific and local sociocultural dynamics of their research subjects, but a number of challenges arise when public health data are appropriated for developing arguments in the domains of sociology, anthropology, and history.

Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe’s *Boy Wives/Female Husbands* (1998) was a seminal
comparative ethnographic survey that synthesized a wide range of archival literature to construct an argument about the long history of same-sex sexuality in Africa. In comparing data from north, west, east, and southern Africa, Murray and Roscoe aimed to dispel the notion that same-sex sexuality did not have a history on the African continent or that it was introduced by foreigners. Relying primarily on a range of missionary and explorer accounts, as well as earlier ethnographic accounts, historical court documents, and forensic analyses, among other written archives, they sought to create a history of queer experience in Africa. This volume, though seminal and useful in its ethnological emphasis, was nonetheless limited by the same shortcomings of the literature that it employed. From its ethnological perspective, however, it was useful in that it attempted to create a broad historiography and move toward illuminating broader theoretical concepts around issues of identity, group formation, and terminology. Ethnographic accounts, while not always discussing the history of the local terms they uncover, have paved an important path to engaging African-language vocabulary around queerness. This is seen by many as an important step toward establishing the autochthony of queer expressions in Africa.

Grassroots efforts on the African continent—such as GALA, an organization formed in 1997 to collect and preserve life stories from the queer African community, especially in South Africa—labor to situate themselves within national mainstream archives and discourses, not only by appropriating human rights discourse but also by inserting themselves in local social, cultural, and linguistic histories. GALA, which in 2007 changed its name to Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action, has the distinction of being the only archive on the African continent devoted to queer issues.

Trans Identities

Constructing a history of trans identities and practices from the archive is an even more challenging task. Practices of gender nonconformity, especially in relation to dress and socially scripted roles and practices, have figured into Europe's civilizing mission in Africa, as James Sweet's (1996) discussion of sanctions on male cross-dressing practices in Congo and Angola reveals. Emic terms such as kojobesia from Ghana (Banks 2012) and 'yan daudu from Nigeria (Gaudio 2009) disclose an archive of the intermediate space between practices and identities, as understood in local contexts. There are limitations to inscribing modern notions of trans identity on these ethnographic discussions and, given the lack of systematic investigation into trans as a category, to drawing upon these discussions to build a comparative framework. Thus, a reconstruction of trans history shares many of the same challenges one encounters when reconstructing the history of queer sexuality. Yet contemporary representations of trans Africans in film (see von Wallström 2016), social media (in particular Twitter and Tumblr), and print (see Morgan et al. 2010) provide new possibilities for archiving trans identities.

We also encounter the issue of subjectivity and personhood and the ways our
contemporary understandings of trans personhood, and its intersections with sexuality, differ from the types of expressions in African contexts that we may be compelled to label as trans. William D. Banks’s (2012) discussion of traditional priests in Ghana, Nkunzi Zandile Nkabinde’s (2008) discussion of herself as a lesbian sangoma (a traditional healer), and Graeme Reid and Ruth Morgan’s (2003) broader discussion of the gendered and sexual self-understandings of traditional priests in South Africa reveals how possession by spirits different from the gender of the host priest provides a framework for understanding nonconforming gender practice as well as sexuality identities. Nevertheless, James Lorand Matory’s (1994) study of cross-dressing practices in Yoruba religion reveals that these trans-gendered understandings do not always correlate to a queer sexuality. For example, Nwando Achebe’s (2011) historical discussion of Ahebi Ugbabe, an Igbo woman famous in Nigeria’s colonial history for becoming a king, reveals the limitations of taking Western-based notions of trans identity and deploying them to make sense of local African realities.

**Digital Platforms**

New media and technologies have opened up the potential for Africans themselves to engage in the construction of an archive, thus decentering an archive constructed exclusively by journalists, academics, and public health researchers. Beyond generalized social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, more specialized sites such as QZine, Behind the Mask, and Inkanyiso helped to establish a platform for ongoing and dynamic dialogue around issues of same-sex sexuality on the African continent. The immediacy and fluid nature of these electronic sources, their regular updating, and their accessibility and access to a wide range of participants helps to overcome some of the limitations of more academically oriented archives. New media and technologies have added a rich digital component to the written archive, expanding the possibilities for exploring African queer experiences while also overcoming some of the shortcomings of the currently constituted written archive. The digital nature provides a dynamism that the written archive struggles to keep up with, and the greater accessibility and wider reach helps to construct an archive more reflective of a diversity of experience, particularly those of women and trans people. Yet, the ease with which digital platforms can be produced and circulated also means that they can be just as easily abandoned, which is what happened with Behind the Mask, once a significant source of news and discussion of queer issues on the African continent. Digital platforms require people to maintain them, and financial sponsorship through advertising or other means to help pay for costs related to data management and staffing. As platforms become popular and their scope widens, management issues can become even more pressing, leading some to fold after a short time.

Digital platforms such as the West African–based Qzine, an arts and culture online magazine produced by and for queer Africans in Africa and the diaspora, have great
potential to initiate and sustain dialogues among Africans around the history of same-sex practices. Michael Owunna, also from a West African perspective, represents another aspect of African agency in creating a digital platform for the dissemination of queer-related African artistic production. Photographers such as Eric Gyamfi, crazinisT artisT, and Zanele Muholi and artist collectives such as FAKA (which combines various visual and aural media into performance art presentations) have helped to expand the representational modes of African queerness and thus have the potential to open up new areas of inquiry and understanding. These digital, performative, and visual platforms provide a means for queer Africans to access a more symbolic realm and to use their engagements to help situate their sexuality within a historical background and trajectory. In drawing on local resources, and in explicitly seeking to interest local populations or perform in local venues, they help create and sustain a dialogue that has great potential for uncovering the autochthony of African same-sex sexuality.

SEE ALSO Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara; Archives in Asia; Archives in Australia and New Zealand; Archives in Europe; Archives in Latin America; Archives in North America; Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara; Internet in Africa; Literature, African (Anglophone); Literature, African (Francophone)

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**FILMOGRAPHY**

What legal records, religious sources, scientific texts, and other archival material reveal about nonnormative genders and sexualities in Asia.

The study of nonnormative genders and sexualities in Asian history requires a more proactive approach than older fields of historical inquiry, especially since primary materials in this field tend not to be organized together in mainstream archives and library collections. In Europe and North America, LGBTQ archives typically developed alongside the growth of LGBTQ activism; in contrast, such social movements have a much shorter history in non-Western regions, such as Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Asia. When mining archival collections in these areas not specifically devoted to LGBTQ actors and topics, researchers often have to read against the grain and between the lines. Moreover, a common practice is for historians of queer Asia to build their own archives based on the materials they put together from various collections.

Legal Records

Legal records constitute perhaps the most important genre of archival sources on which historians have relied for this purpose, because these materials are readily available in central, local, and colonial government archives. As in most of the world, legal sources are especially useful for identifying cases of male sodomy charges and, to a lesser extent, certain types of gender transgressive behavior (e.g., cross-dressing). Indeed, sodomy trials throughout world history tend to neglect the spectrum of female same-sex acts altogether. The availability of criminal records, therefore, also means that in the existing scholarship on Asian sexuality, the treatment of lesbian history has been less sustained and more scattered than the history of male homosexuality. At the same time, given the routine reliance on legal sources in the field of queer history in general, this empirical emphasis allows Asia scholars to easily draw comparative insights from scholarship on other regions.

East Asia In places such as Japan and China, where the impact of Western imperialism was uneven, scholars have mined legislative and court records to map broad patterns of change over time in the regulation of male same-sex behavior. The landmark contribution of Gregory Pflugfelder (1999), for example, uncovers the evolving nature of written law regarding male-male sexual acts from Edo-era (1603–1868) to Meiji-era (1868–1912) Japan. By analyzing a wide range of legislation, Pflugfelder shows that lawmakers policed
male same-sex desire in a more patchwork fashion during the Edo period, when a
disciplinary paradigm of shudō (the “way of youths”) framed male-male sexuality as a “way”
(dō) and dominated popular discourses. After the Meiji restoration, however, due to both
the newly centralized political framework and the reformulated standards of official
morality in Japan’s effort to modernize and Westernize, written law and official discourses
assumed an unprecedented degree of uniformity. Pflugfelder calls the new paradigm that
dictated the new centrally promulgated law codes civilizing because it construed male
same-sex behavior—along with other nonprocreative erotic practices outside the
parameters of state-sanctioned marriage—as a “barbarous” vice that threatened the
“civilized” norm. For a period in the 1870s and 1880s, criminal codes, for the first time
publicly promulgated, proscribed all forms of anal intercourse between men. Whereas the
Edo-period disciplinary paradigm emphasized the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of
same-sex desire, the Meiji-era civilizing paradigm introduced a nationwide apparatus of
surveillance and punishment.

Similarly, Sinologists have combed through legal sources to investigate the origins of
sodomy statutes in Qing dynasty China (1644–1912). In his groundbreaking work on late
imperial Chinese legal history, Matthew Sommer (2000) utilizes county, provincial, and
central archives to map a different kind of transformation in the state regulation of
sexuality: from a paradigm centered on status performance to one centered on gender
performance. The different registers of archival sources are important because they
provide different clues, scales, and advantages for understanding how people’s sex lives
were governed. Local archives have survived from very few parts of China, but the one that
Sommer draws on extensively in his work—the Ba County archive in Sichuan Province—is
a rare holding that is well-preserved. A concentrated look at one region lacks national
representation, but these court cases provide valuable raw materials and other supporting
documents emerging from a local magistrate’s first encounter with a case. In contrast,
when a very serious crime, such as a homicide or a rape, reached Beijing, the format of the
report typically takes the form of a memorial with precise conformity to protocol. Highly
processed and housed in the central imperial archive, these memorials are normally the
outcome of exhaustive investigation and cautiously prepared for the emperor himself. The
major advantage of comparing the central archival materials against the local records is
that the former provides a more comprehensive outlook that is normally missing in the
latter. Although addressing archival sources in China specifically, this discussion can be
generalized to apply to archival research in other regions.

Although male sodomy constitutes only one of the many areas Sommer investigates (other
areas include the chastity cult and the criminalization of prostitution), his contribution on
this particular topic carries wider significance for both Chinese studies and the global
history of sexuality. Speaking to scholars of China, Sommer’s legal analysis refutes the long-
standing belief that the Manchu conquest introduced a conservative state that suddenly
reduced the sexual libertinism evident in the Ming dynasty (1368–1644). Previous scholars
have made the biased claim that the Qing government enacted a new interest in prohibiting consensual sodomy when the foreign Manchu conquerors found sexual relations between men offensive (Meijer 1985; Ng 1989; Hinsch 1990). Yet, Sommer’s detailed investigation of the central and local archives reveals that it was not consensual sodomy, but homosexual rape that became the focus of Qing law. The watershed moment came with the establishment of a sub-statute in 1734 detailing the penalties for sodomy offenses. Contrary to earlier interpretations of this legislation as a new interest in sex between men, Sommer considers this instead as an assimilation of sodomy offenses to the previous heterosexual category of “illicit sexual intercourse” (jian). Specifically, through this new legislative construction, lawmakers aimed to remedy the imbalance in which homosexual rape was more severely penalized than heterosexual rape.

South and Southeast Asia If legal cases provide a useful window into the regulation of sexuality in East Asia, they have served as a popular source base for historians of South and Southeast Asia as well. This is particularly salient given the way the British Empire established antisodomy statutes throughout its colonial holdings around the world in the nineteenth century. The most widely studied example is Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, because its first introduction through the colonial state formed the basis for its subsequent applications in various Asian and African countries. The most oft-cited illustration of Section 377’s mobilization in colonial India is the Allahabad case of Queen Empress v. Khairati (1884). This specific case has prompted scholars of South Asia to push the conventions and limits with which historical inquiries into sexuality gravitate toward the empirical seduction of colonial archives. In her innovative reading of the case, Anjali Arondekar (2009) highlights the paradoxical nature of the way the Khairati case works to magnify the colonial mobilization of Section 377. Due to the lack of evidentiary details concerning the place, time, and persons involved, the Khairati case was ultimately dismissed by the colonial judge. Yet this failed sodomy case repeatedly appeared as an exemplary narrative to illustrate the execution of Section 377 between 1885 and 1920. Arondekar poignantly asks, “How does a case that stumbles over critical issues of evidence, criminality, and legal codification become the colonial trace for crimes against nature?” (2009, 75–76).

The Khairati case and its place in the history of sodomy have enabled scholars to draw connections to the way other colonial sources mediate the relationship between sexuality and its historical understanding. Arondekar highlights the parallel example of colonial anthropology in the work of Richard Burton (1821–1890), the British scholar-explorer best known for his translation of A Thousand and One Nights. In the famous terminal essay on pederasty, Burton mentions a report submitted to the central government in Bombay detailing his observation of pederasty in Karachi, Sindh. But ever since, the contents and location of the report have remained a mystery. Interestingly, subsequent commentators continue to obsess over Burton's lost report, generating what Arondekar calls “a tale of archival losses” (2009, 28). The similarity between Burton’s missing report and the
Khairati sodomy case lies in their shared archival status of loss and failure; precisely through their sustained absence, they promise to bring certain archival objects into existence. In both cases, “a missing record of sexuality promises the (impossible) success of colonial intelligence” (Arondekar 2009, 54). The colonial archive, in other words, should not be conceived merely as an organized collection of “factual” information waiting to be accessed and extracted by historians. Scholars such as Arondekar help us to rethink the formative nature of its relationship to the history of sexuality by questioning the convention of retrieval and, above all, the assumed warranty of archival repositories. The most important archival holding for historical research on British colonial India is the Asia, Pacific and Africa Collections (previously called the Oriental and India Office Collections) at the British Library in London.

Although the institutionalization of antisodomy statutes in the British Empire has been a focal point in historical debates over colonial sexuality, various parts of Asia implemented similar written laws put in place by other European regimes. Thus, other colonial archives have been instrumental to unearthing the consequences of these histories. One notable example is Spanish Manila. In the Hispanic colonial record, the earliest instance of a male-male sexual relationship in the Philippines involved a Chinese mandarin from Taiwan named Lousu, who was found guilty of the crime of sodomy and sentenced to death by the Spanish authorities in 1670. Protests from Manila’s Chinese community, the interest of Spanish authorities in Manila to maintain good diplomatic relations with Taiwan, and a petition from Zheng Jing (1642–1681), the “king” of Taiwan, eventually led to the suspension of Lousu’s sentence (Reyes 2012). A quick foray into the Spanish colonial archives will uncover documents referring not only to the Americas, Guam, Maluku, and Indonesia, but also to Thailand, Vietnam, Burma, China, Taiwan, Japan, India, other Pacific Islands, and even Tibet. Another example is the Dutch East India Company (VOC; Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie), whose courts of law conducted at least twenty trials that pronounced the death sentence for acts of sodomy in the Indonesia archipelago (Boomgaard 2012). The VOC archives are preserved largely at the Dutch National Archives (Nationaal Archief) at The Hague.

**Religious Sources**

The study of queer history through the lens of sodomy has certain limitations. As mentioned previously, queer women’s sexuality tends to be a blind spot in this approach. The fact that antisodomy statutes resulted from European imperial expansion in many parts of Asia already raises a question about the status of nonnormative genders and sexualities in the precolonial era. In order to move beyond these limitations of the colonial archive, scholars interested in the period before modern industrialization often take into consideration other types of evidence alongside a capacious conceptualization of what counts as “legal” sources. For example, two broad categories of Sanskrit literature—śāstra
and kāvya--have been especially useful for grasping the proscription of undesirable sex acts (e.g., sex in the wrong places, sex with animals, and erotic practice performed by persons of the "third-nature/sex") in precolonial India (Vanita and Kidwai 2000; Ali 2012). The former constitutes the main textual foundation around which legal traditions in early India cohered; the latter refers to a literary style used by court poets to generate emotional effects. Rekhtī, a genre of Urdu feminist poetry, provides valuable but mediated insight into female homoeroticism in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century urban India (Vanita 2012). Shariʿa law in Muslim Southeast Asia is another poignant example of where law and religion intersect, and although its jurisprudence is a frequent reference for the prohibition of anal penetration, scholars have relied on medical, literary, and other Islamic texts to identify evidence of cross-gender practices and same-sex relations between women (Clarence-Smith 2012).

Relatedly, researchers have mined archival sources that document a variation of religious practice. Anthropologist Michael Peletz (2009) has studied the writings of early European explorers, colonial officials, missionaries, medical personnel, indigenous court attendants, and professional historians and anthropologists, including his own fieldwork in Malaysia since the 1970s, to develop the concept of “gender pluralism” to capture the diversity of gendered ways of being in Southeast Asia since the fifteenth century. One of Peletz’s most important examples concerns the highly esteemed transgender ritual specialists: male-bodied individuals who dressed in female attire when performing rituals associated with royal regalia, births, weddings, and key stages of agricultural cycles. In the early modern period, many Southeast Asian communities accorded these individuals enormous prestige and respect. The best-known are the bissu, a class of ritual specialists among the Bugis of South Sulawesi. Another example is the androgynous sida-sida, a pre-Islamic class of priests or courtiers in the Malay Peninsula. Sinologists, too, have looked at different religious and intellectual institutions to construct a comparably fluid gender spectrum in Chinese culture since the early period. By drawing on the three canonical traditions of China (Buddhist, Classicist/Confucian, and Taoist), Daniel Burton-Rose (2012), for instance, draws attention to a range of practices that he calls “gendered androgyny,” including examples of “nonmales” and “nonfemales” in the early Buddhist communities, the transcendence of gender boundaries in Tibetan Buddhism, the documentation of sex change in Classicist texts, and the pursuit of female generative power among male Inner Alchemists. Many of the sources that inform Burton-Rose’s research have been translated and published in English.

**Other Published Sources**

In addition to state archives, colonial records, missionary writings, indigenous manuscripts, and legal and religious sources, researchers have utilized other published sources available in specific collections and libraries.
Medical and Scientific Literature An important point of entry into the history of sexuality after Michel Foucault’s ([1990][1976]) seminal contribution to the field are sources related to medical science. Medical and scientific publications, alongside the correspondence of notable sexologists, can be consulted at such places as the New York Academy of Medicine, the Wellcome Library in London, the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction at Indiana University, and the personal papers of sexologists archived primarily at medical school libraries worldwide, from North America to Europe to Australia. The India-based sexologist Alyappin Padmanabha Pillay (1889–1957) served as the editor in chief of the *International Journal of Sexology*, copies of which can be accessed through the American Interlibrary Loan system and some of the archives mentioned previously. The journal includes significant discussions of homosexuality, transvestism, and other nonnormative expressions of gender and sexuality. Pillay and the journal have thus far been largely ignored by historians of sexual science, but their presence made Bombay the gateway for circulating sexual knowledge between sex experts and lay readers around the world in the mid-twentieth century ([Ahlulwalia 2018](#)). Pillay's correspondence with Western sexologists can be found in their respective archival collections. The work of other key figures, such as Agnes Smedley (1892–1950) and R. D. Karve (1882–1953), also positioned South Asia at the center of a global network of sexual science ([Botre and Haynes 2018](#); [Fuechtner 2018](#)).

Historians of East Asia have analyzed the transmission of Western sexological ideas about homosexuality, eugenics, transgender practices, and sex education in Japan, Korea, and China since the late nineteenth century. Some scholars emphasize the importance of indigenous linguistic terms and conceptual categorizations for the reception of Western sexology ([Kang 2009](#)); other historians argue for a more abrupt epistemological rupture occasioned by the novel sexological paradigms ([Dikötter 1995](#); [Robertson 1998](#); [Pflugfelder 1999](#); [Früstück 2003](#); [Chiang 2018](#)). Paying particular attention to the historical conditions of knowledge appropriation and dissemination, critics have also examined the ways in which native writers translated foreign sexological texts to further their own political and cultural agendas ([Suzuki 2006](#); [2015](#); [Guo 2016](#); [David 2018](#); [Hsu 2018](#)). Marie Stopes (1880–1958), Ellen Key (1849–1926), Margaret Sanger (1879–1966), Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902), Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), and Eugen Steinach (1861–1944) were some of the most popular sexologists whose writings found a ready audience at a time when the Japanese Empire acquired a growing military presence across the Asia Pacific. After World War II, both popular sexology and the medical profession continued to sustain focused discussions of gender and sexual variance ([Henry 2017](#); [Welker 2017](#); [McLelland 2018](#)). Sources informing these studies came to light largely through the effort of individual researchers who sought them out and brought them together from scattered collections across East Asia. Most of these archived sources have not been translated into English.

Periodicals and the Popular Press A related genre of sources comes from the periodical
press. The historical differential here is that certain East Asian countries, such as China and Japan, have a longer history of the publishing industry than other places. Starting in the early twentieth century, the rise of journalism and the printing press fundamentally altered the character of popular discourse to the extent that magazines, newspapers, journals, tabloid readings, commerce-driven pamphlets, and other mass circulating texts commanded an important intermediary role between professional experts and a growing reading public. The discussion of deviant sexualities in these venues often constitutes a fulcrum of debate about the nature and existence of “civil society” in modern East Asia. Exceptional in Asia is a strong tradition in Japan of preserving and republishing printed materials, including runs of some magazines, such as *Hentai shinri* (1917–1926; Perverse psychology), which focuses on both criminal and sexual deviances. Some scholars have collected articles and reprinted them, such as the three-volume *Senzenki dōsei kanren bunken shūsei* (2006; Collection of sources related to homosexuality in the prewar period), which includes materials ranging from late nineteenth-century translations of Krafft-Ebing to newspaper, magazine, and research articles on male and female homosexuality in the 1920s and 1930s.

This trove of primary sources has been immensely valuable for the historical study of queer Asia. For Thailand, Tamara Loos (2012) has utilized the various published accounts (e.g., in *Siam Repository* and *Siam Prophet*) about the investigation of Prince Rakronnaret (1791–1848), the thirty-third child of Rama I and second son of the king’s consort, Noi Kaeo, to reconstruct the first legal case in Siam’s history that involved erotic relations between men. For Republican China, Tze-lan Sang (2003), Wenqing Kang (2009), Howard Chiang (2018), and Peter Carroll (2018) have uncovered media coverage unprecedented in scope of stories of male and female same-sex relations and gender transformations in the mainstream and tabloid newspapers. For colonial Korea and Taiwan, Eno Pei-jean Chen (2013) has drawn on press reports to explore the tension between the modernizing impulse of Japanese imperial citizenry and the abiding values of Confucianism as colonized subjects confronted new ideas about free love and same-sex desire. For colonial and postcolonial Singapore, Audrey Yue (2017) has consulted such national dailies as the *Straits Times* to analyze the changing configurations of transgender embodiment and visibility. For postwar Japan, Mark McLelland has called attention to the development of what he calls the “perverse press” (*kasutori* or low-grade/pulp), “a source unparalleled in English and probably in any other language in the world” for the study of minority sexualities (2005, 69; see also Ishida, McLelland, and Murakami 2005). Todd Henry (2013) has probed this genre in greater depth to offer a detailed account of the lives of danshō, which he translates as “cross-dressed male sex workers,” in early postwar Japan. In addition, McLelland has studied Japan’s first homophile publication, *Adonis*, which “predates the founding of America’s ONE and was longer-lived and able to be more graphic in its support for a homosexual subjectivity than its U.S. counterpart” (2005, 94). *Adonis* was published by the Adonis Organization from 1952 to 1962, totaling sixty-three issues in all. Like the sources in sexual
science, accounts of gender nonconformity and queer sexualities in the popular press have been brought to light through the detective work of researchers who proactively looked for them in dispersed library holdings.

**Efforts to Preserve the Heritage of Queer Asia**

In the late twentieth century, political activism centered on LGBTQ rights began to develop in earnest in various subregions of Asia. Across this vast continent, noteworthy turning points constituted the backdrop for broader social and cultural change as the world prepared for a new millennium: the launch of the Đổi Mới reform policy in Vietnam in 1986; the lifting of martial law in Taiwan in 1987; the Marxist conspiracy arrests in Singapore in 1987; the June Democracy Movement in South Korea in 1987; the Tiananmen Square incident in mainland China in 1989; Akihito’s ascendance to the imperial throne in Japan in 1989; the beginning of economic liberalization under Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao in India in 1991; the Black May protest in Thailand in 1992; and the postcolonial handover of Hong Kong in 1997, to name just a few. It was in this context that academic programs in the study of gender and sexuality began to flourish in East, Southeast, and South Asia. This was followed by conspicuous efforts to preserve the heritage and information related to queer Asian people and their past.

A pioneer program in this regard is the Center for the Study of Sexualities founded at the National Central University in Taoyuan, Taiwan, in 1995. Led by the activist feminist scholar Josephine Ho, this was perhaps the first public educational initiative to advocate for the rights of sexual minorities and the importance of educating the public about stigmatized genders and sexualities in East Asia. Since its inception, the center has collected over 1,000 Chinese publications, 10,000 English publications, and 20,000 media reports and clippings related to gender and sexuality. The center welcomes teachers, students, and scholars to consult the collection for research. In 2003, with a grant from Taiwan’s Ministry of Education, the center created a website in Chinese called Database for Core Education in Gender. Freely accessible, the website includes a wide range of materials to aid the teaching and researching of feminist/queer studies. In 1995 a similar research center, more oriented toward the social sciences, was established by the sociologist Suiming Pan in mainland China: the Institute for Research on Sexuality and Gender. The institute falls under the aegis of the School of Sociology and Population Studies at Renmin University of China in Beijing.

Similar digital archives have been established for the study of South Asian, Thai, and Korean queer histories and cultures. The South Asian American Digital Archive contains materials related to the history of the South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association, dating back to the mid-1990s. Established in 1986 in San Francisco, the nonprofit organization Trikone for LGBTQ people of South Asian descent published its own newsletter until 2014. Trikone targets people who trace their ethnicity to one of the following places: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Myanmar (Burma), Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and
Tibet. A digital archive of past issues of *Trikone* magazine is available online. Funded by a grant from the British Library’s Endangered Library Programme, the Thai Rainbow Archive was developed in conjunction with the Thai Queer Resource Center (an initiative led by the scholar Peter Jackson) between 2004 and 2010. The Korea Queer Archive was established in 2002 by the Korean Sexual-Minority Culture and Rights Center (KSCRC) with the goal of collecting queer-related books and documents. In 2006 it started collecting visual materials as well. In the second half of 2008, the Korea Queer Archive applied for funding from the Beautiful Foundation and received it in January 2009 to become independent. From 2009 to 2013, it was maintained as a project of KSCRC. In 2014 it became affiliated with the nonprofit Beyond the Rainbow Foundation. As of 2018, there are over 8,000 items in the archive. Inspired by LGBTQ archives in the West, all of these collections have aimed to digitize and preserve materials related to the LGBTQ experience in an increasingly diversified Asia.

A unique catalog has existed for scholars of queer Japan since at least the early 2000s. At the time, the scholar Masami Yajima amassed an impressive collection of articles and publications, including partial and complete runs of magazines, related to homosexuality and transgenderism in postwar Japan. His graduate students later compiled them into a list and published it as an in-house research report titled *List of Articles on the Social History of Transgenderism/Homosexual in Postwar Japan* (Iseisou doseiai shoshi meroku) in 2004. Yajima’s collection became housed at his home institution, the Institute of Social Sciences at Chuo University in Tokyo, Japan. One of Yajima’s students later took the collection with her and moved it to Wako University, also in Tokyo. This particular archive has been instrumental to subsequent scholarly research on postwar Japanese queer culture and history.

Finally, the idea of the archive itself may well be under duress, given the shifting forms within which materials are being recorded and retained and the global trends toward digitization. Rather than rendering the process of archive making as something that happens in the past, digitalization provides new sets of rules around queer knowledge formation and, by extension, new ways of making the past meaningful to the present.

**SEE ALSO** [Archives in Africa]; [Archives in Australia and New Zealand]; [Archives in Europe]; [Archives in Latin America]; [Archives in North America]

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Archives in Australia and New Zealand

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Description and management of LGBTQI archives in Australia and New Zealand.

Australia and New Zealand both have archives that collect and preserve materials related to the history of their LGBTQI communities. They have a great deal in common, reflecting the broader similarities in the two countries' histories, politics, and cultures. The Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives (ALGA) and the Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand Te Pūranga Takatāpui o Aotearoa (LAGANZ) have their origins in the late 1970s, when they were established by activists concerned that the histories of the movements were being forgotten and the materials in which those histories were embedded were being lost. In New Zealand the need to protect and preserve such materials was driven home forcefully by a 1986 arson attack on the community center where the collection was held.

They were, and remain, independent community-based organizations where volunteers play an important part in administration and collection management. ALGA is registered under state law, and its affairs are managed by a committee elected at the annual general meeting of members. It is located in Melbourne, Australia’s second-largest city, because that is where Graham Carbery, its founder, happened to live. After the fire-bombing attack in 1986, LAGANZ’s ownership was vested in a trust that owns the collection, and an agreement was signed with the Alexander Turnbull Library (the New Zealand national library) in Wellington. The library houses the collection and provides support in the form of curators dedicated (part time) to managing it and making it accessible to researchers.

Both collections have a national focus and few restrictions on the type of materials preserved, which include movement and community newspapers, magazines and newsletters, badges, T-shirts, posters, ephemera, banners, photographs, newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, audiovisual material, and papers of individuals, organizations, and campaigns. Equally, both collections are much broader and more inclusive than their names might suggest, encompassing the diverse range of identities—including lesbian and gay, bisexual, queer, trans, and intersex—that have emerged in the decades since the archives' formations, and also materials relating to HIV/AIDS, indigenous sexualities, and subjects stretching back to the period prior to the emergence of contemporary identities. Their national significance is widely recognized and has been formally acknowledged.
The ALGA and LAGANZ collections far exceed those of the national (and in Australia, state) archives and libraries. Legal deposit requirements in both countries mean that copies of all published material ought to be provided by publishers to national and state libraries, but with small community publications this is not always adhered to, and even when it is, the larger institutions often do not have their finger on the pulse of developments. In 2000, after the publisher of many of Australia's LGBTQI community papers went bankrupt, replacement papers were reestablished independently in most states; the state libraries were unaware of this development, whereas ALGA knew about it and could initiate immediately the collection of the new titles. That said, the state and, in both countries, the national libraries, do have collections of LGBTQI books, periodicals, and personal papers, as do some university libraries. ALGA and LAGANZ see themselves as central players in a distributed network of collections. Court and police records are housed in the national and Australian state archives, though deposit practices have been patchy and extended periods of closure (up to 100 years) apply.

Like all community- and volunteer-based organizations, ALGA and LAGANZ face the challenge of generational renewal, though the changing composition of their management committees indicates some success in negotiating this challenge. The problem of the ever-expanding size of the collections is more of an issue for ALGA, which needs to negotiate its own premises, than for LAGANZ, which is housed in the national library. Ironically, the more the wider community becomes aware of the importance of queer history, the more demands are placed on the collections and their volunteers, stretching personnel resources. They face, too, the challenge of collecting and preserving digital materials.

While these collections are national in scope and unquestionably the most complete, there are smaller collections, too. In Australia, the Gay and Lesbian Archives of Western Australia (a continent’s distance away from Melbourne) maintains an on-again, off-again existence, though it is housed safely in the library of Murdoch University. The Sydney-based Pride History Group, while not an archive per se, has been collecting and preserving oral histories since 2003 and has a collection of well over one hundred interviews. The New Zealand website PrideNZ.com is a community website that preserves over seven hundred audio recordings of interviews and events. The Melbourne-based but nationally focused Women’s Liberation and Lesbian Feminist Archive is now housed with the University of Melbourne Archives. In Auckland, the Charlotte Museum collects and preserves artifacts of lesbian culture and history. In 2006 a project funded by the state library and the state museum to identify holdings in Victoria relevant to LGBT history published a report that revealed the scope of holdings in public, private, and community hands; it also was an important contribution to the methodology of identifying such materials (Davison 2006).

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For most of the twentieth century, Europe has been home to archives dedicated to preserving the history of same-sex-desiring and gender-nonconforming people. Although early initiatives ended with the Nazi rise to power in Germany in 1933 and the outbreak of World War II in 1939, individuals and activist groups began to rebuild archives and libraries after 1945. Many of these archives developed out of LGBTQ rights movements, which dramatically expanded in western Europe during the 1970s and 1980s and in former socialist countries in the 1990s. While in some countries these archives have faced ongoing homophobia and governmental neglect, in other locations archives have found success working with both state institutions and nongovernmental institutions. Nevertheless, questions remain about how to retain the political importance of these archives and represent diverse experiences while securing institutional and government support.

**Early Archival Work**

The first archives in Europe specifically dedicated to documenting the lives of same-sex-desiring and gender-nonconforming individuals were created during the early twentieth century. In 1912 Jacob Schorer (1866–1957) founded the Nederlandsch Wetenschappelijk Humanitair Komitee (NWHK; Dutch Scientific Humanitarian Committee) to work toward the legal and social equality of same-sex-desiring men and women. Part of Schorer’s campaign was educational, and with this goal he constructed a library consisting of eighteen hundred books, as well as periodicals, pertaining to the scientific and literary study of homosexuality (van der Wel 2011). In 1919 Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935), who founded the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (WhK; Scientific-Humanitarian Committee) in 1897, established a similar library at his Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Science) in Berlin. By 1933 the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft had established a library of approximately forty thousand books, as well as an archive of scholarly, medical, and erotic texts (Dose and Herrn 2006).

Both of these libraries served important political and scholarly functions during the interwar period; however, both were relatively short-lived. Hirschfeld’s library was one of the first targets of the Nazi regime, destroyed in May 1933. Although Hirschfeld attempted
to reestablish the institute in Paris, he was largely unsuccessful (Dose and Herrn 2006). In 1940, following the Nazi invasion of the Netherlands, Schorer dissolved his organization and destroyed his records and all correspondence. Shortly thereafter, the Germans confiscated his library (van der Wel 2011).

**Reconstruction and Activism (1945–1990)**

Neither the NWHK nor the WhK was successfully reestablished after World War II (1939–1945). Although they lent their names to several short-lived successor groups, some of their holdings were permanently lost. The period between 1945 and 1970 was marked by social and legal repression of homosexuality in most European countries, making it difficult to form organizations or develop permanent archival collections. Nevertheless, in the years immediately following World War II, initiatives were formed that would establish archives dedicated to the study of same-sex desire and gender nonconformity.

Jaap van Leeuwen (1892–1978), who in 1946 helped found the Dutch Cultuur en Ontspanningcentrum (COC; Center for Culture and Leisure), took on the task of recreating Schorer's library. Although van Leeuwen succeeded only partially, he also managed to develop a large private document collection before his death in 1978 (IHLIA LGBT Heritage 2018). Similarly, relative legal freedom in Scandinavia allowed for the formation of the Kredsen af 1948 (Circle of 1948), Denmark's first gay rights organization, which established independent branches in Sweden and Norway several years later. While no formal archive was established at that moment, the personal documents of its chairpersons and the organization's own files dating back to the 1960s formed the foundation for later archival work (Edelberg 2015).

With the swell of gay rights activism in the early 1970s came the establishment of further archives that were often affiliated with activist groups. Lesbian women led much of this work, which, some have argued, may have been a result of a general invisibility of same-sex–desiring women in the historical record (Leszkowicz 2017). Because of this trend, many of these archives were affiliated with both gay rights organizations and feminist organizations. In 1973 members of the women's group of Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin (Homosexual Action West Berlin) founded the Spinnboden Lesbenarchiv und Bibliothek (Spinnboden Lesbian Archive and Library). Two years later, the Feminist Library in London was founded, which deliberately included in its collections materials on lesbian women (Brown 2011).

The simultaneous emergence of gay and lesbian studies initiatives prompted a group of students at the universities of Amsterdam and Utrecht in 1978 to establish Homodok, a documentation center dedicated to collecting academic works relating to homosexuality. As the group professionalized, Homodok expanded to include the archiving of personal documents and nonacademic publications, and it became home to both the Van Leeuwen
Library and the COC library (van der Wel 2018).

Activist-driven lesbian archival work continued in the early 1980s. In 1982 both the Lesbian Archives Amsterdam and the Lesbian Archives Leeuwarden were created in the Netherlands (van der Wel 2011). The following year, the Centre des Archives, Recherches, Cultures lesbiennes (Center of Lesbian Archives, Research, and Cultures) was founded in Paris. Initially held in a private apartment, the archive was established by a group of volunteers to resist not only the invisibilization of same-sex-desiring women in the written record but also the depoliticization of the movement following the Socialist Party’s accession to power in 1981 (Archives, Recherches, Cultures Lesbiennes 2018). In 1983 STICHWORT, Archiv der Frauen und Lesbenwegung (STICHWORT, Archive of the Women’s and Lesbian Movement) was created in Vienna, and in 1984 the London Lesbian Archive was created (Brown 2011; Glasgow Women’s Library 2018).

Although the appearance of HIV/AIDS in western Europe forced many back into the closet, making it difficult for some archives to acquire personal documents, the 1980s nevertheless was an important decade in the expansion of LGBTQ archives (Edelberg 2015). In 1980 Kredsen af 1948, which by then had changed its name to Forbundet af 1948 (League of 1948), began the process of establishing an official archive, having just purchased a house in the center of Copenhagen. Central to creating the archive were the founder of Forbundet af 1948, Axel Axgil (1915–2011), and his partner Eigil Axgil (1922–1995), who together with a group of volunteers began the slow process of collecting personal collections from past chairpersons and others with interesting documents (Edelberg 2015). In 1983 the archive was opened for public use.

The following year, Andreas Sternweiler (1957–), Wolfgang Theis (1948–), and Manfred Baumgardt (1947–) convinced the director of the Berlin Museum to hold the exhibition El Dorado: Geschichte, Alltag und Kultur homosexueller Frauen und Männer (El Dorado: History, everyday life, and culture of homosexual women and men). The exhibit was developed in collaboration with a group of lesbian activists and drew approximately 40,000 visitors. Its success highlighted the need for a separate museum, which led to the foundation in 1985 of the Schwules Museum* (Gay museum) and accompanying archive in Berlin (Schwules Museum* 2018).

**Initiatives in Eastern Europe (1987–2018)**

Although formal LGBTQ archives were established in eastern Europe only after the collapse of Communist governments, the initiatives on which the Slovenian Lezbična Knjižnica (Lesbian Library and Archive) was predicated were already underway prior to 1989. In 1987 Društvo Študentski Kulturni–Lezbična Lilit (Student Cultural Association–Lesbian Lilith), the first lesbian group in Yugoslavia, was founded, and it established the Lezbična Knjižnica in 2001 (Brown 2011).
During the 1990s several other activist groups established archives in former socialist countries. In 1995 the first LGBTQ organization in Hungary, the Háttér Társaság (Background Society, commonly referred to in English as the Háttér Society) was created in Budapest; from the beginning it collected and archived documents primarily relating to LGBTQ life in Hungary, but it currently also holds documents in other languages, including English, German, and French. In 1999 the Labrisz Leszbikus Egyesület (Labrisz Lesbian Association) was established in Budapest; it collects documents on the lives of lesbian and bisexual women in Hungary. Late in the first decade of the twenty-first century, one of the founders of the association, Mária Takács (1973–), launched an oral history project to collect the life stories of lesbian women living under socialism, resulting in the 2009 documentary Eltitkolt éVek (Secret years), released in 2011 on DVD with subtitles in eleven languages (Nagy and Borgos 2017).

Other eastern European LGBTQ archives established in the 1990s have operated on less stable footing due in large part to financial constraints that have been exacerbated by anti-LGBTQ political and social attitudes. OLA-Archiwum (OLA–Archives Association) in Warsaw was founded in 1996 as an information center, library, and archive for and about lesbian women. Like many LGBTQ archives across Europe, it has depended on volunteer work; however, in contrast to institutions such as the Schwules Museum* and Homodok, the OLAArchiwum has struggled to remain open (Leszkowicz 2017). Following the 1993 decriminalization of homosexuality in Russia, scholars Elena Gusiatinskaya and Viktor Oboin created an LGBTQ archive in Moscow, located in Gusiatinskaya's apartment. In 2000 Oboin chose to donate his portion of the collection to Homodok because of lack of stable finances and location, while Gusiatinskaya chose to keep her collection in Moscow and has since digitized most of the archive (Leszkowicz 2017).

Artists in former socialist countries have also been integral to the work of recovering the lives of same-sex–desiring and gender-nonconforming people. In 2013 Russian American Jewish emigré artist Yevgeniy Fiks (1972–) exhibited a series of paintings titled Pleshkas of the Revolution, representing Soviet-era cruising cottages, and published a photo book, Moscow, showing gay cruising sites in that city. In 2015 Jaanus Samma (1982–) represented Estonia at the Venice Biennale with a research-based multimedia installation, Not Suitable for Work: A Chairman’s Tale, inspired by the life of Juhan Ojaste (1921–1990), a war hero and chairman of several collective farms who was sentenced to one and a half years of hard labor for homosexual acts in 1964. Also in 2015 Polish artist Karol Radziszewski (1980–) set up the Queer Archives Institute, dedicated to the collection, exhibition, and artistic interpretation of central and eastern European queer archives (Leszkowicz 2017).

**Institutions and Alternatives**

Since the 1990s many state-funded museums and archives have become increasingly interested in collecting materials related to LGBTQ themes. This has resulted in a wide
range of collaborations, with some activist-driven archives donating their collections to state-funded institutions, and other state institutions developing their own initiatives to collect LGBTQ-related documents. One of these first initiatives began in Lyon in 1992 when the collector Michel Chomarat (1947–) donated a collection of ancient and modern texts and ephemera on homosexuality to the Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon (Municipal library of Lyon). In 2005 a municipal project was announced to create a gay and lesbian documentary center at the archive, involving a city-financed librarian post and the consolidation of LGBTQ-related documents into what is commonly called “Le Point G” (Bibliothèque municipale de Lyon 2018). In 1998 the library of l’Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya (National Archive of Catalonia) in Barcelona acquired a collection of books and magazines from the history of the Front d’Alliberament Gai de Catalunya (Gay Liberation Front Catalonia) and the Barcelona LGBTI center Casal Lambda. Between 2005 and 2006, the library cataloged a total of two thousand registers, making it one of the largest concentrations of documents relating to homosexuality in Spain (“La catalogació” 2007). In 2002, as a result of the initiative of queer researcher Tuula Juvonen, the government-funded Työväen Arkisto (Labor Archive) of the Social Democratic Party of Finland began collecting materials from Finnish LGBT organizations and private individuals. Työväen Arkisto expanded this work in 2005, collaborating with the LGBT rights organization Seksuaalinen Tasavertaisuus (Sexual Equality, or Seta) to collect LGBT oral histories (Taavetti 2016).

In addition, some formerly independent archives have chosen to donate their collections to nongovernmental or state-funded museums and archives, often due to a lack of financial resources. In 1995 the London Lesbian Archive moved to the Glasgow Women’s Library, an activist-driven archive founded in 1991 that has secured UK accreditation as well as funding from the Scottish government (Glasgow Women’s Library 2018). In 2007, due to a financial crisis, Forbundet af 1948 donated its archive to the Danish State Archives (Edelberg 2015). The following year, the activistled Irish Queer Archive, which developed out of the holdings of the National Gay and Lesbian Federation in the late 1970s, donated its collections to the National Library of Ireland (Madden 2013).

Although there has been debate about the impact of housing LGBTQ archives in non-LGBTQ spaces, the institutionalization of activist-driven initiatives has not always resulted in their depoliticization. In 2000 activists and artists Ajamu X and Topher Campbell launched the rukus! Federation in London to exhibit the work of black LGBT artists, who had often been marginalized in UK queer spaces. In 2004 the idea for an archive was formulated, and in 2005 the archive was launched and donated to the London Metropolitan Archives, which was chosen because its experience housing collections pertaining to the lives of both black and queer people in the United Kingdom suggested that it would preserve the political messaging of the rukus! archive (Ajamu X et al. 2009).

Some archives born out of the initiatives of the 1970s and 1980s have remained
independent. The Schwules Museum* and Spinnboden in Berlin and STICHWORT in Vienna have remained open with the help of private, nongovernmental organization and state funding, as well as the work of volunteers. In 1999 Homodok, the Lesbian Archives Amsterdam, and the Anna Blaman Huis (the successor to the Lesbian Archives Leeuwarden) merged to establish the Internationaal Homo/Lesbisch Informatie-centrum en Archief (IHLIA; International Homo/Lesbian Information Center and Archive). IHLIA has since become a leader in queer European historical work, working with organizations such as Háttrét Társaság to develop a collection dedicated to preserving the history of same-sex-desiring and gender-nonconforming people across Europe (Nagy and Borgos 2017).

SEE ALSO Archives in Africa; Archives in Asia; Archives in Australia and New Zealand; Archives in Latin America; Archives in North America

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FILMOGRAPHY

LGBT documentation centers and archives in Latin America are a recent phenomenon, and they are most commonly found in countries with older, more established political movements. Although they contain information about the history of people with a variety of sexual and gender identities, gay men tend to be overrepresented in most Latin American archival collections. For the most part, these repositories of LGBT documentation focus on the history of activism since the 1970s, but some do contain materials from earlier periods. In Argentina, for example, the Comunidad Homosexual Argentina (Argentine Homosexual Community) and the Sociedad de Integración Gay Lésbica Argentina (Argentine Society for Gay and Lesbian Integration) have documentation of the gay movement since the 1980s. A documentary center of left-wing politics, the Centro de Documentación e Investigación de la Cultura de Izquierdas (Center for Documentation and Research on Left-Wing Culture), has preserved one of the largest collections of LGBT political materials from the 1960s to the 1980s. In Mexico, the Centro Académico de la Memoria de Nuestra América (Academic Center for the Memory of Our America), which is part of the Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México, contains the collections that originally belonged to other archives created by LGBT groups, such as the Centro de Documentación y Archivo Histórico Lésbico “Nancy Cárdenas” (Nancy Cárdenas Center for Documentation and Historical Lesbian Archive), and the documentation from the Colectivo Sol (Sun Collective), a human rights group that focuses primarily on issues related to sexual diversity. For Mexico, there is also a CD-ROM by the Centro de Información y Documentación de las Homosexualidades en México (Information and Documentation Center on Homosexualities in Mexico), which contains references to information for the period from 1978 to 1982. The work of Norma Mogrovejo (2000) offers invaluable information for locating materials related to lesbian identity and history in recent decades throughout Latin America. To study Brazil, scholars should consult the Acervo do Grupo Identidade (Identity Group Collection) at the Archivo Edgard Leuenroth (Edgard Leuenroth Archive) (1998–2015) located at the Universidade Estadual de Campinas. Contacting the organization Grupo Gay da Bahia (Gay Group of Bahia) and its founder, Luiz Mott (1946–),
may be useful for those studying the early years of the Brazilian LGBT movement, and much of Mott’s own scholarship focuses on sodomy and “homosexuality” in colonial Brazil and early modern Portugal. In Chile, the Centro de Documentación Luis Gauthier (Luis Gauthier Documentation Center), hosted by the Movimiento por la Diversidad Sexual (Movement for Sexual Diversity), has preserved a large body of materials from the movement in that country.

Fortunately for activists and researchers, a growing number of publications and materials from the Latin American LGBT movement are available online. For the 1970s and 1980s digital copies of the Brazilian journal *O lamplião da esquina* (The lamp on the corner) and the Argentine *Somos* (We are) are available online. For more recent online documentation, there are also the examples of the Archivo Histórico Lésbico “Ilse Fuskova” (“Ilse Fuskova” Lesbian Historical Archive), created by Potencia Tortillera in Argentina, and the Chilean Movimiento de Integración y Liberación Homosexual (Movement for Homosexual Integration and Liberation). Although information about transgender identities exists in all the above-mentioned centers of documentation, it is relatively scarce. Some efforts have been made to compensate for this archival absence. Transgender activists have produced their own records, including publications and statistics, such as the Archivo de la Memoria Trans (Trans Memory Archive) in Argentina, and books such as *Cumbia, copeteo y lágrimas: Informe nacional sobre la situación de las travestis, transexuales y transgéneros* (2015; Cumbia, drinking, and tears: National report on the situation of travestis, transsexual, and transgender people), as well as the magazine *El teje* (The weave). The Museo Travesti del Perú (Travesti Museum of Peru) also offers an opportunity to explore the history of trans politics and identities in the Andes.

The study of LGBT pasts requires a more proactive search for information than do older fields of historical inquiry, especially given the infrequency with which these histories are collected in mainstream historical archives (although there are ample police records throughout Latin America, from the colonial period to the present, dealing with “homosexuality” and same-sex eroticism). Evidence is also available in less institutionalized settings. For instance, LGBT organizations in Latin America have preserved historical materials that are not available in other extant archives. In addition, oral history is especially relevant now that many of the early LGBT activists are aging and are well past their sixties. Some records of Latin American LGBT movements, especially international correspondence and private papers, were preserved outside the region and are available in the United States. A number of North American LGBT activists cultivated active relationships with people from the entire region, including countries other than Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina. Some examples of the institutions holding the resulting documents include the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections at Cornell University Library, the Lesbian and Gay Liberation Collection at Yale University Library, ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives at the University of Southern California Libraries, and the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco (each of which have ample documentation on LGBT histories in
twentieth-century Latin America and among diasporic communities in the United States). North American sources on the Latin American LGBT movement have been published since the 1970s, especially by the Advocate, Gay Sunshine Press, and the Canadian Pink Triangle Press and its magazine, The Body Politic, which contains news from activists in Latin America. There are also a number of specialized online digital services offered by university libraries where scholars can search for most of the English-language publications referring to Latin America. For twenty-first-century materials, a reader on LGBT rights edited by Javier Corrales and Mario Pecheny (2010) compiled some of the important writings of activists from areas as varied as the Andean region, the Caribbean, Central America, and smaller countries such as Paraguay.

When studying topics other than LGBT activism, and especially in the case of periods before the 1960s, there is little to no information at LGBT-specific archives. Scholars interested in the history of the multiple sexual/gender identities that existed in Latin America from colonial times to the 1960s have tended to seek evidence in mainstream historical archives and libraries, analyzing the sources against the grain to tease out LGBT histories. One of the main methodological challenges in mining traditional archives, however, is that in most archives the materials related to gender and sexuality have seldom been classified in ways relevant to contemporary LGBT categories and terms of research. Instead, archival materials were usually classified according to the bureaucratic needs of the institutions to which they belonged, which can make it challenging to find information relevant to academic research questions in the twenty-first century. Scholars in the United States and in Europe have sometimes had a strong impact on how materials in archives are classified and even relabeled to facilitate their work. Although the situation has improved significantly in the last few decades, especially in the case of Brazil and Mexico, most Latin American states often lack the resources to develop a reclassification that can better assist scholars studying the history of gender and sexuality. Some institutions, such as the Archivo Nacional de la Memoria (National Archive of Remembrance) in Argentina, have often tried to organize their documentation around themes relevant to activists and scholars today. These institutions often have a separate category for LGBT documentation, but other efforts are still needed in the region. Owing to this challenge, researching LGBT issues requires an understanding of the history of the institutions that preserved records, as well as networking and engagement with individuals (and archivists) who might facilitate access to the evidence. International scholars expecting to arrive in the region and find one established archive where they can locate all the information for their research through daily work in the same space will find that they must take advantage of a wider range of available resources. The information tends to be dispersed among numerous state institutions, libraries, private collections, and other grassroots sites that are usually known only by small groups of people—usually a mix of academics and activists who are invested in the world of politics, social movements, or the arts.
Availability of Information by Period

Information about colonial times is often better preserved, organized, and classified than is the case for other periods, yet such materials are complicated by the fact that "homosexuality" itself is a nineteenth-century invention. Information on criminal and Inquisition trials dealing with sodomy are, for example, available in Mexico’s national archive—the Archivo General de la Nación (General National Archive)—and its files can be searched in an online electronic database, the Guía General (General Guide). The Inquisition and criminal courts produced similar records for Cartagena and Lima, but they have not been so well preserved. Inquisitorial visitations to other parts of Latin America, especially colonial Brazil, also left their documentary mark but to a lesser extent (and all the sodomy cases from colonial Brazil are found in the files of the Portuguese Inquisition in Lisboan archives). Inquisition records and other colonial documentation for the whole region are also available at the Archivo Histórico Nacional (National Historical Archive) in Madrid; at the Archivo General de Indias (General Archive of the Indies) in Seville, Spain; and in the Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (National Archive of Torre do Tombo) in Lisbon, Portugal. While many of the files from these institutions are digitized and accessible online, there is still much work to be done in terms of digitization and hosting. The national archives and libraries of several countries have also preserved colonial and early national materials, which include evidence related to cross-dressing, transgender issues, bigamy, and sodomy. Historical evidence about same-sex sexuality or alternative gender/sexual identities for the colonial period is also available at the regional church records (which may require an authorization by the bishop) and episcopal archives of the church, such as the Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de la Habana (Historical Archive of the Archbishopric of Havana) in Havana, Cuba. These kinds of religious archives may contain materials portraying sexual morality as understood by bishops and other ecclesiastical officials in charge of evangelizing the native population.

A large body of information written for the most part by Spanish chroniclers but in some cases also by native writers (see, e.g., Garcilaso de la Vega [1539–1616], also known as El Inca, for colonial Peru), refers to transgender identities, indigenous “sodomy,” and other forms of sex between people of the same gender. The various categories of sins and crimes existing in colonial times have been discussed at length in the current historiography, and a consideration of these categories is crucial for scholars who search for information in colonial published texts and archival materials. Searching for modern terms such as transsexuality, bisexuality, or homosexuality will offer no results, as these were terms unknown in the colonial era. Instead, scholars who are aware of the vocabulary used during the period they study can benefit from digitally available chronicles in which word search is possible, and they will also be able to better navigate physical archives. Examples of the vocabulary used include sodomía (sodomy), the pecado nefando (the “nefarious sin” of sodomy), and the pecados contra natura (the “sins against nature” of sodomy, bestiality,
As the turbulent national period begins with the wars of independence, finding materials becomes more difficult, and at times impossible. Independence wars in the 1810s to 1820s and prolonged civil wars and foreign occupations since the 1820s were not the most conducive for the preservation of records. The Chilean invasion of Peru in 1881, for instance, led to a significant loss of Inquisition records in Lima. The period between 1810 and 1880 is one of the harder ones to explore any issue related to sexuality. In fact, this is probably the least studied period in the LGBT history of Latin America. Some countries continued to have relatively stable judicial records during this period, and information can be found on some sodomy trials from throughout the nineteenth century (as is the case in Mexico). Materials related to regional wars may be available at some of the army archives, perhaps including useful information about sex between men, but no scholar has attempted to find such materials through that channel for the period before 1880. Army archives are among the few that have kept records for this period, and it is possible that many of them contain files depicting the lives of men who had sex with other men. This is especially the case because armies have usually kept internal codes that punished homosexuality even in countries where penal codes lacked any criminalization of sex between men—all of which greatly complicates the archival terrain of LGBT sexuality in Latin America.

Starting in the late nineteenth century, materials about LGBT themes became more abundant again. As the number of wars decreased in most of Latin America, the consolidation of nation-states led to the creation of institutions of social control that produced a large body of data regarding "sexual deviancy." This is especially the case with the rise of modern medicine, criminology, anthropometrics, pedagogy, and other disciplines interested in exploring the consequences of what professionals and state officials understood as "sexual pathology." For this period, the materials published by some of the rising liberal professions are particularly useful. Most of the publications by medical examiners, criminologists, psychiatrists, and related professionals are available in the libraries of colleges of medicine and law within the largest universities, and medical archives abound throughout Latin America (although they may not necessarily be open to researchers). These libraries often bought books and academic journals not only from their countries but from all over the Americas and Europe. Academic networks of knowledge in Latin America became more interconnected in this period, and journals often published materials from other countries. This means, for example, that it is possible to find articles about sexuality in Peru or Brazil published in Mexican or Argentine journals. During the twentieth century, many university libraries developed a sophisticated system of classification by subject. Going through these catalogs allows scholars to develop an exhaustive search of all publications under such topics as "sexual inversion," "tribadism," "hermaphroditism," and other relevant historical terms. Again, knowing the terms used in the studied period is crucial for historical research. Unfortunately, most catalogs in medical and law libraries have not been digitalized or uploaded online. Even when these libraries
have online search engines for all their books and journals, the engines often lack the capacity for detailed subject searching that their physical catalogs still have.

Scholars have found invaluable historical evidence for the period since the 1880s in the records produced by the police, the penitentiary, the judicial system, and psychiatric asylums. For example, James N. Green used the criminal records for Rio de Janeiro in the Brazilian Arquivo Nacional (National Archive) and the Pinel Sanatorium records at the Arquivo Público do Estado de São Paulo (Public Archive of the State of São Paulo) to research and write *Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil* (1999). Similar archives with curated and classified records from modern state institutions since the 1880s exist in most national and some provincial/state archives. Police archives, such as the one from the Ministerio de Seguridad Pública (Ministry of Public Security) at the Archivo Nacional de Costa Rica (National Archive of Costa Rica), likely contain evidence relevant to LGBT studies. These institutions sometimes have highly professional staff interested in LGBT themes. Because of strict budgets and limited physical space, not all national/regional archives have preserved this type of record. Lack of public policies to preserve historical records also plays a role. Sometimes documents are still in the hands of the state institutions that produced them, as is the case with the Centro de Estudios Históricos Policiales “Comisario Inspector Francisco L. Romay” (Sheriff-Inspector Francisco L. Romay Center for Historical Police Studies) in Buenos Aires. In other cases, the records are impossible to locate or have been lost, destroyed, or simply miscategorized and misfiled. Some state institutions closely guard their records and do everything possible to keep them out of reach. This is sometimes the case in countries with a recent history of human rights violations where the police and the army fear that researchers might be looking for evidence to incriminate their staff. Even when institutions of social control open their archives, they have a long tradition of prejudice. In those cases, scholars must assess the pros and cons of disclosing their research topics to the staff. Scholars must also not assume that hostility toward LGBT themes is the default attitude in archives at institutions of social control. Consulting local scholars on the best ways to request authorization to access materials may help researchers determine the best course of action, not only in relation to the decision to disclose one’s research topic but also in terms of the strategies to sort out bureaucratic challenges. Depending on the institution and the ability to contact the right gatekeepers, authorization to consult materials can take anywhere between a day or a few weeks to several years (and sometimes much longer).

Most Latin American universities have specialists in LGBT issues, and some of the larger ones have long-established centers for the study of gender and sexuality. Scholars in these institutions have ample experience accessing archives and collecting scattered evidence. Some of these centers for the study of gender and sexuality also have libraries with secondary sources published in the region that are often insightful and unavailable outside Latin America. Finally, a few research centers are emerging outside of universities, the most famous of which are probably the Brazil-based Centro Latino-Americano em
Modern print media—especially newspapers, books, and magazines—emerged throughout most of Latin America in the late nineteenth century. Until recently, scholars working with these sources had to search through hundreds of thousands of pages in order to, if they were lucky, find a few relevant articles. Digitization and optical character recognition technology have recently created new opportunities through word searching. Some of the most useful online search engines containing Latin American digitized books and media in the last 150 years include the Hemeroteca Nacional Digital de México (National Digital Newspaper Library of Mexico), Hathi-Trust Digital Library, the World Newspaper Archive, the Ibero-Amerikanisches Institut (Ibero-American Institute), the Digital Collections at the UCLA Library, the Hemeroteca Digital “Fray Francisco de Paula Castañeda” (Fray Francisco de Paula Castañeda Digital Newspaper Library), and the Latin American Digital Initiatives. Many Latin American newspapers also offer the possibility of searching their news articles, but this is often possible only for the internet era (since the mid- to late 1990s). After identifying events with dates in the available online records, scholars can easily find news items published on the same date in nondigitized newspapers available in national and provincial/state libraries. All the above libraries have well-preserved hemerotecas (newspaper and periodical libraries). Newspapers and other mass-media sources remain largely unexplored in Latin American LGBT history despite the wealth of information they might offer. It is worth noting that some of the digitized material includes not only mainstream newspapers but also media produced by working-class organizations and anarchist groups, as well as pulp fiction for popular consumption. Searching for LGBT-related terms in these digitized materials could illuminate topics as diverse as the sexual customs of the lower social strata, the attitudes that popular culture developed toward sexual outcasts, and other topics fundamental to LGBT history. Many of the materials commercialized among the urban lower social strata of Latin America contain numerous references to cross-dressing, transgender men and women, and sex between men, among other topics.

**Reasons for Scarcity of Sources**

Two factors primarily affect the scarcity of sources on LGBT issues throughout Latin America in comparison with the United States, Canada, and Europe. Many countries in the North Atlantic developed a repressive legal system that punished homosexual men, producing a large body of records related to criminalization. After independence in the nineteenth century, however, most of Latin America embraced liberal sexual legislation influenced by the Napoleonic Code, which did not punish any consensual activity between adults in private. Homosexual men were still persecuted by institutions of social control in Latin America, with laws related to vagrancy, drinking, and morality, but in the absence of
laws relating specifically to “homosexuality” that justified such persecution, documentation is hard to find. Records of trials against people having sex with partners of the same gender, which are so common for the United States and some parts of Europe, are almost completely absent for most of Latin America. Police records that show evidence of harassment of homosexual men exist, but in the absence of criminalization officers disguised these records under other labels that make the search more difficult. Evidence produced by state institutions persecuting sexual outcasts was scarce and elusive in comparison with that in places where homosexuality was explicitly criminalized. Some Latin American countries, however, did criminalize homosexuality, as was the case in Chile. The first Chilean penal code, enacted in 1874, criminalized sodomy, and this status was confirmed by a reform in 1954. Full decriminalization was achieved in 1999. Therefore, some Chilean archives have a wealth of information on banned sexual behavior that is impossible to find for other parts of the region (see the judicial archives in different cities such as Antofagasta and Valparaiso).

Another factor that has led to scarcity of sources is the absence of a tradition of diary writing, which is associated with Protestant self-reflection rather than Catholic culture. Whereas in the largely Protestant United States many personal diaries offer detailed descriptions of introspection and daily life, such accounts are rare in Catholic-dominant Latin America before the rise of homosexual testimonial writing in the 1950s. An alternative kind of material, however, can sometimes compensate for the lack of diaries. Many twentieth-century foreign visitors to Latin America who had intellectual aspirations and wrote about their travels were interested in exploring anything that could be eroticized. Although narratives in these works are often biased, descriptions of queer behavior and communities of sexual outcasts abound in this genre and deserve closer attention. One resource that includes an extensive collection of writings by foreign travelers in Latin America is the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin.

**Specific Topics of Research**

During the twentieth century, sexuality, especially alternative sexualities and gender identity, became an important topic of academic and political discussion. Some of the classic essays of famous Latin American thinkers discuss the relationship between national identity and “deviant” sexualities, as in the case of Mexican writer Octavio Paz (1914–1998). The prominence of psychoanalysis in some parts of Latin America, and the interest this discipline paid to sexuality, led to the publishing of cases of female and male homosexuality. These case studies often provide detailed descriptions of queer lives as recorded by therapists. The library of the Asociación Psicoanalítica Argentina (Argentine Psychoanalytic Association) in Buenos Aires has one of the largest collections of publications in Spanish throughout the entire region. As modern sexual identities emerged
throughout the region, self-testimonial poems and narratives portraying the life of homosexual men from multiple backgrounds became available. Examples of this include the poetry of Mexican writer Salvador Novo (1904–1974; whose letters are available at the Centro de Estudios de Historia de México Carso [Carso Center for the Study of Mexican History]) and the books printed in Buenos Aires by such publishers as Tirso. David William Foster, in his 1991 book, refers to most examples of gay and lesbian autobiographical writing in the region. A large bibliography on LGBT issues in Latin America compiled by Donna J. Guy and Daniel Balderston in the 1990s and subsequently updated by Adán Griego contains innumerable references to literature portraying a variety of queer themes.

Since the rise of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, national and international organizations have funded research and the publication of essays, various kinds of studies, statistics, and educational materials, all of which have also inevitably altered the archival terrain. This trend became more pronounced in the 1990s, and the topics diversified then. Among others, these studies were funded by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, the Elizabeth Taylor AIDS Foundation, and the Global Fund for Women. These international institutions clearly have information about international funding awarded to Latin American organizations during these decades, but it is the task of future researchers to mine these materials. Such information may reveal the conditions under which funding was given (or denied) to LGBT organizations and nongovernmental organizations. At a local level, universities, public health centers, nongovernmental organizations, LGBT groups, and a variety of state institutions also launched their own studies and publications. Most of these materials were purchased by libraries in the United States and are available through interlibrary loan. For instance, one might look for materials by the Movimiento Homosexual de Lima (Homosexual Movement of Lima), Nexo Asociación Civil (Link Nonprofit Association) in Buenos Aires, Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (Latin American School of Social Sciences; with centers in several countries), the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, the Universidad de la República (University of the Republic) in Uruguay, the Coordinadora Nacional de Agrupaciones y Organizaciones de Personas Viviendo con VIH/SIDA (National Coordinator of Groups and Organizations of People Living with HIV/AIDS) in Chile, and Acción Ecuménica (Ecumenical Action) in Caracas, among other places.

**Special Sources of Information**

International gay and human rights organizations have also kept records of police brutality and persecution of queer people in the last decades. Scholars interested in these topics have successfully consulted the records of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, Amnesty International, and the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans
and Intersex Association, among others. Physical archives in Latin America may also prove fruitful in looking for this kind of material, as in the case of the Centro de Documentación y Archivo (Documentation Center and Archive) at the Museo de la Justicia (Justice Museum) in Paraguay, the Archivo Histórico de la Policía Nacional (Historical Archive of the National Police) in Guatemala, the Archivo de Derechos Humanos en Chile (Human Rights Archive of Chile), and the Archivo de la Dirección de Inteligencia de la Policía de la Provincia de Buenos Aires (Intelligence Directorate of the Buenos Aires Province Police Archive).

In addition to national archives located in the capital of each country, many Latin American countries also have libraries and archives belonging to the congress, ministries, supreme court, and other state institutions. City, state, and other provincial archives are also prominent, but scholars have explored them to a lesser extent because they tend to be more far flung from the capital cities. Some of these regional archives are extensive and well organized, and they are often more welcoming. Examples include the Archivo Municipal de Antofagasta (Municipal Archive of Antofagasta) and the Archivo Municipal de Trujillo (Municipal Archive of Trujillo). As a result of budget issues, national archives and libraries tend to be understaffed. Although regional archives tend to have even fewer resources, the number of scholars attending is much lower, which gives the existing staff an opportunity to provide more personalized attention. Files requested from national archives can take a long time to arrive, or there may be restrictions on the amount of materials and boxes a scholar can demand in one day. Regional archives are not so well attended, and the staff is eager to serve scholars and justify their very existence. Of course, in the end, each and every archive has its own protocol for granting access and facilitating research.

Cinema constitutes another important source of information for Latin America. Since the 1980s the region has produced a large body of testimonial films for people with transgendered, lesbian, or gay identities. Before the 1980s, there was no explicitly LGBT cinema, but related themes were touched on in numerous films. An online search often suffices to identify a list of historical films relevant for LGBT issues, and most of these films are available in the United States or in the filmotecas (film archives) of Latin America. The Filmoteca at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico and the Cinemateca Uruguaya are two prominent institutions of this kind. Located in Montevideo, the latter has preserved more than 3,000 historical films produced in that South American country. Information about other countries is available through the Coordinadora Latinoamericana de Archivos de Imágenes en Movimiento (Latin American Film Archive Coordination Group), a network of film archives in the region. Criticism and debates about these films in the local press can also help scholars explore diverse reactions and overall public opinion. For the period before the 1930s, theater might offer an opportunity similar to that of cinema. Some of the historical theaters of Latin America have their own archival collections where scripts are available, even for plays in lesser known neighborhood theaters. Examples include the Centro de Documentación de las Artes Escénicas (Performing Arts Documentation Center) at the Teatro Municipal de Santiago (Municipal Theater of Santiago) in Chile, the Casa de la
Memoria Escénica (House of Scenic Memory) in Cuba, the Biblioteca Gilberto Martinez (Gilberto Martinez Library) at the Casa del Teatro de Medellín (House of Medellin Theater), the Teatro Solís (Solís Theater) in Montevideo, and the Teatro Cervantes (Cervantes Theater) in Buenos Aires.

Finally, for a history of LGBT Latinxs in the United States, there are several useful archives. (The term Latinxs refers to all people of Latino origin, including men, women, and transgendered individuals. Its use has become a common way to avoid the bias inherent in the masculine plural term Latinos as a universal plural.) Lambda Archives of San Diego has LGBT publications from Tijuana and about Latinxs in Southern California. The Stonewall National Museum and Archives has also preserved materials relevant to Latinxs in the United States in its archives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The same is the case with other archives throughout the United States, some of which are mentioned above. Scholars studying this topic have often relied on private and personal archives (see the 2015 collection titled Queer Brown Voices, edited by Uriel Quesada, Letitia Gomez, and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz).

Archival research related to LGBT issues in Latin America has been extremely challenging for scholars who have been searching institutions over the last few decades. Against the backdrop of this challenging environment, the constant work of thousands of scholars, as well as the efforts of organizations and institutions that have created documentation centers, has gradually begun to improve access to information and is opening up a new promising field of research.

SEE ALSO Archives in Africa; Archives in Asia; Archives in Australia and New Zealand; Archives in Europe; Archives in North America; Cold War and Sexuality in Latin America; Confessional Manuals in Colonial Latin America; Conquest and Sodomy in Latin America; Inquisition, Criminal Courts, and Sexuality in Colonial Latin America; Mexican Revolution and Sexuality; Museo Travesti del Perú; The Nicaraguan Revolution; Slavery and Sodomy in Brazil

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The development of LGBTQ archives in North America is closely tied to the history of LGBTQ social movements from the mid-twentieth century onward. Before the late 1980s, most university-based archives and public libraries did not specifically aim to collect material documenting LGBTQ history. Taking matters into their own hands, LGBTQ-identified individuals and organizations initiated a wide range of innovative and ambitious projects to collect and preserve historical records. Starting in the 1950s, homophile organizations turned their attention to LGBTQ history by publishing historical articles and bibliographies of relevant sources, as well as starting their own libraries and archives. By the 1970s, the gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements were further catalyzing the development of numerous community-based LGBTQ archives across the United States and Canada, as well as a network of LGBTQ archives, history projects, and researchers. Many community-based archives that were founded in the early 1970s, such as the Lesbian Herstory Archives and the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives, continue to exist, even as university-based archives and public libraries have increasingly collected or publicized the existence of holdings related to LGBTQ history. Finally, in the twenty-first century, the availability of digital resources and a broader “archival turn” in the humanities and social sciences have contributed to a growing public and scholarly interest in LGBTQ archives.

The Homophile Movement and the Origins of LGBTQ Archives

In the 1950s lesbians and gay men in the United States established a handful of organizations and periodicals that advocated for gay civil rights. The first Canadian organizations (such as the Association for Social Knowledge in Vancouver) and periodicals (such as Gay in Toronto) appeared a decade later, in the mid-1960s. Collectively referred to as the homophile movement, activists and organizations associated with this movement prioritized educational initiatives. For example, the mission statement of the Mattachine Society, which was founded in 1950 as the first homophile organization in the United States, enshrined education of “all interested homosexuals” and “the public at large” as one
of the organization’s three main goals. “The total of information available on the subject of homosexuality is woefully meager and utterly inconclusive,” the statement argued (Mattachine Foundation/Mattachine Society [1951] 1997, 283). To disseminate more rigorous information about homosexuality, the Mattachine Society published a monthly magazine, titled the Mattachine Review, between 1955 and 1966. According to Gerard Koskovich’s historiography (2016), the magazine published twenty articles on LGBTQ history during the first five years of its publication run, including biographical profiles, book reviews, a two-part history of the organization of gender and sexuality in indigenous American cultures, and a history of the Mattachine Society itself.

Founded five years later as the first lesbian civil and political rights organization in the United States, the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) similarly emphasized education of the so-called sex “variant” (or lesbian) and of the wider public as two of the organization’s founding goals (Daughters of Bilitis [1955] 1997, 328). Much like the Mattachine Society, the DOB published its own monthly magazine, the Ladder, between 1956 and 1972. Among the magazine’s regular features was a book review section titled “Lesbiana,” written primarily by Barbara Grier under various pseudonyms. As the media studies scholar Cait McKinney explains, Grier’s column established her “lifelong focus” on bibliographic activism and formed the basis for The Lesbian in Literature (1967), her “field-defining bibliography for gay and lesbian studies” (2018, 60). In addition to the Ladder, the DOB also maintained lending libraries within the organization’s chapters. A decade after the New York City chapter folded, the then newly founded Lesbian Herstory Archives acquired its library from the artist and writer Jane Kogan, who served as the chapter’s librarian.

ONE Inc.’s library similarly has an archival afterlife as the basis of ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives, the largest repository of LGBTQ material in the world. ONE was founded in 1952 by members of the Mattachine Society who were specifically interested in starting a magazine, prior to the creation of the Mattachine Review in 1955. Between 1953 and 1967, ONE published a self-titled monthly magazine. More ambitiously, in 1956, the ONE Institute of Homophile Studies was introduced. Eventually receiving, in 1981, state accreditation to offer graduate degrees, the institute offered a wide range of courses on “history, literature, and social studies centered upon homosexuality and its relation to world cultures, religion, law, morals, psychology, medicine, and the arts” (quoted in Koskovich 2016, 15–16). In 1994, after the institute closed, the ONE Institute Library merged with the International Gay and Lesbian Archives—a collection maintained by Jim Kepner, a cofounder of the ONE Institute. In 2000 the University of Southern California acquired the combined collection, later renaming it ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives. In publishing their own periodicals, compiling bibliographies of published and archival sources, and building their own libraries and archives, members of the homophile movement laid the groundwork for LGBTQ archives and the field of LGBTQ studies. As the anthropologist Gayle S. Rubin argued in a lecture on the history of the field, much of what her cohort wrote in the 1970s was indebted to the “trails charted by our homophile
Gay Liberation, Lesbian Feminism, and Archives

In the early 1970s, the emergence of gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements in the United States and Canada prompted an unprecedented LGBTQ publishing boom, including fiction and nonfiction books, pamphlets, newsletters, newspapers, and journals. Although gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements were larger and more visible than the earlier homophile movement, lesbian and gay activists of the 1970s remained concerned about the preservation of LGBTQ history and culture. Specifically, many worried that most libraries and archives were not collecting LGBTQ material, even as such material was rapidly proliferating.

Numerous community-based LGBTQ archives were founded in the 1970s and early 1980s in response to this problem. In 1973 and 1974, at least four LGBTQ archives in North America came into being. First, the editorial collective of *The Body Politic* founded what was then called the Canadian Gay Liberation Movement Archives in Toronto—an ambitious title for a “one cupboard reference collection” in the newspaper’s office (Russell, Teeple, and Averill 1985, 246). Still in existence as the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA), this collection grew to become the largest independent LGBTQ archive in the world. Also in 1973, Mark Silber created the Stonewall Library and Archives in his parents’ house when he was a student at Florida Atlantic University. Like the CLGA, Silber’s collection has similarly grown in scope and has relocated to become the Stonewall National Museum and Archives in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. At the same time, in Chicago, a lesbian collective founded the New Alexandria Library for Women in 1974. Five years later, Bet Power hauled the collection to Worthington, Massachusetts. In 1992, after Power came out as a trans man, New Alexandria changed its name and expanded its focus to become the Sexual Minorities Archives, collecting material related to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and intersex histories. From then until 2017, the collection was housed in Power’s house in Northampton, Massachusetts. The collection was relocated to its own building in Holyoke, Massachusetts, following a fund-raising drive.

The same year that the New Alexandria Library was founded in Chicago, the Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) was created in New York City, with the ambitious aim of collecting and preserving records of lesbian lives from all geographical regions and historical eras. Although the LHA was one among many community-based LGBTQ archives founded in the 1970s, the LHA looms large in accounts of the development of LGBTQ archives, perhaps particularly because of the clarity with which the LHA articulated its critique of the collecting practices of traditional archives and its radical vision for a grassroots archive. “We undertook the Archives,” the founders announced in their first newsletter, “not as a short-term project, but as a commitment to rediscovering our past, controlling our present, and speaking to our future” (Lesbian Herstory Archives 1975, 1).
In the late 1970s and 1980s, similar community-based archival projects continued to proliferate, including the BC Gay and Lesbian Archives in British Columbia (1976), the Gerber/Hart Library and Archives in Chicago (1981; originally the Midwest Gay and Lesbian Archive and Library), the June L. Mazer Lesbian Archives in California (1981; originally the West Coast Lesbian Collections), the Quebec Gay Archives (1983), and the GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco (1985). Still in existence, these community-based archives remain key collections for researchers interested in LGBTQ history in general and histories of LGBTQ social movements in particular.

Networks of Grassroots Archives and Independent Researchers

During the 1970s and 1980s, academic historians tended to steer clear of LGBTQ history. General wisdom suggested that focusing on LGBTQ history as a graduate student or junior faculty member was tantamount to committing “academic suicide” (Rubin 2011, 198). In fact, in surveying all the history dissertations completed in the United States between 1972 and 1980, Koskovich (2016) counted a mere three on the history of homosexuality. As a result, independent scholars undertook a good deal of the early work on LGBTQ history. In the absence of university-based support, community-based archives and history projects served as key resources and networking hubs for communities of researchers in the 1970s and 1980s.

The Gay History Group (later renamed the Lesbian and Gay History Project) is a good example of a community-based history project. On 28 January 1978, the first meeting of the Gay History Group was held at Jonathan Ned Katz’s apartment in New York City. A historian without formal training, Katz had recently published *Gay American History* (1976), a comprehensive collection of documents relating to LGBTQ history. Katz co-organized the Gay History Group with John D’Emilio, then a graduate student at Columbia University, who was in the process of completing a dissertation that was later published as *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities* (1983), one of the first dissertations on LGBTQ history. In their (undated) letter of invitation, D’Emilio and Katz described the group as a “small, informal meeting of about ten persons (women and men) who are actively involved or deeply interested in Lesbian and Gay male research.”

LHA collective members Joan Nestle, Deborah Edel, and Judith Schwarz attended the first meeting of the Gay History Group. On 18 March, the group held a follow-up meeting at the LHA, which was then housed in Nestle and Edel’s apartment, to discuss “archives in general” and “the problems of using, getting material out of them, getting permission to publish, and the suppression of homosexual history documents” (Hansen 1978, 1). For the next few years, the Lesbian and Gay History Project, as the group was renamed, met at the Lesbian Herstory Archives.
Similar groups were created across the country. In San Francisco, the San Francisco Gay History Project was formed as a study group in 1978. Originally founded by three gay men, the group changed its name to the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project in 1979, after a number of women joined. Members included the independent scholar Allan Bérubé, the activist and journalist Amber Hollibaugh, the historian Estelle B. Freedman, D’Emilio, and Rubin. In the late 1970s and early 1980s, the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project “read books together” and “met regularly for often intense conversations” (D’Emilio and Freedman 2011, 10). In addition to meeting as a group, individual members were also expected to develop a major project to present to the group. In 1984 Willie Walker proposed an idea for a major project, which was soon realized as the GLBT Historical Society, a major museum and archive.

Once formed, grassroots history projects and archives reached out to one another, forming communication networks. In November 1978, for example, Eric Garber of the San Francisco Gay History Project sent a letter to the Lesbian Herstory Archives to inform them of the history project’s existence and to request information. “One of the reasons we have decided to work together is our shared perspective on the Gay community as multi-class, multiracial, and duo-sexual,” he explained.

To strengthen these existing lines of communication, a number of history projects and archives teamed up to create the Lesbian/Gay History Researchers Network Newsletter in 1980. For each issue, a different archive or history project took responsibility for the newsletter’s production. The four issues of the newsletter were published in turn by the Lesbian Herstory Archives, the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project, the Boston Area Lesbian and Gay History Project, and Lesbian Heritage in Washington, DC. As McKinney argues, the Lesbian/Gay History Researchers Network Newsletter was one of several newsletters that “provided communicative support” for grassroots lesbian and gay research in the 1970s and 1980s (2015, 311).

LGBTQ Collections in Universities and Public Libraries

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, lesbian and gay studies had finally developed a university-based presence with a smattering of research centers (such as CLAGS: The Center for LGBTQ Studies at the City University of New York), journals (such as GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies at Duke University), book series (such as Series Q by Duke University Press), and a short-lived national conference series in the United States, following two decades of gay and lesbian studies research outside of universities. Coinciding with the growing legitimacy of the field, an increasing number of archives began collecting LGBTQ material at this time. This new interest in LGBTQ material was also driven by broader shifts in LGBTQ political organizing, such as the political urgency of preserving records during the HIV/AIDS crisis of the 1980s and 1990s and the subsequent recognition that gay men and lesbians constituted a viable niche market (see especially Chasin 2000;
Prior to the late 1980s, only a handful of university-based archival collections specifically sought LGBTQ material. One of the notable exceptions was the Institute for Sex Research (later renamed the Kinsey Institute) at Indiana University. Created in 1947, the Institute for Sex Research aimed to collect material related to the American sexologist Alfred C. Kinsey's (1894–1956) research on human sexual behavior that resulted in two best-selling and controversial books: *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953). Among the Kinsey Institute's significant early LGBTQ acquisitions was the collection of Harry Benjamin, author of *The Transsexual Phenomenon* (1966). Benjamin's collection was pivotal in the historian Joanne Meyerowitz's *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (2002).

More quietly, the Joseph A. Labadie Collection at the University of Michigan also amassed an impressive early collection of LGBTQ material. Named for the labor activist and anarchist Joseph Antoine Labadie (1850–1933), the Labadie Collection originally consisted of Labadie's personal collection, which was donated to the university in 1911. Although the collection was initially focused on anarchist writings, the collection gradually widened its focus to radical social movements in general.

After Edward C. Weber was named the director of collection in 1960, Labadie began actively collecting material related to the homophile movement. As Rubin explains, Labadie thus “became one of the most extensive repositories of homosexual publications in the country at a time when most university and public libraries dismissed them as pornographic trash” (2011, 349).

By the late 1980s, the tide began to turn. For example, in 1988 Cornell University established the Human Sexuality Collection. Proposed by *Advocate* publisher David B. Goodstein and the biologist and activist Bruce Voeller, the Human Sexuality Collection is broadly interested in documenting the history of the construction of sexuality, with specific attention to US LGBTQ history and the politics of pornography. Goodstein provided significant financial support for the collection, while Voeller donated the archives of the Mariposa Education and Research Foundation, an independent research collection that was founded in the 1970s.

In the same year that Cornell University introduced the Human Sexuality Collection, the author and feminist activist Sallie Bingham endowed a women's studies archivist position within Duke University's special collections. Five years later, Duke University created the Sallie Bingham Center for Women's History and Culture as a permanent collection, named in honor of Bingham. According to its collection mandate, the Bingham Center specifically aims to collect material on women's sexuality and gender expression. The Bingham Center, for example, houses the records of the Atlanta Lesbian Feminist Alliance, as well as...
personal papers from Dorothy Allison, Kate Millett, and Minnie Bruce Pratt.

More recently, in 2000, the University of Minnesota started the Jean-Nickolaus Tretter Collection in Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Studies after acquiring Tretter’s personal collection of material, which had outgrown his apartment. In 2007 the University of Victoria in British Columbia similarly created the Transgender Archives, one of the few collections in North America to exclusively focus on transgender history. Before the archive was officially opened to researchers in 2011, the Transgender Archives acquired three significant collections: the records of the Rikki Swin Institute, the papers of Reed Erickson, and the University of Ulster’s Trans-Gender Archive.

Public libraries also began actively collecting LGBTQ material in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For example, in 1994 the New York Public Library (NYPL) mounted an ambitious exhibit titled *Becoming Visible: The Legacy of Stonewall*. The largest exhibit of gay and lesbian history ever displayed in a museum or gallery space, *Becoming Visible* attracted more than 100,000 visitors and resulted in the publication of *Becoming Visible: An Illustrated History of Lesbian and Gay Life in Twentieth-Century America* (1998). Some activists associated with community-based LGBTQ archives, however, questioned this sudden interest in LGBTQ material. Polly Thistlethwaite, a librarian and the then-coordinator of the Lesbian Herstory Archives, suggested that the NYPL erroneously positioned itself as having a “long-lived interest in collecting lesbian and gay history” (1998, 15–16). The library, she suggested, could have been more “reflective about its problematic relationship with lesbian and gay material” (16).

Interestingly, although community-based archives have a longer tradition of actively collecting LGBTQ material, university and public archives tend to have more robust collections of material from before the mid-twentieth century. As a result, university and public archives have also begun reclassifying and publicizing archival material related to LGBTQ history, alongside efforts to collect new material from organizations and LGBTQ-identified people. For example, the NYPL’s subject guide of gay and lesbian collections includes numerous collections that were in the library’s custody well before they were easily discoverable as sources for LGBTQ history, such as the papers of Dorothee Gore (1904–1982), which document her experience as a member of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) during World War II (1939–1945), and those of Leo Adams (1903–1995), which contain personal correspondence from the mid-twentieth century that reflects the experiences of gay men during this time. However, much like community-based LGBTQ archives, university and public archives ultimately tend to be strongest in documenting late-twentieth-century LGBTQ social movements. Thus, researchers who are interested in earlier historical contexts often have to look beyond LGBTQ collections. For example, Margot Canaday’s *The Straight State* (2009) is based on archival research at the National Archives, whereas Clare Sears’s *Arresting Dress* (2015) relies heavily on court records and newspaper accounts.
LGBTQ Digital Archives

With widening access to the internet, archives have undertaken a range of digitization projects in the twenty-first century. Most pressingly, archives and libraries have worked toward creating online public access catalogs that allow users to search holdings remotely. For example, records of all the processed collections at ONE National Gay and Lesbian Archives are searchable in the Online Archive of California. The finding aid for each collection includes a list of all the folders in the collection, as well as a description, biographical note, and other contextualizing information. Unlike ONE Archives, which is currently housed at the University of Southern California, independent LGBTQ archives are generally less likely to have data management systems that are in keeping with archival standards. However, collections such as Gerber/Hart, the CLGA, the LHA, and the GLBT Historical Society have collection descriptions and in some cases complete finding aids available on their websites.

Archives have also begun digitizing items in their collections. For example, with the support of a National Endowment for the Humanities grant, June Mazer completed a project titled “Making Invisible Histories Visible: Preserving the Legacy of Lesbian Feminist Activism and Writing in Los Angeles” in 2014. This project resulted in the digitization of five collections of high research value: the records of Connexxus, Southern California Women for Understanding, Women Against Violence Against Women, and the personal papers of Margaret Cruikshank and Lillian Faderman.

Similarly, the Lesbian Herstory Archives collaborated with the Pratt Institute’s library school to digitize audiocassettes and videotapes. The digitized audio collection includes recordings of the black lesbian feminist poet Audre Lorde’s speeches; oral history interviews that were recorded as part of Madeline D. Davis and Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy’s research on butch and femme bar culture from the 1930s through the 1960s; the archive cofounder Nestle’s oral history interviews with the African American lesbian Mabel Hampton (1902–1989); and recordings from the Women’s Committee of the AIDS direct-action group ACT UP–New York. The digitized video collection includes interviews from a documentary on the DOB and raw footage from Dyke TV, a public-access program that aired in the 1990s.

In the same tradition as community-based LGBTQ archives of the 1970s, the internet has also facilitated the development of web-based archival projects without any connection to existing archives. For example, in 2014 doctoral candidate Eric Gonzaba created Wearing Gay History, a collection of digitized T-shirts from numerous LGBTQ archives across the United States. Similarly, as a doctoral candidate, Avery Dame-Griff created the Queer Digital History Project to archive pre-2010 LGBTQ digital spaces. The Digital Transgender Archive (DTA) is one of the more ambitious of these new digital projects. Created by K. J. Rawson, an assistant professor at the College of the Holy Cross, DTA is imagined as an online hub for
trans-related "digitized historical materials, born-digital materials, and information on archival holdings throughout the world" (DTA 2018).

A number of oral history projects are also housed on the internet. Founded by the writer Sarah Schulman and the filmmaker Jim Hubbard—both former members of ACT UP–New York—the ACT UP Oral History Project includes over one hundred interviews with activists associated with ACT UP. Directly inspired by the ACT UP Oral History Project, the New York City Trans Oral History Project is a community archive dedicated to the collection, preservation, and sharing of trans histories. The Tretter Collection at the University of Minnesota is also undertaking a similar Transgender Oral History Project. Digital projects have not only widened general and scholarly access to primary sources, they have also raised the profile of LGBTQ archives.

**The Archival Turn**

Alongside the growth of LGBTQ archival and digital collections, scholars in the humanities and social sciences have also grown increasingly interested in archives as a subject of scholarly inquiry in their own right. The poststructuralist philosopher Jacques Derrida’s (1930–2004) *Mal d’archive* ([1995]; *Archive Fever* [1996]) is often cited to conveniently mark the beginning of this so-called archival turn, although some literature reviews stretch back to Michel Foucault’s (1926–1984) much earlier *L'archéologie du savoir* ([1969]; *Archaeology of Knowledge* [1972]) and "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" ([1971] 1977).

Eight years after *Archive Fever*, Ann Cvetkovich’s *An Archive of Feelings* ([2003]) helped initiate a sustained interest in LGBTQ archives in queer studies. In a roundtable discussion that was included in *Radical History Review*’s 2015 special issue titled “Queering Archives: Intimate Tracings,” the historian Regina Kunzel usefully divided this scholarship into two categories. On one hand, some queer studies scholars use “archive” metaphorically or, as Judith (later Jack) Halberstam writes, “as a free floating signifier” to refer to any grouping of related things ([2005, 169]). On the other hand, a growing body of work in queer studies is, as Kunzel writes, “tethered to material archives” ([Arondekar et al. 2015, 229]). Kate Eichhorn’s *The Archival Turn in Feminism* ([2012]) and McKinney’s forthcoming work on lesbian feminist networks and LGBTQ archives are examples of projects that are specifically interested in the history and collecting politics of LGBTQ archives in North America.

**SEE ALSO** Archives in Africa; Archives in Asia; Archives in Australia and New Zealand; Archives in Europe; Archives in Latin America; The Body Politic; Daughters of Bilitis; Lesbian Herstory Archives; Mattachine Society

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Argentina’s Gender Identity Law

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A groundbreaking law allowing transgender people the right to officially change their gender identity without third-party intervention.

Argentina’s Ley de Identidad de Género (Gender Identity Law; sometimes referred to by its number as “Ley 26.743”; hereafter referred to as “LIG”), which was passed in May 2012, recognizes the right of all people to live and be treated according to the gender they identify with, which may or may not correspond to the gender they were assigned at birth. The law, which conferred on Argentina the status of a transgender-rights pioneer, was one of the most progressive in the world at the time of its passing because it allows trans people to rectify their personal documents through a very simple administrative procedure without medical, psychiatric, or judicial intervention. According to the law, all persons have the right “to the recognition of their gender identity; to the free development of their person according to their gender identity,” and “to be treated according to their gender identity” (Article 1), in both the public and the private spheres. Furthermore, the LIG was the first law in the world to mandate public and private health-care coverage of hormone treatment and sex-reassignment surgeries for those who demand them, always on their own initiative. While the LIG does not require any kind of medical intervention to grant the change in documentation, it does facilitate access to transition-related surgeries and treatments for those who decide to undergo such procedures.
Argentina’s Gender Identity Law, which passed in May 2012, is considered one of the most progressive in the world by allowing transgender people the right to officially change their gender without medical, psychiatric, or judicial intervention.

Details about the Law

In the years prior to the law's passing, a handful of trans individuals in Argentina had been able to modify their official documents through lengthy and costly court proceedings, as was allowed in two other Latin American countries, Brazil and Chile. These processes required, in turn, diagnoses of “gender dysphoria,” evidence that the person exhibited stereotypical masculine or feminine traits in a sustained manner over time, and, as in Brazil and Chile, they most often implied the completion of hormone treatment and sex-reassignment surgeries.

Before Argentina, the United Kingdom and Spain had passed gender identity bills in 2004 and 2007, respectively, but they still required medical or psychiatric diagnoses; although sex-reassignment surgeries were not mandatory, they demanded treatments to adapt the
physical appearance of people to preconceived ideas of gender. In 2009 Uruguay passed a law allowing transgender individuals to rectify their official documents without the need of either a diagnosis of “gender dysphoria” or sex-reassignment surgeries, but judicial permission was required.

The Argentine law was the first to forgo this pathologizing perspective and to also challenge bureaucratically fixed and stable notions of gender. The LIG conceives of gender identity as “the internal and individual experience of gender as each person feels it” (Article 2), so that there is no conditionality or third-party requirements for what each person’s own gender represents and how they express it.

Also revolutionary about the law is that the process of rectifying official documentation is simple, free, and “does not require the intervention of any agent or lawyer” (Article 6). It is also confidential, which means that nobody can access the information that was on record before the change, and “any reference to the current law in the amended birth certificate and in the new national identity document issued as a result of it is forbidden” (Article 6). Furthermore, the law takes minors into consideration. Trans children and teenagers under the age of eighteen can complete this process with the consent of their parents or legal guardians, and in case they do not succeed in obtaining such permission, they still have the legal right to appear in court and fight for the change.

Notably, although the law does not require any medical procedure to adjust a person’s gender expression in order to rectify the gender identity and name that is recorded in their official documents, it does, at the same time, mandate access to all medical treatments through the public and private health-care system for those people who decide to undergo “total and partial surgical interventions and/or comprehensive hormonal treatments to adjust their bodies, including their genitalia, to their self-perceived gender identity, without requiring any judicial or administrative authorization” (Article 11).

**A Depathologizing Perspective**

As of 2017, being transgender was still classified as a “mental and behavioral disorder” in the World Health Organization’s International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems (1992), which is used globally as a diagnostic resource for governments and ministries of health, clinical researchers, pharmaceutical companies, and healthcare providers. Although the eleventh revision of this manual, which was slated to be released in 2018, was expected to eliminate the category of “gender identity disorders,” it was also expected to introduce the category of “gender incongruence of childhood,” which threatens to continue the pathologization of gender diversity.

One of the main reasons the LIG became a new international benchmark was that it ceased to uphold the notion of gender transition as a mental disorder or illness, which was
possible thanks to the participation of Argentine trans activists in drafting the law. Some of these activists, such as Mauro Cabral Grinspan, executive director of Global Action for Trans Equality (GATE), are part of the international activist movement for trans depathologization, which fights for the elimination of current diagnostic classifications of gender transitions and for the acknowledgment of gender and body diversity (Suess et al. 2014). The LIG helped, in turn, to strengthen activism for trans depathologization and has often been cited as a precedent to advance similar laws in other parts of the world.

Time and again, one of the preoccupations of the depathologization movement has been how to ensure that trans people can get access to transition-related health-care services if and when they require them, while at the same time eliminating transgender identities from international mental illness and disorder classifications. The Argentine law signified a major improvement precisely because it challenged the notion that a diagnosis is necessary for trans people to be able to receive hormone treatment and/or sex-reassignment surgery when they opt for it.

**History and Background**

In Argentina, as in other parts of Latin America, the word travesti refers to a person who was assigned male at birth but who identifies as female and uses feminine pronouns. The term itself, which had carried negative connotations for decades, was reclaimed in the mid-1990s by a large community, namely by activists such as Lohana Berkins, and it most often—though not always—implies a Latin American, nonwhite, and/or lower- or working-class identity. Transexual (the Spanish word for “transsexual”) is, in its turn, a term usually reserved for trans women who undergo sex-reassignment surgery. In the past decade, however, and particularly in the past few years, the terms chica trans and mujer trans (“trans girl” and “trans woman,” respectively), as well as chico trans and hombre trans (“trans boy/guy” and “trans man,” respectively), have become increasingly widespread, and while the term travesti is still highly common, considerations about sex-reassignment surgery seem to have lost some of their force as an identity marker.

**The Movement to Protect an Oppressed Community** In 2005 research conducted by the Asociación de Lucha por la Identidad Travesti y Transexual (ALITT; Association for the Fight for Travesti and Transsexual Identity) in the city of Buenos Aires, in Mar del Plata, and in other districts of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area, indicated that the life expectancy of a travesti barely exceeded the age of thirty. All respondents said they had limited access to housing, health care, or education, and more than 90 percent reported that they had suffered some kind of violence, including police abuse, over the course of their lives (Berkins and Fernández 2005). A 2008 study by the Ministry of Health indicated that 75 percent of the trans population made a living from sex work, and that 50 percent had started to do so between the ages of fourteen and nineteen.
Prior to the passage of the LIG, various trans activist organizations, which had existed in Argentina since at least the early 1990s, had worked on bills to advance the rights of this systematically oppressed community. In 2007 the Federación Argentina de Lesbianas, Gays, Bisexuales y Trans (FALGBT; Argentine Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans Federation) and the Asociación de Travestis, Transexuales y Transgéneros de Argentina (ATTTA; Travesti, Transsexual, and Transgender Association of Argentina) introduced the first gender identity bill in the National Congress through their ally Silvia Augsburger, a deputy of the Socialist Party. After this bill failed in 2011, the Frente Nacional por la Ley de Identidad de Género (National Front for the Gender Identity Law) was formed specifically to fight for the approval of a bill more in line with the demands of the most progressive local and international trans organizations.

In a political context marked by important advances in terms of human and civil rights, the FALGBT decided to put all its energies first into the passage of a same-sex marriage bill, called the Ley de Matrimonio Igualitario (Egalitarian Marriage Law), only to later focus on a gender identity bill. The strategy was successful. After intense debate in civil society and in Congress, the same-sex marriage bill was passed in 2010—though by a narrow margin—which generated very favorable conditions for the LIG (Farji Neer and Castro 2011). A decisive factor in both cases was the support these bills received from then-president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. Although the same-sex marriage bill was voted for and against by the legislators of the ruling party, the Frente para la Victoria (Front for Victory), which controlled both chambers, deputies and senators voted unanimously in favor of the LIG, once the passing of the same-sex marriage bill had enshrined support for sexual diversity in the government’s agenda (Díaz et al. 2016). Upon signing the new law, President Fernández de Kirchner apologized to the trans community for the delay in passing legislation in a short speech in front of policy makers, trans activists, and other important LGBTQI leaders in a ceremony at the Government Palace.

**Opposition of the Catholic Church** Although, unlike in other Latin American countries, in Argentina there are only a few religious political parties and they hold relatively little power, the Catholic Church has had a great influence on governmental decisions throughout Argentina’s history. Until the election of Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio as the new Catholic pope in 2013, Fernández de Kirchner’s government confronted the church, undercutting the power of the Catholic lobby, which, in the case of the Egalitarian Marriage Law, had led Bergoglio—now Pope Francis—to call for a “war of God” in defense of family values.

**The Human Right to Identity** Another important aspect of the historical and political framework of the LIG revolves around the role of human rights—and human rights organizations—in Argentina. During the military dictatorship of 1976 to 1983, one of the bloodiest in Latin America, an estimated 30,000 civilians were “disappeared”—that is secretly abducted, kidnapped, and most often killed—by the government. Since the
restoration of democracy in 1983, human rights discourse and activism have occupied a central place in national politics, especially as embodied by organizations such as Madres de Plaza de Mayo, composed of mothers of many of those who “disappeared” during the dictatorship, and Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo, the grandmothers of the children of the disappeared.

The adoption of a human rights discourse by the LGBTQI movement in Argentina helped to build legitimacy around their demands and to articulate them within a broader political tradition (Hollar 2017). Some of the trans activists who formed part of the Frente Nacional por la Ley de Género, such as Berkins and Diana Sacayán, had strong connections with Madres de Plaza de Mayo, which, in addition to publicly supporting the LIG, provided resources to promote the bill. Moreover, the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo enshrined the “right to identity” for children of the disappeared who did not know that they had been stolen and adopted illegally during the dictatorship—that is, they defended these people’s right to find out and live according to their “true [genetic or familial] identity.” Articulated in relation to these organizations, therefore, the fight for the LIG built an important part of its foundation on “the right to identity,” which had become one of postdictatorship Argentina’s core democratic values (Ariza and Saldívia 2015), and gained force from previous local political struggles.

Local Impact and Pending Issues

Five years after the enactment of the law in mid-2012, about 5,700 people had rectified their official documentation according to the National Registry of Persons. A 2016 study by the ATTTA and Fundación Huésped (Huésped Foundation) estimated that six out of ten trans people in Argentina already had done so. One of the many positive consequences of the legal recognition of gender identity has been greater access to education, work, housing, and health care—including prevention and treatment of HIV, hormone treatments, and sex-reassignment surgery.

Argentina’s Gender Identity Law has reportedly also fostered the empowerment of trans people, collectively and individually, which has helped them to confront discriminatory situations and bureaucratic requirements, and to counter the internalization of social stigma. Travesti activist Berkins, in a moving piece published a few days after the passing of the law, explained that it redefined the concept of citizenship, marking a historic moment in which the trans community is “invited to the Government palace” to discuss “who makes up the nation state” (Berkins 2012; translation by Germán Garrido).

Despite these important advances, the living conditions of the Argentine trans community remain highly unfavorable. According to the Trans Murder Monitoring project, a study published by Transgender Europe based on data provided by local organizations from around the world, out of the 2,115 reported killings of trans and gender-diverse people in
sixty-five countries between 2008 and 2016, 78 percent (1,654) came from Central and South America. (Brazil and Mexico are the countries with more reported killings worldwide in absolute numbers, with 868 and 257, respectively; the United States comes third with 146; Argentina reported 45 killings). In relative numbers, Honduras, Guyana, El Salvador, and Brazil lead this world list, with 9.68, 5, 4.26, and 4.22, respectively, reported murders per million inhabitants, while Argentina reports 1.158. As in other countries of the region, trans individuals throughout Argentina also face machista violence, much of which is specifically transphobic, in addition to other pressing challenges derived from a lack of resources and stark socioeconomic inequality. Although there is little doubt that the LIG has been highly beneficial for the Argentine trans community, it might be too early to measure the extent of this positive impact, some of which may grow and become increasingly visible in years to come.

Among the pending issues directly related to the Gender Identity Law, health-care protections have been particularly hard to implement because of the deficient public health system in Argentina and the resistance of insurance companies to covering the cost of medical treatments. Discrimination in the workplace, in private and public spaces, and, significantly, in the mass media is a persistent problem, and few public initiatives have been designed to enforce the trato digno (dignified treatment or respect) toward trans people mandated in Article 12 of the LIG, especially after right-wing president Mauricio Macri took office in 2015, inaugurating a new period in Argentine history characterized by state disregard for human rights issues at large.

From its outset, there have been activists who pushed for and celebrated the passage of the bill but who have been nonetheless critical of it for not allowing a trans person to identify as “trans” or “travesti” instead of either male or female (Wayar 2012), or for—allegedly—maintaining or even reinforcing the male/female binary. With regard to this last claim, it must be said, however, that the law does not specify what being a (trans or cis) man or woman means, nor does it mandate any form of gender expression for a person to self-identify as male or female. Introducing nonbinary identities or doing away altogether with any gender markers in official documents, on the other hand, would have entailed the repeal of other existing laws.

Most demands from the trans community today do not revolve around possible shortcomings of the law but, rather, point to the need to secure its proper implementation. Furthermore, the LIG has served as a jumping-off point for new initiatives by Argentine trans activists—notably, the elaboration of a regulated system of job quotas for trans people—that seek to overcome the persistently adverse living conditions of the trans population in Argentina to this day. Though the law in itself represents an invaluable step forward, there is a clear—and urgent—need to further advance the struggle for trans rights.
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The Art of Identity in India

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The expression of queer identity in contemporary Indian art in a society that criminalized same-sex sexual expression.

For those who choose nonheteronormative gender identity and/or sexual practices in India, the legal system until recently had been punitive. The recent recognition of the civil rights of the “third sex”/transgender/hijra community was followed by the removal of the draconian Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which considered all nonheteronormative practices “unnatural”: “Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years.” Generally, nonheteronormative practices are seen as abnormal, and any references to such people and behavior remain a matter of shame and embarrassment. The long, drawn-out legal battle to remove this legal code and antediluvian parliamentary politics had made life difficult for the LGBTQ community in India. The hostile circumstance is doubled several times over with the retrograde social and familial heteronormative conventions.

Social and Legal Activism

Given the hostile legal climate, stereotypical representations of queer persons have been rampant within the popular cultural practices of mainstream Indian society. Sympathetic and realistic portrayals of sexual and gender minorities are rarely depicted in audiovisual media, although some serious treatment has been given in the literary, cinematic, and theatrical genres. The limited spheres of academia and of the elite art world, which at times share boundaries with the platforms of identitarian politics, as well as public discussions in print and electronic media, have definitively helped to create a certain awareness of LGBTQ identities in the public sphere.

The impetus for increased LGBTQ representation in cultural practices is definitely drawn from global and local activist practices. The ideological alignment and collectivity against social taboos was signaled in Bombay (now Mumbai) in 1989–1990 with the publication of the quarterly newsletter Bombay dost. Significant in this context was the formation of South Asian organizations and outreach publications in the United States and Europe from the mid-1980s to the early 1990s. Prominent among such collectives are Trikone (Triangle;
Indian collectives that were established around the same time include Red Rose (New Delhi), Fun Club (Kolkata), Friends India (Lucknow), and Garden City Club (Bangalore). Through the mid-1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century, many more such initiatives and formations took place, including Sneha Sangama, Good as You, and Sabrang (Of All Colors) (all in Bangalore); Humsafar Trust (Cotraveler Trust), Udaan (Flight), and Khush Club (Happy Club) (all in Mumbai); Council Club (Kolkata); Humrahi (Cotraveler) and Naz Foundation (New Delhi); Gay Information Centre (Secunderabad); and Expressions (Hyderabad). Particularly significant are those initiatives and formations that were formed in small towns such as Sahayak Gay Group (Help Gay Group; Akola); Asara (Help; Patna); Sathi (Friend; Cuttack); and Lakshya (Aim; Vadodara). Apart from running help lines and creating common platforms for LGBTQ persons in specific regional locations, these agencies also systematically worked in the areas of mental and physical health by providing counseling and free clinics and by spreading awareness about HIV/AIDS. They also aided in the legal battle against Section 377, a petition against which was filed by the New Delhi–based nongovernmental organization Naz Foundation, which argued that it violated the right to equality, freedom, and personal liberty. On 2 July 2009, the Delhi High Court repealed the section and decriminalized consensual same-sex relations. The Supreme Court of India overturned this on 11 December 2013, and the curative petition against the decision was referred to a five-judge constitution bench for a hearing. On 6 September 2018 the Supreme Court ruled that Section 377 could not be used to punish same-sex sexual activity.

**Artists Representing LGBTQ Activism**

The artists whose works are discussed below centrally situate their artistic practices within contexts of LGBTQ activism. While this entry does not include all of the midcareer artists or the youngest generation of professionals, those who are included here inevitably belong to the mainstream art profession.

**Bhupen Khakhar (1934–2003)** In the early to mid-1980s, inspired by examples in the field of art abroad and gathering strength from the international gay liberation movement, Bhupen Khakhar became the first Indian artist to come out of the closet. His 1979 visit to England had been significant; there he saw homosexual men living together, and this trip also exposed him to gay-themed art (Hyman 1998; Kapur 2002). A chartered accountant by profession and self-trained as an artist, he had become a noted painter by the 1970s. He represented the lives of ordinary middle-class people as he innovated an Indian version of pop art, an art movement that emerged from the United Kingdom and the United States in the late 1950s that sought to upend the established social order by elevating imagery from popular and mass culture into “fine art.” Significantly, this hybrid visual narrative style
came to be regarded as an argument against puritanical notions about tradition and a replacement for the sought-after identitarian quest in modern Indian art (also known as the quest for Indianness, a central theme in the development of modern art in India), which simultaneously came to be considered as the strength of the artist, despite his amateurish limitations, as it enabled him to be imaginatively ironic, as well as melodramatically provocative and subversive (Panikkar 2003).

Khakhar disclosed his sexuality with his autobiographic paintings *You Can't Please All* (1981), *Two Men in Banaras* (1982), and *Yayati* (1987), which are painted with exuberant clarity, subversive strength, and confidence. The first depicts the fable of an old man and his son walking along with a donkey, who are unable to satisfy the judgmental attitude of the bystanders; because people criticize whoever sits on the animal for being inconsiderate to the other person, the pair finally decides to carry the animal, but as they cross a bridge the donkey falls into the river and dies. In the foreground of the painting a naked older man—unmistakably the artist himself, shown standing on the balcony of a dwelling looking out at this activity—is thought to represent the “coming out” of the closet of the artist. The other two paintings are more explicitly erotic in their theme of an old man in sexual relation to a virile young man, the third painting dealing specifically with subordination through the mythical allegory of the resurrection of the old by the youthful, angelic lover. Drawing from the history of gay identity and from contemporary life, Khakhar contextualizes his representational concerns in popular myths and religious congregational practices, as the intersection between religion and sexuality was a theme that he explored centrally in many paintings of the 1980s.

Through the late 1980s and 1990s, Khakhar’s works were eccentric, bizarre, and enigmatic as he devised a new pictorial language that objectifies the ambivalence of sexual encounters, as observed in his painting *Ghost City* (1992). Through this mode he explored the indeterminate aspect of life experiences: moments of belief and disbelief, the tension between a desire to fight or ignore a hostile world, and the seriousness and absurdity of life. These elements are present both in his literary works of this time and in his paintings, and they are seen across his short stories and his play *Maujila Manilal*; the aspect of the bizarre in his fiction helps to interpret his paintings, where the painterly disjunctions and discontinuities, like those in his fiction, reflect the irrationality, passion, and idiocy of the milieu he shared his life with (for his short stories and play, see Khakhar 2001; see also Khakhar 1999, 2000).

Khakhar made art representing the quotidian realities of homosexual men. In doing so, he exposed what until then had been a private and hidden reality, affirming “deviancy” as a public, ordinary, and valid identity. In the process, he constructed deviant sexual narratives in such a way as to infuse them with imaginative, artistic strength and ironic tenacity. For example, his 1994 watercolor *How Many Hands Do I Need to Declare My Love to You?* juxtaposes same-sex eroticism with Indian religious iconography. In this work, a seated
man is cradled by another in a gesture of intimacy and comfort. The main figure has mostly blue skin and many arms, one of which holds a lotus flower—all characteristics of Indic deities. Another blue male figure is central to his 1998 watercolor Picture Taken on Their 30th Wedding Anniversary, which features two seated male figures; the figure with normal pigmentation holds a lotus flower in one hand and the testicles of his partner with the other. Despite being irreverently witty and daringly subversive in his art, Khakhar eschewed any affiliation with emerging activist platforms, and his art was absorbed within the aesthetic sphere of a prudent high culture. He denied being an activist, and his artistic legacy is largely appreciated for its artistic values, rather than for its identity politics or any political statement.

Jehangir Jani, a sculptor, and Sunil Gupta, a curator, writer, and cultural activist, are younger contemporaries of Khakhar. While Jani had no formal training in art, Gupta received his art training in the late 1970s, studying photography at the West Surrey College of Art and Design and earning a master’s degree in photography at the Royal College of Art in London in 1983. Their involvement with high-art practice coincides with the rise of a more self-conscious LGBTQ activism in India and elsewhere. While Jani remained an active member of the Humsafar Trust, a Mumbai-based LGBTQ community organization, Gupta, residing in London and New Delhi, maintained his activist practices in collaboration with several organizations.

**Jehangir Jani (1955–)** Jani positions himself within the layered discourses around the phenomenology of gay experiences, while he crucially and critically engages with the sociopolitical structures that undermine and discriminate against the lives of sexual minorities. His simultaneous positioning as an artist and an activist enables him to assume a strategy with regard to the political implication of representation, as he has created a vehemently assertive self-image—an oddly displaced and tortured image of the humiliated. Jani first asserted his artistic and political credentials with his 1998 exhibition titled Faerie Tales ... A Re-look, which featured sculptures in ceramic and sheet metal. This was followed by the exhibition titled Stories (2000), with works done in fiberglass and metal overlaid with gold and silver leaf. Through these works, Jani projects the thematic focus on the identity of kothi, the effeminate Indian gay male identity. Maneuvered to assert a frontal, iconic presence, through their odd, effeminate bodily shifts and inflections, Jani’s sculptures ironically objectify the persona of kothis, who are abusively referred to by names such as chhakka in common parlance. Characteristic traits of the body in movement are transcribed into sculpture with indeterminate masculine/feminine traits that translate ordinary bodily flesh into poignant sculptural language. As such, the identity of kothi translates itself into expressions of sexual desire of the deviant, while resisting the repeated silencing, humiliations, painful tortures, and, above all, the insuppressible assertion of will to survive with dignity. The symbolic, the metaphoric, and the allegorical in representation are what enables Jani to achieve this conceptual complexity.
In most of his works, Jani deliberately fragments figures so that they simultaneously assume a propensity to become fetishistic body parts of the effeminate gay persona or become signs to narrate an affirmative stance in resistance against humiliation. Some of his works feature an androgynous face that curiously beams and smirks, and is often repeated like an assertive self-reiteration of the right to be oneself. A relief sculpture such as *Chhaka, Chhaka, Chhaka, Chhaka, Chhaka, Chhaka (1998)* is an example of such a strategy. Jani makes contradictory things possibilities by allowing the materials to embody their intrinsic qualities and meanings as the fragility of ceramics is juxtaposed with hard, cold sheet metal; through such a combination, he invokes the inequality of power in the confrontations between minorities and majorities. Or, when the artist covers a figure in gold and silver, as in *Survival (a continuum)*, preciousness and godly dignity become ironic qualities of the rejected and the humiliated.

Jani also explores the political representations of sexual identification through multimedia installations such as *Ways of Resisting (1992–2002)*, *Lazarus and Anarkali (2002–2003)*, and *Untitled (2004)*. Through these, he foregrounds the overdisputed terrain of religious faith in relation to his own identity politics, as he articulates the healing power of faith by threading together fragments of Qur’anic verses, a rosary, simulated blood, and surgical gauze. His conflicted relationship with the religion of Islam, into which he was born, is resolved in various ways through his art-making practice. These installations create a total sensory environment with sounds, sights, and bodily allusions: cast body parts, a cloth-covered corpse, pink lamps flickering through simulated television screens, sounds of ritual breast-beating, and invocations written to God. These become signs of desire, betrayal, death, and the hope of resurrection, all woven together with a “gayish” pink shade, an ironic marker of sexual identity.

**Sunil Gupta (1953–)** Covering a period of four decades starting in the mid-1970s, Sunil Gupta’s photographs cover a wide range of LGBTQ themes. Initially occupied by candid
snapshots of men on the streets of New York and London, portraits of gay couples, images of Indian gay men in public spaces in New Delhi, images of illness brought on by HIV infection, historical architectural sites in New Delhi, kids at the NAZ Foundation’s Care Home for HIV-positive children, photos of an Indian village, and a fictional narrative of photographs loosely based on the 1962 film *La jetée*, directed by Chris Marker, Gupta explores autobiography through complex, myriad tropes, moods, and dispositions, drawn from human history and relationships. Through photographic juxtapositions in diptychs or via superimposed montages—with images of travel and transport often paired with images of South Asian life both in England and India—Gupta has used digital technology to create a sense of narrative, blowing up his images to 3 meters (9.8 feet), adding greatly to their visual impact.

**Balbir Krishan (1973–)** Formally trained in the forms of conventional academic painting at Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University in Agra, India, Balbir Krishan celebrates his openly gay sexuality through figurative imagery, which is romantic, idealized, intensely emotional, lyrical, and spiritual. Painted with sharp mannerist finish, the loving, three-dimensional articulation of nude male bodies, set along with natural forms, exudes the transcendental in human sexual union. The exuberantly sensual colors and forms in his works express gay desires that are rare in sensibility and taste in the contemporary art world.

**Tejal Shah (1979–)** Belonging to the younger generation, the multimedia art practitioner Tejal Shah engages with the mediums of video, photography, performance, food, drawing, sound, installation, and modes of sustainable living. She had her initial art training in photography at RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia, followed by studies at the Art Institute of Chicago and Bard College in upstate New York. Her practice of “queering” everything unselfconsciously manifests “the inappropriate/d other”—one who cannot be appropriated and who is inappropriate. Shah’s earlier works were simulated and parodic moving or static fiction images, such as her 2000 work *Chingari chumma* (Stinging kiss), a single-channel video projection. Focusing on the realm of fantasy that is hidden from the public eye, the 2006 hijra fantasy series titled *What Are You?* is a series of collaborative photo performances by Shah undertaken with transgender persons. Enabling their unfulfilled dreams to be performatively enacted, these were exhibited as archival digital prints. Her more recent works are in the medium of analog and digital collages or multichannel video installations. The immersive experience of these works “entails entering alter-curious worlds riddled with fact, fiction, poetry, and mythology, that compel us to engage with layered propositions on the relationships between interspecies, ecology, gender, post-porn, sexuality and consciousness. Having recently come out as an ecosexual, they think of themselves as ‘some kind of artist working on some kind of nature’” as explained on her website ([Shah 2018](#)).
**Queerphobia and Art**

Paralleling the developments in queer art are the varied phobic responses, particularly censorship, that have simultaneously affected queer artistic practices. As noted earlier, most of Bhupen Khakhar’s art was safely and carefully located within protected private gallery spaces and operated within the aesthetic sphere of a prudent elite culture. However, mistreatment of his works has been reported at the National Gallery of Modern Art in New Delhi in 1997 and at the retrospective show at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Mumbai, in November 2003 (Zitzewitz 2014). Curators of these exhibitions used pejorative language to describe Khakhar’s work, while also sidelining or excluding works with explicit gay themes, particularly those inspired by Hindu religion and myths. In October 2007 Jehangir Jani was pressured into adding a fig leaf to his sculpture *Great Expectations* after the intervention of Mumbai police in an exhibition at the government-run Museum Gallery.

Furthermore, because of the objections raised, the sculpture titled *George and the Dragon* was withdrawn from the same exhibition and a photograph of the sculpture was installed instead. After many threatening calls, a masked attacker physically assaulted Krishan and his work was vandalized at his exhibition *Out Here and Now* on 5 January 2012, at New Delhi's Lalit Kala Akademi Gallery. Another exhibition by Krishan at the Muse Gallery (Marriott Hotel, Hyderabad), was closed on 1 December 2013, before it could be opened.

An exhibition of photographs by Gupta inaugurated on 23 March 2012, at New Delhi’s Alliance Française was abruptly closed a day later as a result of intimidation from the police citing violations of Sections 188 and 292 of the Indian Penal Code; these sections cover, respectively, “disobedience to order duly promulgated by a public servant” and the public display of obscene materials. An exploration of gay life, the exhibition featured sixteen color pictures taken by the artist in France two years earlier. The project involved a photo-narrative loosely based on the French science fiction film *La jetée*, using homosexuality as a medium to connect to life in Paris.

Several artists in general and particularly artists belonging to minority sexual identities have experienced moral policing and censorship in the twenty-first century. The point to be noted is that the so-called negative public responses to LGBTQ art can easily be identified as motivated by fringe groups within the majority Hindu/right-wing political party, which position themselves as the custodians of public morality. As a result, artists practice strict self-censorship, avoid exhibiting in public spaces, and tend to show only in protected private galleries; they tend to use the internet to sell their work directly to foreign (or national) buyers or find sponsorship. It is also a matter of concern that many younger-generation artists, while taking part in LGBTQ events such as pride marches, generally prefer working without the limitations of identititarian labels such as “gay” or “lesbian” and prefer the more fluid category of “queer.” Suffice it to say that LGBTQ art is a highly constrained category today in India, although it has had a vital, compelling presence in the contemporary art scene since the 1990s.
SEE ALSO The Art of Queering Asian Mythology; New Media in Asia; Section 377 and Section 377A; Section 377 in South Asia

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The Art of Queering Asian Mythology

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An examination of LGBTQ-themed artwork through the lens of Asian mythology.

In 2017 the Museum of Contemporary Art in Taipei organized the first major museum exhibition of artwork dealing with LGBTQ themes across China, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. In much the same way, this entry examines works of art—from paintings, photography, and videos to installation, performance, and zines—that explore LGBTQ themes not only from East Asia but also from South Asia and Southeast Asia. While a broad array of countries and subjectivities are covered, the rationale for bringing these particular works together for analysis is not driven by an interest in being comprehensive. Rather, the works are connected by a common theme: they all use the lens of Asian “mythologies” to queer, or rework, traditional concepts of sexuality.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), the term mythology can refer to “a body or collection of myths, especially those ... belonging to a particular religious or cultural tradition,” as well as more generally a “set of beliefs which underpins or informs a particular point of view.” The first section of this essay focuses on the former definition, or more specifically, artworks that destabilize an Asian myth or legend and thereby reimagine nonnormative subjectivities. For example, Justin Shoulder and Bhenji Ra’s video reworks the manner in which Spanish colonialists coopted the Philippine mythological figure Manananggal—seen as a threat to their homophobic and sexist views—as something to malign. Chitra Ganesh’s photograph draws on the legend of a famed Indian princess who fought against the British but whose visual depiction is largely nonexistent in the historical record. Focusing on the princess’s bravery, Ganesh depicts her as a heroine in armor and thereby effectively transgendered.

The other section of the essay meditates on the OED’s second definition of mythology, according to which the term need not refer to classical understandings of myths, legends, or stories. Mythology can refer to the way beliefs structure societies and become naturalized or the myths of society that promulgate certain truths as normative. Indeed, this is the bedrock of the work of Mumbai-based scholar Devdutt Pattanaik, as well as French philosopher Roland Barthes’s canonical Mythologies (1957), in which he critiques French popular culture and mass media. The artworks discussed in this section of this essay are concerned with how mythology reveals truths for what they are: fabrications or
distortions. In this way, LGBTQ subjectivities become part of—rather than stand outside of—the fabric of society. For example, the paintings of Balbir Krishan that are discussed point to how same-sex sexuality is already part of the fabric of society and therefore hardly unnatural or deviant, whereas MuXi’s work suggests the fluidity of gender, rather than gender naturalized as a binary. Moreover, the zines of Thanh “Nu” Mai and Aiden Nguyễn serve as a bridge between Vietnam’s art and LGBT communities to work against the implicit homophobia of the former and the conflation of the latter with the vapidity of nightlife culture.

**SUNIL GUPTA (1953–)**

An artist whose practice is decidedly transnational in scope, Sunil Gupta is a Canadian citizen, a leading figure in London’s Black Arts movement, and the most prominent queer photographer in India, one who is also involved in curatorial, writing, and activist projects. Born in New Delhi in 1953, he moved to Montreal, Canada, in 1969 where he attended college, played an inaugural role in Canadian LGBT activism, and made amateur work. In 1976 Gupta studied photography under George Tice, Lisette Model, and Philippe Halsman at the New School for Social Research in New York City, and his series *Christopher Street* (1976) captures a unique moment for the gay West Village—“post-Stonewall and before AIDS,” in Gupta’s words (2011, 27).

When Gupta moved to London in 1978, he developed a photographic practice consonant with the bold and controversial era of identity that aimed to challenge the white hegemony in British arts. After completing degrees from West Surrey College of Art and Design, Farnham (1981), and the Royal College of Art, London (1983), he joined the Greater London Council’s Race Equality Unit, which led to *Reflections of the Black Experience* (1986), the first show on black British photography (Brixton Art Gallery). Two years later, he cofounded Autograph: The Association of Black Photographers, the first institute dedicated to black photography in London. Photo series such as *Exiles* (1986), “Pretended” *Family Relationships* (1988), and *Ten Years On* (1984–1985) reflect a queer racialized lens through intimate documentary techniques, whereas his *Trespass* (1992–1995) series’ digital montage imbricate queer and migratory narratives. In 1995 Gupta was diagnosed with HIV, and *Homelands* (2000–2003) and *From Here to Eternity* (1999) make personal connections between his ailing body and the various landscapes of his life (India, Canada, and the United Kingdom). Soon, however, his photography came to consider a life, even a love life, with HIV.

In 2004–2005 Gupta returned to New Delhi and became a leading artist and activist in LGBT representation. This period overlaps with the High Court of Delhi’s 2009 repeal of Section 377, an antisodomy law from the colonial period. The photo series *Mr. Malhotra’s Party* (2007–2012) and *Love, Undetectable* (2009) shed light on a new “outness” and queer subjectivity among Indians, while *The New Pre-Raphaelites*
(2008–2009) and Sun City (2010) engender a queer aesthetic as campy tableaux vivants full of cheeky visual citations. These last two series depart from his characteristic documentary eye. Gupta returned to London in 2012 and, in his mid-sixties, decided to pursue a doctorate at the University of Westminster.

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Overall, mythologies (broadly construed) can be powerful modes to naturalize homophobia or stereotypes, and it is therefore not surprising that the artists discussed in this essay are keen to reimagine them. In the end, what emerges is a composite image from this constellation of disparate works that reimagine the heteronormative mythologies that undergird societal and cultural norms across Asia.

**Myths as Connected to Legends**

This section focuses on two works that destabilize Asian myths to reimagine nonnormative subjectivities: a video by Australian artists Justin Shoulder and Bhenji Ra, and a photograph by US-based artist Chitra Ganesh.
Justin Shoulder and Bhenji Ra: *Ex Nilalang* The title of the video *Ex Nilalang* (2015)—by Justin Shoulder (1985–) and Bhenji Ra (1990–), artists of Filipino descent who are based in Sydney, Australia—can be roughly translated from Tagalog as “creature” or to “create,” with the *ex* from Latin meaning “out of” and “out from.” The title is fitting both for the reference to folkloric beings in the work and the provocative notion that the often-maligned creature in most mythological traditions can be a creator rather than a destroyer. About twenty minutes long, the video is composed of three parts—“Balud,” “Dyesebel,” and “Lolo ex Machina”—which reimagine Philippine mythological folklore, pop culture, and ancestral spirits, respectively. This entry will examine the first two parts.

“Balud” focuses mostly on the face of an exquisite figure with dazzling, glittering blue makeup and colorless eyes (see *Figure 1*). She begins a mellifluous song of lament, and when the camera zooms out, her previously unseen wings and long nails come into view. Depicted is the mythological female known as Manananggal—a beautiful woman by day and a “monster” by night. Spanish colonialists turned this figure into something to be feared, supposedly as a way to combat what they perceived as both the precolonial Filipinos’ unabashed sexual liberation of women and their high regard for nonbinary and trans subjects. In the video, Manananggal is played by Jai Jai, a well-known performer in the *bakla*/trans community of the Philippines. *Bakla* refers to categories as diverse as transvestite and homosexuality. Jai Jai presents us with a more sympathetic version of the supposed monster and, in so doing, helps us begin to reimagine the marginalized.
The second part of the video, “Dyesebel,” is based on the artists’ visits to clubs in Manila, where they got to know the city's trans community. From these experiences emerged the idea of an underwater nightclub populated by mermaids, inspired by the urban bakla milieu. The artists drew on pop culture, too, by incorporating the name of a popular soap opera in the Philippines: Dyesebel. Dyesebel’s story is, like that of Manananggal, a sad tale. She was born to human parents but was half-human, half-fish. Feared by the community in which she lived, Dyesebel was eventually thrown out of the city and exiled to the sea, where she befriended other mermaids.

Like Manananggal, the siren-mermaid in Philippine mythology is threatening to human society. For Ex Nilalang, the artist Ra takes on the role of Dyesebel, while friends from Manila’s trans nightclub scene portray the other siren-mermaids. They frolic in the waters, seemingly carefree. The underwater scene is meant to be close in sensibility to the Manila trans nightclub scene, which is both a safe haven and a place to celebrate the community's penchant for all things glamorous. The coming together of LGBTQ subjects in nightclubs produces alternative communities of belonging. Art historian Michelle Antoinette writes that the shared space of this symbolic aquatic world invokes “not only the fluid spaces of the Philippine island archipelago, but also of the fluid contact zone for queer-based connection between the Philippines and its diasporas” (2017, 70). In this way, the work reaches beyond the Philippines to the diaspora.

Chitra Ganesh: The Awakening
The work of New York City–based and lesbian-identified artist Chitra Ganesh (1975–) is concerned with Asia and its diaspora, much like that of Shoulder and Ra in “Dyesebel.” Ganesh is well known for her murals and drawings but less so for her photographs, such as The Awakening (2004), which is discussed here. This work ostensibly explores a historical figure that has reached legendary status: the rani, or princess, of the town Jhansi in India, who famously defied the British in the mutiny of 1857 to 1858. The title is ironic, given that the photograph depicts the princess (the artist herself) lying lifeless in the snow. She has a red bandanna covering her head, a bloody wound on one of her forearms, and blood smeared on her cheeks. Her eyes are rolled back. There is a trail of blood in the snow; footsteps are visible in the snow, too, but it is unclear whether they belong to the princess. While the construction of the ornate silver armor out of modest materials, including cardboard, tinfoil, duct tape, a Frisbee, soldering wire, binder fasteners, and a belt, suggests the precariousness of her act—indeed, she failed in her quest to defeat the British—Ganesh focuses on the steely resolve of the character as embodied by the armor, generally reserved for men, that protects her arms, chest, and legs, as well as the trident that lies next to her (see Figure 2).
When doing research for the photograph, Ganesh found that there was little imagery connected to this otherwise famous figure. As she noted in a 2017 email to Alpesh Kantilal Patel, this lack of imagery might be due, in part, to the fact that armor production and representation were strictly guarded and largely secret in order to preserve methods and strategies from enemy knowledge. Nonetheless, the visual gaps in the archive were curious to her, especially since the heroine took on a role reserved for men. Ganesh's depiction of a transgendered rani provides a way forward to navigate these erasures and was informed by her participation in Sexually Liberated Asian Artist Activist People! (SLAAAP!), a group with which she was involved in the late 1990s and early in the first decade of the twenty-first century that promoted alternative narratives of queer Asian subjectivity. SLAAAP! encouraged photo-based interventions in the streets through the distribution of postcards, posters, and flyers. *Awakening*, though, was intended for the gallery space.
As she wrote to Patel in the aforementioned email, “Where history ends, myths begin.” So, while the photograph might depict death, it is a metaphorical moment of awakening to new subjectivities hitherto unrepresented. Finally, Ganesh noted that when she was growing up in the West in the 1980s, the only photographic images of South Asian girls and women were those that positioned them as individuals who needed to be “saved.” Ganesh was aware that viewers in the United States, in particular, might have these as their only visual reference points for these subjects. With *Awakening*, her viewers were getting something unexpected: a strong woman who is able to fight for herself.

**Myths that Naturalize Norms in Society**

This second section explores a broader array of work by artists who attempt to reimagine naturalized norms in society relating to sexuality—that is, myths that effectively have been turned into truths, which in some cases explicitly exclude LGBTQ subjectivities.

**Balbir Krishan** In a radical shift of British colonial-era law, India decriminalized sex acts between same-sex subjects in 2009. However, by 2013, the courts in India returned to considering same-sex acts a crime, and the laws once again deemed same-sex sexuality as unnatural. In this context, Balbir Krishan (1973–), an artist based in New York and New
Delhi, challenges this development through his paintings and drawings. For example, a large section of his work *This Is Not Dark Life–VI* (2011) is covered in fields of blue, within which he has painted barely visible traces of bodies performing various sexual acts. On the left side, he creates a silhouette of a figure by leaving areas of the canvas unpainted. However, the artist digitally printed onto the “bare” canvas black-and-white snippets of gay male pornography that he found on the internet. The light green paint used to render the legs of another figure in repose reveals to a lesser degree the pornography underneath. Krishan’s painting poetically brings to the fore that which was kept clandestine in India: that men do have sex with each other. Moreover, the work suggests that gay male sex is part of the foundation of society—indeed, it is literally the ground on which the painting is executed. Krishan digitally printed pornography on the bare canvas of another painting, *This Is Not Dark Life–VII* (2011) (see Figure 3). He covered this canvas primarily in green acrylic paint and depicted multiple figures of different sizes. Parts of some of their bodies are painted red, and, while no overt sex acts are depicted, pornography is visible under the thin layer of paint used to fill the silhouettes. It is worth noting that India’s Supreme Court decriminalized same-sex sexual activity in a 6 September 2018 ruling.

Both of the works discussed above were part of the series *Out Here and Now* (2011), which was installed in the eponymously titled exhibition in New Delhi at Lalit Kala Akademi in 2011 and 2012. As Krishan described in an unpublished 2017 interview with Alpesh Kantilal Patel, the exhibition coincided with his decision not only to come “out” as gay but also as a professional artist. Illustrating the stakes involved, he was attacked from behind by an unidentified assailant while delivering remarks during the opening reception, and several of his works were either damaged or destroyed. Some, such as a large watercolor with ballpoint ink on paper titled after the aforementioned series of which it is a part, were taken by the police as evidence and not returned. This particular work displays Krishan’s skill in employing fields of color, as evidenced by the golden-yellow he chose for the background and the sapphire blue-green of one of the heads and torsos of the two figures, who are depicted either just before or after performing anal sex. Its unabashed depiction of a gay male sex act distinguishes it from the works previously discussed.

In an earlier work on paper titled *Dream of My Handicapped Life* (2009), Krishan depicts two figures without heads but conjoined at the shoulders. This work differs in character and color palette from the works he showed in 2012, but not in his expert use of abstraction and color to explore identity politics. The mixture of thin washes of brown, gray, and black paint applied by the artist make the figures appear bruised or sickly. The figures do not have legs below the knees, and their fingers seem unnaturally long. What could have been a loving portrait of two men embracing or kissing becomes instead something potentially monstrous. The pile of red roses at their feet seems ironic. Given that Krishan lost both of his legs below the knee when he attempted suicide by jumping onto railroad tracks, the work can be read as autobiographical. The drawing implies that the categories “lesbian,” “gay,” “bisexual,” “transgender,” and “queer” tend to obscure other
identifications, and that they implicitly concern able-bodied individuals. While there has been a strong interest more recently in the West in thinking about LGBTQ studies and disability studies in tandem, this is not the case yet in South Asia. In this way, Krishan’s work is particularly groundbreaking in its insistence on conceptualizing LGBTQ and disability as both/and rather than either/or.

**Queer Feminist Works in China** In a similar vein but in connection to East Asia, the exhibition *WOMEN 我們* homes in on how the subjectivities of women are often obscured within explorations of LGBTQ lives. Organized by San Francisco–based curator Abby Chen, it opened at EMG Gallery in Shanghai in 2011 and traveled to the Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco in 2012, as well as to the Miami Beach Urban Studios (MBUS) gallery, part of Florida International University in Miami, in 2013. The exhibition took shape initially as an exploration of feminism through contemporary Chinese art and visual culture, a woefully unexamined topic in the art world. The title of the exhibition, *WOMEN 我們*, is instructive. It is a play on an English-Mandarin homophone: the characters, which mean “we” in Chinese, are pronounced like the English word *woman*. The title succinctly reveals the crux of the exhibition’s curatorial conceit: to examine issues relating to women in China while shifting and stretching the very terms of what the categories of “woman” and “China” signify. The exhibition kept the category of woman under question through its inclusion of works by artists who are not biologically female, as well as of works concerned with gender ambiguity or gay male sexuality. All of the works described in the next paragraph were part of the exhibition.

Shanghai-based emerging artist MuXi’s (1983–) video installation *É蛾* (*2011; Moth*) depicts a graceful, seminaked, and androgynous dancer onto whose back digital drawings of a caterpillar becoming a moth are superimposed. While caterpillars do not have morphological characteristics that distinguish males from females, moths do. Usually female moths are larger than their male counterparts, even though the genetic blueprints dictating development and growth are the same for both. By juxtaposing the equally ambiguously gendered caterpillar and dancer with the supposedly mature and gendered moth—whether male or female is beside the point—the work suggests that sexual dimorphism is as “natural” as the fluidity, rather than fixity, of gender.

*Meiren’er 美人兒* (*2009; My little one*) by Er Gao and Li Zhe—collectively known as Er Gao Production—is less metaphorical than MuXi’s *É蛾*. It is an hour-long documentary that includes reflections of various members of the LGBTQ community in Guangzhou on their lifestyles. While homosexuality is not illegal in China, its existence is not officially recognized. Underscoring the danger in making their nonnormative subjectivities visible, some of the documentary’s participants wear masks of various kinds. Yet these often carnivalesque and exaggerated masks ultimately serve more as bold avatars than as something to hide behind.
In contrast to the installation and documentary discussed previously, Zhanling shanghai ditie (2012; Occupy Shanghai Subway) by the lesbian advocacy group Shanghai Nvai and Shanghai-based artist Ling Gao (1980–), was designed to be staged outside of a museum or gallery as a bold intervention into the public sphere. The work is, in large part, a comment on the response of Shanghai’s metro authorities to the sharp rise in sexual harassment of women on its trains. The metro asked women to “please be self-dignified to avoid perverts.” That is, instead of the metro seeking redress by demanding that male perpetrators change their ways, it asked women to literally re-dress themselves. In a protest against the metro authorities’ response, which effectively shifted blame from men to women, Gao and other women rode the subway wearing clothing that resembled burkas and full-face veils while holding tablets that read “It’s a dress, not a yes” and “Want to flaunt, not a taunt.” When Sina Weibo—China’s version of Twitter—asked some 45,000 people what they thought of the Shanghai metro’s call for modest dressing, 70 percent of respondents wrote that women should be careful to dress so as to avoid sexual harassment. This is the sort of reaction Gao hoped to curb, and it points again to the complexity of feminism in contemporary China. The women in the subway performance also wore tea strainers as bras (see Figure 4). Gao’s installation Hey! TTTouch Me! (2010) includes tea strainers hung up as if on a kitchen rack. In this work, the sexualization of a common domestic item conflates—and thereby disrupts—the construction of women as either housewives or whores.
Figure 4: Photo from Gao Ling’s Hey! TTTTouch Me! (2010). Gao Ling and other women wore tea strainers as bras over their clothing while riding the Shanghai subway to protest the official recommendation that women dress more modestly to avoid sexual harassment on public transportation. The sexualization of a domestic item conflates—and thereby disrupts—the construction of women as either housewives or whores.

Thanh “Nu” Mai and Aiden Nguyễn’s Underground Zine Vănguard When artists Thanh “Nu” Mai (1983–) and Aiden Nguyễn (1994–) moved to Saigon (Ho Chi Minh City) from New York City, they found a disjuncture between the LGBTQ and art communities, with little overlap. This led them to found the zine Vănguard in 2014, billed as a safe platform for Vietnamese LGBTQ-identified subjects to freely express themselves through visual arts and written works. In the foreword of the inaugural issue, Mai and Nguyễn wrote that the zine is meant to be a vehicle through which the LGBTQ community can “redefine art and dismantle conventionality” (2014, 2). The magazine also aimed to create a space for an LGBTQ community that is not defined by nightlife, with which queer culture is often conflated.

The production of the magazines is often a group effort, given that they are largely made by hand. The building of the issues themselves brings together the LGBTQ and art communities. Issues feature everything from drawings, digital art, and photographs to essays, poems, and short stories in both Vietnamese and English. The slim first issue of only twenty-two pages included several spreads of photographs, many of which were taken in New York City. One photograph depicts the transgender club diva Amande Lepore. Also in the issue is an essay on the colonial genealogy of the slur word bê đê for effeminate homosexuals in Vietnam. The second issue was slightly larger at thirty-six pages, with essays primarily in Vietnamese and the photography more explicitly connected to Vietnam rather than the diaspora.

Photographs showed naked males standing in large-scale urns and naked women lounging confidently, with cigarettes in hand. The artwork also included collage, as well as a mixture of colorful, pop-inspired drawings, often sexual in nature but always playful. For instance, the front cover of issue 2 includes a series of hearts that on closer inspection are seen to be breasts and ball sacks. Overall, four issues had been produced as of 2017 and were available primarily in Vietnam and Boston. Digital versions of every issue are available online, effectively expanding Vănguard’s reach.

Conclusion

All the artists discussed in this essay do not so much suggest dismantling societies wholesale—a difficult feat given the complex ways in which homophobia is often embedded in them—as they do creating new ones, however flawed. Put another way, the artworks revel in mythologies as “fake facts,” but unlike Barthes’s essays in Mythologies, the
artworks do not function as negative critique. In their indulgence of mythologies and their capacity for reimagining the world around us—as filled with everything from women warriors and those who wear tea strainers as bras in public to a glittery "monster” with a sonorous voice and an ambiguously gendered human-asmoth—the artworks are generative and generous, and they point toward a more hopeful and ethical future.

SEE ALSO The Art of Identity in India; Bakla; Boys Love (Yaoi) Manga; Graffiti and Graphic Art

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Asexuality

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The range of definitions that can apply to this sexual identity from the perspective of asexual communities, scientific research, and queer and feminist theory.

The sexual identity and orientation of asexuality has a rich cultural, historical, and political life, even as it continues to be overlooked and neglected in LGBTQ2+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, plus) spaces and narratives. Commonly understood as not being sexually attracted to anyone, the very modes of defining asexuality are nuanced and contested. This entry explores various definitions and debates around asexuality from the perspectives of asexual communities, scientific research, and queer and feminist approaches, focusing on Western research and communities. It begins with an exploration of asexual activist efforts to define asexuality and question compulsory sexuality. Following on this, it depicts how scientific research has handled asexuality and some of the ways it seeks to define asexuality. Next, it explores feminist and queer approaches to asexuality as they intersect with gender, race, and ability.

Defining Asexuality, Redefining Sexuality: Asexual Activisms and Countercultures

Online asexual communities include the online platform called the Asexual Visibility and Education Network (AVEN), as well as blogs and social networking sites, such as Reddit and Tumblr. Offline, asexual organizing happens locally and internationally, including through meet-ups, conferences, pride parades, zine publications, and an annual “Asexual Awareness Week” (held in the last week of October) (Renninger 2015). AVEN, an online community and education space launched by the asexual activist David Jay in 2001, provides this landmark definition: “An asexual person is a person who does not experience sexual attraction” (AVEN “General FAQ”). Significantly, this definition draws on the language of sexual orientation models to argue for asexuality as a sexual orientation. By using the language of “sexual attraction,” asexuality is granted visibility alongside other sexual orientations that likewise pivot around the criterion of “sexual attraction.” This is an important political move in terms of asexual visibility and education, as it allows for asexuality to be mapped onto already existing understandings of how sexual identities and
orientations operate.

Cartoon "Asexuality Comes in a Lot of Flavors". As illustrated by this cartoon, there is a spectrum of identities that fall under the umbrella term asexuality, challenging the idea that there is only one way to be asexual and that a single definition of asexuality can function to explain people’s unique engagements with asexuality across social contexts.

Even while asexual activist definitions often draw on the concept of “sexual attraction,” they also trouble it. Definitions of asexuality springing from the asexual, or “ace,” community suggest that sexual attraction is not an innate aspect of intimate or interpersonal life, thus challenging compulsory sexuality, or the belief that sex and sexuality are innate parts of being human. Challenging the idea that everyone is sexual, ace online and offline communities also generate other vocabularies and understandings of thinking about attraction. “Romantic” and “aromantic” are important qualifiers within ace communities, contributing another axis to how attraction between individuals is imagined. Aromantic asexuals are colloquially known as “aros,” and aromantic asexuality indicates both a low interest in romantic contact and a prioritizing of friendship, or of being “friend-focused” (Chasin 2015). Aromantic identity troubles “amatonormativity,” or the organization of life and love according to a hierarchy that prioritizes sexual and romantic couples (Brake 2012; Neal 2016). Romantic asexuality includes an interest in building romantic, if not sexual, relationships with others, which may include kissing, touching, and
cuddling. Other attractional modes that are explored by asexual communities on- and offline include aesthetic attraction (“attraction to someone’s appearance”) and sensual attraction (“desire to have physical non-sexual contact with someone else, like affectionate touching”) (AVEN “General FAQ”). These modes for thinking about attraction, as well as the romantic-aromantic axis, denaturalize the assumption that all intimate relating needs to be sexual, providing different definitional tool kits for thinking about attraction to others.

Asexual organizing also presents opportunities for spectrum- and umbrella-based approaches to asexual identification. “Gray asexuality” or “gray-A” refers to people who are asexually identified yet sometimes experience sexual attraction to others, while “demi-sexual” refers to people who experience sexual attraction to people they intimately bond with first. These terms challenge the idea that there is only one way to be asexual and that a single definition of asexuality can function to explain people’s unique engagements with asexuality across social contexts (see AVENwiki “Lexicon”). Furthermore, the terms gray-A and demi present opportunities for troubling a stark division between people who are “sexual” and “asexual.” These terms also challenge the sexual presumption, or that being sexual is the default and neutral mode of being. As the asexual writer Julie Sondra Decker indicates, another term that challenges the assumed neutrality around being sexual is “alloerotic,” which has been in use by ace communities to refer to people who are sexual (2014, 88).

Ace community and organizing also stress the importance of envisioning asexual identity as part of queer and LGBTQ2+ organizing. Asexuality is an orientation that cuts across other sexual identities, such that in addition to identifying as asexual, aces will also identify as bisexual, lesbian, gay, pansexual, and straight, as well as monogamous and polyamorous. Many asexually identified individuals fall under the transgender umbrella and are transmasculine, transfeminine, trans men, trans women, genderqueer, nonbinary, and agender. According to the 2014 AVEN Community Census, only 75 percent of the 10,880 ace respondents who completed the survey identified categorically as “woman/female” or “man/male” (Ginoza et al. 2014) This has also been triangulated by academic research. For example, one study found that, of sixty-six asexual participants, eighteen chose identities that were nonbinary, including gender neutral, androgynous, or genderqueer (MacNeela and Murphy 2015). This is important to remember because many asexual people report feeling excluded from queer and LGBTQ2+ spaces (Ginoza et al. 2014). Furthermore, by thinking of queerness as not only a matter of gender of object choice but also one of nonnormative intimacies and the political challenging of oppressive straight, cisgender, racist, misogynist, and ableist contexts, asexuality can be understood as “queer” in the sense that it responds to the ableist ideas that bind compulsory sexuality with normality, or the idea that to be “healthy” and “normal” means to have and desire sex.

Asexual organizing effectively presents a challenge to asexual discrimination. Researchers across fields have provided evidence for “asexphobia” (Kim 2014) or “anti-asexual
bias/prejudice” such that asexuals are understood as “deficient,” “less human, and disliked” (MacInnis and Hodson 2012, 740). Asexphobia exists at the level of attitudes that have negative effects on asexual people when they are interrogated and asked intrusive questions about their bodies and sexual lives, or when they are presented with “denial narratives” to undermine the validity of their asexuality (MacNeela and Murphy 2015). Discrimination can also take the form of social and sexual exclusion, including in queer contexts; through “conversion” practices in medical and clinical environments to encourage asexuals to have sex; with unwanted and coerced sex in partner contexts; through the misdiagnosis of sexual desire disorders in people who are asexual; and with invisibility and toxic attention or the fetishization of asexual identity (Ginoza et al. 2014; Przybylo 2014; Chasin 2015; Cerankowski 2014). Recognizing discrimination is important because it refuses to see individual acts against asexuals as incidental, providing a systemic view on patterns of “dislike” against asexuals.

A final definitional element arising from asexual communities is the idea of different approaches to sex and sexuality. The sociologist Mark Carrigan (2011) observed that there are three general dynamics among asexual people: sex positivity, sex neutrality, and sex repulsion. In this sense, some asexual people experience repulsion to sex, whereas others “love that you love sex”— as Jay shouted to onlookers at a San Francisco pride parade featured in the 2011 documentary (A)sexual. Furthermore, some asexual people engage in sex and BDSM, suggesting that sexual behavior and sexual identity are not always linked in obvious or absolute ways (Sloan 2015). It is significant to understand all these positionalities as valid and as part of the spectrum of approaches to asexuality and sexuality more broadly.

It is also important to take note of the ways in which asexual organizing and community have arisen as an international identity, though notably one that has been most frequently studied from Western perspectives. AVEN itself is made up of more than 250,000 members, 160,000-plus of whom were on non-English forums as of 1 January 2017 (Brown 2017). Through the flourishing of online asexual cultures, the terminology generated around asexuality has developed and been taken up in and outside the United States and in numerous other countries, including, for example, Japan, India, Poland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. In Japan, for instance, slightly different names around asexuality have emerged: “sexless,” signifying those in married couples who do not have sex; “asexual,” often referring to aromantics; “nonsexual,” often referring to romantic asexuals; and “unsexual,” speaking to those who have sexual desire but do not want to have sex (Harris-Hijiri 2014). Similarly, Day Wong (2015) has explored the phenomenon of asexual marriages in China as one that overlaps with, yet is distinct from, asexual identity as articulated by AVEN. Because of the many aspects and types of asexual identification and experiences, as previously listed, it is useful to think of asexuality in the plural as “asexualities” (Cerankowski and Milks 2010)—an intricate identity that is not possible to contain within one definition.
From Pathology to Allyhood: Science and Asexuality

In distinction to asexual communities, scientific researchers of the past and present tend to take on different approaches to measuring and defining asexuality. In some cases, researchers function as asexual allies, working for the benefit of asexual communities and individuals through the methods of developing accountability and collaboration, whereas at other times the research stemming from the sciences pathologizes asexuality—conceiving of asexuality as a problem to be fixed by medical science. Scientific researchers of asexuality strive to use the measures, tools, languages, and methods of science to demonstrate how sexual orientations, including asexuality, operate in the body and mind, as well as to quantify the occurrence of asexuality among the general population.

Historically, there has been a host of diagnoses that pathologized low levels of sexual desire in North America, western Europe, and other Western countries. Low sexual desire has, since the nineteenth century, been captured with such terms as “sexual anesthesia,” “sexual coldness,” frigidity, and “inhibited sexual desire,” and more recently as “hypoactive sexual desire disorder” and within the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5 [2013])* as “female sexual interest / arousal disorder” and “male hypoactive sexual desire disorder” (*Cryle and Moore 2011; Ellis 1912; Hastings 1963; Krafft-Ebing [1886] 1922; Lief 1977; Kim 2014*). These labels have functioned mostly to disproportionately problematize women's low levels of sexual desire. It has been argued that around the beginning of the twentieth century, Western discourses of white women's “passionlessness” or their “innate” low sexual desire began to shift to ideas that women were meant to be, within the proper heterosexual marital context, sexual and sexually desiring (*Cott 1978*). Furthermore, this increase in the preferred level of white women's sexual desire in the early twentieth century in Western countries is tied to a fear that whiteness was under threat on account of a lower birthrate. This fear of “white extinction,” buttressed by evolutionary theories and the rise of eugenics, informed an emerging sexological and marriage manual discourse that fostered an intoxication with marriage as a site of sexual satisfaction for white women and a move away from their previously purported “asexual” nature (*Owen 2014; Carter 2007*).

Alfred C. Kinsey's (1894–1956) development of the seven-point scale of sexual orientation in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s provided an early example of scientific conceptualizations of asexuality. While it is well known that Kinsey stipulated a spectrum-based model of hetero-homo attraction, what is less known is that he also put forward a category known as group “X” whom he understood as those with “no socio-sexual contacts or reactions,” and who “do not respond erotically to either heterosexual or homosexual stimuli, and do not have overt physical contacts with individuals of either sex in which there is evidence of any response” (*Kinsey et al. 1948, 638, 647*). Furthermore, Kinsey identified 2 percent of men over age twenty-five (656) and “a goodly number of females”
(Kinsey et al. 1953, 472) as belonging to this group. It is interesting to note that asexuality, in Kinsey's model, occupied a space outside of the hetero-homo spectrum, placing asexuals as outliers on the map of sexual orientation.

Michael D. Storms's work from the late 1970s and early 1980s provided the next major engagement with asexuality through a reconceptualization of the Kinsey scale in the form of a four-quadrant grid that includes not only heterosexuality and homosexuality but also bisexuality and asexuality, each with a quarter of the grid space. Notably, Storms (1980), along with similar work by Paula S. Nurius (1983), provides a first articulation of asexuality by seeing asexuality as a sexual orientation. William H. Masters, Virginia E. Johnson, and Robert C. Kolodny provide some recognition of asexuality in their “typology of homosexuals,” discussing “asexual homosexuals” as “low in sexual interest and activity and ... not ‘coupled’” (1986, 365). They identify 16 percent of gay men and 11 percent of lesbians as asexual. However, in the process of identifying gay asexuality, they also pathologized asexuals by rendering them “more secretive,” “dysfunctional,” “worse off psychologically” than other homosexuals, and “generally loners” (365).

A groundbreaking piece of scientific scholarship on asexuality came in 2004 when the Canadian psychologist Anthony F. Bogaert published an analysis of the preexisting UK National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (1994), which happened to have as one of its answer choices “I have never felt sexually attracted to anyone at all” (Johnson et al. 1994, 185). Bogaert’s seminal piece, invested in deducing whether or not asexuality was “real,” brought scientific and popular attention to asexuality in an unprecedented way. After its publication, many mainstream popular news sources and talk shows, including Fox News, The View, The Montel Williams Show, ABC’s 20/20, and CNN, did specials on asexuality, inviting AVEN’s Jay, other asexually identified individuals, “(s)experts” such as sex counselors and scientific sex researchers (Potts 2002), and Bogaert himself to speak on behalf of the legitimacy of asexuality. Though lending visibility to asexuality, much of this popular attention functioned to spectacularize asexuals (Cerankowski 2014) while also representing mostly white, able-bodied, and cisgender male asexuals as exemplars of asexuality (Owen 2014; Przybylo and Cooper 2014). Bogaert’s operationalization of asexuality both in his 2004 piece and in his other work, such as his 2012 book Understanding Asexuality, tends to provide a limiting definition of asexuality that treats asexuals as objects of research to be studied.

Yet a major benefit of Bogaert's study was that it presented a quantitative indication of what percentage of the population might be asexual that has since been used to add legitimacy and credibility to asexuality both in research and the media. Bogaert's 2004 study estimated that 1.05 percent of the population was asexual (drawing on UK-based statistics), while other studies have ranged from 0.4 to 5.5 percent and have focused on findings in the United States and United Kingdom (Aicken et al. 2013; Poston and Baumle 2010). It is important to note the Western, developed-world focus of these studies and that
they tend to draw on preexisting data. Sociological data with nearly 1,000 participants in Japan found that people in their twenties and thirties had an increasing tendency for “asexual behavior” and that asexuality is especially common among young Japanese men sometimes referred to as “herbivores” (Kobayashi 2017).

Contemporary scientific research on asexuality focuses on exploring subjective versus physiological arousal, while for the most part arguing against understandings of asexuality as a pathology. Most prominently, Lori A. Brotto and colleagues at the University of British Columbia Sexual Health Laboratory undertake studies to ascertain that asexuality is a sexual orientation (as opposed to a paraphilia or a sexual dysfunction) and to establish how it is possible for physiological/genital arousal to be present even as subjective attraction is not (Brotto and Yule 2011, 2017). Brotto and colleagues have developed the “Asexuality Identification Scale (AIS)” that consists of twelve questions that measure whether someone is asexual through asking whether the person has experienced sexual attraction, whether an ideal relationship for them would involve sexual activity, and whether they avoid situations that might include sex (Yule et al. 2015).

Brotto, alongside asexual activists such as Jay and Andrew Hinderliter, played a key role in removing asexuality as a sexual disorder from the DSM-5, such that the DSM-5 now has
exceptions under low-sexual-desire diagnoses for asexuality. Furthermore, whereas the DSM-IV-TR articulated so-called interpersonal distress as a proper cause for diagnosing hypoactive sexual desire disorder (HSDD), the DSM-5 does not allow interpersonal distress to be an indicator of female sexual interest/arousal disorder (FSIAD) or male hypoactive sexual desire disorder. Notably, there is a politics and money-generating factor at work in these diagnoses, especially with the US Food and Drug Administration's approval in 2015 of the drug flibanserin (sold under the brand name Addyi) for the treatment of HSDD/FSIAD; despite unimpressive clinical trials, this drug can now be prescribed to cisgender women as a Viagra-equivalent for stimulating sexual desire.

As outlined, scientific and medical scientific research on asexuality has a checkered relationship with asexuality, much as with other sexual orientations. With the “truth-based” quality often granted to scientific and medical knowledge, it often tends to function as the final word on asexuality and its definitions. While there are possibilities and examples of allyship and of adding legitimacy to asexuality, scientific research can also easily pathologize asexuality because of its commitment to the wedding of “health” and “normality” with sexual desire and attraction through an investment in compulsory sexuality.

**Resonances and Intersectionality: Queer and Feminist Approaches to Defining Asexuality**

Queer and feminist approaches to asexuality tend to both broaden and pluralize what can “count” as asexuality and how asexuality is defined. KJ Cerankowski and M. Milks (2010) have written that by calling attention to the plural embodiments and expressions of asexuality—as asexualities—it is possible to more fully account for the spectrum of asexual experiences. Ela Przybylo and Danielle Cooper build on this analysis by calling for a broadening of definitions of asexuality. Instead of accepting the definitions of asexuality put forward by the “truth archive” of science they invite for an understanding of “asexual resonances” that challenges the assumption that queerness must be sexual in nature, asserting that “where there is queerness there is also asexuality” (2014, 299). Broadening and pluralizing asexual definitions is important because it is both a more inclusive approach to asexuality and one that acknowledges sexual fluidity—or that a/sexuality changes over the course of a life span. This presents a direct challenge to some of the more limiting understandings of asexuality, such as Bogaert’s (2012) assertion that asexuality, in order to count as an orientation, must be lifelong or the DSM-5’s commentary that for women to avoid the diagnosis of female sexual interest/arousal disorder (and count as “asexual”) they must have never experienced sexual attraction. In this sense, feminist and queer approaches to asexuality push back against a medical model that tends to pathologize low sexual desire.
Second, feminist and queer broadenings of definitions around asexuality also constitute an expansion of the asexual archive, challenging what has tended to be a cisgender, male, and white canon of asexuality. Canonized examples of asexuality include characters such as Todd on BoJack Horseman, Jughead Jones in Archie Comics, the title character on Doctor Who, Sheldon on The Big Bang Theory, Benedict Cumberbatch’s character on the TV show Sherlock, and the first asexual character featured on mainstream television in the New Zealand soap opera Shortland Street. Broadening the archive around asexuality involves thinking about asexuality intersectionally, questioning why asexuality can “count” only if it is a born-thisway type of sexual orientation, allowing for (a)sexual fluidity over the life span, and focusing on queer and feminist representations of asexuality in particular (Przybylo and Cooper 2014). For example, Eunjung Kim (2010, 2011) expands the asexual archive by focusing on asexuality and disability in Donna Williams’s (1963–2017) memoirs about her experiences with autism and asexuality and in the film Snow Cake (2006), which features an autistic and asexual character. Through doing this, she challenges the ablebodied canon of asexuality that is invested in proving that asexuals are “normal” and not “disabled.” In a different way, Przybylo and Cooper (2014) situate the artist Agnes Martin (1912–2004) and the writer Valerie Solanas (1936–1988) as “asexual” in a broad sense of the term, suggesting that an asexual art practice and political asexuality, respectively, can be other modes through which to understand asexuality in conversation with asexual orientation proper.

Third, queer and feminist research definitions of asexuality also place asexuality in direct dialogue with larger power structures and patterns of injustice. Developing the important term compulsory sexuality by drawing on the work of the legal scholar Elizabeth F. Emens (2014), Kristina Gupta (2015) elaborates on the ways in which compulsory sexuality is a system that encourages some people to have sex, even while banning marginalized groups from sexual expression through the process of “desexualization.” “Sexusociety,” or a society organized around sex (Przybylo 2011), partakes in desexualization, as Kim’s work explores, to render marginalized groups such as people with disabilities, lesbians and transgender people, children and older adults, people of size, and some racialized groups as “asexual” by default—misusing the term asexuality in the process. For example, transgender people have historically needed to feign asexuality and demonstrate disgust for homosexual sex in order to have their surgeries approved and their trans identities confirmed as “valid” by medicine (Valentine 2007). More broadly, desexualization ranges from discourses around people with disabilities not being capable of sex or not being desirable to eugenics-based initiatives for managing a population through controlling reproduction via methods of coerced sterilization.

Desexualization and compulsory sexuality are also linked to hypersexualization, or the branding of some groups and most especially gay men and racialized groups as excessively sexual and lascivious and thus in need of population management. Treatment of people with AIDS in the 1980s, for example, and the pivoting of the “AIDS epidemic” as “God’s
punishment for being gay” demonstrate how the deployment of hypersexualization, in combination with homophobia, can have lethal effects on marginalized groups. Ianna Hawkins Owen (2014) discusses how compulsory sexuality has uneven racial histories, such that whiteness has tended to emulate an “asexuality-as-ideal” as demonstrative of a form of innocence, moral control, and restraint, whereas black people have often been positioned as hypersexual so as to justify chattel slavery, lynching, and other instruments of racism. Hypersexualization and desexualization have thus been used historically and are in the present used as forms of social control and oppression, toward the maintenance of a white, able-bodied, heteropatriarchal nation-state. Feminist and queer research on asexuality thus invites examinations of the intersectional histories and present-day realities of compulsory sexuality.

Fourth, feminist and queer researchers have also situated asexuality as a possible mode of resistance against oppressive social structures. Asexuality in this sense is explored less as a sexual orientation than as a political strategy. Breanne Fahs (2010) explored asexuality as a “radical refusal” in use by women’s liberation feminists such as Cell 16, Dana Densmore and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (members of Cell 16), and Solanas. In various ways, these feminists articulated a refusal of sex, and particularly heterosexual sex, as a means toward getting things done in the women’s revolution, creating world systems apart from cisgender men, and exploring various forms of erotics between women. Asexuality was likewise articulated as both an anti-sexist and anti-racist strategy by figures such as the novelist Toni Cade Bambara (1939–1995) and the Young Lords Party (YLP), a Puerto Rican leftist group. Bambara (1970) articulates sex as a colonial form of control against black women, while the women of the YLP staged a sex strike in 1970 as a way to demand that changes be made within the party, such as elevating women to positions of power, eradicating machismo, and educating the group on feminist concerns (Nelson 2003). Through situating political asexuality as a form of sex rebellion, these and other feminists provided an oppositional platform to racism, sexism, and patriarchy, as well as to ideas of compulsory sexuality or sexusociety (Przybylo 2011).

Asexuality, like any other sexual orientation, is widely varied in terms of experiences, intersecting identities, and expressions. It is thus no surprise that it has yielded various definitions tied to the stakes of the actors involved. Scientific research has seesawed between pathologizing asexuality and legitimating it as a sexual orientation, whereas feminist and queer researchers have explored the political, intersectional, and resistance-based possibilities of asexuality, questioning limiting definitions of asexuality and asking that asexuality be considered alongside desexualization. Asexual activists and community members, as history makers of the asexuality movement, have provided online and offline languages, vocabularies, and symbologies around asexuality, arguing for inclusion in LGBTQ2+ spaces, bringing asexuality into visibility in unprecedented ways. Together, the overlapping spaces of research and activism raise questions about the omissions of asexuality in queer spaces and stories and provide a compelling reason to think about
sexual orientation and identity beyond sexual attraction.

SEE ALSO  *Cisgender or Cis*; *Eunuchs*; *Kinsey Scale*

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**FILMOGRAPHY**


The Asia Pacific Transgender Network (APTN) was organized in 2009 and launched in December of that year as a regional advocacy and coordinating body for organizations serving trans individuals in the Asia Pacific region. The initial focus was on the policy and program needs of trans women in relation to HIV, human rights, and social well-being issues, such as violence, stigma, legal recognition, and discrimination in employment and health services. Regional networks for “key populations” and “most at risk populations” (groups imminently requiring highly specialized HIV interventions) are important in providing a stronger, unified voice for affected communities, nongovernmental organizations, national bodies, international organizations, health care providers, and donors. Primary roles of APTN include strategic leadership, advocacy for trans-specific needs including the development of policy recommendations, capacity building for organizations serving the needs of trans peoples, network strengthening, and disseminating strategic information. APTN was thus established as a network and platform to address the unique needs of trans people in the region. Although its history is relatively recent, the deaths of key figures, the shutting of community organizations, rapid turnover in personnel, shifts in global strategies to deal with the HIV epidemic, ideological realignments of major HIV funders such as the US government, and the continuing erasure of non-English voices make it difficult to reconstruct the founding of APTN.

Early History and Founding

APTN developed from two parallel sets of sex-worker organizing and gay men’s support based in Bangkok, Thailand, during a period when trans issues were starting to be prioritized in HIV response, programming, and research in the United States (Bockting et al. 1998; Clements-Nolle et al. 2001; Nemoto et al. 2004; Herbst et al. 2008), globally (Pisani 2008; Beyrer et al. 2012; Baral et al. 2013), and in Thailand (Jenkins et al. 2005; Guadamuz et al. 2011; van Griensven et al. 2013). Trans members of the Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW) decided to develop a transgender network at Transtravaganza, a trans health workshop for sex workers held in Pattaya, Thailand, in January 2006. Trans representatives from eight countries prioritized a health resource to be written in simple
language that would be readily translated into local languages. The booklet would include
general health information, detailed information on hormones, useful HIV-prevention
information specific to trans needs, material on mental health issues and aging, and specific
information for HIV-positive trans people. Andrew Hunter, policy director of APNSW and
president of the Global Network of Sex Work Projects, applied for backing and managed the
project on behalf of APNSW with funding from the Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR).

During the Risks and Responsibilities Consultation on Male Sexual Health and HIV in Asia
and the Pacific in New Delhi, India (23–26 September 2006), which was coordinated by the
nascent Asia Pacific Coalition on Male Sexual Health (APCOM), the trans representatives
resolved to create their own networks, coalitions, and community-based organizations
among themselves, as well as to seek separate funding to support these formations and
HIV-prevention activities (Khan et al. 2006). The men who have sex with men (MSM)
organizations in attendance resolved to support this endeavor. Four problems were
highlighted:

1. issues faced by trans people are distinct and separate from those faced by MSM;
2. trans people are often marginalized in MSM funding streams (Fried and Kowalski-
Morton 2008);
3. trans women are equally, if not more vulnerable than MSM to HIV infection (Baral et
al. 2013); and
4. trans people face stigma and discrimination based on sexuality (like MSM), but also
are specifically vulnerable to gender-based violence (Lombardi et al. 2002; Stotzer
2009).

Paul Causey, an early organizer and consultant for APCOM, spearheaded the effort to
include trans women and started to use the acronym MSM & TG, rather than just MSM, to
refer to men who have sex with men, gay men, and transgender people.

Khartini Slamah of APNSW, the Pink Triangle Foundation, and Laxmi Narayan Tripathi of
Astitiva were instrumental in advocating for trans women at both events. The primary
message from trans women such as Slamah was “We are not gay men in dresses.” The
inclusion of trans women in MSM services, research, and data reporting rendered
transgender HIV incidence and needs invisible. This situation compounds the lack of
services and systemic discrimination trans women face in health services and society in
general. APNSW and APCOM recognized the urgent need for trans-specific interventions,
including information on trans health, rights issues, gender-based violence, HIV
vulnerability, and HIV-positive care and support. Both organizations also acknowledged
that trans communities are best placed to address these issues and should be encouraged
and supported to form their own regional network, and thus resolved to address the above
issues by supporting the formation of a transgender network for the Asia Pacific region.
In 2009 APNSW’s Hunter hired Dredge Kang to produce a transgender health booklet, based on his prior experience developing trans programs and materials for Asian and Pacific Islander Americans in Los Angeles and San Francisco. At the same time, Shivananda Khan, chairperson of APCOM and chief executive of the Naz Foundation International, hired Kang to create a regional transgender network. Kang suggested that there could be synergy between the two projects and organized a collaborative framework for both projects (Kang 2011). He also advocated for a local trans woman to be responsible for the work under his mentorship in order to develop local trans capacity. Kang hired Sitthiphan (Hua) Boonyapisomparn, who was working at the Southeast Asian Consortium on Gender, Sexuality, and Health housed at Mahidol University’s Center for Health Policy Studies and had previously been the coordinator of Sisters Foundation–Center for Transgenders, to be the interim convener of the APTN. Kang volunteered his time as a coach while taking on the responsibility of writing the transgender health handbook.

Kang enlisted the help of Vince Crisostomo of the Coalition of Asia Pacific Regional Networks on HIV/AIDS (Seven Sisters; of which APNSW was a member) to provide additional in-kind logistical support in Bangkok. Seven Sisters was a coalition of HIV networks, now defunct, initiated at the fifth International Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific (ICAAP) in 1999 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, formalized in 2001 as a Malaysian and later Thai foundation. As a broad-based alliance Seven Sisters brought together seven regional networks: APNSW, AIDS Society of Asia Pacific, Asia Pacific Council of AIDS Service Organisations, Asia Pacific Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS (APN+), Asia Pacific Rainbow, Asian Harm Reduction Network, and Co-ordination of Action Research on AIDS and Mobility in Asia. Crisostomo acknowledged that Seven Sisters should support the inclusion and institutionalization of a trans network within their framework.

Boonyapisomparn and Kang thus worked to manage both projects simultaneously. Planning meetings for both projects were coordinated to overlap so that members participating in both would have to travel only once; this allowed for travel funding to be maximized in joint project consultations. The APNSW Transgender Health Handbook (Kang 2010b) was published shortly after the APTN development conference in 2009 in Bangkok. The following year, an Indonesian version was published (other planned versions never came to fruition, in part due to the untimely death of Hunter). The synergy between the projects allowed both to be completed for approximately $25,000 of combined dedicated funding in small project grants from amfAR and the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

**Representations and Coalitions**

Representational issues were at the core of APTN organizing. The initial APTN organizing conference participants were identified by a committee led by Boonyapisomparn and Kang through consultation with APNSW, APCOM, and subregional and special interest networks.
at the 2009 ICAAP in Bali, Indonesia. Because funding was very limited and the mission of the network focused on HIV, invitations were limited to trans women, with a focus on HIV in resource-poor settings (i.e., developing countries). One of the first discussions was about defining “Asia Pacific,” as Australian representatives were claiming “Asian” national status independent of “Asian” race or ethnicity. Organizers were concerned that Australian and New Zealander participants would dominate the conference and that their issues were very different both from those of other developed nations in the region (e.g., Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan) and especially from those of developing nations. Similarly, there was dialogue about how to define and identify “transgender” community representatives. There was also discussion about what constitutes trans men in a region with a burgeoning, but relatively invisible trans male community among widespread and widely recognized trans masculinities (Blackwood and Wieringa 2007), such as Thai toms (Sinnott 2004), Indonesian tombois (Blackwood 2010), Filipinx tombois (Fajardo 2008), and Chinese individuals assigned female at birth who took on various masculine identities (Leung 2002). Given the guidance from APNSW and APCOM, the initial focus on HIV, the lack of representation of trans men in HIV work, the limited resources involved, the organizing committee decided not to include trans men as participants. Similarly, intersex individuals also were not included in the purview. Participants were invited to act as representatives on behalf of geographic subregions or major countries (excluding Australia and New Zealand) and such special demographic populations as youths, drug users, and sex workers.
A group of trans women nominated by the organizing committee as well as three non-trans experts with extensive knowledge of trans issues were invited to the APTN development conference. The conference was opened by Andy Searle, senior adviser, Sexual and Gender Diversity Knowledge Management Unit from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Experts then laid out the three core issues to be addressed and to inform the decisions at the workshop: health (Graham Neilsen, adviser on sexual and reproductive health from Family Health International), legal (Douglas Sanders, professor emeritus in law at Canada's University of British Columbia), and research (Sam Winter, associate dean and associate professor, Faculty of Education, University of Hong Kong). While English remains the hegemonic language of transnational organizing, simultaneous interpretation was provided in Khmer, Mandarin, and Thai to broaden the participation of representatives with limited English ability.

As participants did not know how transgender identities were defined and lived throughout the region, the majority of the first day of the conference was devoted to presentations by representatives of their populations. The representative from the Pacific was unable to attend due to travel complications. Additionally, the lack of a Filipina
participant was noted. The second two days were focused on APTN structure, strategy, planning, and fund development. Participants identified APTN's vision as “A world free of gender stigma, discrimination and marginalization, where everyone has the same life opportunities regardless of their gender identity or sexuality.” Furthermore, “The mission of APTN is to enable transgender women in the Asia Pacific region to organize and advocate to improve their health, protect their human rights, and enhance their social well-being and the quality of their lives” (Kang 2010a).

Three broad issues were of salience for representation. First, APTN had to decide on how “transgender” and a trans community representative would be defined in the Asia Pacific region. The issue of local subjects who did not identify as transgender (or transsexual) was raised repeatedly. During the presentations, participants described a wide variety of local trans identities in the region, including hijra, banchi, waria, kathoey, and srey sros, and numerous subclassifications, such as "long hair" or “short hair.” Many of these individuals did not know, use, or identify with the term transgender, and some saw the term as an inapplicable foreign, Western, or middleclass concept. There was widespread acknowledgment that gender identity and sexual orientation were not distinct in many contexts. Thus, an absolute division between trans women and gay men or trans men and lesbians was considered tenuous. Additionally, there are many paths to trans identity, and individuals often move through various identifications in both directions throughout their lives (e.g., identify as a gay man, as a trans woman, and as a gay man again). It was also important not to position the Asia Pacific region behind the presumed modernity of the metropolitan West and its hegemonic sex/gender systems (Towle and Morgan 2002; Halberstam 2005).

There was also extensive discussion about who should be a trans representative and whether that person had to identify as trans or be “out.” The framework of middleclass Western confession and disclosure in the mode of “coming out” was not applicable for most individuals, who instead performatively “showed out” (Kang 2014), engaged in other tacit forms of acknowledgment (Decena 2011; Tan 2011), or actively hid their status due to legal, religious, and safety concerns. In a similar vein, “passing” was not considered important in contexts that socially recognized more than two genders (Peletz 2009). Finally, the centrality of medicalization (e.g., gender identity disorder) is not a relevant framework for identity or its resistance. Stigma attached to transgenderism had little to do with psychiatric classification; rather, marginalization was primarily bound to social institutions and relationships, such as religion, gender norms, family relations, romantic expectations, and occupation, especially as sex workers. Criteria for membership that were considered inaccessible, onerous, or dangerous in various nations were rejected, including use of hormones, cross-dressing, living openly as a trans woman, and working for an officially recognized trans program or organization. Participants emphasized that “feeling one is trans” was more important than being recognized as trans by others within a given cultural context. Thus, three broad criteria were enlisted in limiting membership:
Second, the issue of religion was raised in regard to hijras and Muslims. The representatives for India, South Asia, and Muslims focused significant attention on the specific needs of the hijra communities living in India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bangladesh. Although severely marginalized in all four countries, hijras had started to gain specific constitutional rights. The representatives argued that hijras have their own history, culturally sanctioned religious roles, and kinship networks that are distinct from those who identify as “transgender” in a “global” or cross-cultural sense (Nanda 1999; Reddy 2005). At least in India, hijras were treated separately from trans women in national HIV-prevention plans. The United Nations Development Programme held six regional consultations with hijras and transgender women in May and June 2009 (Chakrapani 2010) that focused on developing a consensus around “commonly acceptable” definitions of these groups and their specific social, policy, rights, and resource issues in relation to HIV. The representatives were concerned that the unique issues of hijra communities would not be fully addressed unless they had their own representative on the interim governing board. Furthermore, other representatives who were Muslim noted that the needs of Muslims in such Muslim-majority countries as Malaysia or Indonesia should be considered completely distinct from those of Muslim-identified hijras. The participating Muslim representative was a hijra. Therefore, it was proposed that hijras and Muslims required distinct representation.

Third, power differentials in professional class and education were acknowledged. Nearly half of the representatives were current or former sex workers. Because many trans women are sex workers, there was concern that the network should not marginalize trans sex workers, but at the same time it should delegitimize the assumption that all trans women are sex workers and acknowledge the wide variability in sex work (Hwahng and Nuttbrock 2007; Infante et al. 2009). It was noted that sex workers are often relegated to lower-status functions in organizations. Furthermore, trans women often had limited access to English- and internet-based resources. Many trans women in the region did not communicate online, but rather through social networks in such sites as beauty parlors. A network representing trans women had to address these issues.

In summary, the discussions about representation focused on what constituted “transgender” in the Asia Pacific region and on the issues of religion, language, and class. Consensus about representation was reached and a framework for APTN board membership was accepted, comprising a governing structure based on seven geographic subregions and seven key populations forming a fourteen-seat interim governing board (constituted from the conference participants, with additional gaps noted). It was stipulated that one of the India or South Asia representatives must be hijra. Thus, the governing board was constituted with representatives from Cambodia, China, India,
Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Singapore, and Thailand (APTN 2010).

Hua Boonyapisomparn (Thailand), the conference convener, was unanimously elected APTN coordinator. Representatives and alternates were also appointed to the boards of APNSW, APCOM, and Seven Sisters. As APNSW requires sex worker peer participation, the interim board agreed that the sex worker representative of APTN would automatically be the representative for APNSW. In addition, the working group was tasked with drafting formal letters requesting transgender representatives on the boards of the APN+ and the Asian Network of People Who Use Drugs. The outputs from the conference were:

1. formation of a work plan and budget for 2010;
2. development and agreement on the vision, mission, and core values of APTN;
3. development of the network's organizational and management structure;
4. nomination and selection of people to form an APTN working group with key roles; and
5. identification of potential funders and capacity building needs.

Fighting the pathologization of transgenderism as a mental disorder was also highlighted as the criteria for gender identity disorder were being reconfigured by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health for the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (APA 2013). The event received broad media and organizational attention from trans, HIV, and other groups around the world, creating linkages with other networks and organizations.

Continual Evolution

APTN has changed significantly since its founding. Leadership changed as Boonyapisomparn relinquished her role as coordinator to pursue education in the United States. APTN became a member of Seven Sisters and operated with minimal funding for several years. In 2009 Slamah became coordinator of Seven Sisters and volunteered to oversee the APTN. In 2011 Joe Wong from Singapore advocated for the inclusion of trans men and joined the board. The governing structure remained, with the establishment of an executive working group consisting of Laxmi Narayan Tripathi, Slamah, and Wong. The three executive members coordinated board member responses and represented the voices of the board in the decision-making process. The three executive members, with the assistance of Seven Sisters, hired Natt Kraipet to coordinate APTN efforts. Subsequently, Wong was selected to be program manager. With the support of Seven Sisters, APTN incorporated as a foundation under the Thai Ministry of the Interior in 2015. As a foundation established in Thailand, APTN has a legally mandated foundation board composed of Thai nationals with fiduciary responsibility to oversee the finances and assets in accordance with Thai law. The governing board has become a regional steering committee composed of trans individuals from throughout the region and diaspora, to
ensure that the strategic plan and objectives are in line with APTN’s vision and mission. An advisory board of researchers, care providers, policy makers, advocates, and other professionals with expertise in gender diversity provide technical guidance to APTN. The APTN Secretariat, its program and financial management body, is based in Bangkok and administers APTN objectives and activities under several departments, including communications and advocacy to guide human rights advances and social policy reform. APTN programming has significantly increased since APTN received funding in 2014 from the Robert Carr Fund for Civil Society Networks to support their work of networking, community mobilization, leadership development, and advocacy, especially in relation to health and human rights.

APTN continues to work to benefit trans individuals. It has built strong relationships with diverse trans communities, health-care providers, nongovernmental organizations, networks, policy makers, donors, and other stakeholders in many parts of the region and globally. Since 2012 APTN has published more than twenty reports, policy papers, fact sheets, and other documents. Its key messages are: (1) gender variance in itself is not a disease or mental disorder; (2) transgender individuals have unique health needs and risks that deserve particular attention; and (3) transgender rights are human rights, not special rights. As APTN moves forward, it will continue to have to negotiate local constructions of trans identity, the commonality and diversity of transness in the region, and global trans formations dominated by Western ideologies (Dutta 2013).

SEE ALSO Athletes, Trans and Intersex, in Asia; Bhutan; Hijras; Kathoey; Roopbaan; Sex Reassignment Surgery in Asia; Third Genders; Transgender Organizations in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

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Asrar ʿAitiyyah (2013; Hany Fawzy)

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The first Egyptian film to focus primarily on homosexuality.

Asrar ʿaifiyyah (Family secrets) opened in Egyptian theaters on 22 January 2014, amid scathing criticism and great controversy. Based on a true story, it is the directorial debut of Hany Fawzy, known as a screenwriter for such films as El-Rayess Omar Harb (2008; Chief Omar Harb), Baheb essima (2004; I love cinema), and Film Hindi (2003; An Indian film). The script for Asrar ʿaifiyyah was written by Mohamed Abdel Qader. The film is a coming-of-age drama about a teenager named Marwan (played by Mohamed Mahran), who struggles with his homosexuality amid a dysfunctional family and an oppressive society. The narrative traces the trials and tribulations of Marwan, who, upon his mother’s discovery of his sexuality, is taken to various doctors to be cured of his illness.

Marwan narrates the story and covers a span of five years of his life, from ages fifteen to twenty. The first flashback recounts the moment his boyfriend, Hazem, decides to end their relationship because he believes it to be sinful. The use of the voice-over, combined with the flashback narrative throughout the film, offers an omniscient perspective on Marwan’s life while simultaneously distancing the narrator from his character. The story begins with Marwan at age fifteen; he is an adolescent confused about his sexuality and unable to accept himself. His struggles are amplified by troubled family dynamics, including a domineering mother, an absentee father who rarely returns from his job in the United States, and an older brother, Sameh, who is an aggressive bully.

Marwan’s attempts to reconcile his forbidden desires for other men, combined with the lack of a loving home environment, result in a schism in his personality that manifests as Nour, his sexually active alter ego. Nour starts engaging with men over the internet, while a conflicted and devout Marwan is encouraged by his mother to pray so God can take these thoughts from him. The narrator expresses his confusion, and feels “as if he is living with two personalities,” not knowing which one he really is. Nour’s various sexual encounters demonstrate society’s ostracization of homosexuality and Marwan’s ambivalence about his own sexuality. However, when given the choice by a sympathetic doctor, Marwan opts to cure his homosexuality. Thereupon, he decides to find his true self and face his fears by suppressing his sexual impulses. The film provides a reconciliatory ending whereby the accepted social order is eventually restored: Marwan looks at heterosexual couples with
hope and envy, he confronts his guilt-ridden brother, his mother becomes compliant, and his father and he rekindle their relationship.

**Views on Homosexuality**

In a 2014 interview discussing the movie, Fawzy stated that homosexuality is not “an unethical attitude, it’s a disease,” and gays should be treated sympathetically. “Homosexuality is a disease such as depression…. Why can’t we say ‘patients’ instead of ‘unnatural’ and ‘sinful’? Does any patient in the world not want to be cured from the disease she/he has? Of course not!” ([Muscara 2014](Muscara%202014)). In the same interview, lead actor Mahran states that homosexuality is “something not normal and the community should fix that. But everybody is free in his choices.” Thus, despite the movie’s sympathetic portrayal of Marwan, it still reflects the belief of the director and lead actor that homosexual acts are sinful and that homosexuality is a disease that can be medically cured. These antagonistic attitudes toward Marwan’s sexuality are first and foremost translated in how people perceive his masculinity.

**Cultural Viewpoint**

Marwan is depicted as a stereotypical young gay man. He has effeminate mannerisms and preferences, including wearing pink clothing and covering his bed in pink satin sheets. He shaves his arms, has long, straight hair, and is soft-spoken. Being a homosexual is thus represented as being effeminate, hence lacking masculinity. “Gay” here is the antithesis of the macho, ideal masculinity advocated by Egyptian society. His sexual orientation is depicted as a disorientation from the prevalent Middle Eastern, Arab, and Muslim masculinity. Several characters in the movie ridicule Marwan for his lack of masculinity, including Dr. Ola, a young, veiled woman who attempts to cure Marwan of his homosexuality by making him ashamed of his physical appearance and lack of manliness. Besides prescribing medication, her treatment includes recommendations that he change his physical appearance by growing a moustache and that he perform masculine activities around the house, such as moving furniture, carrying groceries, and fixing the plumbing. She taunts him to question his masculinity, positing a hypothetical scenario: Would he be able to defend his mother and fight the perpetrator if his mother were to be sexually harassed on the street?

Marwan’s masculinity is thus questioned, since he lacks such typical and conventional male attributes as roughness and physical strength. His physics teacher also belittles Marwan’s effeminate attributes after he catches him sleeping in class. He calls him *susu* (sissy) and addresses him in the grammatical feminine gender, as if talking to a girl. In a voice-over, Marwan comments that society is looking at him as an epidemic; his lack of virility is a constant object of ridicule. He is a threat to society by his mere physical appearance. Many of the scenes where Marwan is made to feel small are reinforced by the choice of camera
angle and types of shot. For example, the teacher is shot from below, which heightens the sense of threat. Marwan's pathos is emphasized by the fact that he is often shown alone in medium shots.

**Religious Viewpoint**

Marwan's conflict is exhibited not only externally, but also internally. He has difficulty accepting his orientation, morally and ethically, despite the director’s position that homosexuality is not an ethical issue. The social fabric of Egyptian society is inextricably woven with a religious and cultural thread that is impossible to separate. The predominant social view of homosexuality remains that it is sinful.

In the movie, this is most clearly demonstrated by the boyfriend Hazem, who, after his return from *umrah* (a religious pilgrimage), decides to break up with Nour/Marwan. Hazem’s spiritual awakening coincides with his realization that their relationship is a vice, which he characterizes as *qadhara* (filth). Of course, Hazem’s stance is hypocritically reversed when, at the end of the film, he contacts Nour/Marwan again to rekindle their relationship. It is very telling that the director chose this particular crossroad to explore the protagonist’s life story and bring the narrative full circle. This artistic choice reinforces the director’s view that homosexuality is a disease and not a sin by showing how even religious Egyptians struggle with it.

During Marwan’s struggle with his sexuality, he decides to visit a sheikh for guidance under the guise of talking about a friend of his. The religious cleric radically condemns homosexuality, stating the prevalent social and religious belief that it shakes God’s throne. The sheikh mentions the punishment of the people of Lut (from the story of Sodom and Gomorrah) and warns about the eternal fires of hell. While the encounter itself is short, Marwan’s life becomes imbued with religion. He prays so God can take those deviant thoughts away from him, and he attends a support group, where he encounters other young Egyptians who share his struggle. One of the group members, Mina (a predominantly Egyptian Christian name), talks about working through his confusing relationship with God, wondering how God could judge him for something he is a victim of, before he finally learned to see God with his heart. Another group member, Shady, had lived his life hating himself, hiding his shame behind his pious beard and appearance until he faced the reality he had denied. Religion (Christian and Muslim) is, therefore, both a rigid facade behind which to hide one’s shame and a means of salvation for one’s suffering. Ultimately, however, it is not religion that saves Marwan.

**Medical/Psychological Approach**

The film demonstrates that when one is looking for a cure, one goes to the doctor. Homosexuality is from the onset described as a psychological disorder. The psychiatrists
that Marwan and his mother visit provide a myriad of interpretations of homosexuality. While Dr. Ola, the first doctor, who works in a center for drug addiction and psychological rehabilitation for adolescents, opts for medication and for making Marwan more manly, she does not, in fact, dwell on “curing him” but on changing him to conform to society’s views on masculinity. A second doctor prescribes antidepressants to curb Marwan’s sex drive, but Marwan eventually rejects this treatment because of its side effects. A third doctor, Nabil Barakat, approaches Marwan more sympathetically. When Marwan questions whether it is possible for him to change his sexual orientation, Dr. Barakat assures him he can change but then suggests that emigration might be the answer: “The problem isn’t you. It’s society as a whole. Maybe if you were living abroad, in a society that accepted gay people.” Marwan, however, finds this suggestion unrealistic.

Marwan finally finds the doctor he needs in the progressive psychiatrist Dr. Amjad Wahby. The doctor refuses to use the term *shadh* (literally “aberrant,” the traditional reference to homosexual) because it reinforces the oppression of gay people. He finds that it is not logical to oppress a human being because society fears his symptoms. Additionally, he does not like to call homosexuality a disease but rather a psychological developmental disorder, following a particular psychological crisis.

Dr. Wahby explains there is in each person a male and a female, and his theory on homosexuality is that it develops from a split in one’s gender following a lack of identification with the parent of the same sex. This split translates during puberty into homosexual desire and orientation. He then offers Marwan two choices: to decide this is a disease that he wants a cure for, or to refuse treatment and continue to live as a homosexual. The doctor stresses that Marwan is free to decide. According to Dr. Wahby, someone may have a frail masculinity, and homosexuality will develop in the right circumstances. There is a cure, albeit a difficult one, and the most important step is acceptance. Self-acceptance will hence allow Marwan to face his homosexuality.

Marwan opts for a cure. At the doctor’s prompting, he starts writing a journal about his feelings and discovers that, as he writes them down, his homosexual desires become latent. Marwan then reveals to the doctor some meaningful childhood memories. During her pregnancy with him, his mother was told to expect a girl; when Marwan was born, his mother started treating him like a girl for fear of replicating her negative experience with his brother, Sameh. Her husband’s absence enabled her behavior. Marwan confesses to the doctor that he has no memories of his father, either from childhood or recent times. He is completely disassociated from the child he was. Dr. Wahby helps him connect with his inner child, who feels hurt and abandoned. This child is the true Marwan, according to the doctor. Dr. Wahby also helps Marwan deal with the trauma of childhood sexual abuse that he suffered at the hands of Sameh. The doctor emphasizes that a child is not responsible for his abuse, even if Marwan had not rejected his brother. Marwan thus learns to reconnect with himself anew, reuniting with his childhood, his pain, and his weakness, which,
according to Dr. Wahby, will enable Marwan to discover his authentic self, thereby dissipated his homosexuality.

Marwan’s struggle with his sexuality turns into a search for not only a cure but an explanation for his homosexual orientation. The film ultimately posits that, if homosexuality is an illness or a psychological disorder, there must be one or more underlying causes. The narrative exposition of Marwan’s circumstances, from his childhood sexual abuse to his domineering mother and absent father, all converge to explain the development of his sexual orientation.

**Linguistic Turn**

The terminology used to refer to homosexuality is worth exploring because the film traces the linguistic development of the various terms, from *khawal* and *shadh* to *al-mithliyyah*. When Marwan meets Kareem, a thief who scams him, the man uses the term *khawal*, a derogatory word that particularly expresses a lack of masculinity, when he threatens Marwan in order to dissuade him from pursuing men online. This word is generally an insult to men, and through such an interpellation, gay men are disparaged not only for their aberrant sexual behavior but also for their failure to conform to the social standards and norms that define manhood and masculinity.

In Egyptian society, the prevalent word used to describe a gay man is *shadh* and homosexuality is *shudhudh jinsi* (literally, “sexual deviance”). The words denote a negative supposition about homosexuality because the root stems from the word *aberrant*. Therefore, homosexuality is perceived in terms of abnormal and deviant behavior. Marwan uses the word *shadh*, which in effect cements his view on his own sexuality.

In recent years, particularly with the onset of sexuality and gender studies in the Middle East and the Arab world, the word *al-mithliyyah* has surfaced. This term expresses no linguistic or social biases and focuses on the concept of sameness, *mithli*. Hence, discourse on sexuality incorporates the idea of “homo” and, instead of pathologizing it, it describes homosexuality in terms of same-sex desire. Both Dr. Barakat and Dr. Wahby use the term *al-mithliyyah*. The film therefore delineates a paradigmatic rhetorical shift in the discourse on homosexuality.

**Critical Reception**

*Asrar ʿailiyah* garnered controversy even before its premiere. After first claiming that it would not make cuts to the film solely based on its taboo subject matter, Egypt’s film censorship board demanded thirteen scenes be cut, despite the absence of sexually explicit material. Fawzy feared the censors’ demands would transform the film and present Marwan’s affair as a “romance-free friendship,” when in fact he wanted to convey “the
psychological dilemma of the character and his relationship with others” (Kingsley 2014). Egyptian critics defended the censorship by arguing that the deletion of a scene between two gay men lying in bed was not an affront to creativity, which raised a debate about freedom of expression, thought, and creativity.

Critic Majdy al-Tayyīb (2013) criticized Fawzy for scenes that he deemed daring but ineffective in advancing the plot, such as showing clips from the porn films that Marwan watches, or a doctor asking whether Marwan wants to sleep with his crush. Al-Tayyīb characterized these seemingly explicit scenes as muqazez (disgusting). He accused Fawzy of disregarding the contract between the director and the public by discarding the art of subtle allusion, an art that respects the audience’s intelligence and emotions. According to him, the director replaced it with immature confrontation, thus creating sedition or subversion. The film was accused of “promoting indecent behavior,” despite the director’s vehement claiming that the film was not explicit in nature (al-Tayyīb 2013).

Fawzy defended his film and appealed the censors’ demands, maintaining that there should be complete freedom in addressing social issues with utmost candor. The director ultimately previewed his film to the critics before the censors’ final approval. The film was deemed daring, not just provocative, for adopting a theme so taboo in Egyptian and Arab communities. Other works have portrayed homosexuality in Egyptian culture, notably Alaa al-Aswany’s novel Imarat Ya’kubian (2002; The Yacoubian Building [2004]), adapted into a film in 2006, and some earlier films, such as Al-Raqesah wa-al-siyasi (1990; The belly dancer and the politician) and Darb al-hawa (1983; Trail of fancy). Yet, Asrar ‘ailiyah, despite its intolerant view that homosexuality is a disease, was hailed as a breakthrough for bringing to light the issue of homosexuality simply because it portrays its main protagonist as a young, gay man. It was, however, precisely for that reason that it garnered scathing criticism from LGBTQ activists, as well as Western and some local media.

While not directly posing as pro-LGBTQ, some reviewers were critical of the film’s message and its lack of sensitivity to the issue of homosexuality in society. Some such reviews appeared in the Western media, such as Variety, but others came from within Egypt and the Arab world, including Al-Ahram, Elaph, and Al-Bawaba. Critics accused the movie of asserting instead of subverting society’s views: veiled as a daring work, it was, in fact, a direct attack on homosexuals (Adly 2014) and a “poor melodrama” that “does a disservice to its subject” (Zohdi 2014) by promoting “gay conversion therapy” (Weissberg 2014).

**Assessment**

Marwan’s effeminate character is an obsolete stereotype of a gay man and belies a wrong and naive understanding of homosexuality and the construct of sexuality. Moreover, the idea that circumstances generate sexual disorientation raises the question of agency, which the film, by positing that homosexuality is a choice, reinforces. The other gay men in the
film are often negatively portrayed as lewd and lustful. Homosexuality, as Yasmine Zohdi (2014) notes, becomes an illusion, or a confusion, as the case may be with Marwan. The film falls into the trap of explaining the development of homosexuality as a circumstantial response (namely to child sexual abuse, the figure of a domineering mother or an absent father). This clichéd explanation fails to address the complexity of sexual identity, even if it does indeed accurately portray Egyptian society's attitude toward homosexuality. Although some characters, like Mazen (with whom Nour/Marwan has an affair), seem to accept their homosexuality, the film's focus on Marwan's resolution offers a perspective that can be viewed as detrimental to the existence of homosexuality and social responses to it, since it affirms through its reconciliatory ending that being gay is a choice.

Asrar ‘ailiyah can therefore be accused of being homophobic precisely because it depicts homosexuality as the antithesis of the ideal masculinity that society promotes. Additionally, the narrative forcibly circumscribes Marwan's sexual development within the causal circumstances of childhood sexual abuse to suggest that they are a reason for his homosexuality, despite the revelation that his brother had also been a victim of childhood sexual abuse at the hands of the family driver. Since Sameh’s masculinity was not frail, his experience caused him to become “overly masculine,” displaying more anger and violence, traits that are conventionally accepted as masculine.

The film ultimately operates within a heteronormative framework that reinforces the complementarity of distinct gender roles and the viability of heterosexuality as the only socially acceptable norm. It articulates the expected and traditional understanding of gender differences and fails to really engage with the formation of sexuality and subjectivity beyond stereotypes and clichés. The heterosexist and heteronormative narrative reproduces and imposes the accepted idealized construct of national masculinity. The fracture of or departure from ideal masculinity is translated as effeminization. The film articulates an erasure of other forms of masculinities and the affirmation of conventional patriarchal authority. Instead of addressing the problems gay men face in society, the film treats gay men as the problem; homosexuality is a disease that needs to be eradicated. Hence, the visibility that homosexuality garners through the film is one that negatively impacts the LGBTQ community in Egypt. Ultimately, Asrar ‘ailiyah does not give a voice to homosexuality; on the contrary, it stifles it. Society’s condemnation remains justified, while homosexuality continues to be a secret, a taboo, and a condition that can now be cured.

SEE ALSO Hena Maysara (2007; Khaled Youssef); HIV/AIDS in Egyptian Cinema; Imarat Ya’kubian (2002; Alaa al-Aswany); Queer Names and Identity Politics in the Arab World; Zuqaq al-Midaq (1947; Naguib Mahfouz)

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Israel is a country that was founded in 1948, following a 1947 United Nations (UN) resolution that recognized the right to the establishment of an Israeli state and an adjoining Palestinian state in historical Palestine. The latter was never established. The establishment of the State of Israel was a colonial enterprise, beginning in the late nineteenth century with European economic and political intervention in the Middle East; in 1917 the British government announced its support for the creation of a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine via the Balfour Declaration. Momentum accelerated in the 1920s and 1930s, and the establishment of Israel was further facilitated by the influx of Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Europe, as well as the exodus of Arab Jews from their home countries (Khalidi 1984; Shenhav 2002).

The conflict between Zionist militias and Palestinian nationalists escalated into armed conflict in 1948. This resulted in the displacement of over 700,000 Palestinians living in the land that would shortly come to be known as the State of Israel. As a result of these events, approximately 20 percent of Israel's population as of 2018 is composed of Arabs of Christian and Muslim faiths. Jewish-Israelis of Arab descent are discouraged from fashioning an Arab identity (Shenhav 2002). Meanwhile, non-Jewish Arabs inside Israel refer to themselves as Arab-Israelis or as Palestinians. To refer to themselves as Palestinians is a political act. This act recognizes Israel's colonial history, evidenced by the ongoing conflict between the state and the Occupied Palestinian Territories of Gaza and the West Bank and by the existence of more than 5 million Palestinian refugees in neighboring countries whose status is still unresolved. The Palestinian refugee crisis extends well beyond Gaza and the West Bank into Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Egypt, Iraq, and the Persian Gulf countries, where most Palestinians remain unnaturalized in their countries of residence to this day.

Aswat's Founding

It is in this complex, colonial context that two self-declared Palestinian lesbians decided to
create an email list for gay, Arab women living in Israel. The women decided to meet in real space in 2002. The following year, seven women who had been in attendance at the 2002 meeting went on to found Aswat, which, according to its website, is a Palestinian gay women’s nongovernmental organization. Aswat was formed as a splinter group out of the feminist organization Kayan, based in Haifa. Soon, Aswat had its own website, and women from all over the Arab world were subscribing to the forums and mailing list. Aswat representatives also hold media interviews both in Arabic and Hebrew to raise awareness about the group’s activities and outreach.

SOURCE: HTTP://WWW.ASWATGROUP.ORG/EN

Home Page of Aswat, an Organization of Palestinian LBTQI Women. One of Aswat’s major projects is its “Information Project” on its website, which aims to combat censorship and misinformation surrounding women’s sexuality and lesbianism as well as connect Palestinian lesbians, among other goals.

Conscious of the precarious place these women occupied in Arab and Israeli society, Aswat’s founders set out to fashion a space that could accommodate their intersecting identities.

We, sexual deviants in a heterosexual world, women in a chauvinistic society, Arab women in the Jewish state, were required many times to give up and leave behind a part of our identity in order to be accepted as normal. [Therefore, we] made a decision to create a place that would cater for a coexistence of the different facets of our identity.

(ASWAT 201 1, 153)

Funded by philanthropic trusts such as the Global Fund for Women and the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, Aswat initiated a number of support groups in the form of on-site, monthly meetings and set up a hotline offering crisis counseling in Arabic for queer women and transgender men. Recognizing the need for a body of literature dealing with LGBTQI issues specifically written in Arabic, as well as the need for disseminating neutral or positive terminology and semantics, Aswat began publishing monthly newsletters and
pamphlets as well. In these short publications, Aswat's contributors discussed the history of LGBTQI civil rights internationally, as well as health issues relevant to queer people, and provided Arabic glossaries of terms related to gender and sexuality. Aswat also published “how to” manuals focusing on, for example, coming out to parents or providing answers to basic sexual awareness questions. Aswat frequently issues press releases and open letters expressing political opinions and taking a stand on issues related to Palestinian and women’s rights. Between 2006 and 2010, Aswat released three short narrative books as well. Two of these anthologies consisted of autobiographical writings. The group makes all its publications available online for free, and some of these are available in both English and Arabic.

Overview of Publications

Aswat's first book, Al-waṭan wa-al-manfá fī tajribat almutaharirrāt jinsīyan: Majmūʿāt maqālāt taḥhath fī mawḍūʿ al-mithlīyah al-jinsīyah (2006; Home and exile in queer experience: A collection of articles about lesbian and homosexual identity), contained a mix of original writings and translations of feminist literature written in English. The group’s second book, Haqi an a’eesh an akhtar an akun (2007; My right to live, to choose, to be), was a literary anthology featuring queer women’s writings by Arab lesbians, for Arab lesbians, and in Arabic. This collection inspired a lesbian group in Lebanon, Meem, to produce its own autobiographical collection, Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories, in 2009. In 2010 Aswat released a second anthology, Waqfet banāt (Girls Take a Stand [2011]), which took on a distinctly autobiographical flavor, departing slightly from the poetry and lyrical prose of its predecessor. Waqfet banāt was translated into and made available in English as well. A second edition of the book appeared in 2011.

Unlike its successor, Haqi an a’eesh an akhtar an akun was published in Arabic only. Several authors, such as Rauda, Rima, Reem, and a young woman writing under the pseudonym Life, contributed multiple entries in the form of short stories, reflections, and poetry. One contributor writing under the pseudonym Pazuzu was an active member of the Lebanese lesbian group Meem and was not resident in Israel. In the introduction, Aswat declared that the book was a community outreach effort, aiming “to introduce [the group] to our society, to increase knowledge of and raise awareness around our struggles, and also to deliver our voices to people who may need to know that they are not alone” (2007, 11; translation by Samar Habib). The introduction liberally used terms borrowed from English and translated them into Arabic without clarification for a nonspecialist reader.

By contrast, the Arabic version of the ensuing book, Waqfet banāt, corrected this issue by containing a glossary of terms in the beginning. This glossary explained the meaning of key concepts in queer gender and sexual taxonomy. Some of the terms it elaborated on were al-hawiya al-jinsiya (sexual identity), al-jins al-biology (biological sex), al-naw‘ al-ijtima‘i (gender identity), and al-khuruj min al-khizana (coming out of the closet) (Aswat 2010).
Aswat's emphasis on publishing in Arabic filled a need in the marketplace of ideas and helped establish a theoretical language capable of sustaining discourse on queer genders and sexualities for the Arab reader. The move also seemed to result from the group's collective experience in 2007, when some of the terms in *Haqi an a’eesh an akhtar an akun* failed to register for nonqueer readers. Terms such as *izdiwaji* (bisexual), for example, or *mughayiroo al-naw’ al-ijtima’i* (transgender) seemed foreign and required clarification. In this way, *Waqfet banāt* appears to be a continuation of a strategic project that began with *Haqi an a’eesh an akhtar an akun* in 2007.

The first book centered on the theme of supplying literature in Arabic that could lend itself to describing the thoughts and experiences of its marginalized authors. As one narrator named Aden indicated: “When I started looking for stories in Arabic so I wouldn’t feel so alone, I couldn’t find any. So, I decided to write my story today, so that it may be one of the stories you get to see yourself in, when you begin your search for stories about women like you” (*Aswat* 2007, 99; translation by Samar Habib). Meanwhile, the second book, *Waqfet banāt*, extended the effort a step further by institutionalizing the terminology used in the first book and translating the text to English, thus reaching beyond the Arab world and into diasporic Arab communities internationally, as well as to non-Arab readers.

**Expressions of Sexuality and Repression**

In both *Haqi* and *Waqfet*, the reader is treated to intimate narratives of love, sexual desire, and repression in an Israeli society where Arab ethnicity is not only marginalized but also unfavorably politicized. In addition to the impact of Israeli politics on Arab identity, the narrators often must deal with a patriarchal and heteronormative Arab culture that rebukes them. This is evident throughout these writings, although not all the authors are Israeli nationals and most are more concerned with narrating stories of their coming of age than with political analysis and the backdrop of colonialism.

One significant exception in *Waqfet banāt* is to be found in the afterword by Samira Saraya, then serving as interim general coordinator of Aswat. She recounted a childhood memory of singing the Israeli national anthem and waving the Israeli flag at school on Independence Day (the Palestinian Catastrophe/Nakba Day), without comprehending the colonial history such an act was masking at the time. Years later, Saraya reflected on this memory, realizing its political implications. The parallels between hiding Arab identity and hiding sexual orientation became obvious to her when she recalled that once, on a hospital visit, her mother became distressed when Saraya wrote that she was born in Palestine (having been born in 1936) and had her change the word to “Israel” for fear of complications with hospital staff. Saraya uses these mirroring oppressions as a passageway to communicate about othering to her community. “When I encounter Palestinians in Israel, I make the association between our society, which has experienced oppression and discrimination, and my personal experiences as a sexual deviant, stressing the necessity for the struggle for
exposure and legitimacy” (Aswat 2011, 166).

The Palestinian society that emerges out of the narratives in both Haqi and Waqfet is one steeped in sexual repression, tradition, and taboos. Invariably, the narrators share stories of being conflicted about their sexualities and ultimately having to hide who they truly are to those closest to them. Out of this arrangement emerges an alternate consciousness to visibility politics, one in which coming out is not integral to personal liberation. As one narrator put it: “I have learned that coming out is not all black and white, and that there’s a gray area in between; one that allows me to be in and out at the same time” (Aswat 2011, 56).

This motif repeats throughout both books, speaking to the “universal” experience of alienation lived by queer youth elsewhere in the world. Another motif common to this “universal” experience of negotiating the outward and the inward is to be found in the role assigned to the metropolis by queer youth, who find in it a sanctuary from the double identity imposed when one must endure in the vicinity of the family. Narrators often state that they move to cities such as Haifa or Tel Aviv and begin a journey of personal liberation when they start living on their own. One anonymous narrator recalls the following about moving to Tel Aviv at age eighteen:

\[quote\]
In clubs, parties, and gay bars a whole new world of dating proposed itself. I fell in and out of love, had crushes, relations, affairs, and believed that those were the happiest days of my life. Feelings of ambiguity and confusion were finally replaced by feelings of clarity and serenity. Hiding in my dark closet was no longer necessary and thoughts of hope and satisfaction were ultimately replacing my helplessness and frustration.
\[quote\]

(ASWAT 2011, 49)

Uniquely, Waqfet banât includes narratives by non-Palestinians as well. One remarkable example is a woman named Souraya whose father was born in Palestine, a mere forty days before his family’s exile from Palestine to Lebanon in 1948. Although her father married a Lebanese national, Souraya could not inherit her mother’s citizenship because Lebanese law forbids the mother from giving her nationality to her children. That said, Souraya makes no mention of being a Palestinian refugee. It is possible that she had acquired Lebanese citizenship on the basis of her Christianity in the 1990s, or for her father to have acquired it in the 1940s or 1950s, when the Lebanese government made efforts to naturalize Christian Palestinians (a small minority compared to Sunni Palestinians) in order to bolster the country’s dwindling Christian demographic (Ghandour 2017). Not all
Christian Palestinians were naturalized in Lebanon in this way. It is remarkable that Souraya makes no mention of her citizenship status; this in itself is an indicator of privilege not likely to be encountered among Palestinians in Lebanon who remained refugees.

Souraya remembers her gender-atypical childhood, her masculine presentation, and her attraction to women even from a young age. Speaking of her mother’s friend, Souraya recalls, “I used to be filled with joy when I saw that woman. I was about 5 at the time. I also still remember how when we’d be watching a movie with my mom and dad, and there would be a scene where a man and a woman kiss, I would imagine myself in the man’s place kissing the woman” (Aswat 2011, 137). Souraya is outed by her peers at school, who are the first to use the term lesbian to taunt her. Her story is unique, particularly in the part of the narrative where she connects her story to the Lebanese underground, recalling the establishment of Helem, the Arab world’s first official LGBTQI organization and her membership in an online forum called GayLebanon. Although Helem and GayLebanon provided Souraya with an LGBTQI community both in real space and in cyberspace, she recalls that this was not enough to fill the void that was left by her excommunication from her Christian community. A devout Christian, she returned to a personal relationship with God as her ultimate solace, believing that God loves everyone, even lesbians.

Other non-Palestinian contributors to Waqfet include Yarra Karris, a Lebanese national who is a transgender woman and who immigrated to Denmark to finally be free from the disapproval of her society and family. Another narrator, Haya Souleiman, lives in Cairo and describes an inability to express her feelings to her family. Some women articulate bisexual desires, and others feel that they are sexually fluid and cannot be neatly categorized. For this reason, Waqfet banāt provides a remarkable representation of the spectrum of gender and sexual diversity in Arab society, focusing primarily on Arabs who live in Israel but also extending its coverage to include neighboring countries and even immigration to Europe, where the experience of oppression is lifted.

Both Haqi and Waqfet are books of personal narrative that are essential to tracing the organic and genealogical growth of LGBTQI grassroots activism in the Arab world. They chronicle the experiences and levels of consciousness of gender-nonconforming and sexually nonconforming women of the educated middle class. What now seems like ordinary diary entries will in the future provide invaluable insight into otherwise hidden struggles and the embryonic formations of queer countercultures in the Arab world.

SEE ALSO alQaws; Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories (2009); Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; Internet Queer Sites in the Middle East; Meem: Queer Names and Identity Politics in the Arab World; Urban Queerness

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Intersex and trans competitors have historically faced opposition in sport. Sport organizers have responded to both groups with accusations of unfairness and questions about the role of biological sex in eligibility. Because intersex and trans athletes often do not conform to society’s ideas about appropriate gender, sport organizations have outlined rules to limit their participation. Sex testing criminalized strong women and targeted intersex athletes (Ferez 2012; Pieper 2016). Policies about trans competitors have typically focused on trans women and have frequently mandated medical intervention (Anderson and Travers 2017; Sykes 2006). Such sex-based policies discriminate against both intersex and trans athletes and reinforce gender boundaries in elite competitions.

Intersex and trans people have experienced discrimination for not fitting neatly into binary notions of sex. Intersex is an umbrella term that refers to individuals born with a wide array of natural biological variations that do not meet society’s expectations of male or female (Intersex Society of North America 2018). For example, women with androgen insensitivity syndrome (AIS) have XY chromosomes but are resistant to androgens; they therefore look female and typically live as women but have what is considered a male chromosomal makeup. Trans is also an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of identities. Trans women are persons designated male at birth but whose gender identity is female. Trans men are people designated female at birth but whose gender identity is male (GLAAD 2018). Both intersex and trans individuals have experienced resistance in sport for challenging its sex-segregated classification system.

Early Examples of Trans Athletes

Anxieties about gender-ambiguous athletes convinced sport organizers to implement policies to verify their sex. British athlete Mary Weston had been incorrectly designated as female at birth and competed as a woman in the 1920s (Heggie 2010; Tebbutt 2015). Weston placed first in the British Women’s Amateur Athletic Association (WAAA) shot put in 1925 and 1928 and also claimed the 1929 WAAA titles in discus, javelin, and shot put. Weston’s studies in anatomy, required as part of his training to become a masseuse, led
him to question his sex and gender. Feeling more male than female, he retired from sport, underwent corrective surgery in 1934, and changed his name to Mark. His story, which was widely disseminated, was cited as undeniable proof that sport masculinized women (Pieper 2016; Tebbutt 2015). Likewise, Czechoslovakian athlete Zdeňka Koubková set several records in athletics as a woman in the 1930s. However, appearance-based concerns prompted the Fédération Sportive Féminine Internationale (International Women’s Sports Federation) to remove Koubková from sport competition and remove his marks. Having fought masculine feelings since childhood, Koubková also underwent corrective surgery and changed his name to Zdenek Koubek (Heggie 2010; Tebbutt 2015). Weston’s and Koubek’s successes in athletics and their later transitions bolstered the case for sport officials to question the appropriateness of participation in physical competitions for women (Anderson and Travers 2017).

Accusations against strong female athletes continued. During the 1936 Berlin Olympics, when US runner Helen Stephens won gold in the 100-meter race, her impressive time and muscular frame sparked accusations that she was not a woman. Olympic officials conducted a physical examination, which she “passed,” marking the first sex test of the modern Olympic Games (Pieper 2016). Also during the Berlin Olympics, German Olympian Heinrich Ratjen placed fourth in the women’s high jump. Several popular accounts posit that the Nazi Party forced Ratjen, who at the time was living as a woman named Dora, to compete in disguise, but medical records show that Ratjen was not a male masquerader. Documents from his birth verify that the midwife first declared the baby a boy, then asserted he was a girl, and finally concluded it was best to raise Ratjen female. Ratjen was arrested in 1938 for “cross-dressing” but was later exonerated. He lived the rest of his life as a man (Heggie 2010).
Sex Testing in Competition

Gender-nonnormative athletes, including powerful female athletes and transgender competitors, challenged conventional ideals that pushed sport practitioners to introduce compulsory sex testing for all women in 1966. The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) first mandated physical inspections; however, scientific innovation, as well as athletes' discomfort with “nude parades,” prompted organizers to switch to a chromosome test in 1967 (Heggie 2010; Pieper 2016). On its first use, Polish runner Ewa Klobukowska, who had previously passed a visual inspection, was barred from competition for having a “mosaic” of chromosomes. Believing the test to be successful in eliminating male imposters and diminishing unfair advantages, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) decided to implement the control in 1968 (Pieper 2016).

When the IOC announced its plan to check female athletes at the 1968 Winter Olympics, the Austrian team visited a local hospital before the games to verify the sex of its participants. Skier Erika Schinegger, who had won a gold medal in the 1966 World Ski Championship women's downhill skiing competition, was informed that he possessed internal male sex
organs. Schinegger decided to transition and later joined the men's Europa Cup tour as Erik (Anderson and Travers 2017).

Although the IOC instituted testing to bar gender-ambiguous Olympians, other sport organizations embraced the IOC's method to explicitly block trans athletes from competition. In 1976 the United States Tennis Association used the test to exclude trans athlete Renée Richards from women's tennis. Richards sued the organization and gained access to the women's tour the following year (Anderson and Travers 2017; Birrell and Cole 1990). In 1987 trans golfer Charlotte Ann Wood finished third on the US Senior Women's Amateur Tour. Protests from Wood's competitors convinced the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) to include a “female at birth” clause in entry forms. This eligibility requirement remained in place until 2010, when trans woman Lana Lawless filed a civil rights lawsuit against the LPGA. In contrast, Women's Golf Australia permitted trans participation; in 2004, Mianne Bagger became the first trans athlete to compete in a professional golf tournament (Anderson and Travers 2017).

Sport organizations in non-Western countries also questioned the acceptability of gender-nonconforming athletes in elite competitions despite their greater cultural acceptance of gender fluidity. For example, Thai society generally recognizes a variety of gender identities and representations, yet when Thai kickboxer Parinya “Nong Toom” Charoenphol blurred the boundaries of masculinity and femininity in sport, she was both celebrated and opposed. Charoenphol was designated male at birth, but identified as female starting in childhood. She discovered Muay Thai, traditional kickboxing, as a teenager and went on to win twenty of twenty-two regional matches, most by knockout. Charoenphol gained national recognition in 1998 when she defeated a bigger, more muscular male opponent at the Lumpini Boxing Stadium, the epicenter of Muay Thai boxing. The Muay Thai establishment embraced Charoenphol as a way to revitalize the sport, but not all Thai fans supported her. Some argued that her inclusion in the masculine realm of kickboxing was inappropriate and even that she desecrated the sacred nature of the sport (Hodgkinson 2005). Charoenphol's story gained further traction in 2003 with the release of the film Beautiful Boxer, a biopic that chronicled her life and career. The film received positive critical reviews but a mixed reception from Thai audiences that paralleled the contentious reaction to Charoenphol’s career in Thai society (Stevens 2005).

The controversies surrounding such trans and gender-nonconforming athletes as Richards, Bagger, and Charoenphol encouraged the IOC to outline a policy for transgender Olympians. The 2003 Stockholm Consensus required trans Olympic hopefuls to undergo anatomical surgery, obtain legal recognition of gender, and verify that hormonal therapy had been administered at “appropriate” levels for the assigned sex (Sykes 2006). Critics immediately pointed out that surgery is impractical or undesirable for many trans individuals, and that it fixates on the anatomical changes of trans women. Moreover, legal recognition was an impossibility for many people from certain countries, and what
constitutes appropriate hormonal levels is debatable (Cavanagh and Sykes 2006; Sykes 2006). Protests against the Stockholm Consensus eventually convinced the IOC to outline a new policy, just as protests against sex testing had pushed the IAAF and IOC to change their gender-verification practices.

**Challenges to Sex Testing**

In the mid-1980s, Spanish hurdler María José Martínez-Patiño underwent a chromosomal check that revealed she had AIS. Rather than remove herself from competition, as advised by the team doctor, she competed and was publicly barred from sport (Martñnez-Patiño 2005). Her plight brought increased attention to the discriminatory nature of gender testing, and the resultant international protests encouraged the IAAF to abandon compulsory checks in 1992, and the IOC to do the same in 1999 (Chapelle 1986; Pieper 2016).

But the suspension of compulsory testing proved to be short-lived. In 2009 South African runner Caster Semenya finished first in the 800-meter race at the World Track and Field Championships, defeating the second-place finisher by more than two seconds. Both her appearance and her time spurred many people to question her sex. The IAAF and IOC responded by implementing a new verification system. In 2011 the organizations introduced hyperandrogenism policies that bar from competition women with higher than average levels of naturally produced testosterone. The policies establish 10 nanomoles per liter as the testosterone ceiling for women, including for trans women (Schultz 2012).

Opponents immediately protested that the testosterone limit was arbitrary, and also argued that naturally produced hormones are a biological advantage no different than increased lung capacity or above-average height (Rogol and Pieper 2017; Schultz 2012). Many also criticized the racist underpinning of the testing because women of color were disproportionately targeted: sport officials did not subject white, Western women to the same level of scrutiny due to normative expectations of racialized femininity. For example, during the 2012 London Olympics practitioners identified four women as having hyperandrogenism. The four Olympic hopefuls were all tall and muscular, under the age of twenty-one, and came from “rural or mountainous regions of developing countries.” These athletes later underwent surgery in order to compete in international sport (Fénichel et al. 2013). Indian runner Dutee Chand, who also underwent testing and was withdrawn from the 2014 Commonwealth Games under the hyperandrogenism guidelines, appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS). The CAS halted the IAAF's policy that placed a limit on naturally produced testosterone for two years and ordered the IAAF to provide evidence of the advantage that hyperandrogenism affords to women. In 2018 the IAAF introduced revised eligibility regulations for female classification in races from 400 meters to a mile that forces women to medically reduce their natural testosterone levels if those levels are above a certain limit (IAAF 2018).
Canadian trans cyclist Kristen Worley also opposed the testosterone ceiling mandated by sport practitioners, citing health reasons; she had found that the allowable levels did not support her basic health needs. She filed a human rights complaint against cycling organizations, arguing that the level of testosterone permitted violates the rights of XY female athletes. Worley settled her case in 2017, and the named entities agreed to review the policies on gender verification and transitioned athletes and to promote the message to the IOC and other global organizations (Aalgaard 2017).

Trans Men in Sports

While most of the gender concerns regarding trans athletes focus on trans women and the physical advantages they might have over their cisgender female competitors, several trans men have also made headlines. Kye Allums became the first openly transgender National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) athlete to play Division I sports as a member of the women’s basketball team at George Washington University when he acknowledged his male identity (though designated female at birth) in 2010. He remained on the women’s team, which was allowed by the NCAA because he had not undergone hormone treatments (Thomas 2010). Professional hockey player Harrison Browne of the Metropolitan Riveters in the National Women’s Hockey League in Canada became one of the first openly transgender professional North American athletes when he came out as a trans man in 2016. Like Allums, Browne continued to play with the women’s team because he decided to wait until retirement to begin hormone replacement therapy (Steele 2016).

The first trans man to compete as a man on a Division I college team was Schuyler Bailar, who was originally recruited for the women’s swim team at Harvard University in 2013 but elected to compete on the men’s team after transitioning during his gap year (Merrill 2015). Transgender high-school wrestler Mack Beggs did not have the same option; despite undergoing testosterone treatments as part of his transition from female to male, he was forced to continue competing against girls due to a policy in Texas that mandates that “student-athletes in high school must compete as the gender that’s on their birth certificate” (Howerton 2018), despite his stated preference to compete against boys. He won two state titles in a row, in 2017 and 2018.

SEE ALSO Athletes, Trans and Intersex, in Asia; Sports, Women in, Africa; Sports and Sexuality in Latin America

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Athletes, Trans and Intersex, in Asia

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The complexities of sex segregation, testing, and verification in sports, including the cases of noteworthy Asian trans and intersex athletes.

The term *trans* acquires different meanings over distinct geopolitical and temporal contexts within Asia and beyond, with its broadest application encompassing gendervariant, gender-queer, nonbinary, transgender, transsexual, transvestite, and, at times, intersex people. Here, the term is used as a descriptor for the various forms of sex and gender nonconformity listed above but does not reflect the athletes’ self-identifications, which are often unknown. *Trans* here may pertain to athletes who have chosen to undergo a medical transition involving gender-affirming surgeries and/or hormone replacement therapy, as well as those who do not make that choice. Furthermore, *trans* does not stand in contradistinction to other sexual identities, such as lesbian, queer, bisexual, or gay, because trans people may also be gay, lesbian, or any other sexual orientation.

Usually, the term *trans* is distinguished from *intersex*, which includes people with “atypical combinations of chromosomes, hormones, genitalia, and other physical features” (Buzuvis 2011, 11). It is a term that is often ascribed to certain athletes whose physical attributes, gender embodiment, or gender performance are deemed as divergent from the sex/gender norms within sports and are subsequently brought under medical scrutiny in order to determine the biological sex of these athletes. While *intersex* has been reclaimed by many as a descriptor of identity and shared community, in the context of gender-nonconforming athletes in Asia, it is a term often imposed by medical professionals, the media, or academics. Thus the use of *trans* and intersex here also references the contentious relationship between ascription and (self-) identification and between gender and sex difference, alluding to the existence of multiple identities, terms, and descriptors used by gender/sex-nonconforming people in different parts of Asia. Since the mid-1980s several Asian athletes have been accused of committing gender fraud by fellow athletes and international sports federations, often suspending or ending their careers. It is important to note that in the context of such accusations, the use of the terms *trans* and *intersex* is embedded within structures of containment and management of transgender and intersex athletic bodies in Asia through restrictive and pathologized labels, and yet also gestures to the myriad self-identifying terms for gender nonconformity that proliferate in the region.
The controversies surrounding athletes Pinki Pramanik, Santhi Soundarajan, Aprilia Santini Manganang, Dutee Chand, and Nong Toom further illuminate these tensions as detailed below.

**Sex Segregation in International Sports**

Sex segregation has been a contentious issue in sports since at least the 1960s and has come to involve a range of ethical and political questions involving standards of fairness, the economic aspects of sports careers and competitions, national pride, and the very basis of sex and gender divisions. Elite athletes are seen as symbols of human capability and achievement that possess a strong body, will, and mind within Olympism, a philosophy and set of principles espoused by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) in its Olympic Charter (Henne 2015). Historically, the status of “elite athlete” was bestowed on a select group of competitors who were considered exemplary, both physically and morally, and was explicitly denied to women and non-Western people (Henne 2015). While these exclusionary policies were eventually reconceived, Kathryn E. Henne (2015) and other scholars have shown that they continued to influence policies of fair play, meant to ensure that all athletes compete on a level playing field, so to speak.

In this context, anti-doping regulations, for instance, mandated that athletes must perform at their own individual capacity and not with artificial aids of any kind. This logic of controlling unfair performance enhancements has been extended to include what is deemed an excessive or even unnatural presence of testosterone, a “male” sex hormone presumed to enhance speed and strength in female athletes. Through the use of technology, medicine, and legal mechanisms, female bodies are evaluated for their compliance with, or transgression of, fair play. This notion is, in turn, based on a set of Western standards for the proper embodiment and performance of femininity. Along with the sex segregation of sports, sex verification is a key mechanism through which proper femininity and standards of athletic performance are controlled (Henne 2015). Almost exclusively employed on bodies assigned female at birth, sex-verification tests legitimate the presumption of a clear boundary between male and female, as well as uphold the hierarchy between female and male athletic capabilities (note that “sex verification” and “gender verification” are often used interchangeably in media reportage). Indeed, the trigger for a female athlete to come under scrutiny and testing has often been an extraordinary performance that is seen as antithetical to femininity. An early example of this was Japanese middle-distance runner Hitomi Kinue whose excellent performance in the 1928 Olympics combined with her embodiment of musculature brought widespread accusations of being a “tomboy” and/or physiologically male, both by Olympic sports officials and the Japanese media (Pieper 2016).

A primary anxiety has been to maintain the difference between people assigned female at birth and people considered “gender frauds” and perceived as male, transgender, and/or
intersex. Even as fair-play regulations prohibit the use of myriad artificial substances that might aid athletic performance, many female athletes are often forced by sports authorities to take hormones to lower their naturally occurring testosterone. Such contradictions demonstrate the control exerted over women and people assigned female within elite sports, in addition to the overt exclusion of trans and intersex athletes.

**PINKI PRAMANIK (1986–)**

The case of Pinki Pramanik has been the most publicized example of the mistreatment of intersex and trans athletes in India. Born in West Bengal, India, in 1986, Pramanik had a successful career as a middle-distance track athlete. It is rumored that she was advised by Indian sports officials to retire early, soon after the Santhi Soundarajan controversy at the 2006 Asian Games. Years later, in June 2012, Pramanik was arrested and charged under several sections of the Indian penal code, including 376 (rape), 417 (impersonation), and 493 (cohabitation caused by a man deceitfully inducing a belief of lawful marriage), based on accusations by her live-in companion.

At the time, Indian criminal law held that rape could be committed only when a penis nonconsensually penetrates a vagina. Prior to April 2013, rape laws did not recognize penetration by any other body part or extraneous object, nor did they recognize same-sex sexual violence. Thus, the police demanded a sex-verification test to determine whether Pramanik was capable of committing rape. While the accusations had nothing to do with her athletic career, journalists repeatedly questioned whether Pramanik should give up her awards in light of the maleimpersonation accusations. This line of public questioning led to several nonconsensual sex-verification tests, including unnecessary DNA testing (Mitra 2014). Pramanik received bail, her tests turned out to be inconclusive, and it was revealed that she was being entrapped in false accusations over a land dispute. The charges were dropped.

Pramanik’s case not only revealed the institutional mistreatment and abuse of gender/sexual minorities but was also a powerful example of the harmfulness of contemporary journalistic practice. It was instrumental in galvanizing activist and academic work on the rights of intersex athletes and trans people in India.

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The 1960s saw the formalization of sex verification at competitions governed by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) in the form of visual and gynecological verification of binary sex at “women’s” competitive events. In 1968 the IOC introduced mandatory genetic or chromosomal testing that would identify the presence of two X chromosomes to determine who could or could not participate in women’s events. This compulsory test for women’s events was discontinued by 2000, in part because of the ineffectiveness of such procedures. Nevertheless, sports authorities remain heavily invested in binary conceptions of sex and gender in spite of scientific evidence proving that differences between male and female are subtle, ambiguous, and thus unreliable. Although sex-verification tests are no longer mandatory, the IOC and IAAF still practice them on a case-by-case basis to verify suspicions of “gender fraud” in women’s events. This means that while sex and gender regulations are no longer explicitly exclusionary toward trans people, trans and intersex athletes are often targets of scrutiny because of their perceived gender and/or sex difference.

**Controversial Cases Involving Athletes Assigned “Female” at Birth**

During the twenty-first century there have been several controversies involving Asian athletes subjected to sex-verification tests as a response to accusations of gender fraud from fellow competitors or from regional or international sports authorities. But the case that brought the issues of sexsegregated hierarchies in sports, invasive sex-verification tests, and the rights of intersex and transgender people into unprecedented public attention was that of Caster Semenya, a South African athlete who was made to undergo sex-verification tests after a record-breaking performance in an 800-meter race at the 2009 World Championships in Berlin. Semenya’s case brought other similar cases in Asia to the forefront and demonstrated the need to reconsider the malefemale binary in sports.

**Santhi Soundarajan** Santhi Soundarajan was born in 1981 in the small town of Pudukkottai, Tamil Nadu, India. She was assigned female sex at birth and self identified as a girl growing up. She realized she was different at puberty when she did not menstruate and her breasts did not develop. For Soundarajan, success at sports meant social acceptance
and possible social and economic mobility in the future. She became a successful middle-distance runner, earning many medals and awards and competing at the international level by 2005. At the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, Qatar, Soundarajan won a silver medal in what would be the last formal race of her career, as soon afterward she was declared genetically male by a medical board. The medal and 100,000-rupee cash prize were stripped from her. The government of India and the sporting fraternity withdrew their support, leading to Soundarajan’s attempted suicide in 2007. She received consistent support only from the Dalit-led Tamil Nadu state government (Dalits being the “untouchable,” oppressed caste in India), which saw her mistreatment as amounting to caste-based oppression at the hands of upper-caste national leaders. In 2016 the National Commission for Scheduled Castes began an investigation on Soundarajan’s behalf, with the probe centering on caste-based bias against her in 2006. Additionally, her case was helped by the work of transgender activists—namely, the education and welfare initiatives undertaken from 2006 to 2011 through the Tamil Nadu Transgender Welfare Board (Mitra 2014). In early 2017 Soundarajan filed a complaint with the National Human Rights Commission against the Athletics Federation of India, the Indian Olympic Association, and the Sports Authority of India because of the nonconsensual and humiliating way in which her gender tests were conducted in Doha. Sports officials claim, however, that because her medals were stripped from her by the Olympic Council of Asia, and not the national agencies, there is little that can be done to address the issue at the national level. Soundarajan’s case indicates the need to understand the class- and caste-based implications of sex segregation and verification in sports.

**Dutee Chand** Dutee Chand is another Indian athlete who failed a sex-verification test. She was born in 1996 into an economically poor family of weavers in Gopalpur, Odisha, India. At age seventeen, she won a bronze medal in the 200-meter race at the 2013 Asian Athletics Championships. At eighteen, she was disqualified and prohibited from participating in the 2014 Commonwealth Games because she failed the hormonal sex-verification test initiated by the Athletics Federation of India as a result of her elevated levels of natural testosterone (a medical condition known as hyperandrogenism). In 2015 Chand appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) to undo the actions of the Athletics Federation of India and the IAAF, arguing that insufficient evidence had been produced to prove that there is a link between heightened androgen levels and greater athletic performance. The CAS responded by providing a two-year deadline for further evidence to be furnished by the IAAF in support of its rule against hyperandrogenism, effectively negating Chand’s suspension from competition. Chand went on to represent India at the 2016 Summer Olympics but met an early exit. Intersex activists have used her Olympic performance to argue that hyperandrogenism does not automatically enhance performance and that athletic success is based on hard work and access to quality training facilities—and some argue that international sports authorities should take those factors into account when determining fair play, rather than sex and gender characteristics.
**Park Eun-seon** Born in 1986 in Seoul, South Korean soccer player Park Eun-seon also faced controversy in 2013, as six rival teams within the South Korean women’s soccer league demanded that she pass a gender test. Despite having complied with several prior gender tests—for example, for the 2004 Athens Olympics—she continues to be brought under suspicion and scrutiny. Some have conjectured that such accusations against the star player of the South Korean women’s soccer team are part of a conspiracy to undermine her career, and lack any real merit.

**Aprilia Santini Manganang** In 2015 another controversy over sex testing for an athlete assigned female at birth occurred. Volleyball player Aprilia Santini Manganang was born in 1992 in Indonesia, and led her national team to a resounding victory against the Philippines in the 2015 Southeast Asian Games. Afterward, the leader of the Filipino delegation approached the organizers of the event to verify Manganang’s sex. The organizers denied this request as earlier testing had revealed only slightly elevated testosterone levels (not enough to get her suspended), and she was allowed to keep competing. It must be noted that the humiliating and violent practice of sex verification is disproportionately targeted at athletes assigned female at birth and serves to control female athletic achievement and the athletes’ gender embodiment.

### Trans and Intersex Athletes Assigned “Male” at Birth

Although sex-verification controversies have predominantly revolved around athletes assigned female at birth, the legitimacy of some trans athletes assigned male at birth has also been publicly questioned. One such case involves Satree Lek, a Thai men’s volleyball team that includes transvestite, *kathoey* (any transgender or gender-nonconforming person), and gay people assigned male at birth. In 1996 Satree Lek participated in the Thai national championship despite stigma and opposition from peers and sports authorities. Their triumph at that competition led to *The Iron Ladies* (2000), one of the first Thai films portraying kathoeys and transvestites in a positive light. The film even cast at least one self-identified kathoey and went on to spawn two hit sequels.

In 1998 another kathoey athlete, Parinya Charoenphol—popularly known as Nong Toom—benefited from the precedent set by Satree Lek. Whereas national sports officials had tried to bar kathoey members of Satree Lek from competing, when Toom became the newest Muay Thai (Thai boxing) champion, they supported her. Toom’s life story became the basis of the 2004 film *Beautiful Boxer*. Although Toom’s character in the film was played by a non-trans male actor and former kickboxer, Toom herself went on to become an actress and toured with her one-woman show titled *Boxing Cabaret*. Toom’s successful career as a Muay Thai champion, model, and actress is indicative of changing public opinion about kathoeys and trans and intersex people in Thailand.
In 2015 Iran’s entire women’s soccer team underwent mandatory sex-verification tests after multiple players’ sex and gender identity were suspected. The team’s goalkeeper was first accused of being a female impersonator in 2010. By 2014 Iranian sports authorities had instituted random, unannounced medical checks to ensure that all women on the team fit prevailing gendered codes of ethics and fair play. In the same year, the clubs had to mandatorily perform sex-verification tests before signing contracts with players. In 2015, eight team members were declared either intersex or trans women yet to undergo gender affirmation surgery and were barred from playing.

**Trans and Intersex Athletes and LGBTQI Organizing in Asia**

Transgender, transsexual, and intersex activism in Asia is a changing terrain, with nations increasingly recognizing and instituting protections for the rights of trans people. Contrary to homosexuality, which is prohibited and criminalized in several Asian countries (e.g., India, Iran, and Pakistan), crucial strides have been made by trans rights activists lobbying their governments to ensure the equal treatment of trans people within the national culture and economy. This discrepancy exists, in part, because transgenderism is often seen
as a psychosexual aberration—not a choice but a condition that causes dysphoria and suffering—that some governments have come to consider their responsibility to fix. For example, in Iran a 1986 fatwa not only recognizes trans identity but also substantially subsidizes the cost of gender affirmation surgeries in order to “fix” transgender people and restore them to heterosexuality. Reportedly, many Iranian gay, lesbian, and trans people feel pressure to undergo surgery to remain in their same-sex relationships. The Iranian historian Afsaneh Najmabadi (2014) explores this “proximity” of the categories of transgender, transsexual, and homosexual, wherein the otherwise disparate realms of Islamic jurisprudence, psychiatry, and biomedicine at times intersect in some scholarly work to turn transsexuality and sex reassignment surgery into a corrective to homosexual desire.

At the same time, as a result of worldwide notoriety from how the media, the IOC, and the IAAF handled the Semenya case in 2009, LGBTQI activists and academics the world over have advocated for greater awareness about and policy reform pertaining to trans and intersex athletes. They have demonstrated that sex and gender are much more diverse and ambiguous than sporting regulations allow for and have argued that not updating the relevant sporting rules violates the rights of trans and intersex people. Transgender athletes have been allowed to compete at the Olympic Games since 2004 but only after surgery and at least two years of hormone therapy, as well as with legal documentation of the gender change. In 2016, as a result of trans advocacy in medicine, the IOC stopped requiring gender affirmation surgeries, citing them as unnecessary and “inconsistent with ... notions of human rights” (IOC 2015, 2). This changed policy is certainly indicative of increased awareness about transgender rights, but its deeper impact on conceptions of sex, gender, ability/excellence, and gender roles within and outside sports remains uncertain.

Of concern, for instance, is the new IAAF regulations released in April 2018 that require anyone competing under the category of “female” to “reduce her blood testosterone level to below five (5) nmol/L [nanomoles per liter] for a continuous period of at least six months” (IAAF 2018), regardless of whether her body produces the hormone naturally. Such intersex athletes as Semenya and Chand, who have naturally elevated testosterone, will be forced to take testosterone suppressants because of the findings of a 2017 study funded by the IAAF and the World Anti-Doping Agency concluding that “female athletes with higher testosterone levels can have a competitive advantage of between 1.8–4.5 per cent” (Bloom 2017). Since 2003 trans women have also had to comply with similar rules, according to which they must prove that they are on hormone replacement therapy to suppress testosterone levels. Furthermore, the new IAAF regulations, effective starting November 2018, require every athlete competing under female classification to be recognized as female or intersex by the law, thereby imposing additional bureaucratic hurdles for transgender women athletes (IAAF 2018).

Thus these rules posit cultural and legal standards of “normal” feminine ability and
performance that is then regulated by sports authorities under the guise of scientism and fair play. In the wake of the media controversy around Pramanik, the Indian feminist scholar Nivedita Menon (2011) has challenged this paradigm by noting that such strict management and regulation of athletic bodies is not extended to men’s sports. Such athletes as Michael Phelps and several very tall basketball players whose anatomical and genetic differences give them a clear advantage over other male competitors are not subjected to intrusive scrutiny.

Thus, feminist scholars such as Menon and Payoshni Mitra (2014) have called attention to the ways in which policies of the IOC and the IAAF uphold binary and hierarchical understandings of gender, despite seemingly becoming supportive of transgender and intersex rights. Furthermore, in light of the institutional ill-treatment of controversy-ridden trans and intersex athletes—especially of Soundarajan and Pramanik in India—Dalit feminists and transgender activists have productively reframed the question of trans athletes from biology and anatomy to one that also accounts for the caste-, race-, and class-based discrimination that makes gender-nonconforming athletes exceptionally vulnerable. In this way, the visibility of trans and intersex athletes, albeit imposed, has played a significant role in energizing feminist and LGBTQI activism and has served to reshape public discourse on trans and intersex rights.

What is erased even now, however, is the individual dignity and humanity of these athletes in the aftermath of public controversy and the loss of a career. In this context, some poignant and much-needed efforts have been made to create safe and equitable spaces for trans and intersex athletes. In 2015 a female-to-male transgender youth basketball club was established in Tokyo, Japan. In 2017 the state government of Kerala and the Sexual and Gender Minority Federation of Kerala organized an event called the Kerala State Transgender Athletics Meet. A first of its kind at the state level in India, this event promises to undo the stigma and suspicion with which trans and intersex athletes are regarded and to help integrate them within national and international sports.

SEE ALSO Athletes, Trans and Intersex; Sports, Women in, Africa; Sports and Sexuality in Latin America

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The history of the struggle for Australasian LGBTI rights, as well as the increased political and cultural impact of this community from the late twentieth century onward.

It is possible to understand the history of sex, gender, and sexuality in Australia and New Zealand with a national focus. Indeed, this is the way it is usually done. Australia and New Zealand are independent national states and have been since the early twentieth century. This fact is important for understanding some of the ways in which the politics of sexuality have been played out. But these two countries also share a history and culture that binds them across national borders into an easily recognized cultural realm. They are both products of nineteenth-century mass migration from the British Isles that overwhelmed indigenous peoples and cultures. They both have a culture shaped by English as the dominant language, Christianity as the main religion, the Westminster parliamentary system, and English laws and judicial practices. They share the British monarch as their head of state. Although not widely used, the term Australasia can serve as a convenient label for this transnational reality. Until well into the second half of the twentieth century governments and citizens alike in Australasia looked to Britain as the source of investment, as a target for exports, and as the fountainhead of literature, arts, and popular culture. Beginning in the 1960s, the focus shifted to the United States. More recently Asia has loomed large but chiefly as a source of migration and a focus of economic activity.

These national and transnational lenses need to be supplemented, however, by looking at the subnational, the regional, and the local. Judicial and geographic differences within the two nations matter. The six states and two territories that constitute Australia, the North Island and South Island in New Zealand, and the distinctions between rural and metropolitan areas (with the addition of “remote” regions in Australia) have all had a powerful influence on how people live their lives and have generated distinct subnational subcultures. In the Australian states, as well as in both countries’ local government areas, jurisdictional rights and responsibilities have been important elements in the play of power.

It is important, too, to remember that societies are not a single thing; instead, they are a congeries of institutions and structures within which people make history. The
governmental, the economic, and civil society all matter, as do other domains of society. And all of them are unavoidably pluralistic. The governmental domain includes ministers and the cabinet, members of parliament, and the government and the opposition at national and local (and in Australia at state) levels. The electoral domain includes political parties (themselves composed of members, officials, and branches) along with interest and lobby groups. The administrative/bureaucratic domain includes the public service, the courts, and the police. There are legal, medical, and religious professions and their organizations. The economic domain is composed of businesses large and small, their industry associations and lobby groups, and trade unions. The media domain is composed of print, broadcast, and digital formats operated by competing corporations and small self-managed networks. In civil society, families, friendship circles, and any number of affinities are all in play. When people talk about historical change, they are talking about what happens in the broader cultural realm, in the regions and their subcultures, and in the social domains and their constituent parts—all of which may be moving in different directions and/or at different paces.

**Historical Overview**

England’s laws against buggery (promulgated during the reign of Henry VIII [r. 1509–1547]) arrived with the Australasian settlers/invaders, and even after the colonies gained self-government over the course of the nineteenth century, they tended to follow Britain’s lead on reform. The Australasian legislators might usefully be thought of as *Anglotropic* in their attitude to British laws (that is, like heliotropic plants that turn toward the sun, Anglotropic cultures looked to Britain for guidance). So, when it came to laws on buggery and sodomy, where Britain led, the colonies followed. The obligation to prove not just anal penetration but “emission of seed” was removed, the death penalty abolished, gross indecency laws introduced, and vagrancy laws redefined. When the British Parliament (partially) legalized homosexual acts in England and Wales in 1967, Australasian legislators were generally of the view that their publics were not ready. But decriminalization was on the agenda, and, although it was a remarkably drawn-out process, there was never any serious doubt that homosexual acts would be legalized in Australasia as they had been in Britain.

New Zealand’s unitary state made such laws a matter for the national parliament; in the Australian federation they were within the remit of the states. But it makes sense to think of the struggle for decriminalization as being fought out transnationally over ten jurisdictions: six Australian states, two territories, its federal jurisdiction, and New Zealand. Each campaign had its own history, but the logic was identical: for the individual’s right of sexual self-determination (phrased as the “consenting adult in private”; a phrase adopted from a British government inquiry, the Wolfenden Report of 1957). The changing social context over the quarter century that it took to bring about decriminalization (1972 to
meant that the early efforts were relatively easy, relying as they did on a liberal political climate that even conservative parties were adapting to. By the 1980s and 1990s, reform was a harder task than it had been earlier, as conservative forces, rather taken by surprise by the rise of liberalism in the 1960s and 1970s, had organized themselves and set out to resist all further reform of laws and attitudes. In New Zealand (1985–1986) and Tasmania (1988–1997) bitter, hard-fought campaigns were necessary to overcome this newly mobilized opposition from the Right.

At the same time, however, the demand for decriminalization was supplemented, even before it was won, by wider demands for relationship recognition, parenting rights, and protection from discrimination. In Australia, all of these were state responsibilities and were, as in New Zealand, legislated in an ad hoc manner over the course of the period after 1980. In Australia, at the federal level, the government acted to reform and eradicate homophobic practices within its own areas of jurisdiction. Beginning in 1991, Australians could sponsor their same-sex partners as migrants. (Unlike the United States and Canada, it had never been against the law for homosexual individuals to travel or migrate to Australia or New Zealand; what was new here was the acceptance of the existence of homosexual relationships as a basis for immigration.) In 1992 gay and lesbian people were allowed to serve in the Australian Defence Force. In 2010 this right was extended to transgender people. New Zealand opened up its military in 1993 based on a reading of the Human Rights Act and by 2014 had been ranked by The Hague Centre for Strategic Studies' LGBT Military Index as the world’s best for LGBT inclusion. In 2008 the Australian parliament amended something like 100 laws to eradicate from almost all federal laws discrimination against same-sex couples, supplementing what the states and territories had been doing for the best part of twenty years. (The exceptions related to marriage.) In 2013 federal antidiscrimination protections were extended to encompass sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex status.

The path to same-sex marriage equality in Australia was a remarkably convoluted one—and all the more revealing for that. In 2004 the Marriage Act (a federal law) was amended to ensure that same-sex marriages could not be contracted in Australia, nor could overseas marriages be recognized. This was in response to same-sex couples returning from Canada, married, and expecting to have their relationship accepted. In order to prevent the courts doing so, the law was changed. The conservative government was joined by the Labor Party in this vote. Almost immediately a campaign was established to overturn the law. By 2011 the Labor Party had reversed itself, embracing same-sex marriage. By this stage a solid majority of public opinion was in favor. After Ireland and the United States adopted marriage equality in 2015, the expectation was that Australia would follow. Conservatives, however, announced that there would be a popular vote on the issue prior to any parliamentary vote. More machinations followed, and in the end a voluntary nonbinding postal survey was held instead. In this survey 61.6 percent voted to change the law to allow same-sex marriage. On 7 December 2017 the parliament voted down a series of rearguard
amendments purporting to protect religious freedoms and passed the bill. The vote was, of course, historic. In many ways, the campaign to get out the “yes” vote was even more so. The campaign estimated that 15,000 people volunteered, making over a million phone calls and engaging in door-to-door contact at 100,000 households. Thousands of businesses, big and small, expressed support.

More broadly, in both countries, governments at all levels have been brought by many years of struggle to a point where they now seek to actively promote LGBTI well-being (health policy and so on) via antihomophobic policies and practices by their agencies and within the wider society, and they support LGBTI community events such as pride festivals and marches and days of commemoration such as the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia. Australian and New Zealand governments have also played a significant role in advancing the cause of LGBTI equality on the world stage, reflecting a shared commitment to a “middle-power diplomacy” whereby smaller nations work to extend the human rights protections provided by international law. Both countries have supported the various declarations and resolutions on LGBTI rights in United Nations bodies since 2006. One less obvious role that national governments have played is in signing and being bound by various international rights agreements. In 1994 Nicholas Toonen, a Tasmanian gay man, was able to rely on Australia’s adoption of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights to argue to the United Nations Human Rights Committee that Tasmania’s anti-buggery laws violated his privacy. After the committee found in Toonen’s favor, the federal government used its constitutional right to enforce its international treaty obligations to invalidate the Tasmanian laws (Toonen v. Australia 1994).

**Early Kamp Culture**

Historically speaking, there has been a remarkably rapid shift in laws and attitudes regarding sex, sexuality, and gender, given the deeply rooted nature of Anglo-Celtic homophobia. The first organizations established to argue for decriminalization were founded as late as, in New Zealand, 1962 (which lapsed and was reestablished in 1967) and, in the Australian Capital Territory, 1969. Well before then, there were well-established kamp subcultures in major cities such as Sydney, Melbourne, Auckland, and Wellington that historians can recognize as early as the 1920s and 1930s. (*Kamp* or *camp* was the term most commonly used before 1972 by homosexuals in Australasia, where it worked as a simple synonym for *homosexual*, without the associations of flamboyance that the word had in Britain and the United States.) Groups of men and women lived in semiclandestine social worlds based on shared social spaces, an esoteric language, and a sense of common identity. But there is evidence, too, of friendship circles and other forms of sociability beyond the major cities, in regional towns, especially after World War II (1939–1945)—researched and studied in Darwin, in Newcastle, and, in a particularly remarkable find, in
small-town New Zealand centered on the photographer Robert Gant in the 1890s (Brickell 2012).

Evidence of these worlds exists particularly in literature. Novelists such as Gerald Glaskin (writing as Neville Jackson) offered a lightly fictionalized account of kamp life in 1950s Perth (No End to the Way [1965]). Jon Rose (again, a pseudonym) offered something similar for Sydney during World War II in his At the Cross (1961). Kamp people would also read the work of local authors who had migrated overseas, such as New Zealand’s James Courage (whose 1959 novel A Way of Love was set and published in England and banned in his home country). Michael Hurley’s encyclopedic Guide to Gay and Lesbian Writing in Australia (1996) reveals a much richer world of literary visibility in the pre-gay liberation era than many would have expected, drawing out the value of such writing and providing insights into this otherwise shadowy period. The Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives and the Lesbian and Gay Archives of New Zealand have collected oral history interviews that throw further light on kamp lives of the era before the rise of gay politics.

There were a number of pubs and hotels that were prepared to welcome, or more often turn a blind eye to, gatherings of well-behaved kamps, but the central institutions of the kamp world were private parties and, for women, especially it seems, “sporting clubs, particularly women’s cricket, the army, motorcycle and car clubs” (Chesser 1993, 34). What is clear is that, unlike in Europe and North America, until the mid- to late 1960s bars played a relatively minor role in the subcultures. And it was not from these subcultures that homosexual politics emerged in Australasia.

Instead, the politics of law reform and social tolerance emerged within a wider movement that might be characterized as “modernizing liberalism,” whose proponents set out in the 1960s to transform Australian and New Zealand politics and society from being, in one participant’s description, “racist, anglocentric-imperialist, puritan, sexist, politically genteel-acquiescent, capitalist, bureaucratic and developmentalist” (Horne 1980, 4–5). Through small magazines, initially, and then through newspapers, the movement for change came to occupy an ever more prominent place in the political middle ground, especially through state and national Labor/Labour parties. Among the targets of this movement—immigration and migrant resettlement policy, indigenous affairs, censorship, abortion, foreign policy, urban ugliness, the monarchy, the environment, poverty—antihomosexual laws and attitudes came to be seen as evidence of social backwardness. Decriminalization and tolerance came to be seen as desirable elements of the kind of modern liberal society that these reformers aspired to. Initially, at least, most of this discussion took place in the more marginal niches of social and political life: in student newspapers and in civil liberties and humanist newsletters and meetings. The partial decriminalization of homosexual acts in England and Wales in 1967 provided a fillip to those looking to reform the laws. Synods and inquiries of Methodist and Presbyterian churches (among the smaller Christian denominations) and in the Anglican church in
various dioceses around Australia and New Zealand called for decriminalization. In 1970 Australia’s federal attorney general, looking to revise the law code of the Australian Capital Territory, floated the idea of decriminalization. He was soon forced by his party to back away from this, but others took up the challenge. In the Labor Party, which had adapted most thoroughly to the new liberalism, Gough Whitlam, the federal party’s leader, echoed the famous remark by the Canadian prime minister Pierre Trudeau that the state had no place in the bedrooms of the nation.

The breakthrough years in Australasia came in the late 1960s as the issue of decriminalization, so long discussed in the liberal press, started to take organizational form. In Wellington, the law reform society that had existed briefly in 1962–1964 was revived in 1967, initially as the Wolfenden Association but soon changing its name to the much more open New Zealand Homosexual Law Reform Society (NZHLRS). Two years later, in Canberra, the Homosexual Law Reform Society of the Australian Capital Territory came into being. These were remarkably similar organizations. Founded at public meetings organized by a handful of liberal reformers, none of whom publicly identified as homosexuals, they conducted research, drafted legislation, published pamphlets and newsletters, and lobbied opinion makers and members of parliament. They found widespread support but had no success in achieving their goal. The NZHLRS remained the main vehicle by which the campaign for decriminalization was advanced for the next several years.

In Sydney in 1970, a group of gay people, meeting privately, decided to take a public stand. Their organization, the Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP), was originally intended to be a media-monitoring group that would identify and respond to misinformation published about homosexual people. It was one of a number of small groups that emerged at that time in various cities. When the *Australian*, a major national newspaper and at that time a flagship of the liberal press, interviewed CAMP founders John Ware and Christabel Poll, using their full names and photos, opportunities dramatically opened. Hundreds of people wrote to the new organization, and within a year there were branches in almost every Australian capital city and at most universities. The language employed and the goals were liberal (law reform, education, a denial that homosexuals were in any significant way different from anyone else), and, while its leaders were aware of developments in the United States following the Stonewall riots (1969) in New York City that launched the modern gay rights movement, they did not expect anything similar to emerge in Australia, suggesting that it might be twenty years before Australian homosexuals were likely to be marching in the streets. Despite these limited expectations, CAMP was in many ways “born gay” in that it reflected not the conservative, respectable lobbying of concerned citizens that characterized the 1950s and 1960s (which we might describe as “homosexual politics”) but the open, confident, and demanding tone of the gay rights movement. CAMP and its leaders saw homosexual experience as a valid basis for understanding the homosexual condition and eschewed any reliance on experts. They put
homosexuals visibly and publicly at the forefront of their campaign (without formally excluding straight people). They emphasized self-organization (opening club rooms where resources permitted) and self-expression, producing publications in which homosexuals spoke for themselves to the wider world (including a monthly national magazine, Camp Ink, state-based newsletters, and agitational flyers). And their first demonstration came, not after twenty years, but after thirteen months, in October 1971.

The Emergence of Gay Liberation

CAMP aspired to include women and men, gay and straight, radicals and moderates within its ranks. But by the time of its founding, US politics and culture had been reshaping the West for well over a decade, and in the antipodes Anglotropia gradually gave way to American cultural hegemony. Although the Stonewall riots were not reported in Australia, the gay pride marches celebrating their first anniversary in 1970 did appear in the local press, as well as in widely read American newsmagazines such as Time. It was inevitable that the newly emerging current—gay liberation—would arrive, and be taken up, in Australia. For activists, a particularly important moment came with the publication of Dennis Altman's seminal book Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation (1971). This defining text drew on and reported Altman's encounter with the emergence of liberation politics in New York in 1970 and 1971. It gained added attention locally from the fact that Altman was Australian, returning from New York shortly after publication. The book—and the flood of material that followed in student newspapers, in movement newsletters, in the mainstream press and electronic media, and in overseas magazines such as The Body Politic (Toronto) and Gay News (London)—spoke to the emergence of new strands of politics alongside the modernizing liberalism of the 1960s. Young people, profoundly influenced by revolutionary and countercultural ideas, saw in gay liberation a vehicle to challenge a social order whose time was passing. Liberationists saw society as the problem and saw in pride and defiance the means to transform it. The revolutionary eradication of all sex and gender roles would free not just homosexual people but everybody. The goal was not equality but liberation: “Gay, in its most far-reaching sense, means not only homosexual, but sexually free.... Gay is good for all of us. The artificial categories ‘heterosexual’ and ‘homosexual’ have been laid on us by sexist society” (Melbourne University Gay Liberation Front 1973; taken from Young 1972, 28–29). Gay liberationists stood in solidarity with women, indigenous people, migrants, trade unionists, and all those struggling for a better world.

In Sydney, a group called Gay Liberation was established in January 1972 as a result of disputes within CAMP and the secession of those who saw themselves as more radical than the existing leadership. In Melbourne, a discussion over dinner led to the decision to found a local organization. In the same year gay liberation organizations were established in numerous New Zealand cities, often on university campuses, including Auckland, Canterbury, Wellington, and Hamilton. An early campaign issue was sparked by a decision
by US immigration officials to deny the New Zealand citizen Ngahuia Te Awekotuku entry to the country because of her lesbianism. Gay liberation groups proliferated in cities and towns across Australasia. Initially, the groups tended to be based on university campuses but the desire to transform the world led members to want access to wider audiences and to seek out opportunities to operate in what was often called the “real world.” Collective households, gay liberation centers, and regular meetings on- and off-campus provided spaces in which people could meet, debate, decide on actions, welcome new participants, and pick each other up.

International links to the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada were fundamental, and much of the movement’s ideology, its style and language, and its demands were drawn from overseas. International travel (though expensive and relatively rare) brought activists face-to-face with their sisters and brothers in the struggle, providing ideas and inspiration. Overseas publications were widely read, and content was frequently reproduced locally, often with a breezy indifference to copyright. “Gay” replaced “camp” as the main form of self-identification, although radicals resisted “gay” for many years, seeing it as too respectable a term—as failing to challenge heterosexual society—defiantly using “homosexual” well into the 1970s.

The repertoires of struggle, too, were drawn from an international pool. “Coming out” as a means of confronting both social and internalized homophobia became increasingly common, and protests to defend those who were victimized by church and state after coming out played an important part in highlighting the extent and viciousness of antigay feeling. The 1972 murder of University of Adelaide law lecturer George Duncan, who was thrown into the River Torrens at a well-known beat (a cruising ground for homosexual men) and subsequently drowned, became a national scandal as it became increasingly clear that a small group of off-duty police officers were at least present at the time of the death. This injustice was remembered for decades by gay and straight people alike as emblematic of the tragic impact of antigay attitudes. The first national action in Australia (where communication between widely scattered state capitals was difficult) was Gay Pride Week in 1973. New Zealand held its first Gay Pride Week that same year. Where demonstrations were not possible, zaps (small, militant actions carried out by a handful of people) were deployed. The use of electroshock and chemical aversion therapy and brain surgery to “cure” homosexuals inspired noisy, disruptive, and very public protests. Solidarity with other oppressed and exploited peoples was proclaimed and acted on: “Gay liberation has a perspective for revolution based on the unity of all oppressed people—that is, there can be no freedom for gays in a society which enslaves others through male supremacy, racism and economic exploitation (capitalism)” proclaimed one leaflet (Melbourne University Gay Liberation Front 1973; taken from Young 1972, 25–26).

**Fracture and Reaction from the Right**
There were, of course, divisions within the movement. The sexism of gay men led many lesbians to prefer to work independently. Radicalesbians was a significant force in Melbourne, as was the group Sisters for Homophile Equality in Canterbury and Wellington. But even in less organized forms, lesbian activism was carried on via collective households, theater groups and the arts, publishing, conferences, bookshops, festivals, sports teams, and women’s health and safety campaigns and organizations.

Gay Pride Week in 1973 marked the high point of the early gay liberation years; after that, the movement fragmented into a myriad of activities and organizations. While many at the time bemoaned this, in retrospect it gave the movement a new impetus, as people took up issues that appealed to them and stepped away from ideological and personal conflicts. Telephone advice services, conferences, newspapers, election campaigns, lobbying, trade union caucuses, professional associations—the range of activities available meant that there was something to get involved in for anybody who was drawn to the movement. In 1975 the Australian Union of Students convened a national conference for homosexual activists attended by about 600 people. Dozens of workshops discussed every aspect of the movement’s work, and numerous action groups were founded that went on to make great gains in the following years. Such conferences were held annually until 1986, each one leaving a plethora of new and revitalized organizations behind to carry on the struggle. In New Zealand the National Gay and Lesbian Conference was held annually from 1972 to 1989 (except for 1983).

By the late 1970s, the gains of the movement were starting to look substantial. Law reform had been achieved in a small number of jurisdictions and was firmly on the agenda of most of the others, as was antidiscrimination legislation. Trade unions and professional associations were starting to recognize the claims of their members for protection and recognition. In 1972 the top body of the Australian and New Zealand psychiatric profession called for the decriminalization of homosexual acts and in 1973 went further in a clinical memorandum that declared that homosexuality was not, in and of itself, commonly or necessarily associated with neurotic symptoms. Progressive trade unions such as the Builders Labourers Federation were persuaded to defend victimized students by blackbanning (refusing to work on) campuses to support the movement’s protests. In Victoria, all of the teachers’ unions had adopted strong pro-gay policies covering the rights of teachers and students. Public opinion was shifting markedly toward support for law reform and for greater public acceptance. By the late 1970s, the mainstream media started to talk about the power of what would later become known as the pink dollar. As more and more lesbians and gay men came out, they were increasingly likely to find a positive response from family, friends, and coworkers. A cultural shift was well and truly underway.

This did not escape the attention of the Right, who had been taken rather by surprise by the rise of women’s liberation, gay liberation, and the general radicalization of the late 1960s and had failed to respond effectively. Inspired by the rise of the Right in the United States
and the United Kingdom, conservatives in Australasia started to organize. While Christians, especially from the smaller denominations (Baptists and Presbyterians) and from conservative elements in the Anglican and Catholic churches (especially in Sydney), were outspoken in their calls to oppose the cultural shift, Australasian society tended to be strongly secular in its public life, and the Right was more likely to appeal to “tradition” than to scripture. Anita Bryant’s Save Our Children crusade in the United States and Mary Whitehouse’s British campaign against “smut” in the media provided models to be emulated.

Following overseas developments closely, Australasian activists were aware of the threat that the Right represented and mobilized early and strongly against it. Whitehouse’s 1978 speaking tour of Australia and New Zealand was disrupted and mocked and was a financial and political failure. The idea of a tour by Bryant was quickly dropped. The fear among lesbian and gay activists and their allies of a backlash against the gains of the movement was strong during this period. And it was not entirely fanciful. There were police raids on gay men’s sex clubs in Sydney and Auckland in 1980. A day of solidarity with the US campaign against Bryant, held in Sydney, to coincide with Stonewall Day in 1978, went well until the police attacked the evening parade, beating and arresting scores of people. Over the next several months, protests against this action were regularly attacked by the police, and the arrest count mounted. Ultimately the charges were dropped. In order to make the point that gay people had a right to be visible, the following year an anniversary march was held—thus giving birth to the annual Sydney Gay (later Gay and Lesbian) Mardi Gras. The belief that the Right was on the offensive, and that it was supported by the state and the media, gave an urgency to the struggle against the backlash and revitalized many old activists, while generating many new ones. And the successes of that period of struggle laid the foundations for responding to the greatest threat to gay and lesbian rights ever seen: AIDS.

**Response to the AIDS Epidemic**

It was inevitable that AIDS would arrive in Australasia soon after its appearance in the United States. International travel was cheaper and much more common than a decade before, and San Francisco’s status as a gay mecca drew many across the Pacific to see (and experience) it for themselves. The first reports of AIDS in the Australasian press were of US cases. The first local deaths came in 1982 and 1983. But, alerted by coverage in the US gay and lesbian press, activists in Australasia were ready. Public meetings to found AIDS action groups took place in major cities, rapidly leading to the establishment of national organizations. Australia and New Zealand were well placed to respond to the emerging threat. Both have a strong state-supported, easily and cheaply accessed health system with subsidized pharmaceutical medicines and long traditions of public health education and intervention. Of more immediate importance, Australia and New Zealand had in 1983 and
1984, respectively, elected national Labor/Labour Party governments more than willing to work cooperatively with the community-based AIDS organizations and with the state and private medical professions to respond to the threat.

By 1985 the community organizations were receiving substantial government funding with which they were expected to educate their communities and to bring about behavioral change. Drawing on a decade of activism and the recent successful mobilizations against the Right, with deep roots within their communities, gay activists were in a powerful position to deliver change. With governments at arm’s length, these safe-sex materials could be as explicit as necessary. As one activist said, when it came to these campaigns, “an arse was an arse, and a fuck was a fuck” (van Reyk 1992, 13). The fact that male homosexual sex was still illegal in many states all through this period, and in New Zealand until 1986, was set aside in the interests of promoting “harm minimization.” So successful was this approach that it was rapidly extended to sex workers and injecting drug users. All blood donations were tested from a very early date. Condoms were made freely available. Needle-exchange programs were implemented. These efforts worked. Infection rates peaked early and dropped away to very low levels by the mid-1980s. (More recent research has thrown doubt on the timing of this and the extent of the drop, but it remains generally true and was certainly a powerful belief in and after the 1980s [Wand et al. 2010]). And it is undeniable that an incalculable number of lives were saved. The initial media and public hysteria was calmed. The Australian and New Zealand response to HIV/AIDS is widely regarded as the best in the world.

The effects of the AIDS epidemic were, as in many Western countries, rather contradictory. The traumatizing effect of losing loved ones to AIDS scarred a generation of gay men, their families and friends. But the response to the epidemic brought activists into the political mainstream, working as trusted partners with governments and medical professionals. The decriminalization of homosexual acts was carried through both to assist in the campaign against AIDS (the argument being that people would cooperate more fully with the calls for behavioral change, to be tested, and to access treatments if their sexuality was not criminalized) and, in a sense, as a reward for the community’s responsible participation in seeing off the threat. In Western Australia and Queensland buggery laws were repealed in 1989 and 1990–1991, respectively. In New Zealand, a furious resistance by the Christian Right was successfully overcome, and the laws were reformed in 1986. In Tasmania, the same kind of response from the Right held up reform until 1997 where it was brought into being only by a major political mobilization and the aforementioned Toonen appeal to the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

The ways in which queer people are acknowledged has developed in surprising ways. In the early twenty-first century, a number of parliaments have supplemented their repeal of anti-buggery laws with formal expungements of all convictions and with apologies to those affected. Victoria has gone beyond giving its human rights commission responsibility for
LGBTI rights (as most jurisdictions now do) and appointed a commissioner for gender and sexuality whose priorities include, among other things, actively campaigning against homophobia in rural and regional parts of the state.

**Increased Visibility**

The late 1970s saw the beginnings of a major transformation in gay life and in gay politics that continued even during the AIDS years. More and more lesbians and gay men started to accept the ideas of gay pride and that they had a right to the free expression of their sexuality. As Altman pointed out, by the late 1970s, the gay man in Australia (and the same applied to lesbians) “was likely to be non-apologetic about his sexuality, self-assertive, highly consumerist and not at all revolutionary, though prepared to demonstrate for gay rights” ([1980, 52](#)). The commercial scene grew and grew. The hotels that had turned a blind eye in the 1950s and 1960s were replaced by venues that were increasingly open to gay clientele. In Sydney, clubs such as the Purple Onion and Kandy’s were more or less openly kamp by the late 1960s. In the 1970s mainstream hotels increasingly offered “gay nights” (usually the quiet nights). But bars (the US term rapidly came to the fore) run for, and often by, gay men and lesbians started to emerge. In Sydney this was marked by a shift in the late 1970s of the gay world’s center of gravity from King’s Cross to Oxford Street, which rapidly achieved international status. On a smaller scale, other cities in Australasia followed on, creating concentrations of venues, including bars, coffee shops, and sex clubs. Sometimes residential communities were created around these. The gay scene became increasingly visible, as did gay people. New styles developed, such as the gay male “clone” with his short hair, moustache, jeans, flannel shirts, and work boots, and the “lipstick lesbian” with her conventionally feminine makeup, dresses, and so on. Both styles, imported directly from the United States, reflected an embrace of gender conformity strikingly at odds with the older forms of sissy men and butch dykes.

Activists adapted to this, seeing this new emerging community as a vehicle for the continuing advance of lesbian and gay equality. As Craig Johnston ([1981](#)), one of the movement’s leading tacticians, pointed out, talk shifted, from “oppression” to “discrimination,” from “liberation” to “rights,” and from “movement” to “community.” Perhaps the clearest expression of this was the transformation of Mardi Gras in Sydney from a conventional political march to an increasingly flamboyant parade. The parade does not shy away from politics. The issues of the day are always highlighted, most memorably, perhaps, in 1988 when the bicentenary of the British settlement/invasion of Australia was marked by Mardi Gras by having a float feature Indigenous Australians “discovering” Australia.

The political shift of Mardi Gras, and of the wider lesbian and gay movements, did not go uncontested by lesbian and gay radicals, but the tide was flowing strongly away from liberation and toward equality. The conception of the gay world as a community was
important here. In both Australia and New Zealand, there was a conscious decision by governments and social and cultural elites to recognize the reality—and promote the idea—of multiculturalism, of seeing society as being composed of many cultures and communities. The notion of a gay community fitted this comfortably. It allowed politicians and others to welcome and work with gay people and gay issues. It also allowed for the increasing diversification of the gay world itself. Beginning in the mid-1980s gay was replaced by gay and lesbian (or, commonly, lesbian and gay) both in the names of organizations and in everyday speech. After that, bisexuals, transgender, and intersex people staked their claim for recognition, respect, and equality as partners and full participants in the LGBTI/queer community. Diverse subcultures organized and expressed themselves around a plethora of identities: ethnicity (initially, for example, as Asian and then over time more specifically as Chinese, Vietnamese, Pacific Islander, and so on); preferred sexual practices (BDSM); or body types (bears). These communities were often forced to confront discrimination and prejudice from within the queer community, as well as from the wider society.

Indigenous people drew on traditional and contemporary elements of their communities' history of sex, gender, and sexuality to generate culturally specific identities such as Sistergirls and Brotherboys in Australia (especially visible in the northern regions) and takatāpui in New Zealand. These developments reflect the emergence of new, confident queer Indigenous voices in the public realm, expressing their own diverse cultures, fused from historical and contemporary worlds, and demanding respect from within those cultures and from the wider community (Hodge 2015).

This diversity of identities was encompassed and encouraged in the 1990s by the rise of “queer.” Imported from the United States (as virtually all Australian sexual politics was by this time), queer was, in one manifestation, an academic disciple, taken up in the humanities departments of the universities, that aspired to deconstruct the dominant discourses around sex and sexuality in order to reveal therein the play of a reified power. In this form, queer remained confined largely to the universities and to those who had absorbed its ideas there. Its ideas are best preserved in a short-lived Australian journal, Critical in Queeries (1995–1998).

Despite this kind of derivative adoption of US-based ideas, Australasia has made some contributions to the international understanding of sex, sexuality, and gender—more so that its small size and propensity to rely on overseas thinking might have led one to expect. Raewyn Connell’s contribution to a “southern theory” of, among other things, gender is an example (Connell 2007), backed up by her internationally acclaimed 1990s work on masculinities and owing something perhaps to her work in the 1970s as the designer of the first gay studies program at an Australian university. It is also true that research into the social and cultural aspects of HIV/AIDS in Australia has shaped international thinking and practice very greatly. Perhaps the best-known writer on global sexuality coming out of
Australia is Altman, who, beginning with his groundbreaking *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (1971), has spent over forty years charting the history of sex, gender, and sexuality as it has unfolded internationally. In both analysis and practice he has brought an independent insider’s eye to political and cultural developments. His work and his writing on HIV/AIDS draws on, and speaks to, the experiences of the industrialized and the nonindustrialized worlds alike (Altman 1994). In *Global Sex* (2001) he turned his attention to the relationship between globalization and sexuality, exploring the possibilities of a global sexual politics and the role in it of theories, social movements, realism, and utopianism. More recently he has, in a 2016 book cowritten by Jonathan Symons, turned his attention to what they call the “queer wars” being waged internationally between and within countries over the regulation and deregulation of same-sex sexualities.

But, again drawing on US models, the term *queer* was also employed as a means of expressing a rejection of the politics of the mainstream lesbian and gay movement, embracing militancy, defiance, nonconformity, and anticommercialism. In Melbourne, for example, ACT UP was succeeded by Queer Nation, which protested exclusionist door policies in gay bars and marched in solidarity with Indigenous struggles but disappeared within a year or so. In the United States, the term was adopted in an angry reclaiming of a term of homophobic abuse. This was less true in Australia where the older terms of abuse...
were *poofter* and *lezzo*.

For the most part, queer worked as an umbrella term for the diversity of sexual identities that were emerging in the 1990s. It embraced not just the LGBTI spectrum of current usage but all kinds of ways of “doing gay,” including fetish sexualities, varied body types, racial and ethnic identities, and HIV-positive people. But while this usage was employed for some time, it never really broke out of the political world and came eventually to be criticized for the way in which it concealed rather than celebrated identity diversity.

These developments were visible in a community-based media sector of newspapers, radio, and television programs. But these media did more than report gay life; they actively shaped it. They developed and explored notions of LGBTI identity, promoted a liberal political consciousness, and advanced social and political reform. The media—the press especially—was deeply enmeshed in the commercial scene (being funded by advertising and advancing the communities and identities that were being generated there). This generated both opportunities and challenges that required constant negotiation. The turnover of titles was high, but some papers and magazines lasted for decades, shifting and adapting to changing circumstances before succumbing to managerial incompetence or, more recently, to the unnavigable storm of online and digital technologies (Calder 2016).

Beyond the inner-city communities, from the 1990s on, LGBTI people in regional areas, which had long harbored small and often secretive kamp friendship networks and subcultures, were adopting conventional metropolitan forms of expression. LGBTI communities became increasingly visible in rural and regional areas. Small businesses, service organizations, and local councils started to recognize and welcome queer residents. Episodes of discrimination and hostility directed against this increased visibility attracted media attention but seem to have been relatively isolated. Some places became LGBTI tourist spots on a substantial scale, and as of 2017 more than a dozen localities across Australasia were staging pride festivals each year. Half a dozen communities in New Zealand host pride weeks.
Cultural Impact

The 1970s witnessed the creation of new literary and audiovisual cultures by gay and lesbian writers and filmmakers. Until the 1960s, Australian and New Zealand governments habitually banned books, films, and plays with homosexual characters. But restrictions were loosened in the late 1960s under the influence of the new modernizing liberalism that was opposed to these forms of censorship. Films and plays from overseas started to be screened and staged, attracting large and appreciative audiences. When the American play Boys in the Band ran into trouble with the police in Melbourne in 1969, it was for bad language rather than its depiction of homosexuality. The real breakthrough came with the television series Number 96, a soap opera set in a block of flats in Sydney that, running from 1972 to 1977, focused on the (increasingly lurid) lives of the residents. One of those characters, Don Finlayson, was a homosexual, conventionally masculine in his gender presentation, but openly gay. Don had the usual adventures of soap opera characters, falling in and out of love with both screaming queens and straight-acting men, but was unable, given the tight controls on television programs, ever to kiss his boyfriends, much
less sleep with them, on-screen. Eventually a lesbian character appeared. Other shows took their lead from this. *Prisoner* (1979–1986), set in a women's prison, featured a number of lesbians. In 1996 *Sweat*, a drama set in a sports academy and aimed at teenagers, included a gay cyclist character whose relationship ran through a number of episodes. It is indicative of the courage of such a depiction that it would be over a decade before teen-directed soaps would again feature lesbian and gay characters and story lines. These days such depictions are increasingly common in programs of all genres, produced both overseas and locally.

In terms of literature, established writers such as the Australian Nobel laureate Patrick White (in the 1970s) and the Maori author Witi Ihimaera (in the 1990s) became increasingly public about their sexualities and were prepared to write on queer themes. More importantly, perhaps, community-identified writers, playwrights, and artists of all kinds started to explore the myriad experiences of queer people, often in small magazines but increasingly with the support of mainstream publishers. Kerryn Higgs published *All That False Instruction*, a novel of lesbian life and politics in 1975, but was constrained by family circumstances to publish under a pseudonym and to reset her Melbourne story in Sydney. By the late 1980s there was an escalation in gay male and lesbian writing and publishing across all genres: fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. For the most part, such works were consumed by LGBTI people seeking entertainment and insights into their lives and pleasures, but some works had crossover appeal and found mainstream audiences: Christos Tsiolkas's novel *Loaded* (1995) centered on Ari, a nineteen-year-old “wog poofter junkie”; Timothy Conigrave's memoir *Holding the Man* (1995) centered on the relationship between the author and his boyfriend and was made into a feature film and a documentary in 2015; Robert Dessaix's works *A Mother's Disgrace* (1994) and *Night Letters* (1996) received wide critical acclaim. The history of films and plays in Australasia has the same pattern: mostly small productions with occasional breakout moments. A rich history of queer theater exists, going back to lesbian feminist theater work in Adelaide in the 1970s and 1980s and continuing into the present, nurtured especially by the various annual pride festivals. Films occasionally seize the public imaginations, most notably *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (1994), which tells the story of two drag queens and a transgender woman making their way by bus from Sydney to Uluru. *Desperate Remedies* (1993), a flamboyant and lavishly camp film, was set in a fictional New Zealand port town in the nineteenth century and is suffused with a queer sensibility and characters.

Australians and New Zealanders like to think of their countries as sporting nations and certainly they do well, relative to size, in a number of sports internationally. Lesbian and gay sports teams are common. Elite-level, mainstream sportspeople who are “out” are rare but all the more noticeable for that. In Australia, the first nationally significant sportsperson to come out was the Sydney rugby league player Ian Roberts in 1995. The diver Matthew Mitcham and the swimmer Ian Thorpe, both Olympic gold-medal winners, created waves of enthusiastic interest when they came out in 2008 and 2014, respectively. The New Zealand Olympic speed skater Blake Skjellerup came out in 2010. Like Mitcham,
he had doubts about whether his sexuality, once known, was likely to adversely affect sponsorship deals. In Mitcham’s case it certainly did. The creation of an elite-level Australian football women’s league in 2017 provided the opportunity for many lesbian football players to publicly celebrate their sexuality and relationships, among them the league’s “best and fairest” player that year, Erin Phillips. (The term best and fairest is widely used in Australia to designate a player for a team or competition who has been the most valuable performer and who received no penalties for unfair play in a season.) Katie and Priscilla Duncan, a married couple, have played football (soccer) at the World Cup level for New Zealand. At the same time, however, the complexities generated by sex-segregated competitions led the Australian Football League (AFL) in 2017 to refuse a transgender woman admission as a player to the women’s league on the grounds that her strength, stamina, and physique would have given her an unfair advantage. In 2018 this decision was reversed as a result of a process of consultation within the AFL involving a variety of experts and advocates (McClure 2017; Dutton 2017; Ryan and Spits 2018).

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Trans and Intersex Rights

If lesbian and gay men are firmly ensconced in the political and cultural mainstream, the place of other rainbow groups is not yet secured. In the queer world and in mainstream cultural and political life, “LGBTI” is the most commonly used label, and laws allowing
people to change the sex on their birth certificates and other legal documents are near universal. But until the early 2010s, trans and intersex experiences were represented primarily through the efforts of prominent individuals. Catherine McGregor was a senior member of the Australian Defence Force and a well-known writer on cricket who announced her transition in 2012. New Zealand lays claim to the world’s first openly transgender member of parliament, Georgina Beyer (who served from 1999 to 2007). Her political career began in 1995 when she was elected mayor of a small town as an openly transgender woman. She had previously been an active participant in the Wellington gay scene as a drag performer and sex worker.

The intractable problems of sex designation for intersex babies and puberty-blocking hormones for young trans people have occupied doctors, politicians, advocacy groups, and court officials for some years, although the issues are usually discussed out of the spotlight. The Family Court of Australia found itself at the center of public debate and discussions because of a variety of laws concerning parental rights, child protection, and irreversible medical interventions. In 2017 it formally ruled out any role for itself, leaving the decision to teens, their parents, and their doctors. New Zealand’s Human Rights Commission (in 2010) and the Australian Human Rights Commission (in 2015) have both examined the issues of trans and intersex people in an effort to inform public attitudes and policy responses. In 2013 the Australian federal parliament made discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, and (reportedly, for the first time in the world) intersex status illegal.

Increasingly, trans and intersex people have taken the lead in these public debates themselves. In relation to intersex issues, the Darlington Statement was produced at a 2017 gathering of Australian and New Zealand intersex people (Black et al. 2017), setting out demands around a number of issues (human rights and legal reform; health and well-being; peer support; allies; and education, awareness and employment). It was greeted as a “com[ing] of age” for the intersex movement (Tony Briffa, quoted in Carpenter 2017).

But the field of gender diversity remains one in which anxiety can be relatively easily tapped into, as evidenced by a campaign launched in 2016 by the Right in Australia against an antibullying program for school kids called Safe Schools, which, it was alleged (falsely but effectively), promoted gender nonconformity (e.g., cross-dressing, breast binding, queer sexual practices). The fears excited were enough to persuade most politicians to abandon, or at least, modify the program.

It is difficult not to be optimistic about the place of LGBTI people within Australasian society. The period since the late 1960s has witnessed a remarkably successful struggle to make these societies fairer and more equal. Some of the struggles have been heartbreakingly long and drawn out, but all of them have been successful. There is no reason to think this will not continue to be true.
SEE ALSO *Antisodomy and Buggery Trials; Archives in Australia and New Zealand; Camp; HIV/AIDS; Human Rights; Pride Parades and Marches; Section 377 and Section 377A; Vietnam War; Vietnam War, LGBTQ+ Veterans*

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ʿAwdat al-Almani ilā Rushdih (2006; Rashid al-Daif)


Modern Arabic literature generally offers a reductive treatment of homosexuality, particularly in light of the more complex engagements with homoeroticism that abounded in the medieval Arab Islamic tradition (Lagrange 2000; al-Samman 2008; Massad 2007). The literary critic and translator Ken Seigneurie contends that while studies of homosexuality in the Arab world are flourishing, “almost nothing exists by way of opening an intercultural dialogue over the question [of homosexuality]” (2015, 171). Rashid al-Daif’s ‘Awdat al-Almani ilā rushdih (2006; How the German Came to His Senses [2015]) recounts a crosscultural encounter between a heterosexual Lebanese author and a gay German novelist who engage in personal and intellectual discussions about the topic of homosexuality. Therefore, this novelized biography offers a critical contribution to the Arabic literary canon.

In 2003 al-Daif and Joachim Helfer, Lebanese and German authors, respectively, were paired together to engage in an intercultural dialogue sponsored by the West-Eastern Divan program, a Berlin-based initiative that facilitates opportunities for collaboration among writers from Germany and the Middle East, with the aim of advancing mutual awareness of German and Middle Eastern literatures and cultures. Al-Daif visited Berlin for six weeks, where he met Helfer and engaged with him in conversations about various issues, including literature, culture, and gender and sexuality. In turn, Helfer visited Beirut, where the two writers resumed their conversations and participated in various social and intellectual activities. With Helfer's approval, al-Daif wrote a novelized account of his encounters with Helfer, particularly focusing on the latter's homosexuality, which he found interesting and befitting for a text that seeks to advance intercultural dialogue. Recounted from the point of view of the narrator, Rashid, who should not be conflated with the author Rashid al-Daif, this novelized biography primarily encapsulates Rashid's recollection of the intercultural exchange, but it does not purport to offer an objective account of al-Daif and Helfer's actual encounters.
This novelized biography by Lebanese author Rashid al-Daif represents an increased willingness in contemporary Arabic literature to engage more openly with homosexual issues in its depiction of a cross-cultural encounter between a heterosexual Lebanese author and a gay German novelist.

Following al-Daif’s Arabic publication of ‘Awdat al-Almani ilâ rushdih, Helfer published a book titled Die Verschwulung der Welt (2006; The Queering of the World [2015]), which included a German translation of al-Daif’s book, in addition to Helfer’s point-by-point response to that text. Al-Daif’s and Helfer’s texts prompted intriguing debates among various scholars. The heart of these debates included the following issues: al-Daif’s controversial portrayal of homosexuality; the efficacy of al-Daif’s use of irony and humor as a means of deconstructing dominant stereotypes about homosexuality; and the suitability (or lack thereof) of Helfer’s analytical essay as a response to al-Daif’s fictionalized account, particularly his attempts at identifying any perceived misrepresentations of the events.

**Stereotypes, Irony, and Humor**

Seigneurie (2015, 184) argues that in much of his work, al-Daif employs a strategic rhetoric that entails a “delicate equivocation between candor and self-irony” as a means of creating a discursive space where frank and transformative dialogue may occur. In ‘Awdat al-Almani ilâ rushdih, al-Daif constructs a narrator who takes on a stance close to popular opinion in
an attempt to ensure that the narrator’s rationale and reactions would resonate with his imagined Arab reader. Consequently, as the narrative unfolds, and Rashid is forced to weigh his conceptions of homosexuality against a more complex lived reality, al-Daif’s reader ideally undergoes a similar experience of reexamining his or her deeply engraved opinions (Seigneurie 2015). In a related manner, in her article “Colonial Discourse and Dissent in Rashid al-Daif’s and Joachim Hefner’s Contributions to the West-Eastern Divan,” the literary scholar Rebecca Dyer contends that al-Daif “enables his self-deprecating narrator to express (in comic parody) his culture’s more provincial ideas about same-sex relationships—hinting at their hurtful consequences and at his own previous naïveté” (2015, 200). From the outset, Rashid confesses that his knowledge of homosexuality is limited and that his experience with the openly gay Joachim might therefore be educational, introducing him to a world to which he remains an outsider. Rashid struggles with understanding homosexuality, in part because he has been socialized into espousing a local model of masculinity that privileges procreation. Rashid explains that while his society celebrates men who father children, it condemns homosexuals, who are referred to as “perverts,” and “their practices are considered sex acts against nature” (al-Daif 2015, 3). He perceives homosexuality as inherently antithetical to masculinity, in part because it precludes birthing children. He confesses that despite his attempts to “reexamine at every turn society’s convictions,” as well as his own “personal convictions,” the cultural milieu in which he was born and raised has instilled in him dominant ideas that “have penetrated [him] and do their work in [him]” (3). Rashid's admission of possessing prejudiced ideas, as well as critical distance from his local culture, sets up the stage for Rashid’s contentious learning journey as he prepares himself to meet and partake in a dialogue with a colleague who likely adheres to a different worldview.

In addition to undermining homosexuality because of its alleged preclusion of procreativity, Rashid professes that his unfavorable interactions with “rare gay friends” in Lebanon have further solidified “the rigid stereotype of homosexuality” in his mind (4). Rashid cannot shrug off the stories of his gay friend J. B., who would roam Beirut’s dangerous streets during the civil war (1975-1990), in search of lovers and immediate gratification. He also vividly recalls being the target of unwanted sexual advances from another gay French colleague who was aroused by Rashid’s hairy arms and even pulled at the hair without Rashid’s consent. While Rashid cites examples of the sexually aggressive gay men he has encountered, he acknowledges that perhaps “these were special cases” that do not represent “widespread tendencies” (4–5). He therefore cautions the reader against drawing strict conclusions based on his personal anecdotes. Throughout the novel, Rashid fluctuates between affirming and critiquing his own worldview, as well as those articulated by Joachim, therefore allowing a wide range of perspectives to coexist within the narrative—in constant debate.

Upon meeting Joachim, Rashid is polite yet ridiculously self-conscious. He eagerly attempts to assert his heterosexuality in order to avoid any “unpleasant circumstances that could
jeopardize” their collaboration. Rashid even “took every chance to make [Joachim] understand how much [Rashid] loved women ... and how [he] smelled the odor of putrefaction and armpits when in the company of men without women” (6). Rashid’s perceptions of homosexuality are not extricable from his culturally rooted beliefs about masculinity and femininity. Rashid associates femininity with purity, because women are ordinarily charged with maintaining a clean and orderly home in his culture. He associates masculinity with dirt and negligence because men in his society do not typically partake in managing the domestic sphere. It is no surprise then that he had initially supposed that “two men living together equal dirt, negligence, and the absence of women” (14), because he cannot fathom how two men could possibly maintain proper hygiene and decorum in their lived spaces. As the next section demonstrates, however, Rashid will be disabused of such misguided assumptions during his visit to Joachim and his partner N.’s immaculate home.

Rashid recalls pulling on his sleeves restlessly to hide the hair on his hands in Joachim’s presence, “as a seated woman pulls down her skirt to cover what she can of her thighs” (6). Rashid’s extreme behavior, which al-Daif depicts with a significant dosage of humor and irony, turns out to be completely unwarranted. As Seigneurie notes, “Much of the text’s humor springs from the contrast between Rashid’s anxiety and Joachim’s rational calm” (2015, 186). There is no indication that Joachim is even remotely interested in having a romantic relationship with his Lebanese colleague. Rashid is depicted as a victim of his own imagination. Joachim and Rashid’s early interactions expose the absurdity of the straight man’s fears of the seemingly menacing gay Other. As the novel progresses, Rashid’s simplistic perceptions of homosexuality erode even further.

Dominant Perceptions versus Lived Reality of Homosexuality

Rashid is disabused of many of his reductive views on homosexuality, as he witnesses, firsthand, a lived reality that contradicts the homogenizing narrative that he had uncritically internalized. His fear of gay filth dissipates when he visits Joachim and N.’s elegant home, which offers a “great surprise ... in terms of taste, cleanliness” (al-Daif 2015, 15), therefore proving that men, not just women, can maintain clean, well-lit places. In Joachim and N.’s home, Rashid is confronted by the harmony and wholesomeness of a gay couple’s life, not just their personal space. He confesses: “I’d never visited a gay ‘couple’s’ home before (‘couple’ meaning a married couple), so this was a first” (15). Rashid’s use of the term married couple reflects his acknowledgment of the seriousness and depth of Joachim and N.’s relationship and his realization that same-sex relationships cannot be reduced to “asswork” (14) as he had initially presumed.

The effect of Rashid’s visit to a gay couple’s home lasts beyond his visit to Germany. During
Joachim’s subsequent visit to Lebanon, Rashid feels guilty for “stabbing [N.] in the back” (34), after attempting to match Joachim with a woman. As he reflects back on his experience in Berlin, Rashid blames himself for possibly monopolizing Joachim’s time and for “being inattentive to the matter of their being a ‘married’ couple and completely like man and wife or maybe even much more so,” because “society had made them suffer for it until it finally accepted them for who they are” (35). Rashid’s mention of the plight of marginalized gay populations, who have had to struggle for recognition, demonstrates the transformative dimension of his one-on-one encounter with Joachim. At the same time, the novel suggests that while Rashid now acknowledges the complexity and humanity of same-sex partnerships, he does not necessarily support LGBTQ-friendly public policies.

Rashid’s experience also leads him to invoke cultural parallels. He recalls historical anecdotes about same-sex partners mentioned in classical Arabic literature. As if reexamining such stories with fresh eyes, he contends that what is conventionally referred to as “curiosities” in the Arabic literary history is “not at all a curiosity” (35), considering the serious and affectionate nature of same-sex partnerships, including the relationship between Abd al-Majid (c. 726–809) and Ibn Munadhir (died c. 813), a poet and a hadith scholar, respectively. Rashid questions the term curiosities, which now strikes him as a misnomer that perhaps fails to capture the profoundness of same-sex relationships.

In addition to engaging Rashid in discussions about the injustices that homosexuals have endured throughout history across the globe, Joachim particularly highlights the ongoing plight of gays and lesbians in Lebanon. He shares with Rashid the tragic stories he had heard about Lebanese gay youth, who risk imprisonment, murder, and suicide. Such stories serve to further remind Rashid of a devastating reality from which he had remained distant. They also offer a counternarrative to Rashid’s own stories about “predatory gay men,” by drawing attention to the concrete ways in which gay people are often targeted and victimized by the dominant culture. The deconstruction of Rashid’s proclamations on the filthy, transient, and predatory “nature” of gay relations has the potential to challenge the assumptions of recalcitrant readers who espouse stereotypical views and who, through the act of reading, might undergo a similarly sobering experience.

**Deconstruction of Gender and Family Roles**

Joachim’s seemingly “sterile” masculinity initially clashes with Rashid’s local masculinity, where fatherhood is both an aspiration and an inescapable responsibility. Rashid cannot reconcile Joachim’s alleged lack of interest in having children with Joachim’s aspiration to find a young man whom he can love and mentor in the same way that N. had nurtured him. Rashid questions Joachim’s rationale, and his sense of justice, when the latter seems indifferent about having children. Rashid muses to himself: “Joachim wanted to enjoy the fruits of the labor of others—I mean their children—without bothering to have a son himself to let another enjoy the fruits of his labor and his child” (*al-Daif 2015, 10*). He
becomes unsettled when he learns that Joachim is not interested in finding out whether or not he is the biological father of two children who were born to two separate women with whom he had been sexually involved. Rashid cannot fathom how any man can father children and not feel the urge to claim and care for them. However, after Joachim explains that German women today may not necessarily demand, or even welcome, having a sustained relationship with men with whom they have had sexual relationships, or even conceived a child, Rashid appears to better comprehend Joachim’s rationale.

The conversations about Joachim’s life choices lead to broader conversations about evolving gender roles in Germany. Rashid learns that a man should not boldly pursue a woman but rather “reveal only gentle suggestions, and she is the one who takes the initiative if she wishes.” He concludes that there has been something akin to a “role reversal” between men and women in Germany and that “young men today are in some ways the girls of yesterday” (19). Rashid grapples with shifting notions of gender and sexuality as he is faced with global models of masculinity and femininity that challenge his traditional ideas. As the novel unfolds, he also recognizes that homosexuality does not necessarily preclude parenthood.

During Joachim’s visit to Lebanon, the plot takes an unexpected turn: Joachim meets a German woman named Ingrid. The two feel a genuine connection, and they decide to have a baby together. When Rashid learns about this unexpected news, he jokingly asks Joachim: “ʿadat almanya ilā rushdiha idhan?”—that is, “Germany has come back to its senses then?” (41). Rashid’s tongue-in-cheek question emphasizes his comic attempt at taking some credit for catalyzing Joachim’s important decision, because the name Rashid is derived from the root rushd, which means “reason” or “sense.” Despite making such hyperbolic statements, however, Rashid realizes the irrationality of his own desire to see Joachim settle into a more “normal” and “reasonable” lifestyle, one where fatherhood takes precedence over everything else. Regardless of Rashid’s wishful thinking, the narrative emphasizes that Ingrid and Joachim’s arrangement does not translate into Joachim’s conversion to heterosexuality or his separation from his long-term partner, N. Instead, Joachim and Ingrid enter into a mutual agreement to establish a nontraditional family, one that enables Joachim to take part in coparenting his child with Ingrid, the child’s primary caretaker, while still remaining committed to N. This subplot further contributes to the deconstruction of restrictive binaries such as “heterosexual/homosexual” and “procreative/sterile” masculinities.

Not only does Rashid’s character evolve over the course of the novel, but Joachim also appears to have become queerer in his thinking. While no “cause-effect” relationship exists between the colleagues’ discussion of gender, sexuality, and parenting, and Joachim’s sudden decision to have a child with Ingrid, “in the text as a literary work, it is hard to ignore that we are reading about a process—a bildung—in which decisions are part of a web of experiences, which would include Joachim’s dialogue with his colleague Rashid”
Seigneurie 2015, 181). Both Joachim and Rashid appear to have benefited personally and professionally from their intercultural dialogue and visits to each other’s countries. According to the literary scholars Andreas Krass and Benedikt Wolf, “In a sense, al-Daif is right in suggesting that Helfer came to his senses when he visited him in Lebanon. The cultural exchange program he participated in, as well as his host’s account of it, inspired Helfer to write a commentary that relentlessly deconstructs all the heteronormative biases that al-Daif mocks” (2017, 204). In The Queering of the World, Helfer offers a critique of the dominant stereotypes that Rashid initially expresses about homosexuality, including its association with effeminacy, childlessness, and sexual coercion. However, “it was the man al-Daif, not an ironic literary mask, who did and said what Helfer reports” (Krass 2015, 245). Furthermore, Helfer explains that he was not amused by Rashid’s futile attempt at matching him with a woman in Beirut, but rather found Rashid’s “game” disrespectful and insensitive with regard to the young woman. Helfer also retells his story of meeting Ingrid and explains the intentionality behind his and Ingrid’s decision to establish a family that resists heteronormative conventions. The Queering of the World suggests that Helfer considers Rashid’s comment regarding the German “coming to his senses” further evidence of al-Daif’s inability to appreciate complex, nonbinary constructions of masculinity and femininity, homosexuality and heterosexuality. Al-Daif’s and Helfer’s texts ultimately reveal both the potentialities and limitations of personal encounters, as well as literary productions, in engendering personal growth and mutual cultural awareness.

SEE ALSO Asrar ‘Ailiyyah (2013; Hany Fawzy); Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories (2009); Bayrūt ’75 (1975; Ghāda al-Sammān); Hajar al-Dahik (1990; Hoda Barakat); Lesbanese (2008; Alissar Gazal); Masculinity in Iranian Cinema

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In the early morning hours of 17 November 1901, complaints registered with the Mexico City police led to a raid on a house party at which a group of over forty men were found to be celebrating and dancing together, many dressed up in women’s clothing. As Mexican law, based on the Napoleonic code, made no mention of homosexuality, the police arrested everyone for offenses to “good customs.” The subsequent scandal raucously brought what had apparently been a thriving underground culture of male same-sex eroticism and transvestism in Mexico City into the public sphere, where it evoked both rabid condemnation and fascination. In a response to putative public outrage, those arrested were sent to sweep the streets of the city, with the cross-dressers still adorned in their glamorous makeup, jewelry, and elegant dresses. In addition to this public humiliation, and without any formal legal process, the alleged offenders were sent to the Yucatán Peninsula to assist the Mexican army digging trenches and laboring in mess halls in the ongoing armed conflict with Maya insurgents. The scandal of the Famous 41 can be said to have introduced male homosexuality, etched in the public memory as synonymous with cross-dressing, into the Mexican national cultural imaginary; the maricón—the effeminate male homosexual—was both mocked and celebrated as a colorful and very Mexican archetype. The story garnered headlines in Mexico City newspapers for several weeks, reflecting the public’s apparent indignation (and its simultaneous fascination) with the partygoers’ provocative challenges to social and sexual norms. As male same-sex desire had been radically absent from public discourse in Mexico throughout the nineteenth century, El Baile de los 41 (The Dance of the 41), described in the press with often voyeuristic and often explicitly sexual references, took on historical significance, defining a culturally specific Mexican notion of male homosexuality that would remain in place for decades, and indeed still carries weight today. As Carlos Monsiváis put it, “From that moment, and until recently, in popular culture gay is equivalent to transvestite [travesti]; and there is only one kind of homosexual: an effeminate one” (1995, 199; translation by Robert McKee Irwin). The scandal not only shined some light on a social context unknown to most Mexicans at the time but also gave rise to a new, distinctly Mexican stereotype (the effeminate male homosexual). While it is important to note that everything published about the Famous 41
came from the perspective of outsiders—those implicated never had a chance to represent their own views, whether in the press or in legal proceedings, and nothing has ever been documented convincingly regarding their names, their sexual practices, or their gender identities—the excessively cartoonish representations of the Dance of the 41 took deep hold in Mexican culture.

It has been suggested that the 1901 scandal of the Famous 41 made possible the incorporation of the male homosexual into the Mexican national imaginary (Irwin, McCaughan, and Nasser 2003). In both popular journalism and literature, and even in scientific discourse, beginning in 1901, the Mexican *maricón*, a figure completely absent from nineteenth-century Mexican cultural production, suddenly was made eminently visible as a figure projected as simultaneously repulsive and fascinating. However, despite the symbolic value that quickly was attached to the number 41, this archetype was seen as representing values that went deeply against those of the Mexican nation. This entry presents a historical summary of the nationalization of a stereotyped construction of the Mexican homosexual man in the early twentieth century and its ultimate rejection through the emerging ideology of the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920). El Baile de los 41 opened up new possibilities for imagined sexually diverse communities while also laying the foundations for discrimination and violence against them.
Challenges to Traditional Gender Roles in Early Twentieth-Century Mexico

Male same-sex desire, defined as sinful, had been punished during the colonial era by viceregal authorities and by the Inquisition (and indeed was used as a moral justification for the conquest of Mesoamerican cultures by the Spanish imperial authorities). Yet, during the first decades of Mexican independence, the topic was absent from public discourse (Monsiváis 1995). Early constructs of Mexican national culture did not incorporate sexual identities or practices realized between men; this lack of public visibility meant there was a lack of scrutiny and criticism, making for the possibility of expressions of deep affection between male companions, or even of homoeroticism, that would by more recent standards come across as raras (“strange” or queer).

In 1901 Mexico was in the midst of the lengthy presidential rule of Porfirio Díaz (1877–1880, 1884–1911), a period of significant political stability that would be broken only by the revolution of 1910. During what became known as El Porfiriato, accelerated modernization, industrialization, and urbanization were bringing about cultural and social changes that began to challenge traditional gender roles. El Baile de los 41 was only one of many events that drew attention to changing attitudes and practices regarding gender and sexuality, and the scandal it provoked ultimately made it one of the most influential. Mexican cultural production—modernist and naturalist literature, positivist science, and the popular press—of the period abundantly represented and discussed challenges to sexual norms. While modernist flourish and excess is often thought of as a reaction against positivism’s propensity to rationalize and quantify, artists and scientists alike seemed to fixate on the theme of sexual perversity (Irwin 2006). Although male homosexuality was rarely alluded to directly, the 1895 trials of the Irish-born writer Oscar Wilde brought the theme to the public eye and set the stage for a public discussion about this concept in a local Mexican context, which is what took place beginning in November 1901 (Irwin 2003).

With the scandal of the Dance of the 41, what had been presented as a somewhat exotic foreign problem became a recognizably Mexican topic. Unlike some other Latin American contexts—such as that of Argentina, where male homosexuality was linked to immigration and identified as a pose (i.e., a false posturing and not an authentic subjectivity), a vice that in the end had nothing to do with national culture (Molloy 1998)—Mexico assumed both the explicit (male transvestism, effeminacy) and implicit (male homosexuality) divergences from cultural norms of gender and sexuality represented in public debate on the 41 scandal to be national problems from the start. The first visible representations of the 41 were a
series of engravings by José Guadalupe Posada (1852–1913), whose popular art, including his famous calaveras (skeletons), was emblematic of Mexican culture during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Posada works included illustrations of the ball itself, with mustachioed men in dresses dancing with other men; the public humiliation of mustachioed men sweeping the streets in their elegant garb while a curious and amused crowd looks on; and the departure of these same figures for the Yucatán. The images were accompanied by text, which in the form of a corrido (popular ballad) told the story in a mocking tone, employing a range of slang terms to refer to the 41, such as lagartijo (literally meaning “lizard,” a term referring to men who pay excessive attention to grooming), jotito (a term thought by some to refer to a particular section of the Mexico City municipal jail where effeminate prisoners were segregated), and maricón (literally meaning “big Mary”)—expressions whose usage would soon become widespread.

No one accused the men of being “foreign”; instead, they were recognized as some of the “dandies who are seen daily on Plateros Street” (quoted in Irwin, McCaughan, and Nasser 2003, 22)—that is, they were familiar Mexican faces. However, while the dandies had often been criticized for their frivolous attention to fashion and grooming and had perhaps been seen as inadequately masculine, the sexual difference of the Famous 41 was seen as something new, something marking a new era, as the press announced the event as a “baile estilo nuevo siglo” (new century–style ball) (El Popular, 25 November 1901).

**Homosexuality in Public Discourse**

In the years immediately following the scandal of the 41, the theme of homosexuality entered public discourse at multiple levels. The Mexican criminologist Carlos Roumagnac published a series of books composed of case studies of those incarcerated in Mexico City jails in which his interpretative readings of their histories seemed to uncover homosexual tendencies at every turn (Roumagnac 1904, 1906–1910). For example, in his analysis of medical files, he sought out what he understood as “the physical characteristics that mark the habit of active pederasty” in the genitals of male prisoners (1904, 29; translation by Irwin). Roumagnac does not make clear how a physical examination of genitalia might reveal evidence of practices of “pederasty,” which generally refers to intergenerational same-sex sexual relations between men and boys.

Newspapers, no doubt responding to popular interest in the 41 scandal, began publishing not only further news on similar sexual scandals but also a newly ribald humor that ridiculed male public figures as sexually deviant (Buffington 2003). After decades in which male same-sex desire was radically absent from the public sphere, challenges to sexual orthodoxies became a hot topic. Posada referred directly to the Famous 41 in a 1904 engraving titled Feminism Imposes Itself that implied that feminism’s defiance of gender norms translated into a breakdown in gender norms not only for women but also for men. Posada depicted men carrying out all kinds of traditional women’s roles (such as ironing,
cooking, and embroidering) around the huge number 41, which linked their gendered acts with the sexual deviance associated with the 1901 ball.

In 1906 Eduardo A. Castrejón, pseudonym of the Mexican general Mariano Ruiz Montañés (1846–1932), published a novel titled *Los cuarenta y uno: Novela críticosocial* (The forty-one: A sociocritical novel), which reiterated the story of the 41 with the same mocking derision of the 1901 press, but also with an obsessive attention to detail that complicates its oft-hyperbolic rhetoric of rejection. At the turn of the twentieth century, several mainstream Mexican authors, reflecting this same fascination, introduced sexually unorthodox characters, including a lesbian prostitute in Federico Gamboa’s *Santa* (1903; Saint) and the bizarre case of a woman's soul in a man's body in Amado Nervo’s *El donador de almas* (1899; The donator of souls).

The Rise of Macho Culture and Homophobia

By the time Mexico's revolution of 1910–1920—which was, superficially, a class war, in which insurgent peasants, at least symbolically, defeated an elite oligarchy—had concluded, the incorporation of a range of national symbols drawn from popular culture into Mexican national culture led to an exaltation of a macho style of masculinity that had previously been disparaged as low-class and a rabid homophobia directed against the newly formed stereotype of the effeminate male homosexual—the *maricón*. The term *macho*, which itself had previously been applied principally to refer to male animals, and which extended to humans only metaphorically to signal male savagery, came to embody Mexican national culture. At the same time, the initial playful derision evoked by the visual and textual depiction of the 41 scandal soon transformed the *maricón* into an anti-Mexican, antinational figure. As Monsiváis put it, “If the revolution creates spaces of development of a distinct sensibility, the revolutionaries also flaunt a rampant machismo. (I don’t use the term homophobia as this is a term corresponding to a time when it negatively qualifies an irrational hatred for homosexuals. Before that, when everyone shared the attitude, there is no point in specifying)” (2000, 32; translation by Irwin).

The number 41, meanwhile, entered firmly into the popular Mexican imagination of the twentieth century—but with connotations so negative that the number was radically avoided. Francisco L. Urquizo (1891–1969), a general during the Mexican Revolution, wrote the following in 1965:

> There is no army division, regiment, or battalion that bears the number 41. They go up to 40 and from there skip to 42. There is no list with a 41st line. There are no cities that label a house number 41.... There is no hotel or hospital room with the number 41. No one celebrates a 41st birthday; from 40 they skip
The number 41 resurfaces with positive connotations only in the early 1960s, coding the title of one of Mexico’s earliest literary representations of Mexico’s male homosexual underworld: Paolo Po’s 41; o, El muchacho que soñaba en fantasmas (1964; 41; or, The young man who dreamed in ghosts), a novel that documents and provides the foundations for a newly emerging national imagined community of male homosexuals.

The discovery (by Monsiváis and Irwin, among others) of the Castrejón novel, which no one knew had existed, in a Mexico City archive in the 1990s, revived interest in the 41. New editions, published first in the United States (in excerpted form, in the 2003 volume The Famous 41, edited by Irwin, Edward J. McCaughan, and Michelle Rocío Nasser) and later in Mexico (2010), brought about critical interpretations of the scandal, which for the first time incorporated sexual dissidence into the mainstream of Mexico’s cultural history. Its unearthing coincided with the global rise of sexuality studies and no doubt inspired new efforts by historians to seek out other events, figures, and sites that might reveal the importance of sexually heterodox subcultures for the national culture of Mexico, as well as that of other nations that have meticulously constructed their national histories and cultures in homophobic terms. The fact that the most notorious of the scandal’s (and the novel’s) protagonists are transgender is especially significant as this group, long in the peripheries of activism, has gained legitimacy in many spheres. Indeed, one of the earliest studies of the 41 scandal addresses it from the perspective of transvestism (Sifuentes-Jáuregui 2002).

By the second decade of the twenty-first century, Mexico’s sexual landscape had changed drastically, with significant inroads made into protecting same-sex couples and prohibiting forms of discrimination and violence against those perceived to transgress national norms of gender and sexuality. Nonetheless, homophobic violence remains widespread in Mexico, and much of it continues to be directed toward los obvios (the obvious ones): effeminate male homosexuals, drag queens, transgender women—in other words, those implicated by the stereotype that emerged from the scandal surrounding El Baile de los 41. Although Mexico in the early twenty-first century offers significant tolerance of difference, at the same time harassment, bullying, and brutality—and at times much worse—continue to dehumanize those whose ways of performing their gender or sexuality defy national norms (Lozano Verduzco 2014; Celorio 2017).

SEE ALSO Antisodomy and Buggery Trials; Bathhouse Raids, Toronto (1981); Camp; Fin de Siècle Sexuality; Mexican Revolution and Sexuality; Queen Boat Trials (2001–2002); Wilde Trials, International Significance of
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Bakla

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A term used in the Philippines for an effeminate man or a homosexual.

The Philippines is a country in Southeast Asia, situated in the western Pacific Ocean. It consists of about 7,641 islands, with nineteen major languages (including Tagalog) and twelve major ethnic groups, resulting in a great diversity of culture.Comparatively, the territory of the Philippines is slightly smaller than the state of California, yet it has more than double the population of California, with overpopulation causing serious social problems. While the Philippines has a diversity of people and languages, the Catholic religion is dominant, with 81 percent of the population adhering to that faith in 2010, according to the Pew-Templeton Global Religious Futures Project. The importance of Catholicism in Filipino culture is a legacy of Spanish colonialism. Catholic Spain controlled the Philippines from 1521 until it lost its colony to the United States in the Spanish-American War (1898).

The influence of Catholicism has resulted in widespread discrimination against the country’s LGBT community, which has limited legal rights. Homosexuality is not criminalized, and antidiscrimination ordinances to protect LGBT persons have been passed in some cities. Yet, there were no legal protections at the national level and same-sex couples could not marry as of 2017 (Mosbergen 2015). While a 2013 Pew Research Center report noted that 70 percent of Filipinos believed homosexuality should be accepted in society, Manila-based LGBT activist Ging Cristobal believes that high tolerance does not translate into real acceptance (Mosbergen 2015).

History of the Term Bakla

Bakla is a Tagalog word that conflates effeminacy, transvestism, and homosexuality (Manalansan 2003). The term can be used in both a derogatory and an endearing way, alongside other phrases and words used to describe nonheteronormative people, such as bayogin (literally, a local bamboo variety), binabae (to be turned into a woman), bayok (a type of timber, the bark of which yields a dye), asog (asexual), paminta (masculine gay men), parlorista (a cross-dresser who works in a beauty parlor), and ladlad (literally, “unfurled the cape,” referring to those who have come out).
Prior to the arrival of the Spanish, some pagan priests or shamans known as catalonans or babaylans could be considered to fall into the category of bakla, although they were not called such. While members of this elite group were frequently female, they could include men with “female inclinations” (Barreto-Tesoro 2008, 74), which included cross-dressing. The Spanish colonizers systematically dismantled this religious system in the sixteenth century.

Bakla has a curious etymology that evolved during the Spanish colonial period, though it was not used to refer to Filipino gay men. In the 1760 Tagalog poem “Mahal na Passion” (The Holy Passion of Christ) by Gaspar Aquino de Belen, bakla or binacla refers to a feeling of inadequacy or failure. In the nineteenth-century Vocabulario de la lengua Tagala (Tagalog dictionary) of Juan de Noceda and Pedro Sanlucar, bakla means to seduce (enganar con lustre o hermosura), to be afraid of something new (expanto de cosa nueva), or to experience pain due to scratching (desollarse por rascarse). Among the many metrical romance narratives written during this period, there is only one, Bernardo Carpio, that has a reference to a character who could be construed as gay: Alfonso de Castro, who is described as someone who does not have a wife and does not like women. This is the closest description of a gay man in colonial literature, but even so, he is never explicitly identified as such. Even in the 1865 Confession Manual of Fray Sebastian de Totanes, homosexual acts were referred to as “playful acts with the same sex,” or nagbibiruan sa kapwa lalake, but never as bakla (Garcia 2008).

There was still no usage of the term bakla in the early years of American colonialism (1898–1946), although interestingly in a 1921 collection of Filipino tales by Dean S. Fansler, there is a short tale about the origin of homosexuality. In the story, St. Peter punishes and beheads some Filipinos, and when Christ orders him to put the heads back on, he mistakenly puts some women’s heads on men’s bodies. In this cautionary tale, it is assumed that men who have women’s heads were bakla, but again nowhere in the story are they identified as such.
The Characters Maxi Oliveros (left) and Victor Perez from the 2005 Filipino Movie Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros. This coming-of-age film focuses on a teen bakla (Maxi) who is torn between his love for a young police officer (Victor) and his loyalty to his family of petty criminals. The movie is one of the first independent films produced in the Philippines to contextualize gay pathos within class and religious conflicts.

Depictions of Bakla in Film and Television

It is possible that the earliest use of the term bakla is in Filipino films, which were influenced by Hollywood films with gay characters that were flamboyant, effeminate, and humorous, referred to as the “the pansy” and “the sissy.” Bakla then, which can mean “to be confused” or “to be afraid” of something new, could easily be used in this context. Thus, in the 1954 film Jack and Jill, written by Mars Ravelo and produced by Sampaguita Pictures, the comic actor known as Dolphy played the cross-dressing Jill, with Lolita Rodriguez as his tomboyish sister, Jack. Jack in this story is bent on making a man out of her gay brother and ironically agrees to marry any of her suitors who can do it, even though Jill is bent on being gay. Dolphy’s portrayal of this hilarious cross-dressing character would later serve as a bakla stereotype and a model for many comedians in the Filipino film industry.

Dolphy would continue to play humorous gay characters in his movies, but in the 1978 drama Ang Tatay kong Nanay (My father who is my mother), written by Orlando Nadres and directed by Lino Brocka, he portrayed a gay beautician, Coring, who is in love with a younger man named Dennis. In this story, Dennis entrusts his child to Coring because Dennis is going to work overseas; the child grows up believing Coring is his father. This poignant film tackles the hardships of being a single parent and the discrimination
experienced by homosexuals. In one scene, Coring, after winning a gay beauty pageant, gives a speech about what it means to be a bakla. The film garnered major acting awards, after which depictions of bakla in Filipino films in the 1970s to the 1990s would vacillate from the humorous to the more serious (Baytan 2008).

The rise of telenovelas and independent films in the 1990s would also contribute to various depictions of bakla across classes and ethnic identifications. Although some of these films and telenovelas degenerated into formulaic confessionary narratives, others presented more challenging depictions. One example of a nuanced characterization of bakla is Ang Pagdadalaga ni Maximo Oliveros (The Blossoming of Maximo Oliveros; dir. Auraeus Solito), a 2005 coming-of-age film about a gay teen who is torn between his love for a young police officer and his loyalty to his family. In 2010 the film was named the best Filipino film of the decade. It is one of the first independent films that contextualizes gay pathos within class and religious conflicts in the Philippines.

Challenges and Gains for Bakla in the Twenty-First Century

Whether or not the preponderance of these gay films will contribute to a positive outlook on bakla or gay people in Philippine society remains an open question. Despite the growing visibility of bakla, there was still little legislation that protected them against discrimination as of 2017. A number of independent LGBT organizations have been formed since 2000 to serve specific needs, including sexual and mental health, HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment, representation in sports and politics, and religious and spiritual concerns. As of 2017, there was no umbrella organization uniting these groups.

In 2003 prominent LGBT activist Danton Remoto founded the political party Ang Ladlad, but it failed to win any seats in the Filipino congress. Ang Ladlad organizes an annual pride march in Manila. The theme of the 2017 Pride March was #HereTogether, which served as a call for the allies of the LGBTQ+ community—friends, family, co-workers—to come out and show their support for equality. The parade was held in Marikina City and drew 7,718 attendees—a larger crowd compared to the 4,000+ people in 2016. This movement serves as a reminder to the Philippines that LGBT rights are human rights, and activists are calling on the country to recognize the rights of people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

There are signs of progress. In 2016 Geraldine Roman became the first openly transgender woman elected to the Congress of the Philippines. That same year, the Department of Social Welfare and Development and the Department of Education approved a new dress code that allows students to wear the school uniform that matches their gender identity. In 2017 the Department of Education began a review of public school curricula and programs to identify gender bias. The new policy also mandated the observance of LGBT-related
celebrations and events in schools, including Pride Month in June.

According to a 2017 report issued by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations caucus on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, the Philippines has become more open to discussions about LGBT issues and has seen a rise in cooperation from government, especially in urban areas. Some local governments have passed laws on gender rights and equality, but these laws are not always enforced.

Filipino gays’ struggle for acceptance and recognition continues. As for Filipino gay emigrants, like many queers of color, they are creating alternative paths to queer modernity and citizenship. For anthropologist Martin Manalansan, the struggle for identity is fraught with the contradiction of progressive development and eventual assimilation. These struggles can be seen in the mundane and everyday, in public engagement that questions racialized and gendered images, and in dealing with life-threatening situations involving AIDS. For instance, scholar Robert Diaz studied the queering of comfort women (those forced into sex work by the Japanese army in occupied territories during World War II) and the issue of the japayuki (Filipinos who migrate to Japan and work as prostitutes) as covered in films like Markova: Comfort Gay (2000; dir. Gil Portes) and The Sex Warriors and the Samurai (1995; dir. Nick Deocampo). Diaz argued that these films provide flashpoints into diasporic nationalisms and a nuanced understanding of the ways in which Filipino queer subjectivities are produced locally and globally. For the bakla and LGBT community everywhere, what is clear is that identity is not merely a consumable product or lifestyle but rather the very “nexus” or contested space by which they confront the tribulations of a changing world (Manalansan 2003, xi).

SEE ALSO MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity

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Herculine Barbin was a French intersex person, determined female at the time of birth in 1838 but reclassified later as male. Barbin, according to Alice Domurat Dreger (1998), is one of the most famous hermaphrodites of the nineteenth century. Michel Foucault (1926–1984), a well-known French philosopher and intellectual, discovered Barbin’s memoirs while conducting research for The History of Sexuality, and they were translated into English by Richard McDougall and published in 1980.

Biographical Overview

Barbin’s memoirs are brief and tragic. Born in Saint-Jean-d’Angély, France, on 8 November 1838 as Adélaïde Herculine Barbin, Barbin was placed in a home for orphaned girls after the death of her father. Eventually, one of the nuns arranged to have her study at a school run by the Ursuline order on a scholarship. In 1856 she was sent to Le Chateau to study to become a teacher, gaining a position as an assistant teacher in 1857. She fell in love with one of the instructors, Sara, and rumors of the affair began to circulate.

Barbin had been ill for most of her life, experienced excruciating pains, and had never begun to menstruate, although she did begin to develop facial hair. Troubled by her embodiment, she sought confession with Jean-François-Anne Landriot, the bishop of La Rochelle. Upon receiving a medical examination in 1860, a physician discovered that though Barbin had a small vagina, she had a small penis and testicles inside her body. She was diagnosed with male pseudohermaphroditism. Barbin was redesignated as male and by law was required to live the rest of her life as a man. The legal decision to reclassify Barbin as male circulated in the press in 1860, causing a salacious scandal; she changed her name to Abel Barbin (though known as Alexina or C) and moved to Paris—leaving her job and her lover to live anonymously. Barbin lived in poverty for the rest of her life while completing her memoirs, which were found beside her bed in February 1868, when the concierge of her boardinghouse found her dead by suicide through the inhalation of gas.
Barbin’s story—unearthed out of a collection of files and reports of medical examiners, lawmakers, and onlookers, along with the rediscovery of her memoirs by Foucault—is a complex one that demonstrates how institutions grappled with regulating bodies considered to be irregular in the eyes of the modern systems of lawmakers, classification. Foucault’s critical introduction to Barbin’s memoirs (1980) allows for an investigation of the genealogy of the category of true sex, which, he argues, had not made an appearance medically until the modern age. In the Middle Ages, he explains, intersex people could decide for themselves if they wished to continue to identify with the sex that had been assigned to them at birth—and only when they intended to marry. Foucault asserts that biological theories of sexuality and the forms of administrative control in modern nations gave rise to the rejection of a “mixture of the two sexes” and ultimately led to the limiting of individual free choice. According to Foucault, from the modern and medical point of view, the physician was no longer concerned with the presence of two sexes, but rather with deciphering the true sex of an intersex person that was hidden beneath ambiguous appearances.

Scholars and historians of sexuality have avidly engaged with Foucault’s analysis of Barbin’s life and memoirs, and the text has served as an important point of departure in discussions of sex and gender, in Foucault’s theories of biopolitics, and in analyses of the power exerted over bodies in the modern age. In Gender Trouble (1990), Judith Butler argues that Foucault’s discussion of Barbin’s life contradicts Foucault’s own theory of power explored in the first volume of The History of Sexuality (1978). Butler criticizes Foucault for his romanticized view of Barbin’s world and sexuality as a “happy limbo of non-identity” (Foucault 1980, xiii), noting that Foucault fails to recognize the power relationships that construct, inform, and condemn Barbin’s sexuality in the modern age. This romantic view of Barbin’s sexuality is at odds with Barbin’s own narrative and instead can serve as a window through which one can understand Western social and cultural views on female love, intimacy, and sexual activity in the 1860s, the 1970s, and today. Jemima Repo (2014) has argued that this complication lies in Foucault’s own analysis of sex as a tool for the exertion of biopower—the power exerted over bodies—rather than being the effect of a cultural system; according to Repo, Butler is more concerned with discussing the various contexts in which identity can manifest via Barbin’s story than with the emergence of gender as a power-laden discourse. These debates have allowed scholars and historians of gender and sexuality to engage with a complex understanding of the ways in which power, biopolitics, sex, and gender inform one’s experiences and relationships both with oneself and with hegemonic social institutions such as law and medicine.

As such, the subject of Barbin’s own self-identification has also been debated in academic circles. The anthropologist Gilbert Herdt (1994) praised Foucault’s analysis of Barbin’s story and further identified Barbin as having provided a crisis for “modern ideology,” in that Barbin’s self-identification was neither male nor female. This was contested by the sociologist M. Morgan Holmes (2004), who argues that Foucault’s critical introduction is
taken at the behest of Barbin's own writings; Barbin's own memoirs describe a self-identification as exceptional female but not outside the boundaries of the female. Holmes asserts that Foucault’s use of Barbin's story serves more to assert the existence of a nonidentity than to engage with Barbin’s own perception of her self-identity. In this way, the scholarly attention Barbin's story has received has led to the revisiting of previous discussions of sex, gender, and biopolitics to engage with considerations of self-identification and the agency of the historicized subject.

Outside of academic contexts, Barbin’s story has been the subject of several scripts, films, and writings. Barbin’s memoirs were used as the inspiration for Jeffrey Eugenides’s *Middlesex* (2002), which won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. The birthday of Barbin, 8 November, is internationally marked as Intersex Day of Remembrance.

**SEE ALSO** *Foucault, Influence of; Intersex Identities; Transvestites/Transsexuals*

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**Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories (2009)**

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A collection of autobiographical narratives written by Lebanese lesbians and one trans man.

This entry examines autobiographical writings by homosexual women and a trans man who live in the multiconfessional, multiethnic, and quasi-secular Lebanese state, as they are narrated in the unique collection of autobiographies *Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories*. As described by the book’s publisher, the title of the book “has a very close meaning to ‘Express Mail’ but a better translation would be ‘Mail in a Hurry.’ It reflects both the urgency of getting these stories across and also the private nature of the stories—like letters written, sealed, and sent out to the world” (quoted in Levin 2012). It focuses in particular on the relationship between the individual and society as seen through the prism of the religious and the sacred.

*Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories* was published in Lebanon in May 2009 by the country’s first lesbian activist organization, Meem. Founded in 2007 and disbanded in 2013, Meem was the first and only lesbian-focused organization in Lebanon. Meem was funded as a nongovernmental organization (NGO), but unlike its more established counterpart, Helem, it was not state-registered. The short-lived but powerful organization produced a weekly online queer magazine, *Bekhsoos* (the original site was launched and discontinued in 2008; the new site ran from 2009 to 2013), which was published in Arabic and English and had at its height an international circulation of approximately 10,000 readers weekly. *Bekhsoos* provided the platform and the audience for the publication of *Bareed Mista3jil* in Arabic and English in 2009. The book sold out its first print run of 550 copies (Parashar 2009). *Bareed Mista3jil* was the second autobiographical collection of its kind to come out in Arabic and from the Arab world; it was preceded by *Haqi an ‘aeesh, an akhtar, an akun* (I have a right to live, to choose, to be), published by Aswat, a Palestinian gay women’s group, in 2007.

**Religion and Lebanon: A Brief Background**

Lebanon is a country that faces the great challenges of rebuilding economically and socially after a civil war that lasted from 1975 to 1990. This war was brought about by multiethnic and multiconfessional tensions and the destabilizing effect of the creation of the Israeli
state with a resulting Palestinian permanent refugee crisis that began in 1948. Lebanon’s religious demographics comprise a small majority of Sunni and Shi’ite Muslims, who account for more than 50 percent of the population. The remaining populace belongs to other branches of Islam or various Christian sects, the largest of which is the (Christian) Maronite sect. The Lebanese government has not conducted an official census since 1932, fearing that new demographics may unsettle the delicate balance (or imbalance) of political power, which rests with the country’s Maronite population. Although reformed in 1989 under the Taif Agreement to include greater parliamentary representation of Muslims, the Lebanese governmental system still requires a Maronite president, a Sunni prime minister, and a Shi’ite president of the General Assembly. For this reason, the Lebanese government has not conducted a census of its population in over eighty-five years, hoping to preserve its quasi-democratic political system that is a legacy of the country’s French colonial past (Faour 2007).

While education and state law in Lebanon are both secular, marriage and inheritance are strictly determined according to religious affiliation, rather than in accordance with secular state laws. Activists have lobbied for civil marriage in Lebanon since the 1950s, and the country is moving slowly toward adopting such laws; the Beirut Bar Association drafted a proposal and submitted it to parliament in November 2017 (Diwan 2017). For the time being, it remains important for every citizen to have a religious affiliation because this affiliation determines rules for marriage, divorce, inheritance, and custody apart from secular family and personal law. And while a new law in 2009 gave permission to citizens to omit religious affiliation from their civil records, the absence of personal civil legislation makes this law symbolic at best.

Despite this focus on religion, Lebanese society, particularly in Christian and metropolitan Beirut, can be both secular and francophone. Since the end of the civil war, efforts toward women’s liberation have increased exponentially (Qāṭirjī 2007; Salīm 1999; Husseini 1997; Joseph 1997). NGOs play no small role in the agitations for social change. The women’s rights NGO ABAAD was instrumental in a successful campaign in 2017 to abolish Lebanon’s Penal Code 522, a law granting clemency to a male rapist if he marries his female victim.

Although Bareed Mista3jil was born out of this feminist activist culture that is powered solely by NGO money and structures, its authors were writing in a time before these advances and, understandably, the experiences they share reflect a darker perspective. Of particular interest are the few personal narratives in Bareed Mista3jil that deal with religious identification in some way, because religion is so central not only to the legality of the individual in Lebanon but also the individual’s position in a relational social space. As the anonymous author(s) of the collection’s introduction recognize:
Both the institution of religion and religious beliefs play a big role in the lives of queer women in Lebanon. Queer people come from all 18 of our official religious sects.... The institution of religion in Lebanon, with its laws and regulations, oppresses women’s bodies and condemns unregulated sexuality outside the marital framework as a socially unacceptable form of expression. This form of oppression happens at both the religious institutional level and that of religious public moral opinion.

(2009, 15)

Lesbian Voices from the Margins

Interestingly, the autobiographical representations discussed here reverberate in theme and experience with those discussed in a sociological study conducted by Ibrahim Abraham with “queer” Muslims in the Australian diaspora (2010). Both sources demonstrate that there is an ongoing struggle between religious identity and sexual/gender preference that is met with either shame and repression, abandonment of the faith, or an embrace of a noninstitutional, spiritual practice. Another study of a Malaysian Muslim population in Singapore also yields similar results, giving these findings a peculiar internationalism (Maulod and Jamil 2010). These studies suggest that queer Muslims struggle with their community of faith, which polices their nonnormative behavior, rather than with how their own sexuality may be at odds with revered scripture (Abraham 2010; Maulod and Jamil 2010; Kelly 2010). Nevertheless, the community of faith also relies on scripture to validate its prejudices. One autobiographical account in Bareed Mista3jil exposes precisely this phenomenon. In the chapter titled “Becoming,” the anonymous narrator tells us,

I was born in 1982.

Growing up in a Maronite family, I was a very religious teenager. I read the Bible three times a day. In the morning, I would read inspiring verses from the Psalms. After school, before doing my homework, I would read a passage from the Gospels, and before I went to bed, a passage from the Letters....

At the same time, I knew I was gay since I was six years old.... I honestly did not believe that homosexuality was a problem. It was so natural to me and I was sure it wasn’t a problem.

(53 – 54)
The narrator's perspective changed at age fourteen after reading what she describes as “a passage that would haunt me for years” (55). In Romans 1 the apostle Paul provides the basis for centuries of church persecution of same-sex sexuality, attributing to same-sex behavior a series of immoral character traits such as homicidal tendencies, covetousness, deceptive intentions, and evil-mindedness (Hergemöller and Phillips 2001). This religious perspective is also drawn from the biblical story of Lot, which appears originally in the Torah and reappears in the Qur’an (with Lot’s name changed to Lut). In this story of God’s terrible judgment on the sinful cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the Sodomites are ascribed evil traits and it is implied that these are inextricable from (and possibly caused by) same-sex sexual behaviors. Many scholars have problematized the literal readings of these stories as condemnations of sexual orientations and identities as we understand them in more recent contexts (Boswell 1980, 1994; Habib 2008; Karslake 2007; Kugle 2010; Wink 1996, 1999). Nevertheless, monotheistic religious institutions cannot be absolved of the homo- and transphobia that have affected and certainly continue to affect the lives of nonnormative persons throughout the world.

After reading Romans 1, the narrator of “Becoming” experiences the guilt and shame that is described more generically by the anonymous author of the introduction:

Many Lebanese queers fear that God frowns upon non-heterosexual desires and behaviour. Their sexual identity comes with a lot of guilt, shame, and attempts of repression…. The outcome of these struggles in some cases is an understanding of God’s unconditional love and a reconciliation of faith and sexuality. But in other cases, queer people reject faith altogether and choose to be agnostic or atheist.

(16)

Interestingly, the author of “Becoming” finds a way to reconcile her Christianity with her sexual orientation. Rather than remaining steadfast in that childhood certainty that she is a moral and natural being, her self-love deteriorates until one day when she chances on a Lebanese television program about homosexuality. A homosexual man was being interviewed, along with a number of Muslim and Christian religious figures. The usual venomous condemnation and demonization of the homosexual guest was interrupted when one priest argued against this trend, asserting that homosexuality was natural. When another priest on the program said that if he loved homosexuals so much, then he should go and become one, he responded calmly that he could no more become a homosexual than a homosexual could become heterosexual.
For the author of “Becoming,” this was a defining moment in her life. On her own, and with the backing of a religious authority on the subject, she was able to reread Romans 1 and to recognize that her sexual orientation alone could not possibly make her an enemy of God. She tells us that “I became happy and confident again” (57).

This newfound faith was not shared by members of her religious community, who, on learning her sexual orientation, shamed her and pressured her to cure the incurable. The narrator’s mother, who is mortified when she learns that her sixteen-year-old daughter has identified herself as a lesbian, confines her to her room and subjects her to a series of hot baths for thirteen consecutive days. At school, her classmates are told that she is “ill,” and she is banned from participating in activities in her parish, which once were the center of her young life. Given this reaction, it is no wonder that the narrator of “Becoming” asserts, “I’ve learned that organized religion only wants to control people, and that the only true message of any faith is love…. I started a lesbian support group called Meem, based on the same principles of solidarity and friendship. And that little tomboy who wanted to be a missionary is now an activist for social justice” (61).

The narrator of the chapter “My Faith Is about Love” also comes, independently, to a similar conclusion. She too is a devout Christian, involved in her parish’s many youth activities. One day she kisses another girl her age and discovers her sexual orientation. Unlike the narrator in “Becoming,” she struggles to accept her sexuality and initially finds herself fixated on the idea that the Church did not accept homosexuals, that what I was doing was sinful and shameful…. Then one day, out of the blue, at 15 years of age, I wake up and it hits me that I could be wrong in my thinking…. With time I reevaluated everything I had been taught about Christianity…. Homosexuality doesn’t hurt anybody and it doesn’t offend God. On the contrary, it is about love and the freedom to love.

(79)

In these two narratives, religion spills into a broader realm of spiritual being, and activism is infused with Christian values of love and forgiveness, as well as social justice, where the figure of Christ becomes all “about love” rather than daily ritual or dictates concerning day-to-day living. Faith is also a source of solace for families with lesbian or transgender children in Lebanon; it need not always be a source of homo- or transphobia, as demonstrated in the story “God’s Will.” The narrator tells us that at seventeen she came out to herself as a lesbian, and when she told her mother, a devout Muslim, her mother took solace in the belief that God is the organizer of all being and has thus writ for her daughter.
Elegantly the narrator tells us, "My parents' faith is the source of their compassion and unconditional love towards me and all of their children" (83). Nevertheless, the narrator of "God's Will" has to confront an unusual set of prejudices in the small Lebanese lesbian community to which she belongs. In choosing to wear the veil, she often finds herself engaged in discussions about the incompatibility of her faith and her sexual orientation. Yet she perseveres in her beliefs because of the example her parents have set in adhering to her religion and its practices.

The narrator of “My Hijab and I” reveals that she faces discrimination from some members of the lesbian community. Discrimination based on the visibility of the veil is a marker of the body against which her Christian counterparts need not defend themselves. She comes up with a humorous response that exposes the ethnocentricity of those who challenge her about the hijab and its “incompatibility” with her sexual orientation: “It’s not like I suddenly lose all sexual feeling when I cover my head” (176). The narrator tells us that even as a young girl she had wanted to wear the veil because for her it denoted adulthood and, when she was a child, it was a means for her to imitate the women in her life who were important to her, particularly her mother, whom she held in high esteem. Indeed, her mother denied her requests to wear the hijab until she reached a suitable age (after puberty).

**Narrative of a Trans Man**

In the chapter “Transexual Not Translucent,” a young trans man from a Muslim family tells the reader

> There was a show with a transsexual plot: a male teacher was transitioning to become female. I was watching my mom the whole time, hiding in the corner. Suddenly, she looked at me and said, You know, in Islam it's completely okay for transsexuals to change their gender. I looked at her disbelievingly. Yes, she continued, it’s against religion to force yourself to be something you’re not.

(169)

The narrator does not realize that his mother was speaking of intersexuality, not transsexuality; when he tells her the next day that he wants to change his sex, she rejects the idea totally, showing none of the understanding she had seemed to voice the previous evening. She calls his father (whom she divorced when the narrator was eight) who lives in New York, and he too fails to support his son’s wishes. In investigating Islam’s stance on transgender operations, the narrator discovers that the Islamic Republic of Iran and Saudi
Arabia both permit and financially facilitate gender-reassignment surgeries in spite of stringent Islamic dogmas that condemn homosexuality. This is because there is no mention of transsexuality in either the Qur’an or the Hadith (the primary scriptures from which religious rulings are derived by the clergy); interpretations of the story of Lut in the Qur’an form the basis for condemnation of same-sex sexual behavior. Nevertheless, the permissiveness of the theologians is not relevant to the narrator’s case; he tells us that as far as his parents were concerned, “I was starting to understand that society plays a bigger role in their lives than religion” (170).

What can be learned from these narratives? Primarily, an understanding of the different ways religion permeates the lives of gender- and sexual-minority persons in Lebanon can be gained. Faith can empower LGBT people and members of their families, or it can be a reason for disillusionment. Social customs and traditions, rather than religion more narrowly, appear to be what drive and sustain homophobia and transphobia, but there is certainly a synergy between the community (of faith) and religion in the construction of the sinful and the sacred. In Lebanon, though the secular state is only quasi-secular, it has to an extent resisted the insularity of theocratic states such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, allowing a new, postwar generation of young queer persons to discover a community and activism with which they can learn and empower themselves. The narratives also provide evidence that contradicts the stereotype of an Arab world that is homogenously prohibitive and unaccepting; instead, there are glimpses of familial acceptance and closeness based on candid disclosure of formerly clandestine identities, as well as instances of familial rejection and abuse after those disclosures. Ultimately, however, the narratives reveal that lesbians and transgender persons in Lebanon are neither the helpless victims imagined in the West nor the evildoers caricatured by social and religious institutions that continue to struggle to accept and admit them. These narratives present eloquent autobiographies that reveal strength, determination, and, above all, introspective survival.

SEE ALSO Aswat; ʿAwdat al-Almani ilā Rushdih (2006; Rashid al-Daif); Bayrūt ‘75 (1975; Ghāda al-Sammān); Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; Hajar al-Dahik (1990; Hoda Barakat); Jannāt wa-Iblīs (1992; Nawal El Saadawi); Lebanese (2008; Alissar Gazal); Meem; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Islam

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Bars and Cabarets in Europe

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The development of drinking establishments throughout Europe that specifically serve gay and lesbian customers.

Drinking establishments, which have also frequently offered entertainment such as music, dance, and theater, have long served as significant locations within the urban homosexual subcultures of Europe. Their ability to attract men and women looking for relationships has turned them into sites where communities have formed and identities have been fashioned. The first evidence of such drinking establishments date back to the eighteenth century. As northern Europe’s cities (especially London, Paris, and Amsterdam) grew dramatically in size, certain pubs, inns, and restaurants began to acquire a reputation as places for men interested in sexual contact with other men to meet. Most of these establishments probably served a mixed public, but a few seem to have been more exclusively focused on people who would today be called homosexual men. In London, so-called molly houses included both alehouses and several coffeehouses where men who acted effeminately and sometimes dressed as women were known to congregate.

The number of establishments remained quite small through much of the nineteenth century, with most remaining open for a very short time. As Aaron Betsky (1997) has observed, they were often located in socially marginal spaces such as slums, red-light districts, or the outskirts of town. However, as the economic transformation of Europe after 1860 led many European cities to explode in size, new centers of entertainment for gay men appeared. London’s gay life focused on the West End, with many of the bars located near Piccadilly Circus, Leicester Square, and Soho. Paris’s gay life was a little more dispersed at first, but by the 1920s the neighborhoods of Montmartre, Pigalle, and Montparnasse had emerged as centers of gay nightlife. In Berlin, clusters of gay clubs could be found on Friedrichstraße, around Nollendorfplatz, and in the western district of Schöneberg. And by the interwar period, gay bars could even be found in smaller cities such as Cannes, Copenhagen, Hannover, Cologne, Düsseldorf, and Munich.

After World War II (1939–1945), a new phase of economic expansion that also interacted in complicated ways with a postwar transformation in sexual mores took place. Amsterdam and Hamburg established reputations as major centers for gay life in northern Europe during the 1950s, and by the 1970s the first gay bars had appeared in Mediterranean
countries such as Italy, Portugal, and Spain. Because of communist domination, much of eastern Europe was left out of this development until after 1990; today, however, Prague has a prospering nightlife scene for gay men and lesbians, and homosexual bars and nightclubs can be found even in Moscow, Saint Petersburg, and Warsaw. In many cases, urban areas with clusters of gay bars became nuclei around which queer villages formed beginning in the 1970s, with London's Soho, Berlin's Schöneberg and Kreuzberg, Paris's Marais, Munich's Glockenbachviertel, and Barcelona's Gaixample being some of the best known.

Lesbian bars were slower to be established, but by the end of the nineteenth century small groups of women were sometimes seen using predominately male gay bars to socialize and drink. As economic opportunities for single women expanded and social anxieties about unaccompanied women taking advantage of public space slowly relaxed, a few bars devoted to lesbians began to appear. Paris, famously, had Le Monocle on Boulevard Edgar Quinet, which became known by the 1920s for the women wearing tuxedos who sat about drinking through the evening. Berlin had a handful of exclusively lesbian bars by the turn of the century, and this number grew to over fifty by the mid-1920s. World War II and the Nazi occupation of much of Europe led this nascent lesbian scene to largely disappear for several decades, but lesbian bars began to reappear during the 1970s in the wake of the sexual revolution and the rise of second-wave feminism. However, feminist commentators have observed that even today there continues to be many more bars that cater to gay men than to lesbians.

**Cabaret**

Cabaret refers to a form of theatrical entertainment that mixes comedy, songs, skits, dance, and sometimes other forms of entertainment such as juggling or pantomime. Shows deal with topical issues—politics, fashion, current events, and above all sex—generally in the form of satire or parody. Such variety entertainment emerged first in the music halls of early nineteenth-century Britain and then spread to the United States (where such shows were known as vaudeville) and continental Europe by the 1880s.

Cabaret sometimes included female impersonators onstage. Perhaps the best-known female impersonator during the interwar period, thanks to publicity offered by the French poet and artist Jean Cocteau (1889–1963), was Barbette (c. 1899–1973; née Vander Clyde), an American who performed a high-wire act in drag at such well-known theaters as Paris's Moulin Rouge and the Folies Bergère. Also famous were Leif (1909–1967) and Paal Roschberg (1909–1955), otherwise known as the Rocky Twins, who performed as the Dolly Sisters for the first time at the Casino de Paris music hall in 1928.
The Eldorado was a famous nightclub in Weimar-era Berlin that specialized in cross-dressing performers and employees, both male and female. Although there were earlier bars and theaters that went by this name, this particular nightclub opened originally on Kantstraße during the early 1920s and then moved to Lutherstraße 30 directly across from the wellknown Scala cabaret. This position at one of the centers of the city’s nightlife allowed it to become Berlin’s best-known transvestite revue. As the city acquired international attention for its risqué entertainment, the club by 1927 became a popular location for celebrities, socialites, and tourists interested in a taste of the city’s “decadent” sites. Visitors to the club described an elegantly decorated room with an orchestra and performers who danced and sang. In the audience, one could see women wearing tuxedos sitting at tables together, as well as men in women’s costume who circulated to dance with paying customers. A second, larger Eldorado was opened at the corner of Motzstraße and Kalckreuthstraße, near Nollendorfplatz, in early 1931. Both clubs operated simultaneously for a time until the Lutherstraße location closed later in the year. It is the Motzstraße location whose exterior, adorned with a large marquee reading “HIER IST’S RICHTIG!” (Here It’s All Right!) above its doors, is best known through existing photographs. It stayed open until October 1932, when Berlin’s police chief revoked the dance permit for clubs where same-sex couples were known to dance.

Truth be told, the Eldorado was not typical of the city’s gay nightlife. It never advertised regularly in Germany’s homosexual periodicals, nor is it clear that it attracted a predominantly homosexual audience during the interwar era. Nevertheless, famous descriptions of the club were recorded in Ruth Margarete Roellig's (1928) and Curt Moreck's (1931) popular overviews of Berlin’s gay scene. The expressionist painters Otto Dix (1891–1969), Ernst Fritsch (1892–1965), and Christian Schad (1894–1982) also created noteworthy images of moments in the club. Its interwar reputation allowed it to be transformed after 1945 into a metonym for Weimar’s homosexual subculture, now imagined as a kind of golden age for experimentation, nighttime adventure, and sexual freedom. After the war, a club by the same name reopened on Martin-Luther-Straße and continued to feature the city’s best-known drag show until the end of the 1960s, when it closed.

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There was much overlap between variety shows and the cross-dressing acts that became popular in some gay bars around the turn of the century. Weimar-era Berlin became especially well known for the transvestite revues that one could watch in the Eldorado club or the Mikado. Many of these nightclubs were closed over the course of the 1930s and 1940s as Nazi influence was extended across the continent; they reappeared, however, during the 1950s. Drag shows continue to play an important role today in all gay scenes across Europe.

Gay and Lesbian Bars as Social and Political Spaces

What precisely happens in homosexual bars has varied a great deal over the years. Same-sex dancing has been common, although obviously this has depended on the legal status of homosexuality and local government regulations that might have made it dangerous for owners and patrons alike. By the 1970s, though, discos with large dance floors and enormous sound systems were attracting a large number of gay men and lesbians. Prior to the era of readily available recorded music, many bars featured a piano player who might provide background music or orchestrate sing-alongs in the crowd. Other bars featured a stage to host singers or theatrical acts.

Establishments have been differentiated from one another not only by the entertainment that they provided but also by the customers. By the early twentieth century, several major cities included smaller, rather plain bars for male prostitutes and working-class customers, posher bars for a middle- and upper-class public, clubs full of cross-dressers (which also frequently attracted tourists interested in slumming), and then smaller, quieter pubs that attracted an older clientele. Some clubs have also focused on customers with particular fashion and sexual tastes: for example, Le Monocle in 1920s Paris attracted women who wore tuxedos or other masculine attire, and Hamburg’s Loreley turned itself into the first club for leathermen in 1967.

Beginning with the emergence of the first molly houses in the early eighteenth century, there is evidence that gay drinking establishments served as important social locations for the construction and expression of sexual identity. By the turn of the twentieth century,
there are signs that a similar interaction between physical space, socializing, and performance of identity was taking place in lesbian clubs of Paris and Berlin. In drinking establishments devoted to homosexual customers, homosexual men and women acquired a sense of belonging to a larger community. Here, they could also fashion identities through specific clothes, language, stories, songs, behavior, and interactions.

During much of the twentieth century, some gay bars also hosted social and political organizations devoted to gay and lesbian life. For example, many of the friendship societies of 1920s and post-1945 Germany met in local gay and lesbian bars. Because homosexual bars have served over the years as spaces nurturing sexual identity and hosting homosexual organizations, they have been seen by some historians and academic champions of cultural studies as serving important political purposes. Although no European bar offers such a clear example of political confrontation as New York’s Stonewall Inn did during the riots of June 1969, one can certainly argue that the social networks of the bars created possibilities for resisting efforts of the police and other government authorities to monitor and regulate homosexual activities. Furthermore, the subculture that took form in part in the bars was political in the sense that it implicitly questioned and challenged normative attitudes about proper gender behavior and sexual preferences. Such arguments have perhaps most commonly been made in connection to the “camp sensibility” that found expression in the gay cabaret of 1920s Europe and in the drag shows put on by some clubs today. Finally, the presence of gay bars in some neighborhoods has enabled a kind of “reterritorialization” and “recoding” of urban sexual space in the form of gay villages, creating opportunities for gay- and lesbianpositive images and symbols to be exhibited.

It should be noted, however, that politicized gay men and lesbians have not always embraced the activities or the spaces of the bars. Activists have been known to complain about the difficulty of motivating bar patrons to become politically engaged. There also has been some concern that such spaces encouraged unhealthy sexual habits and identities and only fed prejudices that circulated within the wider society. Some of the friendship societies of the early twentieth century, most notably France’s Arcadie, hoped to create an alternative space away from the bars. During the 1970s, Marxist-influenced critics of the New Left criticized gay commercial establishments as manifestations of the larger capitalist society that they hoped to destroy. And even as Marxist influence has declined, some political activists continue to see the bars of the commercialized (and increasingly gentrified) gay scenes of Europe as distractions at best and as elements of the social structures that segregate people along lines of age, ethnicity, nationality, and wealth at worst.

SEE ALSO Bars, Working-Class, in Mexico; Cabaret Theater in Latin America and the Caribbean; Cruising and Cruising Grounds; Drag, Asian; Friendship Societies in Europe; Molly Houses; Sexual Revolution in Europe
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Bars, Working-Class, in Mexico

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*Notable establishments in various Mexican cities where classes mix in a sexually diverse environment.*

Mexican sexuality is usually understood, both popularly and academically, under the grand narratives of the active/male–passive/female dichotomy, the Mediterranean complex that focuses on the act of penetration, and the cultural readings of symbolic sexual acts developed by Octavio Paz in his seminal *El laberinto de la soledad* ([1950; The Labyrinth of Solitude [1985]]). However, as demonstrated by the anthropologist Guillermo Núñez Noriega ([2001](#)), among others, (homo)sexuality in Mexico is widely diverse and historically rich and encompasses a series of activities that cannot be conceived of and are silenced in such dichotomous understandings. Diverging from the hegemonic definitions of sexuality as manifestations of the nationalist social order of male and female citizens (i.e., “Mexican machismo”), working-class sexuality has historically been shaped as much by processes of industrialization, rural geographies, and structures of power and discipline (as in Pablo Piccato’s [2003] scholarship on Mexican prisons) as by mutual pleasure. In historical sources such as the Mexico City bus-drivers’ journal *El chafirete* (a slang term for “chauffeur”; published in 1923), Cantinflas’s early film *Águila o sol* ([1937](#)), and Salvador Novo’s autobiography *La estatua de sal* ([1945; Pillar of Salt [2014]]), there is ample historical evidence of working-class homosexual and homosocial individuals and communities that belie the active/passive–penetrator/penetrated Mediterranean complex. And even though the commercialized Zona Rosa has become the quickest-growing and most popular gay community, reflecting Mexico City’s rapid modernization, the rest of the establishments in the city and the country provide rich alternative histories of LGBTTTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, transgender, transvestite, queer, and intersexual) individuals and communities. LGBTTTQI is the acronym used by Mexican activists to bring attention to how the mestizo nationalist heteropatriarchal order enacts layers of exclusion, from sexual preference to gender performance to biological difference.

Mexico’s cities and towns, over the course of the twentieth century, grew at the rhythm of the nation’s economic development, and bars and other venues appeared where citizens excluded from the nationalist sociosexual hegemony gathered. In some, men assemble under the performance of a *norteño* (northern Mexican) hypermasculinity, and the feminine behaviors of *jotos* (queers or faggots), are discouraged. Others in more developed
cities gather a wider diversity of sexually and socially divergent individuals, some of whom experience extreme intolerance for their sociosexual expression. The diversity of these individuals and communities assembles alternative masculinities and femininities that question not only the symbolic active/passive dichotomy of the sexual act but also the violent and heteropatriarchal order of mestizo Mexicanness (mexicanidad). The establishments discussed below are examples of urban workingclass spaces from various parts of the nation, and by no means should they be taken as representative of all working-class experiences in Mexico.

**El Norte**

In the northern regions of Mexico, the hegemonic ideologies of mestizo nationalism collide with norteño masculinities, making public expressions of sexual or gender nonconformity potentially dangerous because of the exclusionary violence demanded by these ideologies, where men and women who refuse to conform their bodies can be subject to physical violence. LGBTTTQI working-class sexual interactions tend to take place in private gatherings, parties, and unofficial venues, where men engage each other socially and sexually, as shown in Oliver Rendón's 2011 documentary *En tierra de vaqueros* (In the land of cowboys). Places such as these allow men to interact sexually, while avoiding being labeled with the sociosexual identities of “homosexual,” “gay,” or “joto,” because they are performing masculinities whose success depends on complex codes of honor and silence and not only strength or virility. As documented by Núñez Noriega (2001; 2008; 2015) and other anthropologists, these spaces allow normative masculinities to be negotiated through mutual pleasure, where the active-passive complex is disturbed by the hegemonic and hypermasculine category of the hombre (the Mexican “man”). As long as these men perform masculinity, their sexual choices do not mark them as “homosexual” or anything other than straight. In more urban areas such as Hermosillo, Sonora, with a population of less than a million, established venues and bars such as Cantina Pluma Blanca, La Campechana, and Club Obregón provide spaces where a wider diversity of individuals engages each other socially as much as sexually. Pluma Blanca is a small cantina serving only liter-size caguamas (bottles) of Pacífico beer; its proximity to the public university attracts countercultural politicized students and manual laborers who in their interactions expand and challenge definitions of masculinities and femininities. Club Obregón and La Campechana are, by contrast, two very different bars, where women mingle and where straight pornography may play on television screens, but the men who frequent them are often there to seek out other men.
Interior of Pluma Blanca in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. The Pluma Blanca’s proximity to a nearby university attracts a mix of countercultural politicized students and manual laborers who expand and challenge their definitions of masculinities and femininities in their interactions.

What these spaces signal is a sexual spectrum that discretely separates acts from identities. While individuals are performing acts for which they are excluded from the hegemonic order, the resistance of some to categories such as “homosexual,” “joto,” or “afeminado” (effeminate man) points to a working-class positionality in the social order that associates these categories with a middle-class consumer status. Thus, alternative masculinities and femininities are generated, sexually fluid but publicly performed within gender forms; this bypasses the violence that Mexican heteropatriarchy demands of men by rejecting the dichotomy of active/passive associated with male-female/conqueror-conquered (Paz [1950] 1985). In establishing zones of sexual pleasure where masculinities and femininities are reified while simultaneously eroded, especially by embodying what Paz ([1950] 1985) negatively describes as the openness associated with femininity and weakness, these working-class bars resignify gendered, sexual, and national identities by rejecting the violence inherent in the normative mestizo nationalist ideologies that instruct citizens to be macho men and submissive women. It must be remarked, however, that the historical predominance of male-dominated spaces silences female experiences, whose presence in them is understood in relation to these models of masculinities and not in female-exclusive or lesbian bars, which are vastly outnumbered by male-oriented establishments. In the more urbanized areas, the number of women and trans-oriented organizations surpass the number of lesbian or trans bars, pointing to a difference in socializing spaces and political
goals.

In terms of urban centers in northern Mexico, Monterrey, Nuevo León, with a population of 4.5 million, is the most industrialized city in that region. Although there are many gay bars in the city, especially in the downtown area, most cater to the middle class, and almost none to the upper-class population. However, the city does have several unique working-class bars. The most famous of these are the twin bars Wateke–El Jardín Cruz Blanca, located in the city center under the metro line. An assortment of patrons enter a door at the literal end of a rainbow painted on the outside wall: construction workers just ending their workday, the dust and sweat still heavy on them; taxi and bus drivers; public university professors; manual laborers; transvestites and transsexuals; and the odd newcomer or artist. The bars become a space where, similar to Pluma Blanca, masculinities and femininities are fluid and constantly renegotiated. With an open acceptance (as opposed to tolerance) of all gender expressions, Wateke and Jardín are notorious for being sexual spaces characterized by communal self-care and self-expression. The wide diversity of patrons who gather there create an environment where (lower) class alliance allows for an inclusion that detaches “homosexual” from exclusive markers of gender, race, consumer habits, and gender performance. Instead, in coming together, these patrons make explicit their intersectional similarities: their marginalization and precariousness with regard to the Mexican state and general society. As demonstrated at various events, such as raising funds for the parents of forty-three students from the Ayotzinapa teachers college who disappeared on their way to a protest in 2014, the patrons of Wateke and Jardín assemble their definition of (homo)sexuality in an intersectional manner, inserting a historicity of subjective experiences that opposes the flatness of a more cosmopolitan, urban, and consumer-oriented “gay” identity (present in other middle-class bars in the downtown area). In doing so, their definitions of gender and sexuality are intrinsically a political taking of position, a gesture toward the rejection and marginalization these patrons experience from society at large in Monterrey.

On another end of the spectrum, Monterrey has the bar known as El E (with the E pronounced as in the English alphabet), where men whose identity rests on norteño masculinity come together. The music is exclusively rancheras and cumbias, with no pop music; patrons are almost exclusively cismen, dressed in jeans, boots, buckled belts, and Texan hats and performing a masculinity resting on stereotypes of rural cowboys, with the presence of ciswomen, trans women, and other performances of femininity discouraged. This exclusion negates the explicit political thrust that working-class spaces such as Wateke and Jardín hold, fetishizing and reifying a version of norteño masculinity whose performance must be impeccably “manly” in order to remain legitimate. By contrast, club Muxets (a play on muxe, the transgender tradition among the Zapotec communities on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the state of Oaxaca) brings together working-class individuals performing fluid or trans identities. Heavily decorated with sequins on the stage, the bar usually resonates with upbeat dance music. Patrons are men and women who come
together to see drag shows and Mr. Gay pageants; in spite of this global phenomenon, the overall performance and space is decidedly working class, observable in the habitus of the patrons as they appropriate and subvert the globalized notions of “gay” and drag. As opposed to lesbian bars such as Between, characterized by a butch environment materializing the masculinizing "Lola la traílera” stereotype of a female truck driver, Muxets and other drag bars allow expressions of femininity performed by any gender, thus resisting the limitation of “gay” as feminine-performing male bodies or “lesbian” as masculine-performing female bodies.

**Mexico City**

Aside from the now globally positioned Zona Rosa—a neighborhood historically known for prostitution but now associated with a highly commercialized/consumerist (and, as some would argue, hegemonic) gay community—Mexico City, too, offers a variety of working-class bars, as do many major urban centers throughout Latin America. One of the most famous is El Spartacus, located near the Benito Juárez International Airport in Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl. *Chacales*—“rough trade” men whose masculinity is tied to the eroticization of manual labor—populate the bar along with a wide variety of trans and female patrons. With a highly sexualized atmosphere, El Spartacus contrasts with the Zona Rosa gay bars in that patrons are encouraged to express their sexuality freely, with condoms distributed by the nation’s Secretariat of Health. In this way, the consumer habits associated with urban homosexualities are thwarted and substituted by sexual habits that assemble a homosexual identity based on sexual acts and not on performative or consumer decisions. In downtown Mexico City, bars such as El Viena and El Oasis provide spaces where working-class men and women socialize after the daily toil in nonsexual spaces, dancing to salsa, *cumbia*, and *banda*. By associating homosexuality with popular Mexican icons, the patrons of these bars construct sociosexual identities that again contrast with the more cosmopolitan and market-oriented (and middle/upper-class) homosexualities of the Zona Rosa.

As in other Latin American countries with strong traditions and processes of nation formation that have been promoted by (often violent) states, Mexico’s working class has been stereotypically described as the ultimate embodiment of the heteropatriarchal society (by such writers as Samuel Ramos, Octavio Paz, and Roger Bartra). Contrary to this idea, working-class spheres provide a diversely rich version of LGBTIQQI history that surpasses the limits of contemporary definitions of “gay” or “lesbian.” These citizens have generated spaces where LGBTIQQI individuals, and some straight-identifying people, come together to challenge the processes of nationalist subjectification by reappropriating popular symbols and stereotypes (e.g., rural masculinity in vaqueros and charros, wrestlers, gogo boys) and resignifying them as vehicles of mutual pleasure without the violent heteronormative components. The presence of these straight-identifying citizens
challenges the norms of heterosexuality, foregrounding sociosexual acts over identities. Given the historical roots of male “homosexual” identities in middle- and upper-class experiences and identities (e.g., El Baile de los 41, the Contemporáneos artistic group), these and other working-class spaces allow individuals to generate and assemble their own variation of what it means (historically, politically, sexually, and socially) to be LGBTTQI, or even to identify as “heterosexual” and still engage in same-sex sexual encounters but more importantly socialize in these spaces, especially when the hegemonic urban centers of knowledge production are so closely tied to the geographies and habits of an increasingly global consumer culture.

SEE ALSO Bars and Cabarets in Europe; Cabaret Theater in Latin America and the Caribbean; Cruising and Cruising Grounds; Madame Satã (1900–1976); Mexican Revolution and Sexuality

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On 5 February 1981, four gay bathhouses in downtown Toronto were raided by police. More than 300 men were arrested and charged under Canada’s “bawdy house” laws, which criminalized group sex and other nonnormative sexual activities. The raids were the culmination of Operation Soap, a six-month police investigation involving extensive undercover surveillance.

The response of Toronto’s LGBTQ community was furious and rapid. In less than twenty-four hours, over 3,000 angry demonstrators were on the march. Chanting “No more shit,” the demonstrators confronted police officers at the Division 52 station before continuing to Queen’s Park and the Ontario Legislative Building (Warner 2002). This was the largest LGBTQ demonstration in Canadian history until a second protest involving 4,000 people occurred on 20 February 1981 (Hooper 2016). LGBTQ activists devoted extensive time and energy to the legal defense of the men charged with various “bawdy house” offenses. The Right to Privacy Committee assumed a leading role in terms of legal strategy and fund-raising. Most of those charged were eventually acquitted. This legal rebuke, as well as the strength of LGBTQ opposition, forced the Metropolitan Toronto Police to rethink its tactics (Grube 1997).

The bathhouse raids of 1981 are an important milestone in Canadian LGBTQ history. The raids generally unified Toronto’s LGBTQ community against state regulation, while fostering solidarity and linkages with activists based in cities such as Montreal, Ottawa, and Edmonton, where similar police raids were occurring. The Right to Privacy Committee provided a model for organizations that were established to confront the HIV/AIDS crisis in the mid-1980s (McCaskell 2016). To be fully understood, the bathhouse raids must be situated in several historical contexts.
Gay Liberation

Gay liberation crystallized in Canada in the early 1970s. Toronto-based activists played a leading role in the “We Demand” protest of 1971, which produced one of Canada’s first gay liberation manifestos (Churchill 2014). This manifesto called on the Liberal government of Pierre Trudeau (1919–2000) to expand the Canadian government’s partial decriminalization of homosexual acts between two adults over the age of twenty-one. During the 1970s, Toronto emerged as an internationally significant center of gay liberation activism, in part because of an influx of LGBTQ draft dodgers from the United States who opposed the Vietnam War (Churchill 2001). These individuals advanced the growth of the city’s gay liberation institutions, such as The Body Politic.

By the mid-1970s, The Body Politic had become one the most important gay liberation periodicals in the world and had established a reputation for courageous articles that explored and challenged sexual norms (de Groot 2015). One such article, Gerald Hannon’s “Men Loving Boys Loving Men,” was a journalistic investigation into intergenerational sex and sexuality. Published in 1977, the article unleashed a firestorm of outrage in Toronto, especially because it was printed in the aftermath of the high-profile, sexualized murder of a young boy named Emanuel Jaques by adult men (Graydon 2011). The Metropolitan
Toronto Police, in conjunction with the Ontario Provincial Police, responded with a major raid on *The Body Politic* in December 1977, which resulted in obscenity charges and a lengthy court battle. This was an early attack by Toronto’s police establishment against a gay liberation movement that was rising in prominence and visibility, and an important precursor to the bathhouse raids.

**The Barracks Raid**

On 9 December 1978, Toronto police stormed into the Barracks, a major gay bathhouse in downtown Toronto. It may have been targeted by police because of its reputation for sadomasochism and kinkiness involving leather, chains, whips, and restraints (*Nash 2014*). Two undercover officers entered the bathhouse shortly after midnight and proceeded to document acts considered indecent under Canada’s bawdy house laws. These acts included sex in a communal space, masturbation in a room with an open door, and the use of toys such as whips and clamps. After gathering evidence of such “indecency,” the undercover officers opened the front door of the Barracks to a group of twenty police officers. They proceeded to arrest and charge twenty-eight men with various bawdy house offenses (*Warner 2002*).

Mere hours after the raid, a group of gay activists, businesspeople, and bathhouse patrons gathered at the home of Peter Maloney, a local gay businessman and bathhouse owner, to consider a response. They decided to mobilize broad-based opposition, and a meeting was held at the 519 Church Street Community Centre, a major gathering place for Toronto’s LGBTQ community, on 11 December 1978. Activists and community members decided to hold a press conference denouncing the raid. At the press conference Mariana Valverde, a member of *The Body Politic* collective, asserted that “an attack on any gay establishment is an attack on the whole gay community, and that includes lesbians” (quoted in *Hooper 2016*, 53). A public demonstration involving approximately 400 people was then held on 16 December 1978 (*Warner 2002*). Protesters linked the prosecution of *The Body Politic* with the raid on the Barracks and denounced police oppression.

**The Right to Privacy Committee**

The group that mobilized this response was soon named the Right to Privacy Committee (RTPC). Not everyone agreed with this name because of its liberal connotations. Nevertheless, the name stuck. Members of the RTPC included Tom Warner of the Coalition for Gay Rights in Ontario, Brent Hawkes of the Metropolitan Community Church, Brian Mossop of the Gay Alliance Towards Equality, and businesspeople Peter Maloney and Michael Laking (*Hooper 2016*). The RTPC included an eclectic mix of gay liberationists, liberals, and capitalists who disagreed on many things but concurred that Canada’s bawdy house laws were outdated and unjust.
These laws dated back to the nineteenth century. The 1892 Criminal Code of Canada included a bawdy house section designed to criminalize not only prostitution but also the "houses of ill fame" in which prostitution occurred. A 1917 amendment expanded the Criminal Code's bawdy house section to include sites in which acts of “gross indecency” occur (Russell 1982). None of these sections was annulled or amended by the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1968–1969, which only partially decriminalized homosexual acts. Canada’s bawdy house laws meant that those arrested at a gay bathhouse could be charged as either a “found-in” or a “keeper.” The found-in charge was a summary offense entailing the presence of an individual within a bawdy house. The keeper charge was a more serious, indictable offense related to the ownership and operation of a bawdy house.

As a result of the Barracks raid, five men were charged as keepers and seventeen men were charged as found-ins (Hooper 2016). In its legal strategizing and fund-raising, the RTPC prioritized the defense of the keepers. Many believed that keeper acquittals would naturally lead to acquittals of the found-ins. Occurring on 19 November 1979, the first trial against the keepers occurred nearly one year after the Barracks raid. Defense lawyer Morris Manning argued against the constitutionality of the charges on numerous grounds, such as the lack of clarity surrounding the term indecency. These constitutional challenges worked their way through the Ontario court system to the Supreme Court of Canada on appeal. When the Supreme Court finally ruled that the Barracks charges were indeed constitutional, a new trial date was set for March 1981. However, less than two months before this trial, a larger series of raids captured the attention of Toronto's LGBTQ community.

**Operation Soap**

Beginning in August 1980, four undercover Toronto Metropolitan Police officers opened a large-scale investigation into the city's gay bathhouses. Working in plain clothes, the officers scoured local baths for evidence of prostitution, masturbation, anal sex, fellatio, or any form of group sex. Seventeen undercover investigations were conducted over several months, yielding twenty-four hours of direct surveillance (Hooper 2016). Frequently observing the sexual practices they sought to discover, police made preparations for a series of raids under the code name Operation Soap. This code name made a strong association between homosexual acts and dirt, conjuring “an image of dirty gay sex being cleansed from the social body by police action” (Kinsman 1996, 340). After obtaining search warrants and citation papers, nearly 200 police officers from districts across the city assembled to carry out the raids on four gay bathhouses on 5 February 1981.

Timed to occur at approximately 11:00 PM, the simultaneous raids followed a general pattern. Many of the officers who flooded into the bathhouses were threatening, derogatory, and physically violent. One patron recalls being called a “faggot,” punched, and pushed into the wall so hard that his nose bled (Warner 2002). Other men remember police
declaring that they wished the place would catch fire and that the showers could be hooked up to poison gas (Grube 1997). Rather than using keys offered by bathhouse operators, police smashed doors and used hammers, crowbars, and sheers to rip open mattresses, break lockers, and generally tear the bathhouses apart. At least $35,000 in damage was caused (Warner 2002). Ultimately, more than 300 men were charged under bawdy house laws.

Local politics were certainly a factor in the timing of the raids. Only a few months prior, Toronto mayor John Sewell (1940–) had lost his reelection bid. A supporter of Toronto’s LGBTQ community, Sewell during his mayoralty had bravely spoken out against the 1977 police raid on The Body Politic. Sewell had also endorsed the gay rights activist George Hislop’s run for a seat on the Toronto City Council. The defeat of both Sewell and Hislop in the 1980 election was viewed by many as a referendum on policing practices and signaled to Toronto police that the bathhouse raids would be met with less opposition, perhaps even political support (Kinsman 1996). Transnationally, the raids can be situated within a broad-based, conservative backlash to the politics of gay rights that was growing across North America, Europe, and Australasia during this period (Fetner 2008; de Groot 2015).

Community Response

By the time the 1981 bathhouse raids had concluded, it was clear that their scope and scale were unprecedented. As news of the raids spread, members of Toronto’s LGBTQ community rapidly mobilized in opposition. Representatives of organizations such as the Coalition for Gay Rights in Ontario and the Metropolitan Community Church met at The Body Politic’s office. While some believed that it was too logistically challenging to stage a demonstration the night after the raids, Christine “Chris” Bearchell, a prominent local activist and member of The Body Politic’s editorial collective, successfully argued that immediate action was necessary. Posters advertising the event were plastered throughout Toronto’s gay district and downtown core, and over 4,000 flyers were circulated (Hannon 1981).

Demonstrators began to gather at the intersection of Yonge and Wellesley Streets on the evening of 6 February 1981. They set off for Division 52, the police station that had orchestrated the raids. Chanting “No more shit” and “Fuck you 52,” the crowd marched down Yonge Street, Toronto’s most famous thoroughfare (Warner 2002). A blockade of police cars was defied and overrun by the crowd. One activist jumped onto the hood of a police car and urinated while a stunned officer sat inside (McCaskell 2016). Upon reaching the Division 52 station, protesters were met by a phalanx of defending police officers. Hoping to avoid violence, organizers redirected the protesters up University Avenue to Queen’s Park and the Ontario Legislative Building. There were chaotic scuffles between demonstrators and police throughout the night, which resulted in eleven charges varying from breach of the peace to assaulting an officer (Hannon 1981). Involving 3,000 people at
its peak, this was the largest LGBTQ demonstration in Canadian history to date.

**The Right to Privacy Committee 2.0**

The Right to Privacy Committee was not directly involved in this initial demonstration against the bathhouse raids. Beset by internal conflicts, the RTPC was experiencing problems in terms of community legitimacy. In the months before the 1981 raids, the organization’s meetings sometimes had to be canceled on account of a lack of attendance. In the aftermath of the raids, RTPC abandoned the cautious approach championed by its former chair, John Alan Lee. Shortly after the raids, George Smith became chair of the organization and, henceforth RTPC pursued a more confrontational, community-oriented direction (Hooper 2016).

Holding mass community meetings, the RTPC consulted with constituents to determine how to orchestrate a vociferous response to the bathhouse raids moving forward. A second, even larger demonstration was planned. Occurring on 20 February 1981, this event involved approximately 4,000 people and proceeded under the slogan “Enough Is Enough.” Beginning at Queen’s Park and the Ontario Legislative Building, the protesters proceeded down College Street to Yonge Street, where they defied a police order to remain on the sidewalk. Plainclothes Toronto police officers infiltrated the demonstration and attempted to incite fights, vandalism, and other illegal acts. The demonstration continued to 52 Division, where speeches reproaching police policy and conduct were delivered, and support was expressed by labor and black community leaders. Further demonstrations were organized by the RTPC in the months to come, such as a “Gay Freedom Rally” at St. Lawrence Market attended by over 1,000 people and featuring speakers such as Hislop and the writer Margaret Atwood (Hooper 2016). Also notable was a hunger strike by Metropolitan Community Church leader Brent Hawkes, who demanded a formal inquiry into the bathhouse raids. His hunger strike resulted in a partial victory; Arnold Bruner was commissioned to write a report into relations between Toronto police and the city’s LGBTQ community (Warner 2002). Bruner’s report concluded that the LGBTQ community should be treated by the police as a legitimate minority group and recommended that sexual orientation protections be included in human rights legislation (Kinsman 1996).

**Legal Victories**

In addition to victoriously organizing demonstrations and public events, the RTPC had considerable success coordinating the legal defense of those charged in the 1981 bathhouse raids. The organization learned a valuable lesson from the failed constitutional challenge to charges stemming from the Barracks raid; focusing on bawdyhouse keepers was not a winning strategy (Warner 2002). Moving forward, the RTPC devoted more attention to defending found-ins, who vastly outnumbered keepers. The organization tirelessly fundraised on behalf of those willing to plead not guilty. This encouraged many men to contest
their charges. While the RTPC could not afford to cover the full costs of every case, the organization usually paid at least half (Hooper 2016).

As the trials proceeded, RTPC-affiliated lawyers made an important discovery. Toronto police believed that found-ins would rapidly plead guilty given their shame and embarrassment. No one forecasted mass LGBTQ opposition or a community-coordinated defense. When police arrested the found-ins, they did not record detailed information beyond simple descriptions such as height, eye color, and race. When called to testify at trial, the arresting officers generally could not provide enough information to establish identity. Thus, a large number of found-in cases were thrown out by exasperated judges. When the identity of defendants was legally determined, RTPC lawyers successfully exploited the fact that a bawdy house found-in was defined as a person apprehended there “without lawful excuse.” Numerous lawful excuses were thus concocted. Judges sometimes dismissed cases because defendants claimed be at a bathhouse to use the sauna for therapeutic or medical purposes, or to exercise at gym facilities, or to stay in a cheap room for the night. Of 266 found-in cases, 230 ended in acquittals (Hooper 2016). Trials against keepers proved somewhat more successful as a result of several guilty pleas and plea bargains. But overall, and from a legal point of view, Operation Soap was an emphatic failure.

**Legacies**

The bathhouse raids of 1981 caused great stress, anxiety, and pain for those charged with bawdy house offenses. Closeted men, in particular, lost jobs and families as they were thrust into the court system. Bathhouses were not only spaces of queer sex but also sites of community building, camaraderie, and subcultural expression (Bérubé 2003). In political terms, the bathhouse raids of 1981 can be conceptualized as something of a “coming out” event for Toronto’s LGBTQ community. The large-scale demonstrations staged in response received significant local and national media coverage. While some media outlets, such as the *Toronto Sun*, featured hostile and homophobic coverage, most criticized the excessiveness of the 1981 bathhouse raids. For example, a *Globe and Mail* editorial titled “Heavy Hand of the Law” (1981) criticized the extensive use of police resources to prosecute sexual acts in private spaces and questioned the targeting of an embattled minority group. Additionally, many local and national public figures and groups came out in support of Toronto’s LGBTQ community and denounced the bathhouse raids. These figures and groups included progressive members of the Toronto City Council, civil liberties groups, religious organizations, black community leaders, cultural figures such as Atwood and June Callwood, and leftist civic activists such as Jack Layton (Kinsman 1996; Hooper 2016).

Another legacy of the raids is that they served to unite Toronto’s LGBTQ community against state regulation. There were certainly points of tension and disagreement between the
city's gay liberationists, gay liberals, gay businesspeople, lesbian feminists, and socialist feminists. Specifically, many lesbians questioned the gay male emphasis on sexual freedom and pleasure and tendency to ignore sexual violence and exploitation. Nevertheless, these groups generally came together to oppose such an obvious instance of police oppression and heavy-handedness. The bathhouse raids also created opportunities for linkages and collaborations between activists in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, and Edmonton where similar raids had taken place. In a country as geographically vast, regionally fragmented, and culturally pluralistic as Canada, the event provided a common basis for working toward the repeal of bawdy house and indecency laws on a national level.

A final legacy is that the bathhouse raids and the RTPC had an important impact in terms of Toronto's response to the HIV/AIDS crisis. As the crisis grew in the mid-1980s, many activists with valuable political experience gained through the RTPC joined HIV/AIDS advocacy groups. Moreover, the AIDS Committee of Toronto, founded in 1983, first modeled itself after the RTPC, and the two organizations maintained a close working relationship (McCaskell 2016). Partially as a result of the institutional strength of the RTPC, public health officials in Toronto did not simply close bathhouses in response to HIV/AIDS, as they did in some North American cities. Instead, the RTPC and allied organizations worked to realize the bathhouses' potential as centers of HIV/AIDS prevention and education.

SEE ALSO El Baile de los 41; The Body Politic; Canadian Criminal Code Reform (1969); Compton's Cafeteria Riot (1966); Queen Boat Trials (2001–2002); Stonewall Riots, International Effects of

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Bayrūt ‘75 (1975; Ghāda al-Sammān)

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Arabic novel in which homosexuality is depicted as a by-product of national violence and class inequity.

Ghāda al-Sammān’s (1942–) first full-length novel, Bayrūt ‘75 (1975; Beirut ‘75 [1995]) is celebrated for predicting the eruption of sectarian violence in Lebanon. Published shortly before the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war (1975–1990), Bayrūt ‘75 is considered prophetic in its exploration of the societal ills that led to the fifteen-yearlong civil strife in Lebanon. In short episodes narrating the lives of five characters in Beirut, the author explores sexual repression, social and economic inequity, obsolete customs, and political corruption as the main causes of the conflict.

The novel opens with two of the five main characters in a taxi heading from Damascus to Beirut. Farah and Yasmeena share a humble, conservative background and great dreams of freedom, wealth, and fame. Young and ambitious, they see the city of Beirut as a place of rescue from their repressive social and sexual reality in Damascus. From the outset of the novel, Farah’s paranoia and pessimism are palpable. His excitement for the new possibilities awaiting him in Beirut is overcome with fear and a sense of melancholy that turns into paranoia as he hears the weeping of the three mourning women who occupy the backseat of the taxi. He contemplates: “Why do they sob so? Do you suppose I’m headed to my death, and these … soothsayers of fate [are] lamenting my departure as they escort me to my grave?” (al-Sammān 1995, 5). Farah’s prophetic vision of his own demise is articulated as the taxi approaches Beirut. He finds himself reciting the words of the inscription written over the gates of hell from Dante’s *Inferno*: “All ye who enter here, abandon all hope!” (11). Although Farah is the only character who survives physical death in the novel, his Dantesque journey to Beirut to seek fame and wealth leads to his mental demise as he sexually surrenders to Nishan, a movie tycoon and arms dealer. Along these lines, al-Sammān explores homosexuality in Lebanon on the verge of war within the power dynamics of class inequity and national conflict.

Esmaculation, Death, and Dehumanization

The initial introduction of Farah as a pessimistic, paranoid young man overcome by sorrow and distress yet lacking empathy and concern for others seems only fitting for the development of his character in the shadow of other, more powerful, men. Contemplating
the difficulties he faces upon arriving in Beirut, Farah acknowledges that “something about my face leads people to persecute me. Something draws me to powerful men who get their kicks out of lording it over me” (al-Sammān 1995, 18–19). For Farah, it was his “tyrannical peasant” father who started this cycle of submission to powerful men and, eventually, his emasculation. Averse to Farah’s intellectual interests, his father would scold Farah for not being like his wealthy relative Nishan. As he burns Farah’s books in his bonfires, the father would shout at Farah: “That voice of yours could be turned into a fortune. I’m going to turn you over to my cousin Nishan. He’ll pour you into the right mold—a golden one!” (19). Thus begins Farah’s emasculation, as his fate is determined for him by powerful men: his father and, later, Nishan.

This “turning over” process for the sake of challenging socioeconomic demarcations entails the remaking of Farah into the “singer of manliness” at the high cost of Farah’s “absolute obedience” to Nishan (45). Nishan’s “vicious and hard” voice, “like the crack of the trainer’s whip on the bodies of circus animals,” reminded Farah of “the story of the man who signed a pact in blood with Satan, in which he agreed to give his soul to the devil if the latter would fulfill all his desires. What was the man’s name?” Farah meditates, “Maybe it was Farah—or was it Faust?” (45–46). Hanadi Al-Samman argues that the analogy between Farah and Faust signifies “the manipulative aspect of the [impending] homosexual relationship, represented in the bourgeois economic control of the fate of the lower classes in post-independence era” (2008, 280). By evoking the English playwright Christopher Marlowe’s (1564–1593) Doctor Faustus, the author, then, equates emasculation and total submission to abusive power with death.

Unable to cope with his new reality, Farah is rendered powerless and lost. This is at first expressed in his physical inability to make love to women. After his failed sexual encounter with a woman, the text shines this light on Farah’s interior thoughts: “And when she had closed the door behind her, he felt as though the door between him and the world of women had been shut forever” (al-Sammān 1995, 70). Kifah Hanna argues that, within the existentialist framework, Farah’s eventual sexual surrender to Nishan “only results in another form of death, that of impotence and the broken chain of life which that implies” (2016, 50). Ghālī Shukrī (1990) contends that Farah’s petit bourgeois dream, which favors life in the jungle (i.e., in Beirut under Nishan’s control) over death in the tomb (i.e., in his small peaceful Syrian village, Douma), is figuratively presentenced to death because it is based on the fear of falling into the lowest ranks of the working class.

ʿAfīf Farrāj (1980) reads Farah’s emasculation and ensuing impotence as reflective of what he calls the “fake manhood” predominant in Beirut on the verge of civil conflict. The narrator presents Beirut collectively as a city experiencing a hunger for “the man’s man” (al-Sammān 1995, 68). Ironically, Farrāj continues, Beirut is packed with men indifferent to the imminent national crisis, exemplified by the Israeli planes breaking the sound barrier. Here Farrāj equates the lack of national zeal to emasculation and impotence.
Hanadi Al-Samman maintains that Farah’s obedient surrender to Nishan “emphasizes the master/slave, nonegalitarian aspect of their impending relationship” (2008, 280). With Farah’s sexuality corrupted by the allure of upward social mobility in Beirut, his emasculation also marks, according to Hanadi Al-Samman, “the beginning of a dehumanizing, symbolic transformation of the passive same-sex partner into an animal. This transformation is complete when, toward the end of the novel, Farah starts howling like a wounded dog instead of singing” (280). On this point, Shukrī (1990) emphasizes the Kafkaesque element in Ghāda al-Sammān’s allegorical employment of animals. For Shukrī, the author not only personifies animals, granting them human feelings of fear, sadness, and rebellion; she goes as far as passing off her characters as animals in a union reminiscent of Franz Kafka’s (1883–1924) Die Verwandlung (1915; Metamorphosis), in which a man becomes a cockroach.

Indeed, the narrative of Bayrūt ’75 builds toward such allegory. The author deliberately uses animals within the power dynamics of master/slave to represent her characters’ anguish as they attempt to cope with class inequity. From the dancing monkey, whose performance on Hamra Street Farah keeps stumbling upon, to the “Phoenician” turtle that Yasmeena keeps as a pet, to the goldfish trapped in clear plastic bags, to the circus animals, to the burning butterflies—al-Sammān employs these symbolic references to further underscore the power dynamics in prewar Beirut.

Throughout the novel, the affiliation between Farah and the dancing monkey figures prominently as the author emphasizes the master/slave allegory. Feeling lost and lonely in Beirut, Farah contemplates the relationship between the dancing monkey and its master: “what kind of infernal tie binds those who form alliances for the sheer sake of survival, even if one of them happens to be a monkey!” (21). Almost simultaneously, Farah finds himself thinking of Nishan again. Later in the narrative, Farah perceives himself as a “tiny fish for sale swimming about in … water-filled nylon bags … frantically to and fro, its head colliding continuously with the sides of the nylon bag as it searched in vain for an outlet to the sea. But there was none” (23–24). Unable to cope with his deep sense of emasculation and loss, Farah turns to cross-dressing as a public display of his emasculation and dehumanization.

**Homosexuality and Madness**

Hanadi Al-Samman describes the homosexual relationship between Farah and Nishan as a “traditional active/passive, male/female, master/slave, rich/poor dyad.” Within this context, she identifies their physical encounter as a form of rape, a violent “bodily invasion” (2008, 281). The violent act of rape renders Nishan’s homoerotic desire inapt. “Women aren’t able to give me this kind of pleasure, you magnificent man!” Nishan tells Farah after their first sexual encounter. “With a man I feel intimate and familiar, whereas with [women] I feel alienated and estranged” (al-Sammān 1995, 69).
Farah’s inability to reconcile the virile image imposed on him by the title “singer of manliness” while enduring Nishan’s physical abuse leads to his mental breakdown. This is initially manifested in a series of nightmares and hallucinations before Nishan checks Farah into an insane asylum. Having lost his ability “to pray and make love to women” (89), and horrified at the sight of Nishan’s face pressed against his as he tries to wake up, Farah imagines Nishan as a “ghoul straight out of legends and myths” with “one eye in the center of his face.” Feeling utterly trapped, he pronounces: “This is Sodom and Gomorrah, only bottled inside a jar!” (110). Farah’s proclamation is not only prophetic of the impending civil conflict, it—along with the earlier reference to his inability to pray—underpins the Islamic, Christian, and Jewish view of homosexual acts as immoral and sinful.

Hanadi Al-Samman elaborates on the passive sexual role imposed on Farah in the context of *ubna*, or the treatment of a male’s desire to be penetrated as a disease. She offers a reminder that despite the overall ban on homosexuality in the Qur’an and the equal incrimination of both active and passive partners in Islamic law, there remains culturally a clear distinction between “the active partner, who can maintain his ‘masculinity/normality’ and even enjoy respect in society, and the passive partner, who is often cast in the degrading role of *mu’ajir* (the equivalent of a male prostitute)” (2008, 281).

Nevertheless, Farah’s humiliating sexual role, which leads to his deep sense of emasculation and mental demise, does not turn him into a gay man. Throughout the novel, he is portrayed within the normative heterosexual delineations. Indeed, the novel opens on a heteronormative note, with Farah feeling “his body shudder at the name ‘Beirut,’ as if it were the body of a naked woman brushing up against him” (al-Sammān 1995, 3). Shortly before his first sexual encounter with Nishan, Farah contemplates: “Like all the men in the world, I love women with a passion” (68). In addition, he reminisces about the days when “even a cow or a sheep would have been unsafe” around him in his village (67). Such a hypermasculine portrayal made it possible for critics and scholars to approach homosexuality in *Bayrūt ’75* with conventional tendencies.

Wafiq Gharīzī (1994), for instance, considers Farah’s character the ultimate example of homosexual practices in Ghāda al-Sammān’s work. Keeping in line with taboo approaches to homosexuality in the Arabic literary scene of the mid-twentieth century, Gharīzī considers homosexuality not only a deviance but also a fatal disease. For him, Farah’s sexual surrender to Nishan turns him into “a female monster, a sexual object,” and “a castrated figure.” He dismisses the idea that Farah’s “sexual deviance” is pathological or biological. Instead, he perceives it as the product of socioeconomic pressures or what he terms as “deviant reality,” represented mainly by Nishan (Gharīzī 1994, 100; translation by Kifah Hanna). Within this context, in *Bayrūt ’75* homosexuality is mainly exemplified through Nishan and is seen as destructive—a threat to normative masculinity and social order. Dalila Mahdawi confirms such views as she reads Farah’s experience with Nishan as representative of “debauchery [and] twisted social traditions” in prewar Beirut (2007, 78).
Testifying to the nature of the discourse on homosexuality and homoeroticism in Arabic criticism, Gharīzī (1994) condemns Nishan's infatuation with men as vulgar. Referring indirectly to the Abbasid period (750–1258) as shameful, Gharīzī reflects on Nishan's homosexual practices as evocative of the premodern Islamic era, in which it was culturally acceptable to treat young boys as sexual playthings or to castrate men, and he concludes by dismissing Nishan's homoerotic desires as boorish.

The condemnation of Nishan’s greed and indifference to others—not necessarily his homosexual acts—is indicated in the closing scene of the novel. As Farah escapes the insane asylum, he contemplates that Nishan is “the one who’s ill, though, since he’s the one who’s able to accommodate himself to this sick society. As for me, I’m healthy. That’s why I wasn’t able to fall into a state of utter, absolute madness” (al-Sammān 1995, 115). Farah’s awareness suggests that, in prewar Beirut, survival is determined by the will to sacrifice one’s human principles and morality. The novel, which opens with a passive, insecure Farah, closes with him reclaiming his lost self and taking action. He escapes from the insane asylum to which he was admitted by Nishan. Dreaming of returning to his village, Douma, he steals a sign at the entrance of the asylum that reads “Hospital for the Mentally Ill” and plants it in place of the sign “Beirut” at the city entrance (115). The closing scene brings al-Sammān’s representation of homosexuality as a disease full circle. In Bayrūt ’75, the homosexual passive object is rendered crazy as a result of the unbearable misuse of power and class inequity he has to endure. Emasculation and dehumanization, therefore, seem the natural outcomes within such a contaminated reality.

SEE ALSO Awdat al-Almani ilā Rushdih (2006; Rashid al-Daif); Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories (2009); Hajar al-Dahik (1990; Hoda Barakat); Homosexual Acts in Shariʿa; Lebanese (2008; Alissar Gazal)

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The initialism **BDSM** encompasses a wide range of alternative sexual behavior, including bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, and sadism and masochism (Cross and Matheson 2006), as well as Leather, fetish, and WIITWD (what it is that we do). BDSM is an exchange of power and/or sensation, sometimes pain, for the purpose of cathartic release whether emotional, sexual, or both, and ranges from light spanking or bondage to engaging in a fetish for a specific object or body part, to multiday sensory experiences and long-term power-exchange contracts. The exchange of power creates a degree of intimacy, which many people find to be unparalleled in non-BDSM, or “vanilla,” interactions, and some participants consider their primary sexual orientation to be BDSM (Califia 2000b).

The dynamics of and motivations for BDSM and power exchange are as various as those who practice them. Gay men who practice chastity through the wearing of “cock cages” and giving keys to a trusted “keyholder” may do so from a desire to have or relinquish power, for feminization, to prolong sexual or relationship focus or performance, for sexual or emotional pleasure, to demonstrate self-control for either/both parties, and as a sign of commitment/fidelity (SM Gays 2018). Being caged creates a circumstance in which one is hyperaware of one’s penis and simultaneously unable to use it for orgasm (Krevitt and McCarty 2017), queering normative ideas of phallocentric masculine pleasure.

Consent is of particular importance in BDSM. On behalf of the organization Gay Male S/M Activists, slave david stein is credited with having coined the phrase “safe, sane, and consensual,” or SSC (slave david stein 2000). RACK (risk-aware consensual kink) was proposed by Gary Switch of the Eulenspiegel Society’s Usenet list, based on the recognition that much of the activity in BDSM is inherently unsafe, and therefore the best choice is to mitigate the risks, much like any extreme sport (Switch 2001). There are various perspectives on the use of alcohol or recreational drugs, and harm reduction comparisons are sometimes employed but hotly debated among community members, with some seeing complete sobriety during play as essential to both legal and community accountability, and others seeing BDSM and altered states as part of a wide continuum of pleasure-seeking activity. Master Jackson (1992) likens S/M (sadomasochistic) play to flying an airplane,
both in that common sense is necessary to avoid potential harm and in that there is a need for education and practice. The intentions of both SSC and RACK are to differentiate consensual BDSM from abuse outside as well as within BDSM communities, and to facilitate education and community accountability.

**Mitigating Systemic Inequality and Legal Concerns**

BDSM practice centers on the (re)enactment of systemic power inequalities, which, when transferred into the erotic realm, carry with them the power of the real, the possibility of transformation, and the charge of the forbidden (Stallings 2015). It is a way of engaging with the patterns of systemic power structures such that “structural violence ... forms an imaginative, symbolic basis, a repertoire of sorts, through which these performative practices take shape” (Martin 2011, 8). BDSM is becoming more common, if not necessarily more accepted, as a 2017 study demonstrated: between one-third and one-half of Canadian respondents expressed a desire for kink or BDSM activities, and over one-third had tried it at least once (Joyal and Carpentier 2017). A 2005 survey by condom manufacturer Durex of 317,000 people worldwide showed that around 20 percent had tried bondage at least once, and that 5 percent identified as BDSM practitioners (Lin 2015). A 2003 survey of Hong Kong women’s ideas of “good sex” showed that 3.3 percent of those surveyed were interested in BDSM (Chan 2008), and in 2017 the SG Learn and Play! (SLAP!) group in Singapore reported a steady increase in membership, with new members being mostly young professionals in their twenties and thirties who find the group online and are seeking practical information about BDSM (Tong 2017). The National Coalition for Sexual Freedom, which was formed in 1991, has been a major force for the education and decriminalization of BDSM, being instrumental in the reclassification of sexual fetishes in the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* to indicate that BDSM and fetishes, when engaged in without causing distress, can be a normal and healthy part of sexual expression (American Psychiatric Association 2013).

**Antecedents and Precedents**

BDSM practitioners tend to put time into thinking and theorizing about their sex and play. Richard Joseph Martin notes in his 2011 study on BDSM in Berlin that it is not uncommon to find books on anthropology, philosophy, and psychology for sale at a BDSM fair along with BDSM toys and fetish wear. For instance, reading Victor Turner’s anthropological work on ritual, community, and social organization can offer ways of understanding how BDSM informs social interaction and of how (communal) ritual can be engaged as transformative, giving practitioners a better understanding of how they engage with and subvert social norms and systems of power.

Michel Foucault (1990) situates the construction of modern deviance/sadomasochism as beginning with the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century focus on maintaining control over
the body and sexuality, as well as with the subsequent medicalization and delimiting of sexualities other than heterosexual procreative intercourse. But it has also been noted that his views were influenced by his own desires and a perception of what constitutes “a valuable life, of which sex is a part” (Plant 2007, 533), particularly Foucault’s own involvement in gay BDSM communities in the 1970s, which he draws from in his writings on the intersections of power and sexuality. Foucault makes numerous references to contemporary sexual practices as liberatory and different from those of previous eras of repression: “Never have there existed more centers of power; never more attention manifested and verbalized; never more circular contacts and linkages; never more sites where the intensity of pleasures and the persistency of power catch hold” (1990, 49). Foucault’s categorization of the contemporary period as particularly liberatory in terms of its approach to alternative sexual practices is valid inasmuch as the particular ideologies of sexual liberation, public acceptance, and celebration of queer identities and popular representations of BDSM proliferate.

Just as queers have reclaimed the term queer, so too have BDSM proponents reclaimed a variety of pejorative terms: primal, pervert, freak, deviant, and so on. Unlike LGBTQ movements, with which they sometimes overlap, the tendency in alternative sexuality communities is not always to seek to “come out” in the sense of being known to everyone in one’s life but rather to “come out” in terms of finding like-minded individuals with whom to participate in BDSM, activism, and socializing, whether online or offline. For participants in countries and societies where social norms are not conducive to publicly expressing BDSM interests, online participation through dating apps, discussion groups, and social forums can be a way to meet and connect with like-minded people.

Representations of pain associated with the erotic date from the Edo period in Japan and from early Greece and can also be found in the Kama Sutra (an ancient Sanskrit guide to human sexuality as part of a fulfilling life). The era after World War II (1939–1945) is, however, unique in terms of access to global (tele) communications and industrialization, which normalized leisure time. Gay men returning from the service sought out fraternal organizations for camaraderie, and motorcycle clubs were a way of circumventing laws against homosexuality. From these motorcycle clubs, came leather/biker bars and private clubs. The first leather bar in the United States was Shaw’s, which opened in New York in 1951; the first leather bars in Europe were both located in Amsterdam: Mandje (meaning “little basket”), run by a “leather dyke on bike” starting in 1927, and Hotel Tiemersma (later renamed Argos), which opened in 1957 (Cuirmale 2018). Leather men and trans people have historically been particularly persecuted by law enforcement, and they have had an uneasy relationship with the mainstream LGBTQ community as the latter sought to gain more freedom from police and legal persecution (Dong 1995). Leather bars and community meetings coalesced around the individual nodes of fetish and S/M society centered in large cities. Within US and Canadian educational organizations, there was some overlap between gay and straight BDSM communities. In Germany and the United Kingdom, there has
tended to be a more pronounced division between gay and straight BDSM communities. For gay men, the “hanky code” was a way of signaling their desire by carrying different colored handkerchiefs; although it has grown over time, a basic list includes black for S/M, red for fisting, dark blue for anal sex, light blue for oral sex, orange for anything goes, and yellow for watersports or piss play. Worn on the right, the handkerchief indicates that the wearer is the bottom/submissive, and on the left, that the wearer is the top/dominant.

For trans and gender-variant people, the BDSM community can be a place to find acceptance and the freedom to explore gender, in part because of the ways in which gender performativity is used as play. Queer- and trans-positive spaces offer a wide variety of people space in which to play and socialize without having to cater to social gender norms. Within queer BDSM groups there are some gay men’s and women’s groups that are still trans-exclusive, but many are trans- and gender-variant inclusive, and there are some trans- and genderqueer-only social and play groups as well. Within the BDSM community there are those who fetishize trans people and specific bodily configurations that can be erotic if one is consenting and desirous of being the recipient of such attention, or alienating if one wishes to be seen as a person first.

**Fetish Fashion and Corporatization**

With a community that has been, by the nature of its connections, “underground” or “taboo,” the ability to connect anonymously has held tremendous appeal, and connecting for public sex in a bathhouse or online creates a sense of safety for those who risk social stigma, loss of employment, or familial or legal persecution as possible consequences of disclosure. Beginning in the 1930s in Europe and the United States, a series of fetish magazines emerged that included images of women in leather and rubber corsets and high heels ([Lunning 2013](#)), and that also featured personals sections that used highly euphemized references to BDSM activity. One of the most notable fetish models was Bettie Page, whose iconic image is still the most recognizable “fetish icon” ("Bettie Page" 2018). Before the advent of such BDSM networking sites as FetLife, home computers enabled people to connect to local-network BBS systems that linked community members to each other directly. Later, BDSM channels on internet relay chat and Usenet groups such as alt.sex.bondage continued to enable members to connect and build community from home. Private parties held at individual homes and exclusive/membership sex and BDSM clubs such as the Hellfire and the Mineshaft in New York’s meatpacking district gave people ways to connect in person. Now, apps such as Kik, or WeChat in China, can provide similar opportunities for people to connect safely; to engage in cybersex, cyberdomination, and online learning; and to prescreen potential partners and munch attendees before meeting face-to-face (a munch being a social get-together for people with similar interests to meet and talk, usually held in a public place such as a restaurant or café).

Skin Two, famous for its London club and a magazine of the same name, came onto the
scene in 1983. Bridging the UK punk street-wear look and fetish couture, its aesthetic was
predicated on the idea of *Histoire d'O* ([1954; *Story of O* [1965]]), written by Anne Desclos
under the pseudonym Pauline Réage, and the ways in which O’s submission also came with
being chic ([Polhemus and Randall 1994](#)). Fetish as a mainstream and runway commodity
had started to come into its own, and during the 1980s and 1990s, leather stores moved
from the biker aesthetic of black implements and silver fastenings to include bright colors
and modern high-tech materials. Some of this change can be attributed to the growing
acceptance, if not in the mainstream, then in alternative and sex-positive communities, of
BDSM activities as “serious leisure.” These activities were likened to other adrenaline-
raising sports such as mountain climbing—something to spend time and money on and for
which safety education and social networking are both enjoyable and essential ([Newmahr 2010](#)). Carey Gray, the owner of ASLAN Leather in Toronto and a BDSM educator and porn
producer, has been involved with the Feminist Porn Awards since their inception. Of the
groundbreaking fetish shows he produces for ASLAN Leather, he says, ”My aim is to bring a
realistic portrait of people into kink to the public. I want to give players and sex enthusiasts
of all genders and perversions a place where they can see others showing off their gorgeous
sexy selves” ([ASLAN Leather 2018](#)).

**Organizations and Events**

Leather conferences, clubs, contests, and play parties provide opportunities for people
engaged in leather/fetish/BDSM to get together and learn, socialize, and network. In 2017
the first Mister Leather Brasil and Mister Urso (Bear) Brasil were selected at the Eagle in
São Paulo, along with Ms. Leather Brasil. Dom Barbudo (Mr. Bearded) represented Brazil at
the 2017 International Mr. Leather contest in Chicago ([Mister Urso Brasil 2018](#)). Leather
contests, in particular, create moments of peer validation and opportunities for
mentorship, as titleholders are expected to contribute to community building, education,
and activism. Conference weekends often include classes on play and safety techniques, as
well as spaces for play and vendor areas for BDSM equipment and fetish products.
Beyond fetish apparel and equipment, the best known signifier of BDSM is the leather pride flag, which was first unveiled by Tony DeBlase in May 1989 at the International Mr. Leather contest. Intended as a prototype, it was so popular that the image went into production as stickers just months later. The leather flag provided a way of demonstrating alliance and connection, which was unique to modern BDSMers. Variations on that initial design include a black, white, and green version for daddies (a masculine dominant who takes a more caring or mentorship role toward their submissive/boy/girl/little) and the boys of Leather (an organization founded in 1999 by Ray Hall for those who identify as “boys/bois” in their Leather path, dedicated to “service and devotion”); a pink, white, and black version for the girls of Leather (an organization started in 2003, by Sheryl Dee, to support those with a “girl heart” in walking their Leather path); and one in shades of brown, black, and white with a paw for bears and cubs. (Bears and cubs make up a community that coalesced in the 1980s in San Francisco around the idea of “masculinity without the trappings,” the tagline for the magazine Bear, which featured men with body and facial hair; it has since become associated with being physically large as well as hairy.)

The Folsom Street Fair is one of the largest leather/BDSM events in the world, but it began as a combination of celebration and protest after the city of San Francisco began to try to crack down on the BDSM and handballing (fisting; the sexual and meditative practice of
inserting a well-lubricated hand into a partner’s anus/rectum creating endorphins and an 
ecstatic high for both parties) clubs that occupied the South of Market area from the 1960s 
to 1980s. While the gay male S/M community was being decimated by AIDS, the city felt 
that getting rid of bathhouses and sex clubs was timely, a necessary sociopolitical process 
of urban renewal. Initially termed Megahood, Folsom was organized by Kathleen Connell 
and Michael Valerio in 1984 and provided a space friendly to BDSM but not centered 
around leather. It was not until 1988 that the Folsom Street Fair became a leather event. 
Public activism and visibility of Leatherfolk increased in large part because of rising death 
tolls from HIV/AIDS and the threat of proposed quarantine for those living with the virus. 
After some difficulty with scheduling conflicts and attendance in the 1990s, Folsom 
garnered more corporate sponsorship, which has helped to ingratiate it with the San 
Francisco City Hall and has consolidated its place as the major leather fair to attend 
(Kukura 2014). Being able to be out in public with both the safety in numbers and the 
anonymity of a large crowd provides a sense of freedom for many: “Like the spirit of 
carnival, the grimy dreamworld of the Folsom Street Fair grants permission. License to do 
what you want in public, even if you haven’t dared to do it in private yet” (Sheppard 2003, 
128). The SM Pride marches in London came about as a response to the Spanner case of 
1993, in which a group of gay men who had been engaged in consensual BDSM were 
charged with assault and convicted. The annual SM Pride marches (which ended in 2000) 
were intended to show support for the defendants, to serve as a demonstration of the 
presence and visibility of “SMers,” to provide an opportunity for education, and to 
challenge the criminalization and pathologization of consensual BDSM practices (Dymock 
and Lodder 2016).

What about Feminism?

During the “lesbian sex wars” of the 1980s—an ideological conflict of “the feminist anti-
porn movement against the s/m women” (Cameron 2002)—feminists protested 
sadomasochism, concerned about practices they felt perpetuated social inequalities, 
particularly social conditioning around male violence and female masochism (Linden et al. 
1982). Barnard College’s ninth annual Scholar and the Feminist Conference in 1982 is often 
represented as a pivotal moment in the ideological disagreements between sex-positive 
activists and scholars in what would later become queer studies, and antipornography 
activists and scholars, although Rachel Corbman (2015) points out that some of the 
rhetoric codifying movements and conflicts was also part of the process of field building as 
feminist studies became part of academic institutions during the following decades. A focus 
on individual freedoms, including sex positivity and sexual autonomy, is considered a 
hallmark of third-wave feminism, and the ideological debates over sex and pornography 
are considered to represent the dividing point between those two movements.

Feminist Leatherfolk have responded to these critiques with writing about the ways in
which their BDSM practices constitute a reclamation of sexual selves in the face of male violence (Allison 1992), ongoing declarations of autonomy differentiated from systemic injustice, opportunities for community building (Califia 2000b), and a liberatory space where historical patterns of racism and racialized oppression can be fantasized and recontextualized (Cruz 2016). Samois (first known as Cardea, then Samois, then the Outcasts, and now the Exiles) is one of the oldest lesbian-feminist BDSM organizations. It grew out of a women’s group of the Society of Janus, one of the first pansexual BDSM organizations. The group is known for its writings on feminism and BDSM, created to respond to the charge that BDSM is antifeminist and consisting of two anthologies, Coming to Power (1981) and The Second Coming: A Leatherdyke Reader (1996), in which they include feminist theory around BDSM and women’s agency, as well as erotica celebrating lesbian S/M sexuality and feminism as integral to women’s sexual autonomy and agency. In the late 1980s and 1990s sadomasochism as a psychological/sociological framework was proposed by such feminist scholars as Jessica Benjamin (1988) and Lynn S. Chancer (1992), who used unequal power dynamics as a theoretical basis for examining interpersonal and institutional dynamics. These frameworks are still used in contemporary literary analysis.

**Edge Play: Walking the Fine Line**

Among consenting adults within BDSM, there are types of play that are still considered edgy, and, for some, off-limits. Race play, rape play, animal play, total power exchange, and age play are among the forms of play that have the potential to create unease. The work of bloggers, theorists, and academics is beginning to demystify the taboos, delineate the boundaries between political and sexual arenas of engagement, and find ways to highlight the sometimes contradictory ways in which consensually negotiated fear can heighten arousal. When these intersections of power are manifested in ultimately controllable locations, they have the potential to reify the ways in which consent is enacted and maintained, as well as to make manifest locations of desire and traumatic reenactment as sites of transformation and healing.

Total power exchange and consensual nonconsent are fraught concepts even for leatherfolk because the community is predicated on respecting boundaries, and on maintaining an understanding of and respect for each other’s limits. V. M. Johnson is a BDSM educator and “community elder” known for her long-standing commitment to community building and mentorship. Her 1999 book To Love, to Obey, to Serve: Diary of an Old Guard Slave outlines her experiences coming out into leather in the 1970s and 1980s in New York and contains diary entries that detail not only consensual subjugation but also the ways in which power exchange is enacted between people in day-to-day life. In her 2016 book The Color of Kink, Ariane Cruz uses Gilles Deleuze’s writing on Leopold von Sacher-Masoch’s ideas of love contracts to make sense of the contemporary reality of Johnson (a black woman) voluntarily engaging in and committing to a relationship based on and constructed around
the institution of slavery, which has caused so much lasting harm to black people. Cruz draws attention to the ways in which autonomy is enacted through Johnson's drawing up of her own slave contract (Deleuze's "masochist's contract") (Deleuze 1971) as well as to how the reliance of the contract on the slave's willingness to submit to the power dynamic subverts the institutional master-and-slave dynamic after which it is patterned.

Mollena Williams-Haas, “the Perverted Negress,” is known as a BDSM educator with particular expertise in race play. She discusses consensual race play on the basis of its erotic potential and recognizes it as both politically and erotically charged, but she also identifies its potential for processing traumatic events through repatterning—what Andrea Beckmann (2009) refers to as “rememorizing.” Williams-Haas, however, cautions against using BDSM independent of therapy to process trauma. Having the ability to control the experience is a key component to the success of the cathartic experience for those who desire to re-create and rememorize traumatic events through BDSM. Being able to self-select the amount of vulnerability; knowing that the event has a clear beginning, middle, and end; and knowing that the outcome is predetermined and that one will emerge satiated and whole are key components of the neurobiological rebuilding that occurs during this type of reenactment (Malizia 2018).

Play that engages fantasies of the inability to consent offers particular types of freedom to the bottom or submissive. While they differ in many ways, animal play and age play overlap in that they include social constructions of classes of beings considered powerless in dominant hierarchies. Sassafras Lowrey is a New York City–based author and BDSM/age-play educator, who uses hir writing and podcasts to educate on being genderqueer and being a little (engaging in play and/or power dynamics while embodying a younger self), as well as to create online space for and to demystify the experience of being a little in an age-play relationship (Lowrey 2018). Not all age-play—and not all BDSM—is sexual, and it is important to recognize that, for some, the power dynamics, the creation of safe spaces and ultimate trust, and the ability to give up or hold control constitute the desired catharsis or state of being, rather than erotic/sexual gratification.
Japan

Japan is known for its variety of available fetish material, the freedom with which fetishes are discussed and portrayed—particularly the Lolita, or schoolgirl, fetish, as well as tentacle erotica, which came from hentai (a form of adult/sexual manga, or illustrated erotic literature, featuring “abnormal desires”)—and its lack of censorship rules about the depiction of male genitalia. Used interchangeably in the West to refer to “Japanese-style” bondage, shibari (Japanese for “to tie”), and kinbaku (literally meaning “tight bondage”), a Japanese style of bondage that involves tying up a person with several pieces of thin rope in a visually intricate pattern, have origins in hojojutsu, a martial art used by law enforcement during the Edo period (1603–1868) to restrain prisoners. Specific ties were used for prisoners of different statuses and by different prefectures; the ties were without knots, as there was an element of shame associated with being bound by rope, so that hojojutsu was rope wrapped aesthetically around the body in such a way as to restrict movement (Nawakari 2017). Inspired by scenes of bondage and torture in Kabuki theater, Ito Seiyu was the first to capture images of kinbaku, doing so in his 1928 photography book Seme no kenkyu (Study of torture). Unlike Western ideologies of sadism and masochism exclusively for sexual pleasure, kinbaku is based on a cultural ideal of noble suffering and the idea of tying for aesthetic, restrictive, and painful/ecstatic ends. In the 1950s and 1960s, the magazine Kitan Club published fetish and kinbaku images, as well as serial erotica including Oniroku Dan’s serialized novel Hana to hebi (Flower and snake), which later became a well-known fetish film. Also in the 1960s, Osada Eikichi began performing kinbaku as S/M theater, becoming world renowned for his technique and artistry. Osada Steve apprenticed under Osada Eikichi and has been doing the Osada Seminar at Studio SIX since 2000 (Osada
Popularizing the Scene

BDSM and fetish fashion and iconography has often been adopted by those seeking to impart a risqué or avant-garde flavor to their work—from Jean Paul Gauthier’s bustiers to the science-fiction wardrobes of the Alien or Matrix movies. Thirty-five years after Madonna’s coffee-table book *Sex* (1992) capitalized on the forbidden eroticism offered by depictions of both BDSM and queerness, Erika Leonard (pen name E. L. James) began writing fan fiction based on Stephanie Meyer’s Twilight series. The first published result, *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011), was an instant sensation, spawning a series that sold over 100 million copies worldwide and that brought BDSM into the mainstream in an entirely new way. The story, however, is not a modern understanding of healthy BDSM. While the tools described, such as nipple clamps and paddles, are those of contemporary BDSM, the storyline is derived directly from *Psychopathia sexualis*, a nineteenth-century text on sexuality and “deviance”: Christian, the leading man, has a perception of love distorted by childhood trauma and seeks out an innocent, Ana, to hurt and control in order to soothe his inner torments. The book has an aspect of the Harlequin or Cinderella romance: Ana, in her innocent desire to love and save her tormented hero, gives herself to him; in the end, he is redeemed, experiences an emotional freeing from his traumatic past, and is finally able to experience real love without BDSM (*Green* 2015). Much like depictions of homosexuality in pulp fiction, where queer desire had to be transcended by the redemption of the protagonist to heteronormativity, so too, in *Fifty Shades*, the reader is rewarded with the redemption of the tortured hero to heteronormative (vanilla) reproductive futurity.

In stark contrast, the BDSM educators and erotic/smut authors John Preston, Patrick Califia, and Laura Antoniou create worlds that are just as unbelievable but that are more authentic for being written by members of the community. Preston was a Leatherman and an author known both for his impossibly ideal depictions of power exchange and smoking-hot gay male S/M—particularly in the novel *Mr. Benson*, which was serialized in the gay leather magazine *Drummer*—and for his nonfiction writing, as well as for his commitment to mentoring young queer writers (*Antoniou* 1995). Califia, a cofounder of Samois and a prolific theorist, engages with the edges of power and consent with visceral fiction that flirts with the edges of possibility (*Califia* 2000a). Antoniou, in her Marketplace series, builds a kinkier and better world, one in which fantasies really do come true, sometimes (*Antoniou* 2000).

SEE ALSO *Foucault, Influence of; Orgasm and Orgasmology; Pornography*

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Benga, François “Féral” (1906–1957)

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Senegalese cabaret dancer whose sensuality was perceived as a symbol of homoeroticism in both Paris and the United States in the 1930s.

François Benga was born in Dakar, Senegal, in 1906, as an illegitimate child of wealthy parents from different ethnic groups. He moved to Paris in 1923 where, against his parents' wishes, he decided to take up a dancing career. This was a time when popular clubbing, bohemian lifestyles, and creative sexual expression and subcultures flourished in major cities such as Paris, New York, and London (Barber 2010). It was also a time of heightened interest in African and African American cultures, spurred by the Harlem Renaissance in the United States. Several African American entertainers, such as Florence Emery “Embry” Jones, Ada “Bricktop” Smith, and Josephine Baker moved to Paris, where audiences were eager to engage with the “exoticism” of black performers. Benga made strong contributions to these cultural developments through the strategies that Margaret Rose Vendryes (2008) represents as negotiating tactics, which consisted of garnering strong relationships with a broad and cosmopolitan community, including Africans and African Americans who were living in France or the United States during the Harlem Renaissance.

Benga took the stage name “Féral Benga” and became a professional chorus dancer, performing onstage with Baker and other stars in shows that featured “erotic choreography often performed in steamy jungle settings populated by very dark Africans” like him (Vendryes 2008, 66). Benga deliberately appealed to the racist and primitivizing inclinations of the Parisian audiences by dancing nearly nude with great sensuality. He became much in demand in Parisian bohemian circles as a result. After successful years as a dance performer in 1920s Paris, Benga starred in French movie director Jean Cocteau’s 1930 film titled Le sang d’un poète (The blood of a poet) (Lindstrom 2013). In addition, Benga appeared in Louis Valray's 1935 romance film Escale (Thirteen days of love) and Léo Joannon's 1936 crime and drama movie Quand minuit sonnera (When midnight strikes).
Benga made a name for himself as a Parisian cabaret dancer who usually performed nearly nude and with great sensuality, appealing to the racist and primitivizing inclinations of his French audiences.

Benga is a central figure in African history because he was the person who facilitated Geoffrey Gorer’s (1905–1985) trip throughout West Africa in 1934. Gorer was a British ethnographer who traveled extensively around Senegal that year in the company of Benga, who, like the British adventurer, wanted to go to West Africa “to study the native dances and if possible bring back a black ballet” (Gorer 1935, 4). *Africa Dances: A Book about West African Negroes* (1935) is the outcome of the collaboration between Gorer and Benga. In his narrative, Gorer represents Benga as a man who, by the autumn of 1933, “had already made a reputation for himself as a dancer at the Folies Bergères, a reputation that was enhanced by the ‘mystery’ surrounding his private life—which being translated into English from the Parisian meant that if he had love affairs they were not known about and he was practically never seen in fashionable houses or night clubs” (3). Benga’s “private life,” his status as “an extremely rich and impossible to meet” person, and what Gorer identifies as his “mythical vices” (3) do not constitute enough evidence to identify him as a bisexual or homosexual man. Yet, although he might not have been a homosexual, Benga was an icon who had a strong impact on transnational gay culture of the 1930s. According to James Smalls (2001), Benga played a major role in post(modern) queer ethnographies.
because he was a black man whose “naked beauty” was perceived as a symbol of homoeroticism in both Paris and the United States in the 1930s.

In a similar vein, Benga had a strong impact on global black gay culture, especially on the artistic work of the African American gay sculptor Richmond Barthé (1901–1989) in the 1930s. In 1934 Benga met Barthé, who popularized him in the United States through the renowned Féral Benga bronze casting, which is currently in the Newark Museum in New Jersey (Lindstrom 2013). Barthé used Benga’s homoerotic appeal as a means of representing the aesthetic contributions of black people to universal artistic conceptions of beauty, maleness, and finesses. Discussing Barthé’s employment of Benga’s body in his sculpture, Smalls writes:

> Barthé attempted to sanctify homoerotic desire and Africanity in his most visibly famous statue, Feral Benga ... by combining a European feature often associated with homoerotic desire (i.e., Michelangelesque forms), and angular physical movements identified with an impulsive African primitivism. Despite the differences in media, Barthé’s works are similar to [Carl] Van Vechten’s in their juxtapositioning of racial focus and the sensual worship of the black male physique in motion. (1997, 179–180)

Benga’s influence on the transnational black gay culture of the 1930s provides a starting point for exploring the role of Senegal in the global history of homoeroticism in the first part of the twentieth century.

**Embodiment of Afropolitanism**

J. K. S. Makokha represents Afropolitanism as the process through which “the phenomenon of displacement and mobility across the limits of African spaces—physical, epistemological and disciplinary—changes across teleology and geography” (2011, 19). Benga epitomized the Afropolitan’s ability to use art and movement as means to cross space and disrupt the binary between tradition and modernity. He embodied the modern African who was able to create a fine balance between the past and the present while infusing his original culture into Western civilization. His ability to remain African and blend his traditions with Western customs without being geographically confined in his original homeland reveals his Afropolitanism.

Benga also embodies Afropolitanism because his life represents a model of negotiation of
culture, power, and space in fluid locations that provides a better understanding of the
gender and sexual identities of early twentieth-century urban and transnational African
migrants. Benga’s biography reveals much about the significance of these Africans’ use of
Western theatrical and artistic stages as a means of garnering Pan-African and
cosmopolitan support and surviving oppression. His trajectory reflects a few of the
strategies that some Africans who moved to the West during the twentieth century
sometimes developed to negotiate space for their modern identities.

Unfortunately, Benga is largely neglected in African studies, and his role in the
transnational influence of Senegalese culture in the early twentieth century is little known.
In Senegal itself, few people are aware of Benga, and his name does not appear among
those figures who are celebrated in Senegalese history and culture, despite his status as a
key bridge between colonial Senegalese arts and customs and both French and African
American cultures during the 1920s and 1930s. This neglect is a grave error because Benga
was one of the first artists to serve as a transnational black ambassador and propagator of
Senegalese culture in the 1920s and 1930s, years before the Negritude movement was
born.

SEE ALSO Bars and Cabarets in Europe; Camp; Senegal

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El Beso de la Mujer Araña (1976; Manuel Puig)

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Argentina novel that upends normative storytelling and normative sexuality while giving marginal subjectivities a voice.

El beso de la mujer araña (1976; Kiss of the Spider Woman [1979]), by Argentine author Manuel Puig (1932–1990), is written from within the context of global struggles against authoritarianism that characterized the 1960s and 1970s. Like contemporary testimonials of human rights violations that circulated throughout Latin America, Puig's novel voices the experiences of the persecuted, condemned, and suffering. However, El beso de la mujer araña is different from the work of Puig's contemporaries in that with this novel Puig directly connected the struggles of the political Left for sociopolitical revolution with the often-overlooked legacy of sexual- and gender-based resistance by queer subjects. While the story of their shared condemnation is given life through dialogue, resistance and coexistence are imagined through the gay man’s voice and in his negotiation of other stories, of films, and of romantic motifs.

Setting, Characters, and Plot

Puig’s novel begins in an Argentine prison cell during the years leading up to the nation’s most recent military dictatorship (1976–1983). Here, Molina, a gay man condemned by his queer sexuality, reenacts a series of foreign films to his cellmate, a leftist revolutionary named Valentín. The films themselves provoke discussions of clarification or debate and enable a desired flight from the dominant sexual, political, and ideological frameworks edified in the prison walls. Despite their intentions to permanently evade prison life, the inevitable need for water, restrooms, showers, and food routinely remind the two of their detention. And when Valentín becomes ill after ingesting food poisoned by the prison authorities, the film narratives become a clear coping mechanism to the suffering associated with marginalization.
In this novel, Puig directly connected the struggles of the political Left for sociopolitical revolution with the often-overlooked legacy of sexual- and gender-based resistance by queer subjects.

For Molina and Valentín, in particular, the discursive networks formed around the films produce an appreciation of their differing opinions and realities that, in times of need, develops into clear expressions of empathy and kindness (Edwards 2017; Santoro 1997). Molina, who has typically wavered in the presence of authority, manipulates a meeting he is called to with the warden so as to bring supplies back to his ill cellmate. As their struggle continues, Valentín sheds his stoic demeanor and welcomes the warmth of his companion’s touch. Their reactions to prison life come naturally to a close when the two men make love in the darkness of their own systematic marginalization. Afterward, the two prisoners part ways, and, as they confront authority alone, the possibility of political revolution and social change vanishes.

**Resistance through Form**

Scholars have linked the content of *El beso de la mujer araña* to its formal elements, including textual layout and discursive framing. In particular, much like the manner in which Molina and Valentín’s film narratives represent both a survival tactic and a show of
resistance to prison authority (Rosenkrantz 1999), the narrative structure of Puig's novel has been likened to a stand against the organizational, rationalizing goals of the nineteenth-century novel as understood by scholars, including Doris Sommer and Julio Ramos. Read largely, the flexible, open-ended dialogue that frames interaction within the cell and that, specifically, characterizes the filmic recreations is understood as providing a counterpoint to modernizing narratives by decentralizing storytelling (Edwards 2017). This juxtaposition is framed clearly within the novel when Molina leaves the cell and is invited to the warden’s office in chapters eight and eleven and at the beginning of chapter fourteen. In these instances, social interaction is documented, named, and registered according to scripted models of not only social interaction but literary representation and cultural reflection (Edwards 2017).

Within the cell, the absence of a narrator prioritizes the representation of the marginal subject’s experience. This emphasis on marginal storytelling is further elaborated, however, in the novel’s textual layout. First and foremost, the introduction of footnotes, beginning in chapter three, have been explained as a parallel story line, engaging in the revolutionary politics associated with queer sex, much in the same way the prisoners do within the cell (Balderston 1999). However, it is important to note that, unlike the dialogue between the two cellmates that focuses on the elaboration of six feature-length films (Páez 1995), the footnotes explicitly address the presence of the reader. The in-text asterisk that identifies each of them signals away from the prison cell and toward a research-based narrative defined by order, clarity, and knowledge. The first footnote appears, for example, amid a discussion between the cellmates when Molina is moved by a scene in one of his filmic recreations and recalls a past love. Valentín notices his cellmate’s change in humor and inquires into the details of the relationship. “If we’re going to be in this cell together like this, we ought to understand one another better, and I know very little about people with your type of inclination,*” (Puig [1976] 1991, 59). The asterisk at the end of Valentín’s inquiry directs the reader away from marginalized actors and toward medical discourse, science, and high culture, and specifically to a description of a list of theories on the origins of homosexuality that spans the lower half of the following three pages.

The remaining footnotes, scattered across chapters four through eleven, continue to provide elaborate, extensive digressions from the central prison narrative into psychoanalytic approximations to sexuality, as well as detailed descriptions of the contextual framings of Molina’s films. Together, they carefully mark the separation between researcher and object of study. José Amícola (1998) argues that Puig’s careful and intentional integration and combination of sources results in a social, sexual, and textual democratization. Similarly, the footnote, understood as a minor text, and as an addition to a primary narrative authority, confirms Puig’s refusal to accommodate normative discourses over and above the voice of difference.
Queer Love, Cultural Revolution

In *El beso de la mujer araña*, sexual revolution is inseparable from political change and aesthetic innovation. Here, the representation of sex between the two cellmates through textual space left blank, or the suggestion of touch, taste, and desire with ellipses, hint at the symbolic translation of marginality itself. The scene's documentation marks the translation of the silence, codified communication, and hidden spaces that have characterized queer experience through time (*Masiello 2001*). For Daniel Balderston and José Quiroga (2005), Puig's novel and, in particular, this sequence identify a turning point in the recognition of queer time and space as unique political terrain. In general, however, the priority Puig's novel assigns to representing marginal experience and the revolutionary quality given to queer sex allow such scenes to develop into explicitly queer narrative, like those by Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas (1943–1990), for example. In addition, Puig's representation of a politicized queerness helps to understand *El beso de la mujer araña* as anticipating Pedro Lemebel's (1952–2015) baroque stylings of gay sex in Santiago, Chile, and the tales of interclass, nonnormative transgendered pleasure in the work of today's Argentine authors Alejandro Modarelli and Naty Menstrual.

**SEE ALSO** *Antes que Anochezca (1992; Reinaldo Arenas); Bom-Crioulo (1895; Adolfo Ferreira Caminha); Cold War and Sexuality in Latin America; The Cuban Revolution and Homosexuality; Frente de Liberación Homosexual; El Vampiro de la Colonia Roma (1979; Luis Zapata)*

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Bhutan

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The status of the LGBTQ community in Bhutan.

Bhutan is a landlocked South Asian country in the eastern Himalayas with a small population of around 800,000 people. Bhutan entered the modernized era around the beginning of the twentieth century and remains a highly religious country. Buddhism is the state religion and its influence can be observed in Bhutanese lifestyle and culture. The Bhutanese can be quite tolerant and open regarding topics that would otherwise be considered taboo for a small religious country. For example, sex education is prioritized in schools all over Bhutan, and Bhutanese people approach the topic with subtlety and tolerance.

A lot of international media and individuals outside the country have characterized Bhutanese society as openly bisexual because Bhutanese men do not shy away from playful physical contact with one another even in public. This is a mischaracterization of Bhutanese cultural expression, which is strongly based in the beliefs that gender is binary (male/female) and that sexual expression is limited to heterosexuality. Hence, for men to be holding hands or engaging in even more intimate forms of affection is not considered homosexual because the Bhutanese do not acknowledge that homosexuality exists in Bhutan.

Although there is no cultural recognition of the existence of same-sex sexuality, Bhutan’s penal code does include language that could be construed as criminalizing sex acts that deviate from heterosexual norms. Articles 213 and 214 state that “A defendant shall be guilty of the offence of unnatural sex, if the defendant engages in sodomy or any other sexual conduct that is against the order of nature.... The offence of unnatural sex shall be a petty misdemeanour” (Bhutan 2014). Although such articles have been used elsewhere to prosecute LGBTQ individuals, the intent in Bhutan is more ambiguous. For instance, the law does not specify the gender of the defendant; hence, the law itself does not specifically target homosexuals or men who have sex with men. As a result, even heterosexuals are subject to the same law. The article also fails to define what other sexual acts are “unnatural” and who makes that determination. As of 2017, Bhutan had not seen any cases involving the charge of unnatural sex, but the threat of prosecution looms in the service of homophobic agendas.
Emergence of LGBTQ Community

Historically, LGBTQ individuals at large have remained invisible in Bhutan. Until the twenty-first century, there had been no documentation of homosexuality or queer individuals in Bhutanese history. The first-ever article on gay people, “How Gay Are Bhutanese Gays?,” appeared in a local newspaper on 19 December 2008. The Facebook page LGBT Bhutan and the Twitter handle @LGBT_Bhutan were created in 2013, becoming the first-ever platforms to cater to, as well as publicly acknowledge the existence of, LGBTQ people in the country. The freelance journalist Namgay Zam helped bring awareness to LGBTQ issues through several articles and interviews, including a 2016 article published on her personal blog that first brought international attention to LGBTQ rights in Bhutan. Slowly and steadily, LGBTQ individuals of the millennial generation in Bhutan have become more comfortable with the idea of accepting their sexualities and not necessarily having to hide and remain underground. In 2015 Passang Dorji, a physiotherapist by profession, made headlines as the first gay man to come out publicly and talk about issues concerning gay people on national television. Since then, there have been a number of articles and television documentaries highlighting LGBTQ individuals in the country.

LHAK-SAM, BHUTAN’S NETWORK FOR HIV-POSITIVE PEOPLE

Lhak-Sam is Bhutan’s first and only AIDS organization registered with the nation’s Civil Society Organization Authority. Started by executive director Wangda Dorji, Lhak-Sam works toward preventing the spread of HIV/AIDS in the country and also supports a strong network of HIV-positive people in Bhutan, providing them with proper health care and counseling, as well as spreading information and awareness both for HIV-positive individuals and their family members. After becoming an official civil society organization in 2010, Lhak-Sam received support from the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS; the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria; and the United Nations Population Fund, while securing assistance from other stakeholders in the country, such as the Ministry of Health.

During the second decade of the twenty-first century Lhak-Sam has incorporated LGBTQ awareness into its outreach program. With the help of a steady group of LGBTQ volunteers, Lhak-Sam aims to shed light on ongoing issues regarding LGBTQ discrimination and the self-stigma that most LGBTQ individuals experience. The organization has played a key role in reducing discrimination and spreading awareness about homosexuality and gender identity, working with key stakeholders in the country. With assistance from the Global Fund, Lhak-Sam has been a pioneer in the LGBTQ movement in Bhutan. By providing technical assistance to awareness programs and training to volunteers and community members, Lhak-Sam has been able to empower key community members to be proactive in lieu of a more organized LGBTQ
movement in the country. The organization played a key role in assisting Bhutanese physiotherapist Passang Dorji to come out on national television in 2015. In 2016, coinciding with the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia, the rainbow-colored flag was flown in Bhutan for the first time ever, at the United Nations Development Programme office in Thimphu.

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Issues

Internalized homophobia is the biggest threat to LGBTQ individuals in Bhutan. “Self stigma” is a prevalent cultural norm that leaves LGBTQ individuals feeling displaced and alienated from society. This is largely attributable to the absence of LGBTQ role models and a culture that fails to acknowledge the presence of LGBTQ people, a practice that often makes young gay or lesbian teens in particular feel out of place and alone. Especially in Bhutan, this can be highly detrimental because most Bhutanese have a strong desire to fit in and be a part of the society, whereas standing out and being different is frowned on.

Bhutan’s Buddhist culture has helped minimize discrimination and hate crimes against its LGBTQ community. Buddhism does not proscribe a specific sexuality or sexual orientation but rather focuses on finding peace in one’s inner self. There is no question, however, that the very invisibility of the LGBTQ community has also played a role in shielding LGBTQ individuals from negative repercussions. Bhutanese people in general are unaware of the existence of LGBTQ people in the country. So, currently, LGBTQ people have managed to stay out of the spotlight (good or bad), giving them the advantage of existing in a cloak, invisible yet observant. Additionally, the lack of documentation, research, and attention in the mainstream media does not leave much opportunity for the greater society to consider their views on homosexuality, either positive or negative. If in the near future Bhutan’s gay culture and LGBTQ community engage more openly in society, one can expect disagreement from the greater part of the country’s population.

Decriminalization of homosexuality in Bhutan remains in limbo. As long as the LGBTQ community in Bhutan remains underground and forgoes their civil and legal rights, the government cannot and will not take the initiative to unearth the intricate layers of homosexuality and gender identity at a national level. In 2008 the first democratic elections
in the nation's history took place, marking Bhutan's change from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional monarchy. As such, Bhutan is still a very young democracy, suggesting that Bhutanese people have a long way to go in terms of rights and governance. Awareness and outreach programs in the meantime will prove to be a meaningful tool in battling homophobia. At the same time, programs and community-building activities that encourage a free society will be highly beneficial in attaining the ultimate goal of an open society without prejudice.

SEE ALSO Family Law in Asia; New Media in Asia; Section 377 in South Asia; Sexology in Asia

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http://www.namgayzam.com/colouring-a-rainbow/
Academics and laypeople have for centuries debated what causes a person to be attracted to someone of the same gender or to identify with a gender that differs from their assigned sex at birth. Currently, this debate includes a wide variety of identities, but until the twenty-first century, scientific work on LGBTQ+ sexuality primarily focused on the causes of homosexuality and transsexuality. Although some critics argue that the terms gay, lesbian, transgender, or trans are now preferred over homosexual or transsexual because they emphasize identity over medical classification, it should be noted that, prior to the 1970s, many people relied on medical terms such as homosexual and transsexual to formulate their own sense of self. The various hypothesized causes of sexuality and gender identity fit within the broader “nature versus nurture” debate, in which biological phenomena (e.g., genes and hormones), social phenomena (e.g., cultural norms and family dynamics), or a mix of both are thought to determine human behavior. When human behavior is assumed to be caused by an immutable biological trait, despite evidence of sociocultural factors, this bias is often called biological essentialism. Although typically invoked either to argue against the idea that gender and sexuality are socially constructed and context-specific categories, or to support politically motivated arguments, biological essentialism may describe any instance in which human phenomena are erroneously attributed to nature and not nurture. Scientific research into the biological underpinnings of gender and sexuality has mostly focused on men, although frequent inferences have been made from studies of animal sexuality (Terry 2000). Since the inception of the term, scientists and activists have invoked biological essentialism to argue both for and against LGBTQ+ rights, but this tactic has always perpetuated gendered stereotypes about queer people.

Nineteenth-Century and Early Twentieth-Century Theories
Locating the precise origin of an abstract concept such as biological essentialism is difficult because it is a bias that has been widely present in scholarly and political discourse, as opposed to a specific social or political movement with clear dates and locations. Nevertheless, it makes sense to begin with nineteenth-century sexology because it represented a fundamental turning point in the science of sexuality and marked the inception of gender inversion, a central theory in the biological essentialism of homosexuality and transsexuality (Greenberg 1988). Prior to the 1800s, religious and legal authorities saw homosexuality as a depraved or heretical act (e.g., sodomy, buggery) rather than a representation of one’s identity, but as Michel Foucault (1926–1984) has argued, this era saw a shift among scientists and courts to viewing homosexuality as defining an identity (Foucault 1978). A number of factors contributed to this shift—which was, crucially, gradual and uneven—but biological essentialism was a major influence.

These factors received concentrated attention starting in the mid-nineteenth century in various parts of Europe, including Germany and France. A particular turning point was studies of “contrary sexual sensation” and “inversion of the genital sense” (termed anima muliebris in corpore virili inclusa, often translated as “female psyche confined in a male body”). This hypothesis suggested that inverts (people who would now be considered homosexual people) have sex-crossed brains, with such men assumed to have the psyches of heterosexual women, and such women assumed to have the psyches of heterosexual men. “Today,” the medical historian Vernon A. Rosario notes, “it is commonplace to identify ‘inversion’ as a radically new sexual identity and the ‘invert’ as the immediate ancestor to the modern ‘homosexual.’ The birth of the invert is more historically complex, however, for he did not spring fully formed from the mind of German physicians in 1869” (1997, 70). Rosario contends that the characteristics of sexual inversion had been gradually accumulating in nineteenth-century medical literature but that it was in the 1880s that this category would fully emerge and be transformed into a range of “sexual perversions” (83).

The Austro-German sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s (1840–1902) book Psychopathia sexualis (1886) was an important scientific attempt to document “sexual pathology.” Krafft-Ebing is often thought to have popularized the word homosexual, while the word heterosexual was first used in Charles Gilbert Chaddock’s (1861–1936) 1892 translation of Psychopathia sexualis. Like many other sexologists of the period, Krafft-Ebing saw reproduction as the biological purpose of sex and therefore considered any sexual behavior that did not result in procreation to be inherently pathological. Homosexuality, masturbation, and other forms of recreational sex were all considered deviant on the same grounds. Krafft-Ebing believed that gender inversion was a wide-ranging continuum of problematic gender variance that included what is now understood as transgender identity. He speculated about both congenital (e.g., anomalies in prenatal development) and acquired (e.g., poor parenting or experience in same-sex environments such as schools and prisons) cases of gender inversion. Krafft-Ebing’s work is viewed as deeply pathologizing today, but his beliefs were relatively compassionate for his time in that he used his medical
models of gender inversion to argue against imprisoning people for homosexuality and instead advocated treating them in medical facilities because he believed that such people were sick.

Because of the notoriety of *Psychopathia sexualis*, Krafft-Ebing is often inaccurately credited with introducing gender inversion in academia, although he had a number of predecessors. For instance, the German sexologist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895) presaged Krafft-Ebing by twenty years. Ulrichs openly identified as an *Urning*, his term for what society would today call a gay man, and he spoke about homosexuality as a natural biological phenomenon (*Greenberg 1988*). Ulrichs described male homosexuality as a female psyche in a male body, so although Ulrichs differed from Krafft-Ebing in terms of whether he believed that homosexuality was pathological or not, they both believed in gender inversion.

Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935), a German sexologist who founded an early homosexual rights organization in 1897, also argued that homosexuality and transsexuality were forms of biological gender inversion (*Greenberg 1988*). Hirschfeld, like Ulrichs, believed that gender inversion was a part of natural biological diversity, claiming that same-sex attraction and sex-crossed behavior are inborn character traits. Hirschfeld and Ulrichs argued against antihomosexuality laws, using biological gender inversion as evidence that people who would now be called LGBTQ+ cannot help their natural behavior. So, too, did Marc-André Raffalovich (1864–1934), a French homosexual writer and psychiatrist who clashed with Hirschfeld but who shared his belief that homosexuality could be natural and who also rejected pathology and criminalization. Raffalovich proposed the concept of “unisexuality.” As with today’s conceptions of homosexuality, unisexuality involved an attraction to the same sex, rather than strictly *psychical* hermaphroditism, a term commonly used in the late nineteenth century. Raffalovich elaborated on this theory in his 1896 book *Uranisme et unisexualité: Étude sur différentes manifestations de l’instinct sexuel* (*Uranism and Unisexuality: A Study of Different Manifestations of the Sexual Instinct* [2016]).

A number of other prominent scientists of the period, such as the American sexologist David O. Cauldwell (1897–1959) and the British physician Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), believed that homosexuality and transsexuality could be caused by either a dysfunctional childhood or biological anomalies (*Stryker and Whittle 2006*). Today, these scholars’ views are considered largely sympathetic to LGBTQ+ people, as they argued that gender variation was normal in humans and that homosexual behaviors—and the people who engaged in them—were examples of this variation. That being said, Ellis still cautioned against homosexuals having children because they would “for the most part ... belong to a neurotic and failing stock” (*1901, 198*).

The British social theorist Edward Carpenter (1844–1929) also provided a biological model of homosexuality that was not pathological and did not center on abnormality in works
such as *Homogenic Love and Its Place in a Free Society* (1894), *Love’s Coming of Age* (1896), and *The Intermediate Sex* (1908). Indeed, Carpenter argued that what he termed “homogenic love” and “comrade love” performed social and intellectual functions that were positive and central to modern states. Carpenter posited that sex exists on a continuum from heterosexual male to heterosexual female, with homosexual people occupying various intermediate types. Although this model still assumed that same-sex attraction was a function of biological gender differentiation, it argued that this differentiation was normal and not pathological.

In France, the neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893) and the psychiatrist Valentin Magnan’s (1835–1916) “Inversion du sens genital” (1882; Inversion of the genital sense) offered a degeneration theory for gender inversion, one that mirrored eugenic arguments (Reed 2001). In so doing, they built on Ambroise Auguste Tardieu’s (1818–1879) *Étude médico-légale sur les attentats aux moeurs* (1857; Medicolegal study of assaults on decency) and Bénédict Morel’s *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l’espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives* (1857; Treatise on physical, intellectual, and moral degeneration in the human species and the causes that produce these diseased varieties). Degeneration theory emphasized a concept of heredity in which organisms acquire traits over their lifespan and then pass those traits on to their children. Degeneration theory was used to argue that individuals’ pathological or criminal behavior led to inborn physiological deficits, called hereditary taint, that would be passed down to their offspring, and this would compromise societal progress (e.g., education, industry). Charcot and Magnan argued that inversion among Greeks and pagans was reflective of their underdevelopment as peoples and that modern French society had evolved past this primitive sexual state. Inverts were thus seen as reverting to more primitive humans and therefore posed a threat to France. Charcot and Magnan’s theory was thus another biological model that pathologized homosexuality.

Biological essentialism played a central role in the eugenics movement (Bashford and Levine 2010). Eugenics refers to an idea that human “stock” or genetic quality can be improved by controlling or otherwise intervening in sexual reproduction. Francis Galton (1822–1911) coined the term, and he used the English naturalist Charles Darwin's (1809–1882) theory of evolution to argue that human characteristics were almost entirely hereditary and genetic (i.e., biological essentialism). The implication of eugenics was that people who were deemed inferior (e.g., homosexuals, convicted felons, the physically or mentally disabled) would conceive children who are also inferior. In an attempt to improve the quality of the human species, eugenicists pushed for practices that ranged from birth control to segregation to involuntary sterilization, the last of which is a form of genocide. The eugenics movement exemplifies how biological essentialism can lead to injustice.

Some of the most prominent sexologists (e.g., Hirschfeld, Ellis) were eugenicists themselves, although they did not advocate for the more extreme forms of eugenics (e.g,
forced sterilization and abortions; Greenberg 1988). Instead, Ellis and others advocated for a voluntary genetic aristocracy formed through racist and classist mate selection, which was a popular idea among scientists of the time. So although arguments based on biological essentialism were at times used to funnel people who would now be called LGBTQ+ out of European prisons in the 1800s, this belief system was also used to advocate for abuses ranging from anti-interracial marriage laws to attempted genocide through sterilization in the early 1900s.

As psychoanalysis gained prominence around the turn of the twentieth century, some scientists increasingly saw gender inversion as arrested sexual development. The Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) advocated for a universal potential for same-sex attraction, which he called innate bisexuality, in his seminal *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* ([1905] 1962). In this theory, Freud used evidence that humans are not sex-differentiated during very early stages of fetal development to argue that humans have an inherent bisexuality that normally fades as they mature. From this perspective, homosexuality was described as stunted development. Freud also argued that gender inversion was caused by a failure to resolve the Oedipal complex, where a child identifies with the same-gender parent and falls in love with the other-gender parent (Freud 1951). Freud waffled on whether gender inversion was normal, but because his theories of human behavior centered on fundamental conflicts and neuroses from childhood, he ultimately took an environmental model of universally troublesome sexual development to position homosexual and heterosexual people as more similar than ever before.

**Twentieth-Century Theories**

Starting in the 1930s, scientists in the United States began to build on gender inversion and psychoanalytic models of homosexuality. George W. Henry’s (1889–1964) study titled *Sex Variants* (1941) sought to psychologically and physiologically profile homosexuality, collecting childhood case histories, X-rays, nude photographs, semen samples, and surveys of gendered behavior (Minton 1986; Terry 1999). Henry believed that homosexuals have an inferior genetic constitution that is exacerbated by poor parenting, especially feminine fathers and masculine mothers, which results in gender inversion. Similarly, *Sex and Personality: Studies in Masculinity and Femininity* (1936) by Lewis M. Terman (1877–1956) and Catharine Cox Miles (1890–1984) asked homosexuals and heterosexuals questions related to several psychosocial factors, including the masculinity-femininity scale (Minton 1986). Terman and Miles sought to prove that homosexual men were abnormally feminine and homosexual women were abnormally masculine, but their results showed that many homosexual people were more gender conforming than several of the heterosexual samples. To reconcile this, Terman and Miles proposed that some homosexuals are not invert but are instead perverts: people who are not biologically same-sex-attracted but instead through “chance circumstances” became homosexual in order to satisfy their
wanton curiosity. From this perspective, inverteds were true homosexuals caused by biological substrates (essentialism), whereas perverts were situational homosexuals who had sex with the same gender because of their attraction to sexual deviance (nonessentialism). Terman was also a eugenicist, who relied on his work on intelligence testing to argue for innately higher intelligence quotients (IQs) among white people, eventually joining the Human Betterment Foundation, which promoted compulsory sterilization laws for those deemed less intelligent.

Conducted in the midcentury, Alfred C. Kinsey (1894–1956) and colleagues' research is still considered among the most exhaustive studies of homosexuality. Kinsey, an American biologist and sexologist, eschewed the theory of gender inversion and labels such as "homosexual" and "heterosexual," instead arguing that sexual orientation exists on a continuum from same-gender-attracted to both-gender-attracted to other-gender-attracted, called the Kinsey scale. Kinsey believed that sexual orientation was fluid across time and context. He also argued that labels such as "invert" and "homosexual" were cultural constructions that foisted a false binary on people's sexuality. Kinsey's work was the first prominent explanation of homosexuality that stressed cultural causes and did not rely on pathological or biological causes. After his work on male sexuality, Kinsey developed a quiet interest in transvestism (Meyerowitz 2001) and became acquainted with a medical expert in this field, Harry Benjamin (1885–1986). Coming from the German sexological tradition and an endocrinologist himself, Benjamin worked closely with patients to argue against the then prevalent psychoanalytic understandings of cross-gender identification. Like Kinsey, Benjamin championed a scale, known as the sex orientation scale, which situates different degrees of transgender inclinations on a continuum. Often credited with coining the term *transsexualism*, Benjamin explained the desire for sex change in terms of biological constitutional factors and advocated surgical interventions for the treatment of transsexuality (Meyerowitz 2002). Both Kinsey and Benjamin would later be reclaimed by queer activists as scientists unusually sympathetic to gender and sexual minorities.

Kinsey's research, along with gay and lesbian activism, was instrumental in formally depathologizing homosexuality (Chiang 2008; Drescher 2015). The American Psychiatric Association (APA) catalogs and describes mental illnesses in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)*, and homosexuality was included to some degree in the initial three versions. The *DSM-I* included homosexuality as an outright illness, but during the late 1960s and early 1970s, the APA began to reconsider this diagnosis because of gay and lesbian activism (e.g., activists disrupted APA conventions in 1970 and 1971) and research such as Kinsey's that showed that homosexuality occurs among psychologically healthy people. In 1973 the APA concluded that homosexuality is normal and changed the diagnosis in the *DSM-II* to "sexual orientation disturbance" and again in the *DSM-III* to "ego-dystonic homosexuality"; these diagnoses were reserved for homosexual people who experience distress around their sexual orientations. These later diagnoses were ultimately removed in 1987 for the *DSM-III-R* because they blamed individuals for experiencing a
societal problem (i.e., antigay stigma). The *DSM-5* (2013) has no diagnosis for homosexual people, but there is a classification for “gender dysphoria,” denoting transgender persons who experience distress about their gender identity or expression. LGBTQ+ advocates have criticized the concept of gender dysphoria for again pathologizing queer people for experiencing social stigma. Although the current *DSM* still pathologizes transgender people, each successive version has pathologized homosexuality and transsexuality less than the former iteration, and this has been informed by both biological and cultural research on gender and sexuality.

Although Kinsey and other scholars (e.g., George Weinberg, John H. Gagnon, William Simon) provided a cultural-behaviorist explanation for homosexuality, it was not until several decades later that academics took up this argument in force. Foucault (1978) presented his aforementioned thesis that society did not think of homosexuality as defining an inborn character trait until the nineteenth century. Judith Butler (1956–) coined the term *performativity* to describe how gender and sexual norms are acted out unconsciously to produce the impression of stable genders and sexualities. Other scholars, including Jack (formerly Judith) Halberstam (1961–) and David M. Halperin (1952–), have analyzed historical records and modern-day queer subcultures to show variability in how sexuality and gender are expressed. These scholars have demonstrated wide-ranging rates of homosexual and transsexual identity and behavior (suggesting a cultural role) and proposed theories as to how social norms affect LGBTQ+ experiences.

**Modern Biological Theories and Evidence**

As cultural models of homosexuality and transsexuality were popularized during the end of the twentieth century, so were new biological models of these identities. Simon LeVay’s (1943–) 1991 study of differences in brain matter between homosexual and heterosexual people constitutes some of the most polarizing research on homosexuality. In that study, LeVay found that a region of the hypothalamus known to play a role in sexual functioning may be dimorphic in terms of sex and sexuality: the volume of cells in this region is proportionally higher for women than men, except for gay men, whose volume is similar to that of women. Despite a small sample size and other methodological issues (e.g., most participants had died of AIDS, the study could not be replicated), this research garnered intense media attention as proof of a biological cause of homosexuality. A gay man himself, LeVay integrated his findings with other biological studies and argued that homosexuality is not a choice and that gay people should thus be granted equal rights. Although LeVay stopped short of calling LGBTQ+ people gender inverts, his work operates under the familiar assumption that homosexuality is caused by biological gender nonconformity.

Scientists from the late 1990s through the second decade of the twenty-first century folded LeVay’s findings into a broader theory of homosexuality, called the prenatal hormonal influence theory ([Blanchard 2008](#)). This theory argues that maternal hormones feminize
gay men's brains before birth, thus producing homosexuality. Ray Blanchard (1945–) and Anthony F. Bogaert (1963–) were among a number of scientists in the late 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century to show that gay men have more older brothers than straight men, called the fraternal birth order theory. This theory argues that successive gestation of male fetuses progressively builds up anti-male antibodies in the womb, thereby feminizing later-born boys. Prenatal hormones have also been used by scientists to explain higher rates of left-handedness and potentially longer index fingers among gay men because these phenomena are connected to testosterone exposure in utero. Although fraternal birth order and several other demographic characteristics are well founded, the prenatal hormone explanation for these phenomena has not been directly tested and is therefore speculative (Mustanski, Chivers, and Bailey 2002).

Similar to LeVay’s study, Dean H. Hamer (1951–) and colleagues’ 1993 study of the “gay gene” captured the imagination of laypeople and scientists alike. This study found a correlation between homosexuality and the Xq28 genetic marker, which has been interpreted to mean that there is a heritable, genetic component to homosexuality (i.e., a gene that makes you gay). Again mirroring LeVay’s study, Hamer and colleagues’ findings were based on a very small sample size (forty families with two gay brothers) and have not been replicated. Despite these limitations, the news media have embraced the concept of a gay gene and often regard it as a matter of fact. Although evidence for a single gay gene is not well supported by empirical research, there are a variety of findings and hypotheses that converge on the possibility of a genetic component to homosexuality. Large-scale genome-wide association studies of twins or other siblings have found multiple genes associated with homosexuality, suggesting a more complex genetic contribution to same-sex attraction (Sanders et al. 2017).

Because evolutionary theory dictates that only adaptive genetic traits will be passed down to future generations through natural selection, the authors of gay gene studies have speculated about the evolutionary origins of homosexuality (Kirkpatrick 2000). E. O. Wilson (1929–) originated the kinship theory of homosexuality, which argues that gay people improve the survivability of their relatives, thereby indirectly preserving their genes despite not producing children themselves. Research has consistently shown that homosexual men have more-fertile female relatives than heterosexual men, which supports the kinship theory. Gay men are also hypothesized to aid in the survival of their kin because they often express lower levels of aggression and higher levels of empathy, verbal reasoning, and intelligence; except for intelligence, these traits are culturally associated with femininity. These behavioral differences do not have an identifiable biological substrate (e.g., gay and straight men have similar levels of testosterone), so the presumption that gay men aid their kin’s survival as feminized males again shows a bias to assume gender inversion. Taken together, genetic research suggests a hereditary component to homosexuality derived from aiding familial fertility, but the tendency to regard homosexuality as caused by a gene that makes men gay by making them feminine is
an unfounded conceptual leap and thus constitutes biological essentialism (Mustanski, Chivers, and Bailey 2002).

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, biological researchers have synthesized genetic and prenatal hormonal findings to argue for an epigenetic explanation for homosexuality. Epigenetics refers to a process whereby environmental factors moderate (i.e., turn off or on) gene expression. In the case of homosexuality, maternal hormones are hypothesized to cause expression of gay genes. As such, twin and other sibling studies have modeled the unique contribution of genetic factors and prenatal environmental factors to show the role that both play. Michael Balter's (1947–) 2015 article in Science is among the most prominent of the epigenetic studies. The most popular explanation for this interaction is that homosexuality is a latent possibility among many family lines that is expressed only when there is a surplus of men (i.e., older male siblings).

Animal studies have also been used to argue for a biological cause of homosexuality. Most notably, Bruce Bagemihl's (1962–) 1999 book Biological Exuberance reviews homosexual behavior among hundreds of animal species. Bagemihl's work identifies five types of homosexuality: courtship, affection, sex, pair-bonding, and parenting. Various animals can engage in any number of these forms of homosexuality, and they can range from single instances to long-term arrangements. Animal studies in general have been used as evidence of the biological role of sexual orientation and gender expression, but this research points to a different manifestation of homosexuality than biological models among humans. With few notable exceptions (e.g., sheep), homosexuality in animals occurs in isolated instances or along with heterosexual behavior. These findings thus suggest universal bisexuality or a latent potential for homosexuality that is activated only when necessary. So although these findings suggest a biological role in homosexuality, they undercut the gender inversion hypothesis that genes and hormones interact to produce exclusively homosexual creatures.

**Culture and Politics**

Biological essentialism and the “nature versus nurture” debate are largely Western constructions. Indigenous groups and other non-Westerners have attributed human behavior, including homosexuality and transsexuality, to spiritual phenomena (which are neither nature nor nurture) or simply did not speculate about causation. There are, however, ways in which beliefs about homosexuality and transsexuality in the West were affected by colonialism, and much of the modern nature or nurture debate references sexual identities and practices from non-Western regions.

Today, cross-cultural research deeply informs the nature versus nurture debate, in part by highlighting how same-sex sexual behavior can manifest outside of the ostensibly mainstream Western gay or lesbian identity model. Biological essentialism is also an unstated assumption that underlies policies and laws about homosexuality in some non-
Western countries, sometimes in complicated ways. For example, engaging in same-sex sexual acts is a capital crime in Iran. However, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–1989), then the country’s leader, issued a fatwa in the 1980s that allowed people to legally receive gender reassignment surgery, with the rationale that some people are trapped in a body that does not match their true gender and this biological mistake should be able to be corrected. Although liberatory for trans people who want to undergo reassignment surgery, this combination of laws may also pressure other individuals to change their gender even in cases where this is not their desire.

Nature versus nurture debates about homosexuality and transsexuality have also profoundly shaped American LGBTQ+ social justice movements (Seidman 1993). The homophile movement of the 1950s and its most prominent organizations (e.g., the Daughters of Bilitis, the Mattachine Society) believed that homosexuality was caused by biological abnormalities that cause innate difference, but they advocated for disregarding this difference in order to assimilate gays and lesbians. The gay liberation and lesbian feminist movements of the 1970s pivoted from the homophile movement: they argued that gender and sexuality were cultural norms that oppress both straight and queer people. Proponents of gay liberation argued that dismantling gender roles and sexual taboos was the solution to ending discrimination against LGBTQ+ people.

In the 1980s the AIDS crisis generated a sense of urgency around queer rights, with organizations such as ACT UP and Queer Nation taking more militant approaches to activism (e.g., publicly outing closeted celebrities; Duggan 1992). This movement presented queer people as a homogenous minority group that is discriminated against for its inherent difference from the dominant group (sometimes called a racial or civil rights model of activism). The civil rights model of LGBTQ+ activism persists today, and although it does not necessarily attribute LGBTQ+ experience to biology, it is closely associated with the mainstream idea that queer people are “born this way” and trans people are “born in the wrong body.”

SEE ALSO ACT UP; Daughters of Bilitis; Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM); Ecology and Environmental Issues and Activism; Foucault, Influence of; Gay Liberation Front; Institut für Sexualwissenschaft; Kinsey Scale; Mattachine Society; Psychopathia Sexualis (1886; Richard von Krafft-Ebing); Situational Homosexuality; Third Genders

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The black freedom movement was a social movement led by and for African Americans across the span of the twentieth century to obtain full human rights in the United States. Historians have traditionally pointed to the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955–1956 as the event that marked the start of the peak of this movement, also known as the civil rights movement. While the civil rights movement is acknowledged as the crowning era of the black freedom movement, black Americans and their allies fought against segregation and racial discrimination many years prior to 1955 using a wide variety of tactics, including but not limited to protests, boycotts, sit-ins, legal cases, and investigative journalism.

The Montgomery Bus Boycott marked a new era in the long trajectory of the black freedom movement because a shift in tactics and an upsurge in local community-driven movement building occurred. While such national organizations as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) were still critical to the black freedom movement in the 1950s, local grassroots campaigns became a defining feature of the movement as well. In many ways, because of the legacy and historical impact of slavery and the subsequent rise of Jim Crowism, the US South was the center of the black freedom movement; however, black communities across the entire country participated, and local struggles outside the South proliferated. Historians have traditionally placed the end of the civil rights era during the second half of the 1960s, some pointing to the assassination of the Reverend Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, and others marking the decline of the civil rights movement a few years earlier with the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Selma to Montgomery marches of that same year. However, the black freedom movement represents a longer struggle that extended well past the late 1960s, reaching into subsequent decades with the expansion of different strains of black politics and activism including but not limited to black nationalisms and black feminisms. Additionally, this movement also influenced the rise of such other movements as the second wave of the feminist movement and the gay rights movement. The historian Jacquelyn Dowd Hall (2005) coined the phrase “the long civil rights movement” to describe the political links between the African American civil rights movement and simultaneous and subsequent movements in the second half of the twentieth century.
**Heterosexism in the Black Freedom Movement**

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and gender-nonconforming individuals contributed significantly to the black freedom movement throughout its entire history; however, very few people were “out” in the movement before and during the civil rights era because of the dangers of the homophobia and transphobia that permeated the movement from the outside in. Additionally, the movement’s dependence on racial uplift ideology and the maintenance of respectability politics that idealized black identity in a heteronormative fashion reinforced heterosexism in the movement. For the most part, cis-male (people who were assigned male sex at birth and have a gender identity that matches normative notions of maleness—i.e., not transgender), patriarchal, charismatic leadership maintained a dominant presence in the movement, which in turn had a significant impact on the historical memory of it. This is true even though women and queer people played vital roles at both the local and national levels.

For most of the twentieth century, being open about nonnormative gender identities and sexualities could result in arrest and imprisonment in the United States. It was common for people to be arrested for acts of “indecency,” and queer spaces such as gay bars were highly surveilled by police. This was especially true during the pre-Stonewall era. In 1969 the Stonewall Inn, a gay-friendly bar in New York City, was raided by police. Fed up with profiling and police brutality, patrons, led by trans women of color, fought back. This became known as the Stonewall riots. Every state in the United States criminalized homosexuality during the era of the civil rights movement. Not only did LGBTQ individuals fear for their own safety, they rightfully feared that their identities would jeopardize the organizations they were a part of, the campaigns they worked on, and the movement as a whole. LGBTQ civil rights organizers and leaders struggled to keep their private lives private and were often manipulated, blackmailed, and threatened by other organizers and various entities of the state. The knowledge of their sexual identities was used against them and wielded as weapons against the legitimacy and progression of the movement. They were targeted by McCarthyism (an aggressive campaign against alleged communists in the US government and other institutions, named for its primary agitator, the Republican senator Joseph McCarthy) and COINTELPRO, the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) Counter Intelligence Program.
Black Feminist and Civil Rights Leader Pauli Murray. Murray was one of the founders of the Congress of Racial Equality in 1941 and challenged segregation both directly and in her writings. Attracted to feminine women and often dressing like a man, Murray refused to label herself as homosexual and struggled to define her gender identity.

Pre-Stonewall LGBTQ Civil Rights Leaders

While there were certainly numerous LGBTQ organizers and leaders in the pre-Stonewall era, not many were open about their sexuality or nonnormative gender identities. Additionally, for many decades the language to describe nonheteronormative, nonbinary, and transgender identities did not exist, often leaving individuals struggling to grasp for an understanding of who they were and how to exist in a world that did not affirm their identities. Pauli Murray, Bayard Rustin, and James Baldwin are all examples of LGBTQ individuals involved in the struggle for black freedom before the Stonewall riots of 1969.

Pauli Murray

Pauli Murray (1910–1985) was a black feminist author, Episcopal priest, civil rights leader, and attorney from Durham, North Carolina. Murray struggled to define her sexual and gender identity for many years, and throughout the 1930s and 1940s committed herself to institutions and underwent treatment to address the bouts of intense depression she experienced stemming from confusion around her identity. Murray refused to describe herself as homosexual, though she was attracted to feminine women. She desired a monogamous heterosexual relationship and preferred to take on the normative gender roles and appearance of a cis man. Lacking the language to describe the possibility of a transgender identity, Murray consigned herself to identifying as a woman. At times she
dressed as a man and was once arrested for posing as a man while attempting to desegregate a public bus in Petersburg, Virginia. This arrest, which occurred in 1940, was not the first or last time Murray directly challenged segregation.

Beginning in 1938, Murray attempted to gain admission to the all-white University of North Carolina. Her case was supported by the NAACP and received national attention, though ultimately she was not admitted on account of race. In 1941 Murray entered historically black Howard University to study law. Murray was the only woman-identified person in the law program at the time (the only other woman-identified person having dropped out) and frequently experienced gender discrimination, an experience from which she coined the term *Jane Crow*. At Howard, Murray endured sexist jokes, she was excluded from class discussions and the campus legal fraternity, and her masculine gender performance was rejected. In many ways, Murray did not meet the definition of the ideal woman in civil rights circles, including Howard Law School. However, this experience did not defeat Murray. She, along with Rustin, James Farmer, and George Houser founded the Congress of Racial Equality in 1942 and adopted the strategy of nonviolent civil disobedience that Mahatma Gandhi used against British colonialism in India.

When Murray graduated in 1944, she applied to Harvard University for graduate study but was rejected because of her gender. After this rejection Murray earned a master’s degree from the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law. In 1965 she became the first African American to earn a doctor of juridical science degree from Yale University. In 1951 she published the book *States’ Laws on Race and Color*, which became a major asset to civil rights lawyers in years to come. Like many of her comrades, queer or otherwise, starting in the early 1950s Murray was the target of McCarthyism because of her political ties to civil rights organizations and her personal politics.

In 1956 Murray published a biographical account of her family’s experience with white supremacy called *Proud Shoes: The Story of an American Family*. In 1961 Murray was appointed by John F. Kennedy to the Civil and Political Rights Committee of the President’s Commission on the Status of Women. During the 1960s, although Murray was included in the male-dominated circles of national civil rights leadership at times, she agreed with such women as Ella Baker who were critical of the form of leadership that cisgender, mostly heterosexual men embodied in their approach to political movement building, and she was especially disturbed by the fact that black women, though they were conducting a critical amount of labor at the grassroots level, did not hold national leadership positions. She continued to advocate for black women and feminist causes after the peak of the civil rights movement. In 1977 Murray became the first African American woman to become an Episcopal priest. Before she died of cancer in 1985, she wrote an autobiography, *Song in a Weary Throat: An American Pilgrimage*. This work was published posthumously two years later.
**Bayard Rustin** A contemporary of Murray, Bayard Rustin (1912–1987) was perhaps the best-known openly gay organizer of the modern civil rights movement. He was raised in a Quaker home in West Chester, Pennsylvania. His family was political and involved in civil rights causes. He attended Wilberforce University, Cheyney Training School for Teachers (now known as Cheyney University of Pennsylvania), and City College of New York. Rustin was a controversial figure during his lifetime because of his sexuality and his politics. In the 1930s Rustin was a member of the Young Communist League. He also refused to fight in World War II (1939–1945) after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. He was surveilled by the FBI and arrested by various local police forces throughout his lifetime.

Although Rustin's contemporaries in the civil rights movement often defended him when he was attacked for his political beliefs, they did not defend him when he was targeted for his sexuality. His sexuality was seen as a liability for the movement, especially under the surveillance of McCarthyism. Rustin was arrested for public lewdness in the 1950s. Conservatives used this arrest and other stains on his criminal record in an attempt to sully the reputation of the black freedom movement.

Rustin is perhaps best known for his position as deputy director for the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963, but his political work stretched back several decades. He was a founding member of the Congress of Racial Equality and the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and he studied nonviolence in India. In 1947 Rustin organized the Journey of Reconciliation, which was later used as a model for the Freedom Rides of 1961. As result of the Journey of Reconciliation, Rustin was arrested and sentenced to nearly a month on a chain gang. Rustin was also a trusted mentor to Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King. He was highly influential in the movement at the national level and was a conduit through which nonviolence became a major tactic for challenging segregation in the United States. After the height of the civil rights movement, Rustin shifted his energies and used his political expertise for other causes. In the 1970s and 1980s he advocated on behalf of LGBTQ rights in the state of New York and beyond. He died in 1987 at age seventy-five.
James Baldwin James Baldwin (1924–1987) was a prolific gay African American writer and public intellectual who was active in the black freedom movement. Baldwin grew up in Harlem, New York. By age twenty-four he had grown so tired of American racism that he moved to Paris, France, living much of the rest of his life outside the United States. His experiences abroad in such countries as France, Turkey, and Switzerland, as well as in various parts of Africa, had an impact on his writing. In Paris, Baldwin was involved in the cultural movement of the Left Bank. Drawing on his personal experiences, several of his works not only illuminate the black experience in the United States for readers but also focus on the experiences of gay and bisexual men. Although its characters were predominantly white, his second novel, *Giovanni’s Room* (1956), focused on queer men many years before the gay liberation movement unfolded. By the early 1960s Baldwin was world renowned for his writing. His essay “Down at the Cross” was published first in the *New Yorker* in 1962 and then as one of two lengthy essays in the 1963 book *The Fire Next Time*. In this essay, which was awarded the George Polk Memorial Award, Baldwin discussed the role of Christianity in American society and its impact on the history of black Americans.

Also in 1963, Baldwin became more of a public face in the civil rights movement both
nationally and internationally. He led a demonstration in Paris in August of that year and participated in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. He also went on a speaking tour of the US South in 1963, speaking on the state of the black freedom movement and the black experience in the United States. Throughout the 1960s, he made numerous television appearances and spoke frequently on college campuses to packed rooms of eager listeners. Baldwin maintained friendships with many celebrities, artists, and activists, black and white, who were allied with the black freedom movement. He was a friend to the activists Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King Jr., all of whom were assassinated. First published in 1972, his book-length essay *No Name in the Street* discusses the impact of losing comrades to assassination among other subjects related to his experiences in the late 1960s and early 1970s. When Baldwin died in 1987, he had yet to finish *Remember This House*, a memoir of the civil rights movement that reflected on the lives and assassinations of his three slain friends in the movement. This unfinished manuscript was the basis for the 2016 film *I Am Not Your Negro*, a documentary by the Haitian filmmaker Raoul Peck.

**The Black Freedom Movement in the Post-Stonewall Era**

Toward the end of the 1960s the black freedom movement underwent significant political shifts as civil rights gave way to Black Power. Several new political formations grew out of and were influenced by the major tactics, events, experiences, organizations, and campaigns of the civil rights era. Black Power, accompanied by various formations of black nationalism and black feminism, was on the rise by the late 1960s. The mainstream second-wave feminist movement and the gay liberation movement were influenced by the black freedom movement as well. Many individuals who participated in feminist and gay liberation circles gained experience in building political movements through participating in the black freedom movement during the civil rights era and through allying themselves with Black Power organizations.

**Black Power and Gay Liberation** Black Power rhetoric is often characterized as hypermasculine in popular culture and academic scholarship. Just like civil rights, Black Power and black nationalism were steeped in normative gender roles and traditional notions of sexuality. In many ways Black Power organizations inherited the heterosexism of the civil rights era, although some Black Power leaders saw queerness as an oppressed identity and advocated for an alliance between the gay liberation movement and the Black Power movement. In the Bay Area of California, the gay liberation movement and the Black Panther Party (BPP) developed an alliance around police brutality in particular. Huey P. Newton, a cofounder of the BPP, gave a speech in 1970 advocating for a revolutionary alliance between the movements of Black Power, gay liberation, and women's liberation. Though steeped in masculinity, the BPP was one of the only national black organizations during the era to place numerous women in leadership positions and to speak out in support of gay liberation.
Still, there was much tension between some Black Power activists and gay liberation organizations. In 1969 New York's Gay Liberation Front (GLF) split apart over the question of how, if at all, to support the BPP and whether it was important to ally the gay rights movement with organizations not focused solely on gay liberation. When the GLF made the decision to support the BPP, some members left the organization as a result. By the early 1980s, there were still tensions between the two movements. In 1981, at the historic First National Plenary Conference on Self-Determination, factions of the black liberation movement determined that it was not in their best interest to support gay liberation, gay leadership within their movement, or support queerness as “correct practice” (Clarke 1999, 31).

**Black Feminism and Sexuality** Prior to this, during the late 1960s and early 1970s, black feminist activists and intellectuals began to form collectives and organizations that addressed the numerous kinds of oppression they experienced as both African Americans and as women. Many individuals who founded or joined black feminist organizations brought political organizing experience from the civil rights, Black Power, and feminist movements. They often incorporated the structural analysis and the rights- and identity-based politics of these movements into their new political formations and organizational foci. Additionally, because they experienced sexism in the civil rights and Black Power movements and racism in the feminist movement, black feminists formed the National Black Feminist Organization in 1973, the Combahee River Collective in 1974, and the National Alliance of Black Feminists in 1976. Beyond sexism and racism, numerous black women who were a part of these organizations also expressed frustration with the heterosexism and classism they experienced in black organizations and women's organizations. As a result, black feminists often articulated a political stance that was pro-LGBTQ and challenged capitalism. The Combahee River Collective published a statement in 1977 that articulated how radical black feminists understood their own oppression as multifaceted. The collective’s political lens was anti-capitalist, feminist, anti-racist, and LGBTQ affirming:

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The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are actively committed to struggling against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression, and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking. The synthesis of these oppressions creates the conditions of our lives.

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The structural analysis of black feminists in the Combahee River Collective statement represents, to that point in history, one of the most comprehensive intersectional political stances of the era. Black feminist politics as articulated and practiced in the 1970s made an indelible mark on numerous radical black organizations and activism in the decades to come. Currently, several national organizations that are part of the Movement for Black Lives coalition claim a radical queer black feminist political lens. Examples include the Black Youth Project 100 and Black Lives Matter, two organizations founded and led by queer black women and youth.

**SEE ALSO** Combahee River Collective; Harlem Renaissance; Human Rights Campaign

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Extortion and blackmail have been the constant accompaniment of laws that ban same-sex sexual acts probably since such laws were first invented. However, the true golden age of blackmail really began only in eighteenth-century Europe when same-sex acts and desires began to be seen as a distinct area of criminal law. Although laws against “sodomy” (which could at various times include all sorts of sexual acts) date back to the ancient world, it was not until the thirteenth century that similar laws were enacted by civil authorities in western Europe. Even then these laws were very infrequently enforced, if at all. The wider impact of these laws was also diluted by the fact that in Europe and many other places sex between men was often considered unexceptional as long as it accorded with important social hierarchies and the “active,” or insertive, partner was of a higher social status than the “passive,” or receptive, one. Sex between women was widely regarded as implausible and hence was hardly ever criminalized.

The key alteration in the law came about in England, when sexual acts between men were included in criminal rather than ecclesiastical laws against the wider category of sodomy (which also included sex with animals). The first antisodomy statute making such acts capital crimes was passed by Henry VIII of England (1491–1547) in 1533 as part of his expansion of state authority; before that, church courts had jurisdiction over sodomy. Even then, the enforcement of these laws was uneven, and they were applied with any force only in northern Europe after 1700, especially in England and the Netherlands; the latter made sodomy punishable by death in 1730. Over the course of the nineteenth century, most western European countries adopted laws against public indecency that were used against same-sex behavior. The early English laws later became the basis of most antisodomy statutes in force in the United States, as well as in the British Empire and the countries that grew out of it following decolonization, many of which retained the original statutes and still did as of 2017.

In northern Europe in the eighteenth century it was gradually agreed that enforcing morality should be a key duty of the state. As a result, increasing numbers of criminal trials drew attention to the existence of “sodomites,” who it was increasingly possible to see as a
distinct type of individual. It was not long before conspiracies to extort or blackmail under the accusation of sodomy were made public. One of the first alleged cases that is known involved the trial of the Earl of Castlehaven for sodomy and rape in 1631. As a contemporary ballad put it, the earl testified that “he did it not / but conceived it a plot / to take away him and his life” (quoted in Herrup 1999, 164). The earl’s case was an isolated one until the eighteenth century, and it was only then that the rising numbers of prosecutions in England for all kinds of same-sex acts and circumstances, along with the accompanying antisodomy rhetoric of moral reformers, provided blackmailers with their first serious opportunities. One the first cases to be prosecuted was that of Thomas Vaughan and Thomas Davis, convicted of conspiring with two other men in 1707 in an attempt to extort money from two men under the charge of sodomy. Vaughan was said to have made a similar accusation eight years previously (Compleat Collection 1718–1721).

**Blackmail in City Street Cultures**

Blackmail has flourished in cities. By the 1780s extortionists in London were often said to belong to gangs who made their living in this way. The crowds that cities attracted, not to mention the critical mass of people looking for sexual opportunities of all kinds on the city’s streets, provided an ideal context in which accusations of impropriety could be made. In 1843 it was reported by a magistrate that a man named Long, who belonged to “a gang of an infamous character,” had “for about 15 years” earned his living in this way (quoted in Cocks 2003, 131). Certain places such as parks, streets, and urinals in the center of London had by that time become notorious sites of both sexual exploration and peril. In England blackmail of this kind even had a name: the “bounce” or the “common bounce”—the latter to distinguish its same-sex variety from more ordinary kinds of extortion. Anonymous threatening letters were also the frequent instrument of Victorian blackmailers (Davitt 1885; Cocks 2003).

The changing status of blackmail was signaled by the fact that between about 1780 and 1840 it became a distinct offense defined with increasing clarity in English law. Extortion under threats to accuse someone of a same-sex act was singled out from other forms of robbery with violence. The courts decided that a threat to character and reputation constituted a form of violence in itself, even if physical violence had not accompanied the threats. Statute law followed the courts, and in 1827 the British Parliament defined threats to accuse someone of a “sodomitic” act as a specific crime, whereas in 1838 such offenses were included in English criminal statistics for the first time. Although countries that operated under the civil code introduced by the French emperor Napoleon (1769–1821) did not specifically criminalize homosexual acts, instead classifying them as forms of public indecency, blackmail also occurred in these states.

Most European cities in the twentieth century contained street cultures involving sex between men. These were mainly populated by young unmarried men who did not lay
claim to a “homosexual” sexual identity but saw sex with other men as part of the usual life course. Just as in the nineteenth century, assignations took place in streets, parks, cafés, urinals, and pubs, as well as increasingly in places of commercial leisure such as cinemas or steam baths. These cultures were often structured by age and class, and the relations that emerged frequently had the ostensible character of a transaction. This is indicated by the term rough trade, which was used in English street slang to refer to working-class men who might be sexually available. In these cultures, any encounter between men of different classes was customarily accompanied by some form of exchange—if not actual cash, then a drink or a meal or some other offering in kind. In such circumstances, it often became difficult to distinguish these formalized transactions from others that involved a degree of menace. Exerting pressure on one’s upper- or middle-class suitor for money or gifts, known as “tapping,” was part of the business of trade and reflected the harsh economic realities of the interwar period. Some historians have argued that in these circumstances, informal blackmail (sometimes called “poof rorting” in English interwar street slang) was an opportunistic response to the evident inequalities of “trade.”

Although the press, from the nineteenth century onward, tended to see homosexual blackmail as the business of organized criminal gangs, or to focus on individual cases in which large sums were handed over, the reality was much less systematic. It is often argued that the implied bargain, menaces, or even violence that went with many same-sex encounters should be seen not as some “homophobic” response but as an inherent aspect of these street cultures, part of a “continuum” that began with intimacy or sex and that could end in blackmail, theft, or assault (Houlbrook 2005). This is a productive way of looking at blackmail as it focuses not on the sinister threatening figure lurking in the shadows portrayed in such classic films as the English filmmaker Basil Dearden’s drama Victim (1961) but on those involved in the various forms of queer culture themselves.

Blackmail in Politics and Government

Blackmail has also had a wider significance, especially in Cold War politics, and is not merely confined to informal transactions on city streets. In the United States in the 1950s, fear of the security implications of homosexuality, in particular the potential susceptibility of homosexual men and women to blackmail, was one of the many motivations behind the “lavender scare” that resulted in the dismissal of thousands of men and women from government service. As part of the McCarthyite witch hunts against communism, homosexual men and women were suspected of a loyalty to some secretive group or ideal that might be more binding than love of country. As a consequence, a series of purges took place, especially in the State Department, that aimed to remove this potential security threat (Johnson 2004). These fears were heightened by the revelation in 1956 of the defection to the Soviet Union five years earlier of two British MI6 operatives, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, the former of whom was homosexual. A third, Kim Philby, followed in
1963, while a fourth, Anthony Blunt (also gay), remained discreetly hidden in government service until the 1980s as Queen Elizabeth II’s official art expert. The gay honey trap used by the Russians to ensnare the lowlevel UK government clerk John Vassall in the mid-1950s and his arrest in 1962 merely completed the picture.

Later attempts to defuse this problem often seemed to make it worse. The US government’s “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy, which was in effect from early 1994 until 2011, aimed to get around previous bans on gays and lesbians serving in the military by removing any requirement to state their sexual allegiance. Nevertheless, homosexuality was still regarded with suspicion by military authorities and could be a cause of dismissal from military service. The policy therefore led to anxieties that it enhanced the possibilities for blackmail. While there are no statistics on such cases, there are anecdotal reports. J. D. Smith, formerly of the US Air Force, revealed in a 2011 article, just before the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell,” that he had been blackmailed by an instructor. Smith subsequently helped establish OutServe (now OutServe-SLDN) to support gays and lesbians in the military.
Surge in Blackmail outside the West

Homosexual blackmail in Europe and North America has declined with the repeal, from the 1950s onward, of laws against male homosexuality. Blackmail has surged, however, in those countries (seventy-three or more) that still have antigay laws and a strongly (albeit sporadically) homophobic press. Many of these states inherited English antisodomy laws from their imperial pasts but have often added to them, although most have only very recently begun to enforce such laws with any vigor. The story of blackmail in some African, Asian, and Middle Eastern countries is complicated by the fact that many of these regions have their own traditions of same-sex behavior that cannot be subsumed by Western models of sexual identity. The global spread of gay rights has encouraged some men and women in these countries to adopt Western models of “out” gayness, and it is often this open, legitimizing feature of homoeroticism that is regarded as new and problematic. The consequences of these developments—alongside the continuing existence of antisodomy laws, an antipathetic public opinion, and a hostile press—have created ideal conditions for blackmail.

The ease and anonymity of encounters made on social media have facilitated extortion, as has the fact that many such sites are often used by married men or by those who do not identify as gay in the Western sense. In Kenya, for instance, the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission reported in 2015 that blackmailers have used social media to entrap men and film same-sex encounters, leading to threats that the footage would be sent to wives or employers. Another tactic was robbery or forcing the victim to an ATM to hand over money. Even the police were not immune from such accusations (Langat and Kushner 2015). Another new factor is blackmail against women seeking sex with other women. Female same-sex activity has historically tended to not lead to such accusations, mainly because same-sex acts between women have rarely been illegal. According to a 2011 report by Ryan Richard Thoreson, women in Nigeria have faced “threats from family, friends, lovers, and the people in their schools and workplaces.” Among other instances, the report shows that blackmail has even descended into the school system and sets out the case of five high school students who were blackmailed by classmates for same-sex activity.

Blackmail cases have been closely associated with the enforcement or declaration of antigay laws. In India in 2014, after the Supreme Court upheld the imperial antisodomy law set out in Section 377 of the criminal code, gay websites such as Grindr and PlanetRomeo, as well as Facebook and WhatsApp, were used by criminals to extort money from those seeking same-sex encounters (Phadke 2014). Digital technology has facilitated what is sometimes called “sextortion” on a much wider scale, often across national boundaries. In a village in the Philippines, Maria Caparas, “the Queen of Sextortion,” tricked hundreds of people across the world into performing sexual acts on camera, the footage of which was then used to blackmail them (Parry 2017). Cases of Palestinians seeking same-sex
encounters being blackmailed by the Israeli security services have also been reported.

Governments that decry same-sex activity or legislate against it frequently encourage a wider climate of extortion. Debate over the notorious Ugandan anti-homosexuality bill (introduced in 2009) that aimed to imprison those men and women guilty of homosexual offenses for between seven years and life, and even to introduce the death penalty in some circumstances, was accompanied by a wave of homophobic press and harassment that led to the violent death of the prominent gay activist David Kato (1964–2011) at the hands of an assailant (Okeowo 2012). Enacted in early 2014, the Ugandan law was struck down by the country’s Constitutional Court later that year. Similarly, the 2013 Russian law outlawing “gay propaganda” has been accompanied by reports of widespread extortion and harassment (Silchenko and Titova 2016). These were often associated with criminal gangs working through dating sites. Recorded cases follow the pattern often repeated in African countries of setting up dates and then ambushing the partners in a flat before claiming that their associate was under age. This is then followed by threats to call the police or release a secretly filmed video. The Russian activist group Vykhod (Coming Out) recorded twelve similar attacks in Saint Petersburg in 2015 (Silchenko and Titova 2016). Since 2010 persecutions of those seeking same-sex encounters in the Caucasus have equally widened harassment, extortion, and blackmail. In Dagestan, it has even been reported that gay men have been blackmailed into the service of the security forces, apparently a long-standing Soviet practice (Patin 2017).

Blackmail and persecution in these places can be seen as an instrument of the nationalist state in response to supposed “Western” incursions and modes of identity. In the history of blackmail, it should be remembered that this is a problem directed not only against self-identified gay, lesbian, transgender, or other queer individuals but against all those seeking same-sex encounters.

SEE ALSO The Closet; Cruising and Cruising Grounds; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Homonationalism in Africa; Lavender Scare; Military Law and Policy in the United States; Treason and Queerness; The Wolfenden Report

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The Body Politic

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The Body Politic (TBP) was a gay liberation magazine published in Toronto, Canada, between 1971 and 1987. Considered to be groundbreaking in both its content and approach to LGBT issues, TBP was available in cities across Canada and Europe and as far away as New Zealand and Australia. TBP played a pivotal role in the evolution of the gay and lesbian liberation and human rights movements both in Toronto and across Canada through its coverage of political debates, its reporting on academic research on homosexuality, and its listing of LGBT social activities, along with coverage of arts and culture. TBP not only documented the numerous challenges facing lesbians and gays over the course of its existence but also actively shaped the gay and lesbian movements' political, legal, and ideological responses to mainstream challenges (Jackman 2011). For many, TBP was “essentially the first real voice for queer people across Canada” and acted as a central clearinghouse for information on LGBT issues and as a communications center connecting LGBT communities (Knegt 2016). TBP also had the foresight to actively archive its own materials and to collect information on other organizations and individuals. This contributed to the formation of what became the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives (CLGA) on Isabella Street in Toronto, one of the largest lesbian and gay archives in the world and an invaluable resource for scholars doing research in LGBT history and activism in Canada (CLGA 2017).

Homosexuality was partially decriminalized in Canada in 1969, reflecting the ongoing and substantial political and social transformations already underway around gay and lesbian issues when TBP was established. This shift in legal status opened the way for the formation of a number of gay and lesbian organizations, including the Community Homophile Association of Toronto (CHAT) and Toronto Gay Action (TGA). As noted by collective member Michael Riordan, the TBP editorial collective was “born in the wild heat and ferment of Canada’s first gay upheavals” (quoted in Knegt 2016). It included TGA members and other local activists, including Gerald Hannon, Tim McCaskell, and Jerry Moldenhauer. Several of the original collective members were actively involved in Toronto’s counterculture movements, writing for the alternative paper the Guerilla. Dissatisfaction with the marginalization of issues related to sexuality in the Guerilla...
spurred calls for a publication keying on questions of sexual orientation and identity, discrimination and inequalities, and the need for community formation (Churchill 2003). The collective hashed out editorial decisions at weekly meetings marked by spirited and sometimes vitriolic debates around particular topics or themes. Distributing each edition was labor intensive and time consuming prior to desktop publishing. TBP was initially sold on local street corners and in bars in Toronto, although the paper developed a substantial mailing list over its lifetime (Jackman 2011).

As noted by Michael Connors Jackman in his 2011 history of The Body Politic, TBP “brought together a network of sex radicals who documented, celebrated and critiqued the arrival of the new world of gay life in urban centres throughout much of North America and Europe.” The November 1971 inaugural issue elaborated TBP's goals in an article titled “We Demand,” a manifesto previously presented to the federal government in Ottawa setting out the long-range goals for the nascent Canadian gay and lesbian movement. It detailed the central concerns for gays and lesbians in Canada, including the removal of certain criminal code provisions, such as “gross indecency” and “indecent act,” that were often deployed against homosexuals. Amendments were needed to immigration and divorce laws, which often discriminated against gays and lesbians, and there were broader calls for legislated human rights protections for gays and lesbians in both federal and provincial human rights codes (Nash 2005). Many collective members were university educated, thereby bringing a critical analytic to the magazine’s content and writing style. It was not uncommon for some articles to draw on the works of Karl Marx, Herbert Marcuse, or Michel Foucault or to highlight the contemporary scholarship of academics such as Gayle Rubin (Churchill 2003). As Steven Maynard argues, a visit by Foucault to Toronto in 1982, together with the publication of Foucault’s History of Sexuality, sparked a fierce debate between some collective members about the deficiencies in “existing left sexual history and the mainstream gay movement’s lack of radical theory” (2016, 124). In the early years of TBP, the collective struggled to articulate a distinctive “gay-left politics” together with the production of theory—efforts that arguably disappeared with the advent of queer theory and its rejection by activists as just so much impenetrable jargon (Maynard 2016).

In the same period, the magazine also exhibited a more liberationist ideology calling for the freeing of all individuals, both heterosexual and homosexual, from oppressive sexual (and gendered) regimes (Nash 2005). The magazine encouraged gays and lesbians to come out to family and friends, as well as publicly, and to become politically active in challenging social and political constraints on sexual and gendered expression. Sexual-political analysis focused on, among other issues, the formation and acceptance of homosexual identities by the mainstream community and on challenging the heterosexual and normative constraints embedded in Canadian political, social, religious, and legal institutions (Jackman 2011). Such a politic would gradually be eclipsed, in the early 1980s, by a human rights activism focused on obtaining equal rights for gays and lesbians, grounded in a politics of identity and difference and requiring protections in employment and housing, open service in the
military, and same-sex marriage (which was implemented nationwide in Canada in 2005) (Nash 2005).

Controversies

*TBP* became an important and very public forum for airing debates relevant to the gay and lesbian community not only in Toronto but across Canada. Many articles touched on (and generated) hot-button issues that shaped perceptions about Toronto’s gay and lesbian community. As its presence and reputation grew, the paper was increasingly considered the leading informational resource for both the mainstream press and the general public about the LGBT community. *TBP* was the primary source of information on the latest medical or scientific research on homosexuality (including book reviews) and on resources and services related to the HIV/AIDS crisis in the early 1980s. *TBP* often shaped the debates around controversial issues, such as the political and social response to the bathhouse raids by Toronto police in 1981, the 1977 murder of twelve-year-old Emanuel Jaques, and the 1978 protests against a visit to Toronto by the antigay Christian celebrity activist Anita Bryant.

As an intentionally provocative publication, whose articles often galvanized sometimes polarizing debate within the LGBT community, *TBP* also attracted the attention of the police and municipal officials. In August 1972 the paper published an article by Gerald Hannon titled “Of Men and Little Boys” suggesting the potential “benefits” of sexual relationships between adult men and minors (Bradburn 2015). Many in the local LGBT community were appalled, and the article garnered considerable mainstream attention as proof that the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969 posed a serious threat to children. Both the *Toronto Star*, the largest local newspaper, and the *Globe and Mail*, Canada’s largest national newspaper, ran articles condemning *TBP*. The *Globe* claimed that the federal government was inadvertently supporting pedophilia through its funding of a related homosexual drop-in and distress center run by CHAT. CHAT, a more socially conservative organization, distanced itself from *TBP* by highlighting the political and social differences within Toronto’s gay and lesbian community. The article prompted a police investigation, although no charges resulted.

In December 1977 *TBP* published another controversial article by Hannon titled “Men Loving Boys Loving Men,” an arguably ill-timed piece given the sexual assault and murder of Jaques in July of that year by several men with distant ties to the LGBT community. The article focused on the experiences of three men who had relationships with underage boys. Mainstream backlash was swift and predictable, as local journalists claimed the article provided proof of the pedophilic inclinations of gay men. *TBP*’s offices were raided by the Toronto police department’s “pornography squad,” which seized substantial material, some of which was unrelated to the contentious article. The removal of documents, including mailing lists and account information, prompted some to argue that the raid was designed
to undermine the magazine's ability to publish and to intimidate those who wrote for or
received copies of the paper (Bradburn 2015; Jackman 2011). This time, charges were laid
against collective members Hannon, Ken Popert, and Ed Jackson for using the mail to
distribute “immoral, indecent or scurrilous” material. Despite the negative publicity, many
rallied around the publication, including John Sewell, the mayor of Toronto, and the local
activist June Callwood. After a series of trials and appeals, the matter was finally dropped in
the fall of 1983. These events are emblematic of a slew of public battles over TBP’s
publication of various advertisements, classified ads, cartoons, and stark descriptions of
cruising practices and public sex.

Given its prominence in the gay and lesbian political, social, and cultural issues of the day,
TBP has achieved almost mythical status in the annals of gay male and, to a lesser extent,
lesbian history in Canada. And there is little doubt that understanding its influence is
pivotal to understanding the formulation of LGBT and queer life in Canada. Yet, as Marc
Stein (2014) points out, what might be known about gay history is often driven by what is
deemed worthy of saving in an archive. Arguably, it is the seemingly more respectable and
predominantly white, male, and middle-class periodicals that are preserved (and lionized)
rather than publications related to or for lesbians or people of color (Vigiletti 2015) or
more sexually explicit magazines and newsletters (Stein 2014). TBP, by having the
foresight to preserve its own materials through the creation of an archive, ensured its
prominence as the gay periodical of record for Canadian LGBT political and social activism.

While TBP members might be accused of ignoring questions of race and class in favor of a
dogged focus on sexuality and sexual identity, there is some suggestion that the collective
did struggle to consider the intersection of sexuality with questions of racism, class
positioning, and social justice. Collective members, such as McCaskell, argued that
questions of race and class were not much of an issue given the centrality of sexuality as the
site of discrimination at the time (Jackman 2011). Nevertheless, questions about race and
sexuality emerged in April 1985 after the publication of what has become known as the
“houseboy” ad, a classified advertisement published two months earlier. The advertisement
read “Black Male Wanted: Handsome, successful GWM [gay white male] would like young,
well-built BM [black male] for houseboy.” The decision to publish the advertisement came
after considerable debate between collective members, and its publication “revealed
contrasting political visions, differing sensibilities, and deep divisions” within the collective
(Churchill 2003, 114). It also drove debate in the larger lesbian and gay community about
sexuality, desire, and race. In an effort to address the divisiveness generated by the
advertisement’s publication, TBP organized a meeting with Zami (the first Canadian group
for black and West Indian gays and lesbians; Brown Canada 2017) and Gay Asians of
Toronto. Discussions about the intersection of race and sexuality ordered themselves along
a continuum from claims about the centrality of sexuality as a universal experience (in
which racialized desires played a part) and the essentialist nature of desire to claims about
culturally entrenched racism exacerbated by cultural and social attitudes (such as those
demonstrated by the advertisement). Never satisfactorily resolved, the incident demonstrated that while TBP understood itself as reaching out to a broadly based gay and lesbian community, many felt excluded by their limited visibility in its pages.

**Assessing the Legacy of TBP**

The gay and lesbian press in North America, Europe, Australia, and New Zealand played a critical role in the formation of gay and lesbian identities, politics, and communities from the late 1960s into the second decade of the twenty-first century (Baim 2012). Young people and those new to “the life” drew inspiration from the pages of LGBT periodicals and magazines (Streitmatter 1995). Magazines such as TBP undoubtedly played a central role in the Toronto and Canadian context in constituting recognizable homosexual identities understood as belonging to a recognizable community and in generating debates around key gay and lesbian issues (Cover 2005).

Nevertheless, contemporary scholarship, while recognizing the invaluable contributions of the early gay press for individuals, communities, and the political movement, is also quite critical of both the positive and negative impacts of the press’s activities. This includes critiques of such publications' Western-centric and gay white male focus, the press’s influence on the commodification of LGBT neighborhoods, and how, through their selective archival activities, they have excluded the voices of marginal groups (e.g., women, people of color, trans people) from the histories and geographies of gay and lesbian communities.

By the 1990s the gay press was a global phenomenon spreading Global North conceptualizations of sexual and gendered life across the world. Scholarly works published in the second decade of the twenty-first century have examined how the gay and lesbian press in the United States in the late 1950s and early 1960s portrayed the lives of gays and lesbians in eastern European, Latin American, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, and African countries often in paradoxical ways. Some writers used the existence of LGBT people in other countries as evidence that gays and lesbians existed “everywhere” throughout history and even in “primitive” countries (Serykh 2017). Alternatively, some exotic locales were portrayed as more sexually liberated, often reflecting certain more colonialist discourses about the freedom of “native” moralities around sexuality (Gleibman 2017). Yet, despite the obviously problematic nature of these claims, these publications also served to develop a transnational homosexual and/or queer political network and a sense of shared community that underpins modern LGBT activism worldwide (Milo 2017). Certainly, TBP was an early precursor of this global influence given the largely informal circulation of TBP in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

Historically, the gay press, including TBP, covered issues relevant to the entire community, although in hindsight it is fair to say that thematically most of the content appealed to largely white, middle-class, and, in the case of TBP, university-educated gay men. Certainly,
lesbians participated in the production of TBP and contributed articles and editorials to the publication, most notably Chris Bearchell, but the relationship between gay men and lesbians on the collective was often fraught (Jackman 2011).

Coupled with this critique is the argument that much of the gay press, while initially giving voice to a minority group seeking radical political and social change, was transformed because of growing corporate sponsorship and advertising revenues. In catering to these corporate and advertising interests, the gay press contributed to a reworking of the queer community and related spaces into marketable consumer identities and places (Fejes and Lennon 2000). While TBP might evade much of this critique with its demise in 1987, its successor, Xtra, certainly played a central role in this phenomenon in Toronto.

Finally, although wide ranging and keenly focused, TBP has been criticized almost from the outset for its primary focus on the interests and concerns of white, middle-class gay men to the exclusion of minority groups and women. Matters came to a head in the spring of 2016 when several events were held in Toronto to celebrate the forty-fifth anniversary of TBP. Two particular events are of note. The first is the opening in May 2016 of a play by Nick Green called Body Politic, at Buddies in Bad Times Theatre in downtown Toronto. The play's intent was to celebrate the inception and important historical role of TBP in shaping the Canadian gay and lesbian movement. Coinciding with the play's run was a daylong symposium hosted on 28 May 2016, by the Mark S. Bonham Centre for Sexual Diversity Studies at the University of Toronto and several other organizations. Billed as an event to explore the lessons this “cheeky tabloid” had for “new generations of queer activists,” the speakers included a range of scholars, activists, and former members of the collective (“Paper Trail” 2016).

While community discussions around the play pointed out how it excluded references to the presence of women and people of color in the inception and history of TBP, it was during the Bonham Centre symposium that serious rifts in the largely celebratory portrayal of TBP’s legacy became visible. Particularly critical of TBP was Rinaldo Walcott, a professor at the University of Toronto and a symposium panel member who argued that the presence of a largely white audience at the symposium was also part of TBP’s legacy. He noted that “for black queers, we live and love in the ruins of the aftermath of The Body Politic, not because of it but in spite of it” (quoted in Mann 2016a). Walcott also drew attention to how the materials archived by the CLGA reflected the invisibility of black queers, something echoed in the lack of people of color in the pages of TBP. Other speakers also pointed out that TBP’s successor, Pink Triangle Press (PTP), was also guilty of excluding representations of black queers. Syrus Marcus Ware, a community activist, highlighted the invisibility of women and trans people in both TBP and PTP publications and retrospectives, while asserting that the omissions in the approved archives can “produce a whitewashed canon” often reflected in LGBT institutions that display subtle antiblack racism (quoted in Mann 2016a). As an example, speakers highlighted how the narratives
about Toronto’s 1981 bathhouse raids ignore the participation of people of color in both public protests and in fund-raising. In the contemporary period, black queers play a pivotal role in current social and political activism, engaging in immigration issues and supporting black queers, especially youth, through associations such as Black Lives Matter Toronto and Black Queer Youth.

Undoubtedly, TBP is an important publication, contributing to the development of a gay and lesbian community in Toronto and supporting the activism that shaped the Canadian social landscape. Nevertheless, contemporary criticism reinforces the need to be vigilant in how one frames that history, including both the inclusions and exclusions such publications might foster.

SEE ALSO Bathhouse Raids, Toronto (1981); Butt Magazine; Canadian Criminal Code Reform (1969); “We Demand” Protest (1971)

BIBLIOGRAPHY


Bom-Crioulo (1895; Adolfo Ferreira Caminha)

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*A naturalist novel dealing with race, homosexuality, and crime in Rio de Janeiro.*

*Bom-Crioulo* is a novel by Adolfo Ferreira Caminha (1867–1897), a Brazilian writer and journalist who had also served as a naval officer. It has been hailed as one of the first Latin American fictional works to deal explicitly with homosexuality, and it is the first Brazilian novel to feature a “purely” black protagonist. It was written at a time in Brazil that was characterized by the recent abolition of slavery (in 1888), the transition from the Portuguese monarchy to the first republic of Brazil (established in 1889), and the introduction of the 1890 penal code.

The Novel’s Content and Style

Divided into two distinct parts, the story takes place sometime between 1830 and 1840, during the reign of Pedro II, the second and last ruler of the empire of Brazil, reigning from 1831 to 1889. The first half narrates the experience of Amaro, a thirty-year-old runaway slave known as “Bom-Crioulo,” as a sailor in the navy. In the all-male and multiracial space of the ship, homosexual practices and relations were widespread and somewhat tolerated. Amaro is physically strong, extremely jealous (the allusion to William Shakespeare’s Othello is explicit throughout), and driven by excessive alcohol consumption to “crazy excesses,” like a “beast let out of a cage” (Caminha 1982, 34). Impulsive by nature, Amaro is frequently involved in fights, and he is physically punished as a result in scenes that remind the reader that Caminha, who had been a vocal abolitionist in the late nineteenth century, was also strongly opposed to the flogging of sailors, a practice he had repeatedly witnessed as a naval officer. Amaro, in the novel, enters into a sexual relationship with a white, feminized fifteen-year-old named Aleixo. But unlike Aleixo and the other (lighter-skinned) homosexuals and lawbreakers on the ship, Amaro’s own temperament and congenital criminality are connected to his race and sexuality. Thus, Caminha’s novel, perhaps unwittingly, reproduces some of the assumptions of the school of criminology with which he was familiar if not a proponent.
Caminha's novel was innovative in its frank examination of homosexuality at its intersection with race and racial stereotypes. This becomes clear in the second half of the novel, which is set in Rio de Janeiro. The two sailors share a room in a boardinghouse run by an old friend of Amaro’s, a masculinized woman named Carolina who had immigrated to Brazil from Portugal. Carolina seduces Aleixo during his lover’s temporary absences, and Aleixo comes to outgrow his homosexual “vice,” eventually finding Amaro, his sexual advances, and his racialized body utterly repulsive. Amaro, returning to the boardinghouse, hears this news from a worker in a nearby shop. Overcome by jealousy, he murders Aleixo and leaves his body in the middle of the street, surrounded by a curious crowd. As the novel ends, the narrator urges the reader to focus on the criminal, not the victim: “Nobody paid attention to the other combatant, to the black man ... everybody wanted to see the body, to analyze the scar, to stick his nose in the wound” (141). In spite of his abolitionist past, Caminha now, seven years after the emancipation of the slaves, expressed anxieties about the growing presence of blacks in the capital of the recently proclaimed republic.

Arguably, the greatest innovation of Caminha’s novel is its frank examination of so-called congenital homosexuality or sexual inversion at its intersection with race and racial
stereotypes. The following passage demonstrates the novel’s ambivalence on the subject:

_Bom-Crioulo felt an extraordinary fever of eroticism, an uncontrollable ecstasy of homosexual pleasure. Now he understood clearly that only with a man, with a man like himself, could he find what in vain he had looked for among women. He had never been aware of this anomaly in himself; never in his life did he recall having had to examine his sexual tendencies.... Well, there was nothing he could do except be patient, seeing that it was “nature” herself who was imposing this punishment on him.

After all he was a man, and he had his sexual needs, like any other man.... Anyhow, his own conscience was clear, all the more so because there were examples right there on board of conduct similar to his—not to mention a certain officer concerning whose personal life terrible rumors were spread. And if the white man did it, the black man was even more likely to! For not everybody has the strength to resist: nature is stronger than the human will.

(63-64)

In spite of its daring subject matter, its ambiguity, its apparently nonjudgmental approach to same-sex desire, and its vicarious sympathy for its protagonist, _Bom-Crioulo_ emulates much of the style and scientific mentality of the so-called experimental novel of nineteenth-century naturalism—a literary movement that shocked its contemporaries for its use of excessively crude language, and for claiming to apply scientific methods to the novel, and of which the French author Émile Zola (1840–1902) was the most important representative. The pseudoscientific doctrine of the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909), known as criminal anthropology, was particularly influential in Latin America. One of its main projects was to associate physical traits (called stigmata) with tendencies toward crime, among them, homosexuality. But whereas in works originated in other regions of Latin America (such as Argentina) homosexuality was most often associated with foreign influence or foreign bodies, _Bom-Crioulo_ associates homosexuality with an internal other—a growing Afro-Brazilian presence in urban areas, particularly in Rio de Janeiro.

**Male Homosexuality in Nineteenth-Century Brazilian Literature**

Although _Bom-Crioulo_ was thought to be the first novel in Brazil to deal explicitly with sex and romance between men, and one of the first in any European language to do so, critics in the twenty-first century have acknowledged at least three notable precedents: _Um homem_
gasto (1885; An exhausted man), O Ateneu (1888; The Athenaeum [2015]), and O barão de Lavos (1891; The baron of Lavos). *Um homem gasto*, by the writer and physician Lourenço Ferreira Leal, does not focus on homosexuality per se so much as on the “excesses” and subsequent sexual disorders suffered by its protagonist, Alberto. Still, the book mentions Alberto’s evolution in boarding school from an “Antinous of many Hadrians” to a “Hadrian of several Antinouses” (Leal 1885, 185; translation by César Braga-Pinto), in other words, from what was then called a “passive pederast” to an “active pederast.” The best-selling novel *O barão de Lavos*, written by Abel Botelho, a Portuguese army officer, also deals with homosexuality. Caminha was aware of both novels, and he even referred to *O barão de Lavos* in his defense of *Bom-Crioulo*. In contrast, *O Ateneu*, written by Raul Pompeia, is more nuanced and less inclined toward moral condemnation. In that novel, the first-person narrator, a boarding school student named Sérgio, describes his sentimental education, successive gender identifications, and same-sex desires (as well as those of other students).

In 1897, two years after the publication of *Bom-Crioulo*, the symbolist writer Nestor Vítor published “Sapos” (Frogs), a short story that depicts an Irish Brazilian man's sexual devolution into pederasty and promiscuity upon ending an intense relationship with an office mate. In his contemporary review of Vítor’s volume *Signos*, where the story was first published, João da Cruz e Sousa (1861–1898), the first renowned black Brazilian poet, drew an analogy between the main character’s sexual abjection and the fate of all social outcasts, including blacks (Cruz e Sousa 1897).

Each of these late nineteenth-century works is, to some extent, indebted to French naturalism, a literary movement that emphasized observation and relied on scientific doctrines of evolution, race, degeneration, and heredity. While these authors’ fictional characters are objects of curiosity and even sympathy, they are never sources of attraction or models of alternative or oppositional politics to be emulated. Similarly, the homosocial spaces of the school, the ship, and the office are never developed into allegorical representations of a national fraternity. An exception from this period is the work of the mixed-race and reputedly homosexual Paulo Barreto (1881–1921), who published two stories in the newspaper *Cidade do Rio* in 1899 and 1900. “Impotência” (16 August 1899; Impotence) is indebted to decadent and naturalist aesthetics and the main character of *À rebours* (1884; Against nature), by the French novelist Joris-Karl Huysmans (1848–1907). In that story, a seventy-year-old man recalls his passion as a youth for a gardener. Similarly, “Ódio, ou Páginas de um diário” (19 May 1900; Hate; or, Pages from a diary) is a rare, passionate tale of same-sex desire, homophobia, and homosexual panic that is clearly modeled on French decadence, a late nineteenth-century literary movement that was characterized by excess, artificiality, and the exploration of sexual perversion.

**Critical Reception and International Circulation**

Critics initially reacted to *Bom-Crioulo* with prudish indignation and facetious speculation
Nothing more than a case of sexual inversion studied in [Richard von] Krafft-Ebing, [Albert] Moll, [Ambroise] Tardieu, and in books of legal medicine.... If we are to believe certain imbeciles—according to whom the characters of novels should reflect the authors' character—[Gustave] Flaubert, [Émile] Zola, and [José Maria de] Eça de Queiroz would have practiced incest and monstrous acts.... What is more pernicious: Bom-Crioulo, in which homosexuality is studied and condemned, or those pages that are now circulating and preaching, in a philosophical tone, the dissolution of the family, concubinage, free love, and all sorts of social immorality?

(CAMINHA [1896] 2009, 447; TRANSLATION BY BRAGA-PINTO)

After having faded from circulation and critical consideration in the early twentieth century, since the late 1950s Bom-Crioulo has been regularly published and has gained entry to the canon of Brazilian literature. Widely read, it has been reprinted in a variety of popular and educational editions in multiple languages. But while Brazilian critics and educators have focused on the work’s scientific intentions and naturalist style, the 1982 publication of an English translation by Gay Sunshine Press has drawn the attention of largely gay-identified readers and literary critics, some of whom have reclaimed it as a foundational text of Brazilian and even world “gay literature.” It has also been translated into several other European languages, with international editions that deploy various marketing strategies. The cover of the first French edition (Rue de la Miséricorde [1996]) features a photograph by the French ethnographer Pierre Verger (1902–1996), known for homoerotic portraits of Afro-Brazilian subjects. In contrast, a later French translation (Un amour d’ebène [2010]) advertises the novel as a masterpiece of universal literature that all “honest men” should read. In Spain, the work was published as Buen Criollo (2005), initially as part of a gay and lesbian series with the same Verger photo on the cover, and later (2008) featuring a different but equally erotic image. The Mexican edition, El buen negro (2008), was translated by the well-known gay writer Luis Zapata (1951–) and published with a cover that shows a mixed race, rather than black, man. The German edition (Tropische Nächte [1994]) is particularly interesting given that it was published as part of a collection of gay erotica, its cover illustration recalling Querelle, the iconic 1982 gay film directed by the German filmmaker Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1945–1982). In Brazil, depending on the target audience, the novel’s numerous current editions tend to
emphasize either Afro-Brazilianness or homosexuality, but rarely both.

Scandalous at the time of its publication, banned in Brazil for almost half a century, and most recently celebrated—and at times appropriated—by global and queer literary criticism, *Bom-Crioulo* constitutes a unique case for the study of postcolonial and sexual histories and cultures. It may be true that uncritical claims of its modern and positive (or merely ambivalent) portrayal of interracial homosexuality risk confirming prejudices regarding biological fatalism as it relates to both sexuality and race. Yet the novel has continued to draw the interest of readers, both in the present and in the past, who seek to challenge stereotypes and assumptions concerning the immutability of race and sexuality.

SEE ALSO *Imperialism and Colonialism; Situational Homosexuality; Slavery and Sodomy in Brazil*

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The history of LGBTQ+-themed bookstores, including their unique role as activist centers and community spaces.

Beginning in the early 1970s, bookstores catering to the LGBTQ+ community became important social spaces for advocacy and pride, moving beyond existing gay crisis hotline and drop-in center models to make positive information about gay and lesbian lives more widely available for browsing and purchase. Typically operating as a combination of literary salon, queer archive, and gaymart, storefront businesses from Toronto to Berlin served a customer niche that included seasoned activists, newly out individuals, and LGBTQ families all seeking their own history and literature. A rainbow flag raised high over the door and window displays showcasing a range of publications from the spiritual to the erotic countered centuries of shame and secrecy. As Daniel Lefferts noted in his 2014 article “Why We Still Need LGBT Bookstores,” “Our newfound sociopolitical liberties, instead of obliterating the need for a distinctive gay culture, should instead give us license to explore that culture and develop it further. We need gay bookstores, not as sanctuaries for the repressed, but as museums and libraries for the out and proud.” Over time, roughly corresponding to 1970 to 2014, the diverse owners, managers, collectives, and volunteers staffing LGBTQ and feminist bookshops negotiated politics, poetry, pornography, and profit to stay afloat. They popularized new, out and proud writers from Judy Grahn and Jewelle Gomez to Armistead Maupin and Jeanette Winterson, and brought older literary giants out of the closet. Although in much of the world such bookstores were forced to operate more secretly (and in both the United Kingdom and North America stores were sometimes subject to police harassment), they served as significant venues for readings and book launches, allowing LGBTQ authors to gain new fans and critical attention. Publishers whose books were sold widely at LGBTQ+ bookshops included Harrington Park Press, the Gay Men’s Press, Paradise Press, Virago, Alyson, the Women’s Press, and, in the United States, lesbian presses including Aunt Lute, Bella Books, Bywater Books, Cleis, Naiad, New Victoria, and Spinsters Ink. With the rise of LGBTQ studies in academia, scholarly titles from Duke University Press, the University of Wisconsin Press, and the State University of New York Press appeared, as well as journals including GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, Journal of Lesbian Studies, and TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly.

As known addresses, bookshops quickly became a focal point of identity- and community-
building with an explosion of store openings in the gay hubs of San Francisco and New York during the period of increased activism after the 1969 Stonewall riots. Whereas more militant, street activism might be dismissed by mainstream critics, bookstores elevated the profiles of the LGBTQ reader and writer alike, asserting new queer consumer power and a role in the literary market. This was a direct challenge to the old stigma attached to “adult” bookstores—hitherto the only sites, aside from libraries or special academic collections, for books and films featuring explicit gay sexuality. Some LGBTQ bookshops did maintain a separate, “adults-only” section with explicit magazines for gay men (sometimes referred to as “stroke books”), and also sold critical studies addressing the culture and politics of sex work. As in the early years of homophile organizing by 1950s and 1960s advocacy groups such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, which pushed a “respectable homosexual” platform for gaining political rights, the visibility of erotic literature and gay porn troubled some who saw it as an obstacle to assimilation. Yet, sexually frank literature was an important and popular sales item for gay men: the Dutch quarterly Butt was one example of a bookshop item drawing attention to male nudity; it was also named one of the Guardian’s top twenty magazines. The manager of Australia’s Bookshop Darlinghurst, which opened in 1982, even suggested that some older gay men just starting to come out “found a sexual partner in our shop as well, when erotic gay magazines used to be published and we stocked them. Our magazine section tended to be cruise-y at times! But there has also been romance, and one of our own staff met his partner there” (Bereznai 2017).

During the so-called sex wars of the tense 1980s, when many lesbian feminists attacked pornography as harmful to women and anonymous sex was blamed for the AIDS crisis, bookstores differed widely in their inventories and their responses to would-be censors. Lambda Rising Bookstore’s selections acknowledged anonymous sex as a vibrant part of gay subculture and, therefore, gay writing; popular author and filmmaker John Waters praised Lambda Rising Bookstore’s Baltimore branch as “a seriously good bookshop, with the added touch of porno” (Marech 2008). By the 1980s and 1990s, with increased awareness of safe-sex techniques and AIDS prevention through condom use, shops marketing gay literature often sold safe-sex products and lubricant at the counter, for both ethical and commercial reasons.

Thus, despite their preponderance of high-quality materials, occasionally LGBTQ booksellers were charged with obscenity, notably Gay’s the Word Bookshop in England (raided in 1984 by Her Majesty’s Customs and Excise on grounds of indecency), Glad Day in Toronto (which in 2003 won a federal lawsuit defending the right to sell “adult” films without the approval of the Ontario Film Review Board), and Little Sister’s Book and Art Emporium in Vancouver (which was cleared by the Canadian Supreme Court after a 2000 customs battle when inventory from the United States was seized at the border). These bookstores all eventually prevailed in costly court battles due to the outpouring of support from loyal customers and literary advocates. The first LGBTQ bookshop in Taiwan, Taipei’s
GinGin Books, opened in 1999 amid legal pressure from censors who challenged owner “JJ” Lai Jeng-Jer for distributing so-called obscene material (and for importing magazines and sex toys from Hong Kong, Japan, and Germany). In 2010 Shobhna Kumar opened what the *Hindustan Times* called “India’s first gay bookstore,” an online shop called Queer Ink in Malad, but it is important to note that the feminist bookshop Streelekha in Bangalore was selling books by lesbian author Suniti Namjoshi in the early 1990s.

**GAY’S THE WORD BOOKSHOP**

Founded by Ernest Hole with assistance from Peter Dorey and a small group of people from Icebreakers, a gay socialist group, Gay’s the Word bookshop opened for business in London, England, in January 1979. Inspired by the rise of lesbian and gay bookstores in the United States and named after the last musical written by Ivor Novello, Gay’s the Word was the United Kingdom’s first lesbian and gay bookshop. Others followed, including West and Wilde in Edinburgh, Out in Brighton, and Silver Moon women’s bookshop in London. Today, Gay’s the Word is the last surviving physical bookshop specializing in LGBTQ+ literature in the United Kingdom and the second-longest running lesbian and gay bookshop in Europe, after Prinz Eisenherz in Berlin.

From its inception, the bookshop was intended to be a community resource and political hub, providing access to information and a space to nurture the well-being of the lesbian and gay community at a time when antigay prejudice was commonplace and gay books were not generally available in mainstream bookshops. No material that was considered racist, sexist, sexually exploitative, or which presented negative perspectives on gay or women’s liberation was stocked. Today, Gay’s the Word continues to operate along that original mandate with staff attentive to the needs of customers seeking advice on “coming out” and with numerous discussion, activity, and support groups convening in the venue in the evenings. As the novelist Sarah Waters observed in 2007, “It’s not just a bookshop, but the hub and affirmation of a whole community.”

In 1984 Her Majesty’s Customs and Excise, assuming the shop to be a porn store rather than a serious bookstore, mounted a large-scale raid and seized thousands of pounds’ worth of stock. Works by Tennessee Williams, Christopher Isherwood, and Jean Genet were among the books seized. Directors were eventually charged with conspiracy to import indecent books under the Customs Consolidation Act of 1876. The Defend Gay’s the Word campaign was set in motion, with a defense fund raising over £55,000 from the public. Many well-known writers also gave their support, including the American writer Gore Vidal, who donated £3,000. All charges were eventually dropped.

Organizations that have held meetings in the bookshop over the years include the
Lesbian Discussion Group (meeting for more than thirty-five years), the Gay Black Group, and the Gay Disabled Group. From 1984 to 1985 Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners met at the shop and collected money outside, as immortalized in the 2014 film Pride, directed by Matthew Warchus. The success of the film has helped to underscore the importance of Gay’s the Word in people’s minds, bringing a whole new generation of customers to the bookshop’s door, further improving its viability.

With one of the best-curated, comprehensive ranges of LGBTQ+ books available to buy in the world, the stock includes lesbian and gay fiction, history, biography, literary criticism, queer studies, sex and relationships, parenting, kids, young adult, trans, secondhand, religion and spirituality, and poetry. Following a challenging trading period in 2007, Gay’s the Word launched a high-profile campaign to raise funds, which included a shelf-sponsorship initiative called “Cash-for-Honours.” Customers and authors, including the actor Ian McKellen and the writers Ali Smith and Philip Hensher, rallied round and the shop was saved.

The first two decades of the twenty-first century were marked by a rash of closures of queer venues in London (and across the world), which resulted in part from economic gentrification and the effects of digital technology on behavior, the importance of unique spaces such as Gay’s the Word has come into sharp relief. Venues such as independent LGBTQ+ bookshops are part of the living, breathing fabric of queer culture. Often serving as a touchstone venue that people discover early in their personal journeys and as sites of pilgrimage for those from other, more restrictive cultures, they are special places where people find politics, understanding, and each other. In the words of the American writer Armistead Maupin in a 2007 email to the author, “Gay’s the Word, to my mind, is the fountainhead of queer literature in Britain. I am deeply grateful that these pioneers fought so hard for our right to tell—and read—our own stories.”

**Uli Lenart**  
*Bookseller*  
*Gay’s the Word bookshop, United Kingdom*

This history reminds us that mail order, though certainly a lifesaver for many, was not always a safe solution for distant customers because mail could be subject to confiscation—a predicament dating back to the nineteenth-century Comstock Laws in the United States, which gave the US Postal Service broad latitude to seize “obscene” materials. In the years before World War I (1914–1918), those laws were used to target literature about birth control, notably Margaret Sanger’s daring magazine *The Woman Rebel*. The “plain brown wrapper” designating adult material delivered by mail eventually inspired the title of a
lesbian book, Rita Mae Brown's early (and now rare) volume *A Plain Brown Rapper* (1976). However, for closeted readers or those threatened by the loss of jobs, housing, or custody if outed in their homophobic communities, access to queer culture via mail was life changing and a link to the burgeoning global pride movement.

Moving beyond these occasional challenges from conservative or state critics, gay bookshops took care to construct an atmosphere that welcomed customers of all ages and interests, hosting author reading events, serving as ad hoc organizing sites, donating books to community fund-raisers, and forging important relationships with rare-book collectors and burgeoning LGBTQ archives. They were some of the first sites of accessible literature for queer and questioning youth, for gay and lesbian parents, and for educators seeking appropriate works for classroom units on LGBTQ life and identity. As public sites with free admission, LGBTQ bookshops also changed the tone of urban “gayborhoods,” which had long been defined by bars and late-night performance clubs—legally boundaried meeting spaces that limited participation to those over the age of twenty-one. (Age limits tended to be lower across Europe and in the United Kingdom.) In far too many cases, bars and clubs enabled a culture of alcoholism coupled with racist ID practices, whereas bookshops offered an alternative of self-discovery and self-help through titles on recovery and diversity. Books also provided a means of talking back to one’s oppressor through the elegant written word, fostering empowerment in regions where political writing of any kind represented the triumph over censorship and false narratives about history. With the expansion of LGBTQ bookstore culture in the United States and elsewhere, finding accurate depictions of gay, lesbian, and, more recently, trans life no longer meant a lonely quest for just one book or film with a happy ending.

**History**

Three sites compete for the title of first/oldest gay bookstore: Oscar Wilde in Greenwich Village (opened by Craig Rodwell in 1967, originally as the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop), Glad Day Books in Toronto, Canada (opened in 1970), and Giovanni’s Room in Philadelphia (opened by Ed Hermance in 1973), the oldest LGBTQ bookstore in the United States to operate continuously at one site. The oldest gay bookstores in Europe also opened before the end of the 1970s: Gay’s the Word and the Man to Man Bookshop in London and Prinz Eisenherz Buchladen in Berlin. SisterWrite on Upper Street N1 in London featured a no-men-allowed lesbian books room and a women-only café from 1979 to 1993. Although the trans community would later disrupt and interrogate the premise of male and female as essential categories, it is noteworthy that several early bookshops promoted, through name and policy, customers’ preference for a same-sex sanctuary as well as the legitimacy of a same-sex attraction. Edinburgh’s Womanzone (opened 1983) was another where, not incidentally, women could buy lesbian titles from publisher Onlywomen Press, and in London Silver Moon Bookshop was denied a liquor license for its café because it did not
provide toilets for men.

The urgency of making a space for gay liberation literature in the years just before and after the Stonewall riots of 1969 began in more liberal cities of the North, but a second wave emerged in the American South in the 1990s. Drawing on both local and national concerns, each independent bookshop offered a range of activities and events, including responses to hate crimes and pending LGBTQ rights laws. From its position in the nation's capital, Lambda Rising played an important role in extending the literary reach of LGBTQ publishing by starting Lambda Book Report in 1987 and the Lambda Literary Awards in 1989. Since 1996 the Lambda Literary Foundation has operated as a nonprofit (now on the West Coast) responsible for LGBTQ book festivals, conferences, reviews, monthly book clubs, awards, scholarships to emerging writers, writers in the schools, and other activities affirming the lavender word. The Lambda Rising Bookshop at Dupont Circle in Washington, DC, saw considerable foot traffic from out-of-towners during all four of the national marches for LGBTQ rights (1979, 1987, 1993, and 2000); a sign in its window also directed local activists to gather at the US Capitol for a spontaneous rally in response to the killing of Matthew Shepard, a gay college student beaten to death near Laramie, Wyoming, in the fall of 1998.

Throughout this same post-Stonewall era of pride and activism from the 1970s through the 1990s, lesbian customers were just as likely to buy their books and films through the global network of woman-centered feminist bookstores such as Amazon Books, Lammas Women's Books and More, Women and Children First, Sisterhood Books, and Crazy Ladies. These bookstores were both part of and separate from the LGBTQ bookshop community, offering books, art, readings, and concerts that emphasized women's lives, and benefiting from the platform of issues raised by the women's movement. Although there were actually more feminist bookstores catering to women than LGBTQ bookstores catering to men and women in that era, it is unclear whether women's bookstores took customers or sales away from LGBTQ enterprises. Both complementary to male gay rights interests by featuring materials and workshops on general LGBTQ political rights and also offering women-only events and materials specific to lesbian lives, feminist businesses struggled financially. For bookshop managers whose lesbian-feminist politics were more revolutionary than entrepreneurial, turning a profit was not as urgent as smashing the patriarchy and interrupting racism. Kristen Hogan's The Feminist Bookstore Movement (2016) addresses the ways that staff and volunteer “bookwomen” labored to create social spaces that were simultaneously welcoming, accessible, and provocative; the business ethos of sales was sometimes barely apparent. In the pre-internet era, women's authentic experiences of sexual violence, racial oppression, homophobic disregard of lesbian realities, and class struggles in a sexist wage economy were rarely, if ever, discussed in mainstream media. Independently published books told those truths and also offered a resounding link to lost women writers who had dared to pen lesbian narratives long before the so-called second wave of feminism in the 1960s and 1970s.
Often run by collectives, women's bookstores first emerged as a cultural wing of the radical feminist movement, serving a political agenda separate from the male-dominated Left. Lesbian activists in the late 1960s and early 1970s encountered sexism from gay men as well as homophobia in feminist organizations such as the National Organization for Women, and thus began an exodus from both streams to give voice to lesbian-feminist concerns through publishing and recording. Not all feminist bookstores were lesbian-owned or -operated, but most offered materials by and about lesbians that other presses, including newspapers, refused to print. Like gay bookstores, feminist bookstores functioned as informal gathering sites and hosted author events, but they also sold albums and served as concert venues for the lesbian music movement, and they were rallying points for actions against male violence. Feminist bookstores proliferated in the United States and beyond, and their names deliberately emphasized female literary history and essentialism: A Room of One’s Own (Madison, Wisconsin), A Woman’s Prerogative (Ferndale, Michigan), Amazon Books (Minneapolis, Minnesota), Antigone Books (Tucson, Arizona), Artistic Amazon (Portsmouth, New Hampshire), Bluestockings (New York City), Boadecia’s Books (Berkeley, California), Book-Woman (Austin, Texas), Charis Books and More (Atlanta, Georgia), Common Language Bookstore (Ann Arbor, Michigan), Crazy Ladies (Cincinnati, Ohio), Crone’s Cupboard (Boise, Idaho), Crone’s Harvest (Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts), Dreams and Swords (Indianapolis, Indiana), Gertrude and Alice’s (Collinsville, Connecticut), Herland Sister Resources (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), Lammas (Washington, DC), Lioness Books (Sacramento, California), Little Sister’s (Vancouver, Canada), Mama Bear’s (Oakland, California), My Sister’s Words (Syracuse, New York), People Called Women (Toledo, Ohio), Sisterhood Bookstore (Los Angeles, California), Streelekha (Bangalore, India), Venus Envy (Halifax, Canada), Women and Children First (Chicago, Illinois), and WomenCrafts (Provincetown, Massachusetts). The independent presses printing and supplying new lesbian books likewise chose names that declared a woman-identified sensibility: Down There Press, Shameless Hussy Press, Persephone Press, Diana Press, Spinsters Ink, Daughters, Naiad, and, in Britain, Onlywomen Press and Pandora Press. In 1999 Amazon Bookstore Cooperative in Minneapolis sued Amazon.com for trademark infringement of its name, and in a complicated settlement then signed over rights to the name (while licensing ongoing usage of “Amazon” through 2008).

Frustration over the marginalization of black women’s voices led Barbara Smith and her sister to form Kitchen Table/Women of Color Press, and at least one bookstore, Sisterspace in Washington, DC, catered to the community of black women. Before the social media networks of the twenty-first century, breakthrough writings by lesbian authors (particularly women of color) created occasions for transforming both the isolated newcomer and the evolving activist. Bookstores offered resources to repair the fragmented conditions of women’s lives while also subjecting their staff and business practices to constant political scrutiny. Women in Distribution, Carol Seajay's Feminist Bookstore News, and the early Women in Print conferences connected bookstore staff to one another as the
threats of online shopping, chain bookstores, and conglomerate mergers encroached and antitrust laws limited feminist booksellers’ ability to act in coalition. But in terms of placing hard-to-find and beloved feminist texts into readers’ hands, feminist bookstores emerged victorious in the battle with capitalist interests. The complete history of independent lesbian periodicals, women’s presses, and the women’s bookstore movement from 1969 to 1999 is now available from scholars such as Julie Enszer, Judy Grahn (A Simple Revolution [2012]), and former Feminist Bookstore News publisher Seajay. Seajay’s essay on the rise and fall of feminist bookstores, “Our Words in Our Hands: A Brief History of Women’s Presses and Bookstores,” which appeared in Ms. magazine in July/August 1992, remains a classic for understanding the economic and political underpinnings of women-identified businesses. In the interdependent economy that typified lesbian cultural networks, where sheer distribution often took precedence over profit, women’s bookstores sent booksellers to festivals and conferences while their home stores featured bins of women’s music and woman-made crafts or jewelry as well as books. The elevation of lesbian poetry readings to a kind of performance art helped to introduce new writings by lesbians of color, including nonfiction anthologies, as well as recorded concerts. These did not shy away from confronting white lesbians about racism and classism, but lesbian-themed writing brought women across racial lines in a very different way than the street protests of the 1960s. A bookstore, like a library, permitted quiet, autodidactic radicalization and commitment. Women who had access to a feminist bookstore in their cities could now browse uninhibited for hours, avoiding the drama of trying to find or check out lesbian books at schools or libraries.

Some bookstores expanded into cafés so that women could meet free from male harassment, reprising an earlier era’s network of suffragist tea rooms. (In 1911 feminist Alva Belmont ran a successful suffrage restaurant in New York.) Bloodroot restaurant and bookstore in Bridgeport, Connecticut, published a feminist cookbook titled The Political Palate in 1980. Bookshops also helped publicize a year-round calendar of activism for lesbians during the 1980s and 1990s, papering entire walls with flyers and brochures for upcoming events and later displaying the books or recorded manifesta that had resulted from such gatherings. Bulletin boards at bookshops included want ads for housemates, for rides to festivals, for submissions to anthologies, and even for interviews with some of the first scholars looking to study lesbian lives. In cities with large military populations, where homophobic police informants monitored women in uniform who tried to enter known lesbian bars, a visit to a bookstore might be a military lesbian’s only community entry point; a poetry reading usually flew below the radar of known, and banned, lesbian spaces. Typically alcohol-free except for occasional book-release wine and cheese receptions, bookstores were an alternative sober social space for women in recovery. During the 1980s, shelves were filled with books on twelvestep programs and codependency and memoirs by authors addressing their journeys toward sobriety. Despite their politically textured aspects, bookstores were also flirtatious and friendship-based community spaces,
which was fondly illustrated in Alison Bechdel's long-running comic strip *Dykes to Watch Out For*. By 1992, Seajay's essay in *Ms.* acknowledged these changes:

> There was a time at the beginning of the women's movement when a committed feminist could store everything in print about the women's liberation movement in a few file folders on her desk. Now there are 140 women's bookstores scattered across the US and Canada. The larger stores stock 15,000 to 18,000 titles.... Most have more books than any one woman could read over the course of her lifetime.


A 1988 edition of *Gaia's Guide International*, for lesbian travelers, listed lesbian bookstore-cafés in Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, India, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain, and Sweden.

**Mainstreaming, Visibility, and the Internet**

Gradually, the best of lesbian writing and art percolated into mainstream distribution as both lesbians and gay men gained attention in academia and pop culture. A central conflict of the 1980s concerned age-appropriate LGBT books for children whose families were not represented in schoolbooks; in the United States, the American Library Association defended lesbian author Lesléa Newman, author of *Heather Has Two Mommies* (1989), when evangelical and right-wing groups sought to ban lesbian and gay authors from school shelves. Other controversial releases were Michael Willhoite's *Daddy's Roommate* (1991) and, in Europe, Danish author Susanne Bosche's groundbreaking *Mette bor hos Morten og Erik* (1981; *Jenny Lives with Eric and Martin* [1983]). In 1986 Bosche's photoessay was labeled “homosexual propaganda” by the secretary of education in the United Kingdom, as Section 28 made it an offense to advocate homosexuality. LGBTQ+ bookshops and mail-order services played important roles in distributing this new genre of family-friendly storybooks because they were banned from some schools.

However, more and more adults were exposed to new books with overt and sexual LGBTQ content as they were adapted into screenplays, such as Dorothy Allison's *Bastard Out of Carolina*, which debuted on cable in the United States in 1996 with mainstream Hollywood star Jennifer Jason Leigh in a lead role. Many films about LGBTQ life featured scenes in bookstores, including *Pride* (2014), set in London's Gay's the Word; *Better Than Chocolate* (1999), set in Vancouver's censorshipridden Little Sister’s; and Armistead Maupin’s *Tales of the City* miniseries (1993), with a scene in San Francisco's A Different Light bookshop.
Both *Better Than Chocolate* and *Tales of the City* were noteworthy for featuring trans women as strong central characters well before greater visibility and advocacy for trans rights in the twenty-first century. When American comedienne Ellen DeGeneres came out on her television series in 1997, her character, Ellen Morgan, managed a bookstore.

But as former customers began to read, make purchases, and meet one another online, bookstores (along with many other social and physical sites of LGBTQ culture) began to go out of business in the early twenty-first century, vanishing from the diverse landscapes they had helped build and define. Over 1,000 bookstores (LGBTQ included) closed in the United States alone between 2000 and 2007. The reasons are complex. In the 1990s the appearance of select LGBTQ books in mainstream chain bookstores, such as Barnes & Noble and Borders, suggested social progress but cost independent booksellers crucial sales and foot traffic. LGBTQ bookstores, like all independent bookstores, also battled the innovations of cyberspace and social media, which presented fresh opportunities for marketing and direct mail orders but pitted smaller businesses against the powerful Amazon distributor. Facing competition, LGBTQ+ bookshops turned to survival strategies including expanding into cafés, while others reinforced sales of sex toys, which were not
available in mainstream bookstores. (In a 1996 installment of Bechdel’s comic strip Dykes to Watch Out For, the employees of fictional Madwimmin Books discuss similar options. Lois suggests that the bookstore can meet rising costs by offering a range of sex toys, since popular bookstore chains “might carry lesbian erotica, but they don’t sell the hardware!”)

Just before Christmas 2010, Ted Jensen and Kevin Medley, the founder/operators of OutLoud Bookstore in Nashville, Tennessee, cited these factors in their decision to close after fifteen years: “The greed of some in the banking industry continues to push interest rates so high that most small businesses can’t afford them. Affordable credit is simply not available to most small business owners…. Supersized businesses like Amazon, Wal-Mart, and Best Buy have unfair price advantages over locally owned businesses” (OutLoud 2010). Bruce Bawer’s 2003 “Closing Time” column in the New York Times offered similar reflections. In contrast, when Lambda Rising closed in 2010, founder Deacon Maccubbin’s assessment was positive: “If we’re successful, there will no longer be a need for a specialty gay and lesbian bookstore because every bookstore will be carrying [this literature]. And 35 years later, that’s what happened. We call that mission accomplished” (Proctor 2015).

The economic challenges of sustaining brick-and-mortar businesses in an era of online shopping and socializing had other costs for people of color identifying as LGBTQ, as many low-income and minority communities were displaced by soaring rents and gentrification. Those white, gay men whose higher income levels allowed them to enjoy urban home ownership were able to put down roots in neighborhoods now devoid of post-Stonewall radicalism. For women escaping abusive marriages or navigating the legal waters of lesbian motherhood, the feminist bookstores that had been walkto refuges vanished. Bechdel’s Dykes to Watch Out For, which ran in syndicated LGBTQ magazines and newspapers from 1986 to 2013 and was inspired in part by the original Amazon Books in Minneapolis, presented every real-life change and challenge experienced by existing bookstores over those decades, from a brick thrown through the window to the gradual inclusion of trans women to the necessity of stocking fanciful sex toys as book sales were lost to competing chain bookstores. In 2012 the comic strip story line featured the inevitable closing of Madwimmin Books, and soon afterward, Bechdel moved on to write her award-winning graphic memoir Fun Home (2006), which became a Broadway hit in 2015.

In his 2014 essay “The Slow, Tragic Death of the LGBT Publishing Industry,” Lethe Press manager Steve Berman notes, “How individuals learn about new books, or old classics that deserve to outlive their authors, is tricky. In the early days of LGBT publishing there were few titles available, so the clerks and owners were more likely to have read each and every one.” Lambda Rising Bookshop once encouraged patrons to drop a business card in a glass jar on the counter for a chance to Win a gay library!; the explosion in LGBTQ-themed books has taken us far beyond what can be contained in an individual collection or a shop space. Ironically, whereas federal authorities once persecuted the LGBTQ community, today some government sources are making funds available to promote the preservation of LGBTQ history. From New York’s LGBT Historic Sites Project website to the National Park Service
study of LGBTQ America, LGBTQ sites are now of historic interest. In the next years, we will see more bookshops designated as historically precious to the development of an LGBTQ literary tradition and the cultural victory over discrimination. History will judge whether the mainstreaming of LGBTQ literature is a victory for open expression of identity or an erasure of once-vital locations for a community still under legal and moral assault.

SEE ALSO Butt Magazine; Pulp Fiction, Gay and Lesbian

BIBLIOGRAPHY


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http://www.nyclgbtsites.org/site/oscar-wilde-memorial-bookshop/


Contrary to many accounts, the American writer Henry James (1843–1916) did not coin the term Boston marriage. His sister, however, was in one. Alice James (1848–1892) and the educator Katharine Loring (1849–1943) shared what Henry called “a devotion so perfect and generous ... a gift of providence so rare and so little-to-be-looked for in this world that to brush it aside would be almost an act of impiety” (quoted in Faderman 1981, 196). Henry was also familiar with the writer Sarah Orne Jewett (1849–1909), who was in an almost thirty-year relationship with the writer Annie Adams Fields (1834–1915), and his notebooks suggest he was intrigued by the erotics between the women’s rights activist Susan B. Anthony (1820–1906) and the talented orator Anna Elizabeth Dickinson (1842–1932). So when James published his novel The Bostonians (1885–1886) about, as he put it, “one of those friendships between women that are so common in New England” (quoted in Matthiessen and Murdock 1947, 47), he was pointing his pen at a recognizable attachment between otherwise unmarried women. A Boston marriage was recognized as long-term, monogamous, and involving a degree of financial independence, sometimes inherited and sometimes earned. The women in these marriages were often involved in suffrage, philanthropy, breaking into professional spheres, and “New Woman” politics.
Charlotte Cushman (left) and Matilda Hays. American stage actress Charlotte Cushman lived in what was described as a “female marriage” with Hays for a decade in the mid-nineteenth century. This relationship and others Cushman had with women did not excite scandal because they were assumed by many to be nonsexual.

In *Surpassing the Love of Men* (1981), Lillian Faderman traced the first use of the term to the early twentieth century. More recently, Benjamin Kahan (2013) has uncovered its use in an 1893 letter that also refers to even earlier, widespread usages. Prior to the use of the epithet *Boston*, the term *female marriage* was often used. The English poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861) employed it, for example, when she met the American actress Charlotte Cushman (1816–1876) and her lover, Matilda Hays (1820–1897), in Paris in 1852. Barrett Browning wrote to her sister that Cushman and Hays had “made vows of celibacy & of eternal attachment to each other—they live together, dress alike ... it is a female marriage” (quoted in McAleer 1951, 27).

**Race and Class**

The categories of Boston marriages and romantic friendships both imply a high degree of socioeconomic status. Although assuredly working-class women in the industrial Western world have always lived together in similar formations, the terms are found applied only to middle- and upper-class women. This may be because written histories have predominantly attended to subjects who have estate, and it may also be that marriage of any kind has historically been about estate. The question of cross-class relationships between women is relatively unattended to. There has been some scholarly attention to
cross-class, long-term relationships of gay men such as the English homosexual rights activist and writer Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), the American poet Walt Whitman (1819–1892), and the English novelist E. M. Forster (1879–1970). The possibility of erotic relationships between, for example, a lady and her maid is powerfully expressed in the poem “Warming Her Pearls” (1987) by Carol Ann Duffy (1955–) but has received less scholarly attention. Exceptions include work on Jewett's fiction, notably “An Autumn Holiday,” “Miss Tempy’s Watchers,” Deephaven, The Country of Pointed Firs, and, most especially, “Martha’s Lady.” Deephaven (1877) portrays a Boston marriage between “best of friends” Kate and Helen who set up “housekeeping” together. Jewett was herself in a longterm same-sex relationship with the Boston socialite and philanthropist Fields, a relationship that lasted until Jewett's death in 1909.

Although the terms Boston marriage and romantic friendship are delimited by class, they have jumped racial barriers and been used to describe black women's relationships. To cite one example, the African American writer Angelina Weld Grimké (1880–1958) had a romantic friendship with her African American school friend Mamie Burrill (Rupp 2001). Grimké used the language of marriage in a way that was clearly more than metaphorical: “I know you are too young now to become my wife, but I hope, darling, that in a few years you will come to me and be my love, my wife! How my brain whirls how my pulse leaps with joy and madness when I think of these two words, ‘my wife’” (quoted in Perry 2001, 313). The schoolgirl Grimké here looks ahead to a lesbian future that most scholars agree was foreclosed; Gloria T. Hull describes Grimké as a “thwarted lesbian, who forswore lasting intimacy at an early age” (1987, 21). Grimké’s adult writing is fretted by passion for lost loves and women admired from afar or yearned for across distances created by hesitancy, prohibition, or death. For Grimké, youthful romantic friendship allowed her passion a freedom denied her in adult life.

An antebellum example of a same-sex relationship between black women can be found in the history of Rebecca Cox Jackson (1795–1871). Jackson was an African American free woman who divorced her husband and became an itinerant preacher before joining the Shakers, who were impressed by her mystical visions and welcomed her as a prophet. In 1851 she moved to Philadelphia with her partner, Rebecca Perot, where they founded the first black Shaker community. After Jackson’s death, Perot took the name “Mother Rebecca Jackson” and assumed leadership of the community.

### Beyond Boston: Some Questions on Nation

The term Boston marriage is structured by two allegiances: anglicized geography and estate. What happens if both of those constructions are removed? Scholarship on female friendship and marriage emerged at a time when queer theory was still very Anglo-American-centric, with some consideration of French literature and culture. That Western bias, however, has been changing. Area studies has provided valuable national and
ethnically specific case studies as well as new calls for scholars to make global and even transhistorical connections. In 2000 the *Journal of Women's History* marked the twenty-five years of scholarship since Carroll Smith-Rosenberg’s 1975 article “The Female World of Love and Ritual” with an issue that draws connections between Smith-Rosenberg’s American “female world” and those of nineteenth-century Bohemia and South Asia. The journal’s editor, Leila J. Rupp, later published *Sapphistries: A Global History of Love between Women* (2009), which she describes as contributing to “a transnational history of lesbianism” (6). Her account shows that forms of female marriage have existed at many times and in many places; what is contested is how they are represented. Rupp cites ancient rabbinical commentary condemning marriage between two women as Egyptian or Canaanite as “an early example of blaming sexual deviance on foreign influence” (2009, 36). Rupp also cites some African scholars’ impatience with African American writers such as Audre Lorde (1934–1992) hailing African forms of female marriage as lesbian: “What looks like a transhistorical, transnational history of Black women’s relationships to some, looks like Western misinterpretation and misappropriation to others” (2009, 88–89).

Andrea Sankar’s 1986 article, “Sisters and Brothers, Lovers and Enemies: Marriage Resistance in Southern Kwangtung,” on female marriage resisters in Hong Kong between 1865 and 1935 reveals patterns of sworn sisterhood and homosocial networks that are similar to the same-sex spinster cultures of nineteenth-century America. The article also provides a reminder that “kinship” and the terminology of kinship—“sister,” “wife,” “daughter,” and so on—are complex entities. Within living memory in the United States, for example, marriage inequality prompted some gay couples to adopt each other for legal and financial protection. Bayard Rustin (1912–1987), a leading activist in the civil rights movement, adopted his partner, Walter Naegle (1949–), who was then described as Rustin’s “son” in Rustin’s *New York Times* obituary. For those who live in countries where same-sex unions are not legal, adoption remains the only way to formalize a relationship through law and inherit each other’s estates without death duties.

Women living outside of heterosexual marriages have always suffered especial precarity in the matter of inheritance. Anne Lister (1791–1840), the wealthy gentlewoman whose decoded diaries testify to her twin passions of lesbian adventuring and the pursuit of wealth, inherited her estate from an aunt. In her own will, she left the bulk of her estate not to her partner, Ann Walker (1803–1854), but to her paternal cousins. Lister had given Walker a wedding ring and had their union blessed in a church, but after Lister’s death Walker was left with a “life interest” in their shared home of Shibden Hall, with the proviso that she must not marry. Lister’s posthumous — and some might say patriarchally limited— protection for her same-sex spouse did not, however, protect Walker when she was declared insane, removed from Shibden Hall, and confined to an asylum.

**Michael Field: A Case Study**
“Michael Field” was the name under which the couple Katharine Bradley (1846–1914) and Edith Cooper (1862–1913) wrote and published poetry and plays in fin-de-siècle England. In their poetry, they pledged to be “poets and lovers forever more” (Thain and Vadillo 2009, 28), a description that expresses a bond not only between the two women but also between literature and love. The two women, who were also aunt and niece, maintained a multivolume set of jointly written journals, which tell scholars yet more about how the women understood their union. In the first instance, they rejected all attempts to parse the singularity of their chosen name into two parts. Describing their literary work as “perfectly mosaic” and their writing practices as absolutely intertwined, “let no man think,” Bradley wrote, “he can put asunder what God has joined” (quoted in Sturgeon [1922] 1975, 47). Bradley writes these lines in 1886 to the British sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859–1939) in a letter that she must admit she wrote single-handedly, but her admission shows how carefully she and Cooper self-fashioned the story of the closeness of their union, as well as how much they were reaching for a model of marriage more perfect than others had achieved. Bradley’s echoing of the language of the marriage ceremony in writing “Let no man think he can put asunder” is both pointed and chastising; she claims divine imprimatur to swat aside mortal detractors.

If Bradley sounds imperious about the sanctity of their union, it is because she and Cooper were downright competitive about it. Elizabeth Barrett and Robert Browning had one of the most famous courtships and marriages of the nineteenth century, but the women who announced “we are Michael Field” (Field 1933, 20) asserted in their journals that they were “closer married” (16). The basis for their audacious claim? The Brownings did not write together, Bradley reflected, and therefore did not, like Michael Field, “bless or quicken one another at their work” (16). “Bless” and “quicken” is the language of sex and pregnancy; Bradley and Cooper saw their relationship as one that could enfold the elements of heterosexual marriage and then exceed them, metaphysically. They found philosophical grounds for their ideas about communion in the work of the Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677), who “with his fine grasp of unity says: ‘If two individuals of exactly the same nature are joined together, they make up a single individual, doubly stronger than each alone,’ i.e. Edith and I make a veritable Michael” (16).

Although their relationship was seen by some as eccentric, arrogant, and codependent, it was also shaped by and expressive of epistemic shifts in sexual culture. In both their literature and journals, Michael Field explored the limitations and banalities of conventional heterosexual marriage. They witnessed the trial of their friend and sometime champion, the Irish writer Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), and felt the anxieties of their gay male friends that followed from this first-ever prosecution of homosexuality. They socialized with the British writer Vernon Lee (1856–1935) and her then-partner, Kit Anstruther-Thomson (1857–1921), finding their “mannish” dress off-putting. Some of their heterosexual friends were sexually freestyling, too, trying out ménage à trois living, which Bradley deemed “the most difficult of all combinations” (quoted in Donoghue 1998, 87).
She spoke from some experience; “we are Michael Field” expressed a unity that was not necessarily monogamous, and Bradley and Cooper’s relationship encompassed numerous flirtations and affairs. Although they did not consider themselves as looking for new sexual and romantic forms—instead convinced they had already found one—they were participants in a moment that formed a crucible for sexual reinvention.

**Loving by Another Name**

A useful heuristic for understanding the way that play and plurality undergirded the forms of Boston and female marriages and intimate and romantic friendships is the tracing of nicknames and pet names. Although Michael Field might have insisted on the singularity of their pen name in the public sphere, their private papers positively bristle with an array of pet names for each other. In the simplest forms, Bradley took the name “Michael,” while Cooper answered to “Henry.” Just a few of their other names for each other include Archangel, Old Cat, Daphne, Felicity, All Wise Fowl, Heinrich, Kittie, the Mother One, Perpetua, Persian Puss, Old Pop, and Sculptor. The names cross lines of species, nation, generation, and gender, and yet more were used to refer to friends and family. It might be argued that prior to what the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984) describes as the invention of the homosexual (Foucault 1978), a search for queer kinship structures produced and was expressed by fashioning names and roles for each other. This practice of proliferating polymorphous endearments was by no means unique to Bradley and Cooper. Lee and Mary Robinson (1857–1944), Lee’s lover prior to Anstruther-Thomson, enjoyed what Martha Vicinus calls “an orgy of renaming” (2004, 9) that was similarly inventive and scrupulously avoided Lee’s given name, Violet. At the fin de siècle, the “love that dare not speak its name” had many names and ones of its own choosing.

These naming practices bespeak self-invention and a carefree attitude toward prescribed social and romantic roles. Pet names work much in the same way as in-jokes; they express an intimate knowledge of someone, and they also rebuff outsiders who lack that knowledge. Pet names can therefore be seen as an extension of fin-de-siècle salon life that was, variously, flamboyant and closeted. The terms *homosexual* and *heterosexual* both date to the late 1860s, coming into English language usage only in the 1890s. As sexuality was coming to be named by doctors and jurisprudents, queer subjects were naming themselves in exuberant and riddling fashion. These naming practices, and the role-playing they implied, express the importance of performativity that queer theory would explicate at the other end of the century. In their afterlives, these same pet names have also played a role in the suppression of the history of relationships between women: the affection and flirtation that they express has often been too much for editors, who censor the names. The ability of pet names to disclose lesbian desire can be mapped onto the way that the terms *Boston marriage* and *romantic friendship* sit on a continuum with myriad other terms that belong to a history of women loving women: pash, smash, woman-couple, female husband,
spinster, sapphist, tribade, companion, amazon, and tommy.

**Scholarly Debate**

Smith-Rosenberg’s “The Female World of Love and Ritual” first established the significance of how, in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America, “women 'routinely formed emotional ties with other women'” (1975, 1). Her argument was based on recognition of the power of “single-sex or homosocial networks” (9); rigid gender-role differentiation led, she showed, to women “forming primary emotional, perhaps physical and sexual, ties with other women” (DuBois et al. 1980, 61). A key feature of these relationships was, she showed, that they were “openly avowed” (Smith-Rosenberg 1975, 4). Faderman then took up romantic friendship as a central term for her similarly groundbreaking 1981 study, *Surpassing the Love of Men*. In between the publication of these two works, in 1980 Adrienne Rich published an article in which she outlined a concept that she called the “lesbian continuum,” referring to a range of woman-identified experience. Between them, and over the course of just six years, these scholars managed to bring into focus a huge range of female same-sex relationships that were, as Smith-Rosenberg put it, “undeniably romantic and even sensual” (1975, 24). These relationships were not only socially sanctioned but also produced by the social enforcement of heterosexual marriage. The conventions of marriage, in other words, have histories that are as much same-sex as opposite-sex.

All three scholars recognized that the same-sex relationships they described occupied a wide spectrum, from schoolgirl to spinster, from nonsexual to erotic. Some subsequent critics, however, objected that accounts of romantic friendships and Boston marriages emphasized emotional intimacy but sidelined sex. These scholars pointed out that women’s sexual desires are routinely treated as nonexistent, that the very possibility of sex between women has often been refuted, and that scholarship must not redouble these misreadings, rendering lesbian desire once again phantasmic. Terry Castle, for example, kicked against what she called the “often cloying” model of romantic friendships (1993, 95) explored by Faderman, Elizabeth Mavor (1971), and others. The early scholarship on romantic friendships had defined itself against “individual psychosexual developments” (Smith-Rosenberg 1975, 2) in favor of describing social bonds. In Faderman’s and Mavor’s hands, this methodology was mostly anti-psychological. Faderman claimed that the category of romantic friendships disappeared in the wake of the invention of the category “lesbian.” Sexology, Faderman argues, “changed the course of same-sex relationships” because it simultaneously turned lesbianism into an available identity and “cast suspicion on romantic friendships” (1991, 35). Similarly, Mavor deemed Freudian interpretation a “blunt instrument” (1971, xvii). Castle, however, bridled against the way that these scholars made sexual innocence the default interpretation for the same-sex female bonds they were uncovering, repudiating what she called the “no-sex-before-1900” school of thought (1993,
More recently, Sharon Marcus has built on the notion that nineteenth-century “female marriages” were variations on marital convention rather than challenges to it. Her in-depth 2007 study of friendship, desire, and marriage in Victorian England is undergirded by a methodological objection to work on gender and sexuality that has overly emphasized deviance, transgression, and oppression. Foucauldian approaches to the history of sexuality have been structured by pathology and prohibition, which, Marcus argues, skewed the archive. Turning away from sexology, psychology, and law, she instead explores the representation of bonds between women in the more quotidian media of life writing, advertising, dolls, and fashion.

Since scholars first learned to think of same-sex bonds between women as culturally central, there have been two significant turns in queer theory that offer opportunities for revisions of critical understandings of romantic friendships and Boston marriages. The first is trans theory. Many of the women in these relationships called themselves “husbands” and took on other forms of masculine identification. Should they therefore be considered to have transgender, rather than lesbian, subjectivities? “John” Radclyffe Hall (1880–1943) was, for example, “husband” to “wife” Una Troubridge (1887–1963), and scholars such as Jay Prosser (2001) have begun to argue that Hall’s depiction of themself as an “invert” or member of the “third sex” should be read as a transgender narrative.

The second relevant turn in queer theory is toward scholarship that establishes identifications with asexuality or celibacy. In the 1980s and 1990s Faderman and Castle jousted over whether there was any sex between the women in Boston marriages and romantic friendships. In a 2013 work, Benjamin Kahan offered the category of “celibacy” to “break [the] deadlock” between Faderman and Castle, suggesting that although some Boston marriages included sex and some did not, all “share a social identity with celibacy” (41). Kahan’s approach does not exclude the sensual or erotic but is rather a way of theorizing sexuality without sex. As such, he offers a history to an emergent contemporary identity category, asexual.

This new work in queer theory provides some counterbalance to the field’s earlier investments in transgression. Scholars have begun to ask whether it is possible to instead have queer theory without antinormativity and have pointed out that the privileging of transgressive energies and identities has been predicated on white, visible, able, and masculine bodies. Given that a key element of Boston marriages and romantic friendships was that they were, on the whole, socially sanctioned, there is an opportunity for these renovations of queer theory to be mapped back onto older forms of female intimacy. And what of future queer scholarship? Is anything on the horizon that might make the field revisit the history of Boston marriage and romantic friendship? If so, it might come from a surprising quarter—an expanded study of heterosexual marriage.
Scholars have fought over presumptions of sexlessness in Boston marriages, but what of straight marriages? Was sex always or consistently a central term in that institution? When scholars write of the “convenience or economy” (Kahan 2013, 41) of women living together, what is the history of those imperatives with regard to heterosexuality? Elizabeth Freeman’s 2002 work on what she called the “wedding complex” showed that the rituals inaugurating monogamous heterosexual marriages have always been sites for “imagining and enacting forms of social intimacy” (294) that exceed monogamy and heterosexuality. The contemporary polyamory movement has also helped query the centrality of monogamy to heterosexual relationships. If scholars can simultaneously resituate celibacy in gay male culture and non-monogamy in straight culture, they may open some interesting paths via which to revisit the history of lesbian marital formations.

SEE ALSO Female Husband; Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa; Sappho, Nineteenth-Century Rediscovery of; The Well of Loneliness (1928; Radclyffe Hall)

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The limited evidence that exists of the sexual mores of precolonial southern African societies living in the region that includes present-day Botswana suggests that same-sex sexual practices were probably commonplace and accepted by the original Khoisan hunter-gatherers but not by the agricultural Bantu-speaking settlers who dominated the region by the end of the first millennium CE. These settlers had various tribal or totemic identities but were mostly close enough culturally and linguistically to be grouped together by ethnicity (plural: Batswana; singular: Motswana) and language (Setswana). The colonial experience—and resistance to it—brought them still closer, and a half-century of independence has further solidified Batswana's sense of national and ethnic identity.

Whereas egalitarian Khoisan societies had little need to police sex or gender, the labor-intensive agriculture and ancestor veneration practiced by the Bantu-speaking newcomers required large families, clear lineages, and strict hierarchies of gender and age. Sexuality was identified with procreation, leaving little room for the expression of homosexual desires or gender diversity. Nonnormative sexual and gender inclinations must nevertheless have existed and may sometimes have found expression. Although the power of socialization to make “deviant” behaviors literally unthinkable should not be underestimated, there is inferential evidence that, before childbearing age at least, nonprocreative sexual activities, including same-sex relations, were seen as “play” and winked at if carried on discreetly.

Colonialism, Christianity, and Capitalism

Colonialism brought concepts and practices that both disrupted and reinforced existing ones. Christianity was slow to take root—the pioneering missionary Robert Moffat (1795–1883) famously admitted he made only about 200 converts in fifty years of evangelizing the Batswana—but gained ground rapidly once local believers took the lead and emphasized those aspects of the Christian message and “culture” most congruent with existing Setswana customs and values.
This indigenization process arguably enabled the most sexually repressive aspects of Setswana traditional culture and Victorian Christianity to reinforce each other in colonial Bechuanaland (1885–1966). Traditional culture confined public discussion of sex to the bogwera (male) and bojale (female) initiation ceremonies at the onset of adulthood. These were now abandoned as pagan. The new mission schools taught nothing about sex and sexuality but superimposed heteronormative Victorian concepts of gender over the already strict Setswana ones. This reinforced some aspects of traditional patriarchy but clashed with others, most notably polygyny (the practice of having more than one wife).

The new silence around sex, together with the promotion of strict Victorian gender norms and the introduction of legal prohibitions against “gross indecency” and “carnal knowledge against the order of nature,” further denied nonnormative sexual desires and gender identities. At the same time, however, colonial capitalism introduced modes of social and economic organization—including migrant labor, salaried employment, private ownership of land, town life, and paid work for women—that, by disrupting traditional familial ties and opening new social spaces, created previously unimaginable opportunities for freer sexual and gender expression in, for example, boarding schools, worker hostels, and the more anonymous environments of new urban spaces such as Gaborone and Francistown. Ironically, traditional Setswana concern for the integrity of the family and lineage enabled a limited freedom in this regard. Together with traditional taboos around the public discussion of sex outside initiation, it made something of a fetish of domestic privacy. This permitted a degree of tolerance—albeit circumscribed and provisional—of sexual and gender nonconformity by enabling people to “look the other way” (go ikgatholosa) as long as forbidden relationships were carried on discreetly and did not disturb social cohesion or interfere with the responsibility to marry, produce children, and carry on a lineage. This tradition of discretion and “open secrets” has remained strong despite the disruptions of colonialism and globalization.

Emergence of the Struggle for LGBTQ Rights

The originally Western concepts of sexual orientation, gender identity, and sexual rights demand public recognition of sexual minorities and legal and policy reforms to ensure equality of citizenship. This conflicts with a traditional reluctance to acknowledge sexual and gender nonconformity publicly or to “intrude” into familial privacy. The struggle for LGBTQ rights in Botswana illustrates both the challenge this conflict poses for African activists who want to avoid the charge of merely copying Western LGBTQ activism and the potential of using indigenous values to build a more effective local LGBTQ movement.

Organized LGBTQ activism in Botswana dates from the mid-1990s. “Gay life” before this was confined to house parties and a handful of bars in Gaborone and Francistown that tolerated discreet LGBTQ customers. Those with the means enjoyed the larger and more open LGBTQ social scenes in South Africa and developed connections with South African
activists, especially after the African National Congress officially endorsed LGBTQ equality in 1990. Some activists began to discuss ways of promoting a more open, rights-based environment for the LGBTQ community in Botswana.

In December 1994 Utjiwa Kanane, a Motswana, and Graham Norrie, a British expatriate, were arrested in a hotel room in Francistown and charged with "carnal knowledge against the order of nature" (Section 164 of Botswana's penal code, unamended since colonial times). Except for a little noticed case of prison rape in 1991, this was the first time the “sodomy statute” had been invoked since independence in 1966. Norrie pleaded guilty and was fined and deported. Kanane appealed his conviction, arguing that the statute discriminated on the basis of gender (it referred only to males) and violated his right to freedom of association. His unprecedented boldness and defense by a prominent opposition lawyer made the case a cause célèbre, bringing homosexuality and the idea of sexual rights prominently into public discourse for the first time in Botswana and galvanizing the small LGBTQ community's nascent interest in sexuality as a human rights issue.

In 1998 the language of Section 164 was made gender neutral in a move to nullify the strongest argument for vacating Kanane’s conviction. This underscored the state’s hostility to LGBTQ rights and motivated some gay men and lesbians in Gaborone to launch Botswana’s first LGBTQ advocacy and education group, Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexuals of Botswana (LeGaBiBo). To avoid the expense and security risks of applying for nongovernmental organization (NGO) registration, LeGaBiBo was hosted as a program of the Botswana Centre for Human Rights, known as Ditshwanelo, an amicus curiae (impartial adviser) in Kanane’s appeal. Over the next five years, LeGaBiBo organized several pioneering workshops for the Gaborone LGBTQ community, but funding constraints prevented more from being done. After the Kanane appeal failed in 2003, outside interest subsided, and the LeGaBiBo program closed for lack of funds. In 2005 a different group revived LeGaBiBo as a program of the Botswana Network on Ethics, Law, and HIV/AIDS (BONELA). This time, the group applied for registration as an NGO but was denied on the grounds that registering an organization for “homosexuals” would amount to condoning illegal acts. Nevertheless, no action was taken against LeGaBiBo or BONELA.

Meanwhile, the strategy of addressing LGBTQ rights through the lens of HIV prevention proved fortuitous. At the time, Botswana had the highest estimated HIV prevalence rate in the world, and the government in conjunction with major international donors had recently launched the first free national antiretroviral-drug treatment program in Africa, along with a massive and unusually frank public education program that stressed, among other things, openness about sex. The importance of “key populations,” including “men who have sex with men,” was recognized by both donors and the government, and funding became available for initiatives targeting them. These necessarily involved the promotion of at least limited LGBTQ rights (e.g., the right to nondiscrimination in health care). LeGaBiBo was
able to acquire a permanent, professional staff for the first time and the resources to develop a sophisticated program of activism. In particular, as a participant in BONELA's HIV/AIDS activities, it engaged with audiences that would otherwise have been inaccessible: members of parliament, government officials, police and armed forces personnel, teachers, health-care workers, traditional leaders (dikgosi), and ordinary Batswana at the traditional ward meetings (dikgotla) that are key shapers of public opinion.

In the process, LeGaBiBo developed a communication strategy that blends Western-originating international human rights discourse with the indigenous tradition of botho (humanness), which is, in effect, Botswana's “state philosophy” and has been relentlessly promoted in the media and education system since independence. Botho's emphasis on molomo (dialogue) and tlotlo (respect) is routinely cited as responsible for the prosperity and continuous peace that Botswana, unlike many other African countries, has enjoyed. By invoking these principles in its own work, LeGaBiBo has been able to get at least a polite hearing. This strategy may account for the otherwise incongruous protection of sexual orientation in the Employment Act of 2010, the first such policy in sub-Saharan Africa. The civility and avoidance of open conflict enjoined by botho have arguably helped prevent the backlash that LGBTQ activism has provoked in some other African countries.

In 2011 LeGaBiBo reapplied for registration and was again refused. This time, it sued the government, arguing constitutional grounds (equal protection of the law, freedom of association, and freedom of expression), and won. The government appealed the initial ruling, but in March 2016 Botswana's highest court dismissed the appeal, and LeGaBiBo was finally registered on 29 April 2016. Traditional cultural factors may have played an important role in the legal process. The attorney general's arguments struck many as less than competent, and it was widely speculated that the appeal was meant to fail. Being compelled by the courts inoculated the government against political fallout, but it also continued a policy of go ikgatholosa regarding LGBTQ rights. In 2010 former president Festus Mogae revealed that during his term (1998–2008) he had instructed the police not to enforce Section 164, and his successor, Ian Khama, reiterated that same year that “if you see someone and you know that they are gay, they are not going to be arrested and charged.... Being gay is private. Let us take it gore ke tsa bone [that it is their business].”
Botswana's President Ian Khama in 2014. Khama advocated a policy of gore ke tsa bone (that is their business) toward the country's LGBTQ population during his presidency from 2008 to 2018.

The fact that Khama has long been rumored to be gay makes traditional values, in particular the practice of go ikgatholosa, an especially significant issue for LGBTQ activism in Botswana. Khama was the favorite son of Botswana's revered founding president, Seretse Khama, and is the hereditary paramount chief of the country's largest “tribe.” He was vice president under Mogae and head of the armed forces before that, and he and his family enjoy tremendous prestige. His homosexuality, widely regarded as an open secret among the urban, educated elite, is not publicly discussed as such in Botswana, although his bachelor status regularly is, usually in the context of speculation about “fiancées.” Khama's only officially acknowledged engagement was announced during the run-up to his first presidential election campaign, but the relationship “ petered out” after he was elected (Tabengwa 2011). For many, this only confirmed the rumors, yet journalists and political opponents have continued to “look the other way.” In the meantime, stories about the president’s sex life circulate quietly in an LGBTQ community that is increasingly assertive about its rights but that also enjoys a limited and makeshift degree of tolerance based on the traditional discretion around sexuality that the president’s situation illustrates so strikingly.

Whether Botswana's indigenous culture of discretion, of which go ikgatholosa is a key part, can coexist with modern expectations of “out-and-proud” LGBTQ identities remains to be seen. The results so far of LeGaBiBo’s strategic use of botho suggest this may be possible, and developments in Botswana should therefore be carefully watched by LGBTQ activists. Much will depend on the extent to which traditional discretion reflects the humanism of
bothe, which should ultimately make it compatible with international human rights discourse, or is in reality merely an indigenous expression of homophobia and transphobia.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara; HIV/AIDS in Africa; Human Rights

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Boys love (BL; also written “boys’ love” and “boy’s love”) first emerged in Japan in commercially published shōjo manga (girls’ comics) magazines at the beginning of the 1970s. The male characters in these relationships usually do not identify as “gay” (gei), and many artists and fans have distanced their works from connections to real-life homosexual men. Fans themselves, however, have made these connections since the genre first appeared (Welker 2015). While its genesis is roughly concurrent with Anglophone “slash” fiction—a type of fan fiction in which, typically, female fans of a television series or other work pair existing male characters to create fantasy same-sex relationships—no connection has been established between the origins of slash and BL. Although initially created by young female artists to help adolescent girl readers in Japan circumvent restrictive norms on female gender and sexual expression, contemporary BL fans use the freedom provided by this media to enjoy “pure romance” as well as to “play” with gender and sexuality in general (Fujimoto 2015). This media has at times been criticized by gay men for appropriation of their image (Ishida 2015), but its popularity in Japan shows no signs of abating, and some gay and bisexual men enjoy it (Baudinette 2017).

BL also continues to spread globally. In the early decades of the 2000s, BL media from Japan, as well as locally produced BL inspired in whole or in part by Japanese BL, is consumed around the world in multiple media formats including manga, anime, prose fiction, video games, drama CDs, illustrations, music videos, and live-action films and television programs. These BL media are variously created and circulated in many countries and transnationally through both commercial and noncommercial channels. In terms of scale, in Japan alone the total annual market size including both commercial and noncommercial sales was estimated at around 22 billion yen (roughly $200 million) in the middle of the 2010s (Yano Research Institute 2017).

**BL in Japan**

While preceded in the early 1960s by male homoerotic fiction by writer Mari Mori (1903–1987), the origin of BL is usually linked to a new generation of young women artists who
reinvented shōjo manga, including new approaches to gender and sexuality. The creation of BL is often specifically attributed to Keiko Takemiya (1950–) and Moto Hagio (1949–), whose short manga works “Yuki to hoshi to tenshi to ...” (1970; Snow and stars and angels and ...) and “Jūichigatsu no gimunajiumu” (1971; November gymnasium), respectively, are widely considered the first works of the genre. Hagio’s subsequent Tōma no shinzō (1974; released in English as The Heart of Thomas) and Takemiya’s Kaze to ki no uta (1976–1984; The song of the wind and the trees), alongside manga such as Toshie Kihara’s (1948–) Mari to Shingo (1977–1984; Mari and Shingo) and Ryōko Yamagishi’s (1947–) Hi izuru tokoro no tenshi (1980–1984; Emperor of the land of the rising sun), are some of the most significant manga works of the genre in its first two decades (Welker 2015), when the genre was usually called shōnen'ai or bishōnen manga.

In the 1970s and 1980s, manga labeled shōnen'ai, meaning love (ai) for or by boys (shōnen), typically featured romantic or sexual relationships between beautiful boys (bishōnen) or young men. A number of popular shōnen'ai works were serialized in mainstream shōjo manga magazines over many years alongside works in other genres, sometimes created by the same artists. Popular works were also released in bound volumes. While Takemiya’s Kaze to ki no uta, for instance, included somewhat explicit sex scenes, commercially published shōnen'ai works of this period generally depict no more physical intimacy than passionate kisses. This may explain why the label “shōnen'ai” has come to be used by fans outside Japan, who often spell it “shounen-ai,” to describe works that depict romantic but not sexual relationships. The term has largely fallen out of use among manga fans in Japan, where it retains its original meaning of pederasty.
By the mid-1970s, female fans were beginning to create fan works that paired into homosexual relationships ostensibly heterosexual male characters from existing texts, such as the anime _Uchū senkan Yamato_ (1974–1975; Space battleship Yamato; later localized for the United States and other markets as _Star Blazers_), as well as real-life rock stars and other celebrities, such as members of the band Led Zeppelin. Circulation of _dōjinshi_ (fanzines) featuring such manga and fan fiction at fan events date to around the same time at Tokyo’s Comic Market (Komikku Māketto; shortened to both Komiketto and Komike, stylized in Roman letters as Comiket and Comike). Comic Market was established as an event for sharing _dōjinshi_, including both original and derivative work. While it has become a massive biannual three-day event that often sees participation by over 500,000 attendees and 35,000 _sākuru_ (circles; i.e., groups that produce and distribute _dōjinshi_ and other media and goods), Comic Market was first held in December 1975 with around 700 attendees, then mostly adolescent girls. The popularity of male homoerotic works by and for female fans at Comic Market in its early years was a major impetus for the publication of the magazine _June_ (originally called _Comic Jun_) in late 1978. _June_’s position as the sole commercial publication focused on male homoerotic manga and fiction by and for female consumers led to its title being used as a genre label among fans and others, who called such work “June” or “June-mono” (June things). “June” continues to be used alongside “BL”
at Comic Market to label original BL works (Welker 2015).

One of the three days of every Comic Market is dominated by original and derivative BL works. In addition, nearly every weekend somewhere in the country there is at least one fan event involving anywhere from fewer than one hundred to thousands of fans at which BL dōjinshi and related goods and sometimes “cosplay” (costume play) are the primary or only focus. Attendees and circle members at these events are overwhelmingly female and range in age from teens to fifties. At events focused on original works, such as J.Garden, a majority of attendees and circle participants are in their thirties or older, while at events focused on parodies of recently popular manga and anime, a majority are under thirty.

In 1979 members of the circle Ravuri (Lovely), popular at Comic Market, released a dōjinshi titled *Rappori: Yaoi tokushū go* (Rappori: Yaoi special issue) containing original male homoerotic narratives. The *yaoi* in the title is an acronym for “yama nashi, ochi nashi, imi nashi” (roughly, no climax, no point, no meaning), which had recently been used by members of the circle as a self-deprecating label for their work in general, regardless of content. Its use in the title of this dōjinshi, however, led to the term being specifically associated with male homoerotic work. While the yaoi special issue contained no explicit sex scenes, the relative freedom from constraints imposed by commercial publishers meant that some dōjinshi distributed at Comic Market and elsewhere contain very explicit sex scenes (Welker 2015). Although through the beginning of the 2000s the term *yaoi* in Japanese tended to be associated with male-male romance dōjinshi in general, with no reference to the level of explicitness, the relatively common nature of explicit sex scenes in these dōjinshi may be the reason that outside Japan “yaoi” is often used as a label for sexually explicit works.

By the mid-1980s, homoerotic parodies coupling characters from popular shōnen anime and manga such as Yōichi Takahashi’s manga and anime series *Kyaputen Tsubasa* (Captain Tsubasa), a narrative about a boys’ soccer team that was first serialized in the shōnen manga magazine *Shōnen Jump* from 1981 to 1988, became a large and very visible presence at Comic Market. Other major shōnen manga and anime, often featuring sports teams because they provide many possible character couplings, have served as source material since then. Works that have been popular among creators of derivative BL include *Seinto Seiya* (originally serialized 1986–1990; released in English as *Saint Seiya*), *Yoroi den samurai torūpā* (1988–1989; *Samurai Troopers*), and *Slam Dunk* (1990–1996), followed by *One Piece* (1997–), *Naruto* (1999–2014), *Tenisu no ojisama* (1999–2008; *Prince of Tennis*), *Yowamushi Pedal* (2008–), and *Haikyū!!* (2012–) (Welker 2015).

The strong continued popularity of original and derivative male-male romance narratives in commercial magazines and at Comic Market and other events throughout the 1980s helped set off a wave of new commercial activity. Several dozen new commercial magazines featuring male homoerotic manga or fiction were established between 1989 and
1995, though many were short-lived (Welker 2015). The magazine *Image* distinguished itself with the tagline “BOY’S LOVE❤ COMIC [sic]” on the cover of its first issue in December 1991. The phrase is almost certainly a direct translation into English of *shōnen’ai manga*, a term that was still in use among fans. Within a few years, the term *boy's love*—also written *boys’ love* and in the phonetic *katakana* script (pronounced *bōizurabu*) or abbreviated to *BL* (pronounced *bīeru*)—would grow increasingly popular (Welker 2015). While *Image* and many other magazines of this era initially published the work of amateur artists, “boy’s love” and variants became associated mainly with commercial works, in contrast to “yaoi” and sometimes “June,” associated mainly with amateur works. This distinction largely disappeared in Japan over the course of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Perhaps owing to the relative lack of explicit sex scenes but common presence of implied sex in commercially published BL, outside Japan, “boys love” has come to be used by many fans as a label for works with some sexual content but few or no explicit sex scenes. Among contemporary fans in Japan, however, “boys love” and “BL” are widely used as broad labels encompassing all such narratives.

In early twenty-first-century Japan, there are major and minor publishers producing over a dozen monthly, bimonthly, and semiannual magazines and multiple imprints of BL books sold online and around Japan at bookstores, many of which have shelves or whole sections devoted to BL manga and prose fiction. In addition, BL anime have sometimes been broadcast on television, beginning with Mineo Maya’s *shōnen’ai*-themed *Patarillo!* in 1982. Notable BL anime series include the anime versions of Maki Murakami’s *Gravitation* broadcast in 2000, Yun Kōga’s *Loveless* in 2005, and Shungiku Nakamura’s *Junjo Romantica* in 2008. The original sports anime with strong BL themes *Yuri!!! on Ice*, broadcast in Japan in late 2016, quickly became a global hit, winning seven of Crunchyroll’s Anime Awards for 2016, including Anime of the Year. Recordings of male voice actors performing BL narratives were first distributed in the late 1980s, starting with *Tsuzumigabuchi*, released in 1988 by the publisher of *June* (Nishimura 2015). Later, these BL dramas began circulating on CDs called drama (*dorama*) CDs or BLCDs, which continue to be popular, along with mp3s and other digital formats. Popular BL video games, the first of which is said to be *Boy x Boy: Shiritsu Kōryō Gakuin Seishin Ryō* (1999; Boy x Boy: Kōryō Gakuin Seishin dorm) (Nishimura 2015), include both romancedriven games and those with pornographic content. Outside of the commercial marketplace, BL-related dōjinshi and cosplay events, which can be traced back to the Comic Market, are held around Japan with great regularity. A neighborhood in Tokyo’s Higashi Ikebukuro district has become a mecca for BL fans, with multiple shops devoted to the sale of commercial and fan-produced BL media and related goods along a street nicknamed “Otome Road” (maiden road).

As of the second decade of the 2000s, most BL fans and creators are still female, but there are a small number of gay, bisexual, and heterosexual males involved in the consumption and production of BL in Japan (Baudinette 2017).
BL outside Japan

By the 2010s, BL had developed thriving fandoms in many countries in Asia, Europe, and elsewhere, especially online, entailing the consumption of official translations as well as fan-translated pirated versions of Japanese BL manga and prose fiction, and the sharing of fan art and fan fiction. The foundations for this fandom in many countries were laid in the 1990s, or earlier in some regions. As interest in the genre spread, BL gradually began to appear in a number of countries via individual imports, licensed and fan translations, and locally produced works. In the mid-1990s, BL fans around the world began using the internet to share information about Japanese BL manga and anime, distribute their own unofficial synopses and translations, and sometimes gather together to translate works (Sabucco 2003). While licensed and pirated hard copies of BL manga and anime as well as BL fan works are available at bookstores, and conventions are regularly held in dozens of countries, the internet remains the primary source of BL and primary site of sharing BL outside Japan.

In the first decades of the twenty-first century, BL is particularly popular in Asia, where BL fandom appears to have developed earlier than elsewhere. In Taiwan, for instance, in the mid-1980s BL parodies of Saint Seiya were published in the back of commercially published pirated translations of the original manga in a section called “Xingshi xiaojuchang” (Seiya little theater) (Miyako 2016). In the early 1990s, pirated BL manga began to appear in the Chinese marketplace as part of an influx of Japanese manga (Yang and Xu 2017). However, due to relative ease of production and distribution, in China prose fiction is by far the most common form of BL. In China, BL is usually called danmei, the Chinese pronunciation of the Japanese term tanbi (aesthetic), a term that has sometimes been used to label BL in Japan. In spite of the difficulty of publishing locally—on account of being targeted by state censors because of the genre’s association with both homosexuality and pornography—a handful of short-lived magazines have been published since 1999, while amateur artists have been distributing fanzines (tongrenzhi) at fan events since the beginning of the 2010s (Yang and Xu 2017). Danmei has also developed a massive online presence, primarily in the form of prose fiction. Fans can be roughly divided into three “circles” (quan) based on their focus: original Chinese danmei fiction, Japanese works, and Euro-American slash fiction (Yang and Xu 2017). The online danmei fan community includes a large number of fans from outside mainland China, including Taiwan and Hong Kong, as well as diasporic Chinese around the world (Yang and Xu 2017). As in Japan, in Chineselanguage BL fandom the connection between BL and real gay men is not straightforward, but some BL fans in Taiwan were involved in activism supporting same-sex marriage rights.

Concurrent with China, BL was first imported by individuals in the first half of the 1990s into South Korea, where it has been strongly associated with dōjinshi fan culture (Kim
The circulation of a pirated version of Minami Ozaki's (1968–) influential BL manga *Zetsuai* (1989–1991; Absolute love) in 1993 served to ignite a long-running and still ongoing yaoi boom among fans of the female-targeted *sunjeong manhwa* (pure romance comics) within the dōjinshi fan community (Kim 2013).

Southeast Asia has also seen the development of a strong and overlapping community of BL fans and producers, who sometimes attend fan conventions in neighboring countries (Bauwens-Sugimoto 2017). In many parts of this region, BL media is kept underground by legal restrictions and cultural norms proscribing pornography and homosexuality. The expectation that teenage girls and young women would not be interested in either helps make it possible for them to create and consume this media without attracting outside attention (Bauwens-Sugimoto 2017). In the Philippines, Lights Out, a small convention for fans of yaoi and BL, was held annually in Manila from 2003 to 2010, and reestablished two years later as BLush Convention. In contrast with Japanese fans, Filipino yaoi fans associate the genre with gay men, and many describe it as “gay love” or “gay porn” (Fermin 2013). Local publisher of Japanese manga-style comics Black Ink has been publishing original BL manga in Tagalog since the early 2010s. The popularity of translated (often pirated) and original BL manga and prose fiction helped inspire the production in the 2010s of dozens of BL-themed live-action films and television series in Thailand, where BL media overlaps...
with LGBTQ media. These live-action media are popular around the region, and increasingly around the world, as versions subtitled by fans in multiple languages circulate online via networks both of BL fans and of gay men.

BL fandom in Europe and the Anglophone world also dates to the early to mid-1990s. The first local BL fanzine was produced in Italy in 1994, followed by the official Italian release of an anime version of Kazuma Kodaka’s (1969–) manga Kizuna: Koi no kara sawagi (1992–2008; released in English as Kizuna: Bonds of Love). Successful sales led to the release of more BL anime. Marimo Ragawa’s New York, New York (1994–1998) was the first licensed translated BL manga in Italian when it was published by Marvel Italia in 1999 (Sabucco 2000). In France, a translation of the popular manga collective CLAMP’s Tokyo Babylon (1990–1993), a series with a male-male romance plot, was released by commercial publisher Tonkam beginning in 1996. Starting in the twenty-first century, a thriving BL fanzine scene began to develop in France, with fanzines containing any combination of critiques, original comics, and derivative fan art and fan fiction (Sylvius 2012). In Germany, the first official translation of Ozaki’s Zetsuai was released by Hamburg publisher Carlsen starting in 2000, and it soon drew the attention of the German media and inspired other presses to follow suit (Malone 2010).

The United States had developed enough of a BL fan base to support a BL-focused fan convention, San Francisco’s YaoiCon, as early as 2001. In 2017 BishounenCon, a second BL-themed convention, was first held in Warwick, Rhode Island. BL and BL fans have also long had a visible presence at other conventions, including Comic-Con International in San Diego and Sakura-Con in Seattle. The United States saw its first licensed translation of a BL manga in 2003: volume 1 of Sanami Matoh’s (1969–) Fake (1993–2000), released by Tokyopop, followed by Kodaka’s Kizuna by Central Park Media’s Be Beautiful imprint. The success of these soon led to more licensed publications of BL (Pagliassotti 2008). BL has subsequently been published by other major publishers of English-language manga and graphic novels, including Viz and Yen Press. There have also been niche publishers of BL in the United States, including Yaoi Press, founded in 2004 with a focus on publishing original English-language BL from around the world. Soon after the first English-language print editions of BL appeared, the release of digital editions of BL manga works began, including on the major site eManga. com, run by Digital Manga. Digital Manga’s imprint Juné, named after the first commercial BL magazine in Japan, has published several hundred print and digital editions of BL titles in English (Brienza 2016). In some cases, commercial presses have altered the ages of characters under eighteen or otherwise changed the original works to avoid the implication or depiction of minors in sexual situations (Pagliassotti 2008; Brienza 2016). On account of its market size, the United States has been the primary hub for licensed English translations and releases of BL media.

In Latin America, which has also seen a flourishing of BL fandom in the first two decades of the twenty-first century, BL primarily circulates in a mix of Spanish, Portuguese, and
Local Amazon stores and other online bookstores are dominated by English-language translations of Japanese BL manga as well as original English-language BL fiction. Locally produced manga and fiction and translations from Japanese into Spanish and Portuguese are published in print and digital formats by mainstream and niche commercial presses, however. For instance, Lit Ediciones, with the tagline “Yaoi Hecho en México” (yaoi made in Mexico), has been publishing local BL since 2016, while Oops Comics Studio, based in Monterrey, Mexico, describes itself as publisher of doujinshi (dōjinshi) with yaoi and yuri (female-female romance) themes. In Brazil, Editora Draco, publisher of fantasy, science fiction, and graphic novels, and NewPOP Editora, publisher of manga and comics, have released a small number of original Portuguese-language and translated Japanese BL titles. BL fans and works are also visible at conventions. In Monterrey, Oops Summer Fest, which bills itself in promotions as “the first yaoi event in Mexico” was first held in September 2016. Doki Doki City, first held over two days in November 2017 in Mexico City, has described itself on its website as “the largest and most important yaoi-themed convention in Latin America.”

BL-Related Terminology

As noted previously, since its creation in the 1970s, BL media has been referred to as “shōnen'ai,” “yaoi,” “June,” “boys love,” and “BL,” among other labels, at various stages in its development. These labels have sometimes been used by creators and fans to reference specific periods and forms of BL. In the early twenty-first century, “BL” and “boys love” have been the primary labels for the genre in Japan. In English and some other languages, these terms are sometimes used alongside “shōnen'ai” and “yaoi,” often spelled or pronounced differently, to classify works based on the degree of sexual explicitness.

In Japan, passionate fans of BL are sometimes called and self-identify as fujoshi, meaning “rotten women” or “rotten girls.” The term, which became popular in the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, is a homophone of and a play on a word meaning “women” and “girls.” Male BL fans are sometimes called fudanshi, meaning “rotten boys” or “rotten men.” Other terms using fu, meaning “rotten,” have also been coined in Japanese to refer to this fandom. Local pronunciations and variants of these and other terms are in use among fans in Chinese, English, Korean, and many other languages.

In Japanese, amateur works are classified as either orijinaru (original) or sōsaku (original works), or niji sōsaku (derivative works) or aniparo (short for anime parodi [parody]). The pairing of two characters together is often called kappuringu (coupling) in Japanese, while in English this is often called “shipping,” which is short for “relationshipping.” In couples, one partner is usually exclusively sexually insertive and the other sexually receptive in anal intercourse, which is an expected though not always depicted part of relationships in most BL. Couples in which partners engage in both roles are rare. The sexually insertive partner, who is commonly also socially dominant, is called the seme (attacker), while the receptive
partner is called the *uke* (receiver), terms that date back to the 1980s in this sphere (Ishida 2010). Many terms exist to classify subtypes of *seme* and *uke* based on their personality. *Seme* and *uke* are used among fans speaking other languages, though the pronunciation is often different. Some members of the gay community in Japan have begun using *seme* in place of *tachi*, the longstanding term for the sexually dominant, or insertive, and usually more masculine partner (Ishida 2010). While *uke* has been used in the gay community since at least the 1950s (Ishida 2010), the term *neko* had been the dominant term to refer to the sexually passive, or receptive, partner from the 1990s (Ishida 2010) through the early 2010s. However, 9monsters, a popular mobile phone dating app for gay and bisexual men released in 2011, asks users to identify themselves as “tachi,” “uke,” or *riba* (short for “reversible,” meaning versatile), favoring the term used in BL.

In Japan, BL is sometimes considered to include a genre called *shota*, which depicts prepubescent boys, often in sexual relationships with significantly older boys or men. The genre name derives from the term *Shōtarō complex*, an attraction to prepubescent boys named after the young male protagonist in the 1950s to 1960s manga and animated series *Tetsujin 28-gō* (called Gigantor in its American adaptation). While many BL are set in high school or middle school, shota works involve characters of elementary school age or younger. Also, in contrast with BL, shota has a very large male fandom. A series of shota fan events first held in 2006 called Shota Scratch, for instance, is dominated by male participants.

In Japan, BL is treated as distinct from the minor category of manga made by and for gay men, which is often called *gei manga*, *gei komikku* (gay comic), or *gei komi* (Baudinette 2017). Fan events for this type of media are dominated by male fans and creators. In English and other languages, this manga is sometimes called *bara* (rose), based on the history of that term’s association with homosexual men in Japan. Outside of Japan, however, the line between these two genres and male and female fandoms and artists is significantly less clear.

**SEE ALSO** Otaku Sexualities in Japan; Pornography in Asia; Pulp Fiction, Gay and Lesbian

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“Brokeback Mountain” is a short story by the American writer Annie Proulx (1935–), originally published in 1997 in the *New Yorker*. In 2005 it was adapted into an Oscarwinning motion picture directed by Ang Lee. Proulx’s story narrates the twenty-year love affair between Ennis del Mar and Jack Twist, two young ranch hands who meet and become lovers while tending sheep in the mountains of Wyoming during the summer of 1963. Denying to one another that they are “queers,” they maintain secrecy around their relationship and part ways when the summer ends. Although they both go on to marry a woman, Jack and Ennis reunite several years later and resume their affair. Jack proposes that the two men buy a ranch together, but Ennis refuses, recalling the violence he witnessed as a child against two rural men who were believed to be lovers. The affair continues over the next two decades, but the relationship is ultimately strained by difficult timing, geographical differences, and Jack’s resentment of Ennis’s refusal to make a life with him. When news of Jack’s death reaches Ennis in 1983, he suspects that Jack may have been the victim of homophobic violence and expresses profound regret over his inability to commit to him.

Proulx’s body of fiction focuses on the complexities of rural life, particularly in the American West, and “Brokeback Mountain” is one of Proulx’s only stories that addresses gay themes. She anticipated that the story would be controversial, but it quickly garnered praise in the literary world, winning an O. Henry Award and a National Magazine Award in 1998. The story was later included in her awardwinning 1999 collection *Close Range: Wyoming Stories*. Despite the story’s mainstream success, Proulx recalls that very few LGBT organizations reached out to her after it was published and that it was also met with resistance by residents of Wyoming. Nonetheless, Proulx also received a number of moving letters written by sexual minorities from rural areas who saw their own experiences reflected in Jack and Ennis’s story. Following the release of the feature film, Proulx was dismayed by the influx of mail she received from readers with “powerful fantasy lives” (*Cox* 2009) who offered alternative endings to the story that envisioned Ennis living a happy life with new male lovers.
Scene from Brokeback Mountain (2005), Starring Jake Gyllenhaal (left) and Heath Ledger. Annie Proulx's short story "Brokeback Mountain" about two Wyoming ranch hands who maintain a homosexual relationship was made into a feature film in 2005. The movie garnered widespread attention for its groundbreaking portrayal of a homosexual relationship between two ruggedly masculine men in a rural setting, overturning the stereotype of gays as effeminate urbanites.

Indeed, the reach of the story broadened significantly with the release the story's feature-film adaptation in 2005. Screenwriters Larry McMurtry and Diana Ossana remained largely faithful to the original story, and the film featured Oscar-nominated performances by Heath Ledger and Jake Gyllenhaal. It received many critical accolades, and won Oscars for Best Director, Best Adapted Screenplay, and Best Original Score. It was nominated for eight Oscars total, including Best Picture. A Taiwanese director living in New York, Lee had a history of experimenting with a variety of genres, and his take on the American Western reflected his affinity for the genre's romance. The Taiwanese director Yao-chi Chen described Brokeback Mountain as an "outstanding cross-cultural performance" that incorporated visual and thematic elements of Chinese cinema and poetry, from a focus on landscape to the understated expression of its characters' deeply felt passions (Associated Press 2006).

As the film gained widespread popularity and acclaim, it received some homophobic backlash. But overall, its sensitive portrayal of same-sex love had a profoundly positive impact on mainstream perceptions of homosexuality in the United States. Some critics praised the film as doing the most to normalize homosexuality since Jonathan Demme's Philadelphia (1993). Importantly, while Philadelphia created sympathy for gay men in its
portrayal of an HIV-positive character, *Brokeback Mountain* takes place in the decades prior to the epidemic, thus breaking the association between gay sexuality and AIDS.

The rugged masculinity of the film’s protagonists also broke new ground, overturning dominant stereotypes that associated gay men with urban culture, domesticity, and effeminacy. Frequently dubbed the “gay cowboy movie,” it elicited a range of responses that sparked debate over the apparent contradiction between the terms *gay* and *cowboy*. While some felt that the characters’ queerness undermined the heterosexual image of the American cowboy, many appreciated the way the film brought out the homosocial and queer undertones that have always existed in the genre of the Western.

The extent to which Jack and Ennis can be understood as “gay” characters, or *Brokeback Mountain* as a gay film, has also been a source of contention. Indeed, despite its reputation as the “gay cowboy movie,” many viewers observed that, in truth, Jack and Ennis are neither gay nor cowboys. While the film can easily be read as a portrayal of closeted sexuality, consistent with the historical experience of sexual minorities throughout the twentieth century, neither character claims the label “gay,” and both have sexual relationships with women. This led some commentators to play down the film’s LGBT content, lauding it as a universal love story that happened to be between members of the same sex. Other critics saw the film’s avoidance of labels as a queer gesture that disrupted the very notion of “the closet.”

SEE ALSO *The Closet*; *Rural Queer Communities, US*; *Rural Queerness*

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The Bubble (2006; Eytan Fox)

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The Bubble is a drama of star-crossed lovers, highlighting an affair that unfolds in Tel Aviv between two young men—one Israeli and one Palestinian. Upon its release in 2006, the film, by director-writer duo Eytan Fox (1964–) and Gal Uchovsky (1958–), enjoyed a successful run across several international LGBTQ festivals, where it was touted as an engaging romp reminiscent of the hit HBO television series Sex and the City (1998–2004) and lauded for its bold portrayal of a taboo affair between two men on opposite sides of the Israel-Palestine conflict. Reviews noted the film’s memorable cast of characters comprising an energetic collective of young, progressive Israeli friends. The three main Israeli characters share an apartment in Tel Aviv, participate in critiques of the Israeli military occupation, are proudly out and about as sexually liberated men and women looking for love in the city, and relish any and all opportunities to both dish about and grill one another over the trials and tribulations of their respective romantic lives.

At the same time, scholars and critics alike have noted the film’s proclivities toward an Israeli nationalist discourse of pinkwashing, or the marketing of a queer-friendliness that obscures other political issues. Tel Aviv is depicted as a queer-friendly bubble whose idyll—the namesake of the film—is threatened by the inconvenient violence of an ethnic conflict that encroaches from without, both spatially and temporally. In the film, violence is shown to seep into the city from militarized checkpoints and borders that lie beyond Tel Aviv as the result of an earlier generation’s conflicts that hang over young Israelis and Palestinians as a burdensome inheritance. The film draws parallels between the violence of the Israeli occupation and the violence of the closet, whose twin oppressions become too much for the main Palestinian character, Ashraf, to bear. While a motley cast of Israeli characters are shown in a variety of professions, political leanings, and personalities, the Palestinian characters fit into rather predictable tropes: the closeted queer Palestinian; the fiery, homophobic radical; the suicide bomber; and the traditional, conservative woman defined primarily by her domestic roles as wife, mother, and/or sister.
Framing Desire and Power

The Bubble opens with a scene at a checkpoint, as a soldier with the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) brusquely directs a group of Palestinians through the procedures of a security search. Ostensibly, the scene is being recorded and delivered to the audience by a small film crew using a handheld camera, as indicated by the intercutting of shaky vérité footage, the presence of the camera crosshairs in this intercut footage, and a moment at which the soldier approaches the camera and tells the crew that recording is not allowed. In this way, the opening scene positions the audience as privy to a set of realities that are largely unauthorized—off the record, intimate, and illicit. It is in this very opening scene that Noam, another IDF member stationed at the checkpoint, and Ashraf, a young Palestinian man who is among the group that is being searched, are shown to gaze at one another in a series of close shots that reveal their clandestine, lingering eyes. The suggestion of mutual erotic interest, within a heavily imbalanced set of power relations, is intensified by a series of shots that comply with the soldier’s demands, as the bodies of Palestinians are subject to his scrutiny, as well as that of the audience. The men are asked one by one to lift up their shirts, baring their abdomens and chests. In a closer frame, the slow manner in which Ashraf lifts his shirt seems flirtatious and coy, akin to a striptease. But in the larger context
of the security search, the display ensues with ambiguity, marked by hesitation and shame as the Palestinian men are compelled to bare their torsos for the soldier and, by extension, the audience. The soldier barks at a veiled pregnant woman, demanding that she reveal “what you have there.” Shocked, she slowly unbuttons her jacket, as even her pregnant belly becomes an object of suspicion.

Tragedy bookends the film, as, during this opening sequence, the pregnant Palestinian woman suddenly goes into labor under the stress of the search. Her stripping continues, as the young, well-intentioned Noam jumps to her aid. Ashraf serves as translator, and Noam asks that her buttons be loosened to allow her to breathe. Her veil is removed as well as her bloodstained undergarment, and Noam pries apart her legs to examine the status of her labor himself. He coaches her to push, and the audience is positioned among the crowd of onlookers for whom the woman’s body, writhing with pain, is fully in view. A team of medics soon arrives to examine the baby that Noam has just delivered, only to pronounce it lifeless. The woman screams with agony, and anger and grief surge among the group of Palestinians, who accuse the IDF members of intentionally killing the child. In this way, the film establishes several fraught political contexts and themes at the outset: an occupation that is violently tragic even in its most routine operations; the need to breathe and thrive, as well as the impossibility of doing so under the occupation; the critical work of progressive Israeli activists in documenting human rights violations related to the occupation; a rights-based politics of visibility and witnessing; and the futile inseparability of the deeply personal and deeply political, as the sexual charge of the glances exchanged between Noam and Ashraf are inextricable from the power relations of occupation, suspicion, and violence that occasion their initial encounter.

**Coming Out On-screen**

Many of *The Bubble’s* opening themes quickly recede into the background, as the rest of the film’s narrative, formal, and genre proclivities become less about the occupation per se and more in step with the Israeli “gay cinema” of the 1990s. Films such as *Amazing Grace* (1992; Amos Guttman) and *Gotta Have Heart* (1997; Eytan Fox) celebrated a Western, internationalist discourse of coming out and dovetailed with a state-supported rebranding of Israel as progressive, tolerant, and gay friendly. *The Bubble* followed upon this 1990s wave of popular Israeli films, for which the renowned director-writer couple Fox and Uchovsky became well known.

Abandoning both the grainy, vérité-style footage and the tense atmosphere of the opening checkpoint sequence, the scenes that compose the bulk of the film take place in Tel Aviv—referred to as “the bubble” by characters within the film. Notwithstanding the fraught circumstances of the opening scene that hint at a love-at-first-sight exchange between Noam and Ashraf, the two are reunited when Ashraf suddenly shows up at Noam’s Tel Aviv apartment. Ashraf announces that he has come to return Noam’s identity card, which he
found and picked up at the checkpoint. Tel Aviv, the city to which Ashraf is an outsider, is cinematically rendered in slick continuity and features attractive, cosmopolitan, sexually liberated white characters who move between bohemian apartments, trendy cafés, and immaculate shops that offer an array of artisanal and luxury items. As a young Israeli who serves in the IDF; gets along with friends of different sexual orientations and political leanings; works at a hip record shop; and holds a discerning preference for Morrissey, Bright Eyes, and George Michael over Israeli pop stars, Noam in particular emerges as an ideal subject of Israeli homonationalism. His queer identity, in other words, upholds a widespread post-1990s branding of Israel as a tolerant, Westernized, gay-friendly nation.

The budding romance between Ashraf and Noam is detected by Noam's roommates, Yali and Lulu, and it becomes fodder for their teasing banter à la Sex and the City, as the roommates' close friendships are cemented by frank exchanges over matters of love and sex. In a direct reference to the American sitcom, Yali even refers to Lulu as “Israel's Carrie Bradshaw.” Frankness when it comes to sex at the level of the roommates' conversation is reinforced by the visual frankness of the film in showing parallel scenes of hetero- and homosexual consummation between Lulu and her journalist love-interest Sharon on the one hand, and Noam and Ashraf on the other. In the parallel editing of the two sexual encounters, the film espouses a “coming out” in terms of an ethos of visibility in Israeli cinema, which upholds a tolerant avowal of queer love, both nonheteronormative and, in this case, interethnic-cum-interreligious. The latter ultimately remains a tragic impossibility within the bubble of a bohemian fantasy of free love that bursts—quite literally and violently—with the queer-Palestinian-turned-suicidebomber who cannot come out. He detonates himself as he is embraced by Noam in The Bubble's final moments.

The Bubble, the Closet, and the Camp

The most exuberant moment in The Bubble is the scene of a beachside rave, as the three roommates are among a motley group of young Israelis who take ecstasy, dance, and party freely with their respective love interests, regardless of sexual orientation, race, and political leanings. Lulu vociferously participates in an anti-occupation campaign that organizes the beach party under the headline “Rave against the Occupation.” During the dance party, Noam and Ashraf are together, as are Yali and Golan, a boorish, hunky caricature of a gay man with right-wing political proclivities, as well as Lulu and Shaul, an endearingly puppy-faced fellow activist who is completely smitten with Lulu. A woman activist with a shaved head, who in an earlier scene casually bared her breasts while changing her T-shirt, is shown to kiss another woman passionately. It is this carefree bubble that is vaunted as exemplary within the film: open, tolerant, fun, and uncontaminated by political violence, as the political “rave against the occupation” takes a backseat to the party space's exceptional inclusivity and queer friendliness.

The exuberance of the dance party unravels as Ashraf finds it more and more difficult to
pass—first, as an Israeli by the name of Shimi in Tel Aviv, despite his facility with Hebrew; and second, as a straight Palestinian who must disavow any friendly contact with Israelis among his Palestinian relatives in Nablus. In this way, the film portrays Ashraf as being oppressively and repeatedly closeted, and the brutal pressures of this closeting become equitable to, if not a displacement of, the violence of the occupation itself. Meanwhile, Noam and Yali exchange remarks over the impossibility of Ashraf coming out “over there” (i.e., in a Palestinian-Arab-Muslim community that is assumed to be the ultraconservative antithesis of gayfriendly Israel), and Yali wonders, half-jokingly, whether the heavenly reward that awaits gay Muslim suicide bombers is that of seventy-two young men, instead of the traditional seventy-two virginal maidens. Within a nationalist Israeli discourse that forwards ethnic stereotypes of an Arab-Muslim other, The Bubble offers only one alternative masculinity to that of the closeted, queer Palestinian—that of the terrorist suicide bomber. Besides Ashraf, the only other significant male Palestinian character in the film is Ashraf’s soon-to-be brother-in-law, Jihad, a fiery radical who is portrayed not only as a member of terrorist circles that are plotting violent attacks on Israelis but also as intensely anti-Semitic and homophobic.

Ethnic stereotyping of Palestinians in The Bubble is formally embedded as well. The capturing of Palestinian spaces and communities is framed by modes of news reportage and documentary, which mark a distinct departure from the slick continuity with which Tel Aviv is rendered in the film. Parallel to the manner in which the audience’s witnessing of the opening sequence is motivated by the presence of activists who are documenting human rights violations of Palestinians at an Israeli military checkpoint, the audience’s witnessing of scenes in Nablus is motivated by Noam and Lulu’s decision to bring along a camera and pose as French journalists who wish to document the wedding of Ashraf’s sister Rana and Jihad. Here, too, the documentary premise frames the audience’s witnessing of yet another round of violence. This time, it is that of the closet that confines Ashraf to an unambiguously anti-Semitic, homophobic terrain of feudal Arab-Muslim social structures. While Ashraf and Noam are kissing one another in an actual closet in Ashraf’s home in Nablus, they are caught by Jihad. Jihad blackmails Ashraf, demanding that Ashraf marry his cousin Samira in exchange for his keeping Ashraf’s shameful secret. With a heavy heart, Ashraf attempts to comply with the forced arrangement and approach Samira, only to end the conversation abruptly in a split-second decision to attempt a coming out instead. Ashraf goes to his sister Rana, who is preparing herself as the bride, and attempts to come out to her. Rana is taken aback and unable to process Ashraf’s confession. The permanence of the closet looms over Ashraf as the family revels in the wedding festivities of Rana and Jihad—the traditional ritual in which Noam and Lulu initially claimed an ethnographic interest, posing as French journalists who hoped to document Palestinian life. In this manner, The Bubble continually frames Palestinians not only through ethnic stereotypes of abjection within a culture that is ossified and unchanging but also as ever-ready subjects for the newsreel, documentary, and/or ethnographic footage that bears witness to their
ongoing traumas.

For both Israeli and Palestinian characters in *The Bubble*, visibility/witnessing is put forward as the proper antidote to trauma. In other words, the metaphorical movement out from the hidden confines of the closet and into the realm of the visible expands within the film, as an end in and of itself. The film’s discourse of coming out, as a means of overcoming trauma-as-repression, is perhaps most evident through a scene in which Noam takes Ashraf to watch a performance of the American dramatist Martin Sherman’s play *Bent*. The play bears witness to the violence borne by gays, as less visible victims of the Holocaust, alongside the horrific extermination of Jews, in Nazi concentration camps. The audience, as well as Noam and Ashraf as audience members within the film, witnesses a scene from the play that shows two men—one marked as gay and the other as a Jew—who fall in love while inside a concentration camp. They take solace in poignantly professing their love for one another, even as they are unable to touch one another and must prepare themselves for the inevitable. This scene from *Bent* reinforces *The Bubble’s* themes of trauma-as-closet. Indeed, the intimacy between Noam and Ashraf further deepens through exchanges of their respective childhood traumas. Witnessed by the audience as grainy memories—flashbacks that are stylistically marked in both cases as found footage of amateur home videos—Ashraf and Noam both “come out” to one another. Ashraf’s childhood traumas are recollections of dispossession and displacement from Jerusalem, as the flashbacks show Israeli bulldozers razing the home that his father painstakingly built, forcing the family to flee for Nablus. Noam’s are those of witnessing failure and defeat in the deeply pained eyes of his mother, following her futile attempts to organize against the outcasting of Palestinian families in their neighborhood.
Noam is portrayed as a progressive Israeli subject who, like the activists in the film’s opening, can marshal the resources of a well-adjusted, liberated society that can exorcise its traumas through healthy practices of nonrepression. Noam teaches Ashraf about “coming out,” takes him to *Bent*, and encourages him to talk through his childhood traumas. But ultimately, this goes only so far, and when Ashraf’s sister is inadvertently killed in the crossfire of Israeli bullets intended for Palestinian terrorists during a shootout, Ashraf declares that he will step in for Jihad and carry out the requisite suicide attack in order to avenge Rana’s accidental death. In the concluding scene, the final gesture that Ashraf makes before detonating his suicide vest is not one of vengeance or anger but one of love. As Noam spots Ashraf outside a café, Ashraf turns himself away and moves toward the empty street. He traces his eyebrow with his index finger, mimicking a gesture designated by a character in the play *Bent* as a secret sign that means “I love you.” Ashraf is embraced by Noam as the film fades to white in slow motion, although the ambiguity of this moment is clarified by a newscast that immediately follows, reporting on a suicide bombing that has taken place outside a Tel Aviv café and strangely claimed just two lives in the middle of an otherwise empty street. In light of this ending, one of the stakes of *The Bubble*’s deeper ideological structures is its implicit suggestion that the ultimate tragedy is that of Ashraf’s inability to come out, as he finally conforms and martyrs himself to the pressures of Palestinian masculinity, construed by the film’s Israeli nationalist discourse as necessarily
violent, anti-Semitic, and homophobic. As such, *The Bubble* offers a robust critical opportunity within both LGBTQ studies and cinema studies to examine the post-1990s globalization of a celebratory Western discourse of visibility politics, while urging attentiveness to the concomitant pressures, complexities, and contextual specificities not only of the closet but also of coming out.

**SEE ALSO** *Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; Einayim Pkuhot (2009; Haim Tabakman); The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Pinkwashing*

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Butt Magazine

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A post-pornographic fanzine for gay hipsters.

Butt is a gay fanzine with interviews and photos that was published in Amsterdam beginning in 2001, and later for some time in New York. Since 2011 Butt has appeared exclusively online as a digital archive and social network. The Butt brand, however, also circulates in other ways: Jop van Bennekom and Gert Jonkers, the two Dutch founders of Butt, host parties in Berlin, London, and New York and sell fan merchandise such as calendars, T-shirts, and towels with Butt logos or themes. In 2006 the “Butt” Book, with a “best of” selection of interviews and photos, appeared through the German art-book publisher Taschen. In December 2014 an expanded new edition came out under the title Forever “Butt.” In addition to the magazine and its spin-off products, Butt in the early twenty-first century founded a new gay indie aesthetic, which became a global phenomenon and centers on an aesthetic-sexual lifestyle that brings together pornography and art (Rehberg 2012, 2014, 2016). Butt spawned imitators—including the fanzines Kaiserin, Basso, Kink, Meat, and They Shoot Homos, Don’t They? Each of these fanzines emerged from an urban gay scene (e.g., Paris, Berlin, Barcelona, London, Melbourne) or focused on a specific sexual fetish (e.g., hair, piss) (Bronson and Aarons 2008).
The Representation of Masculinity in Post-Pornography

"Butt"'s photos, printed in a documentary style and on pale pink paper, can be situated in the context of the post-porn movement, which seeks to affirm a queer appropriation of the genre of pornography, and thus to mobilize its cultural and political potential for the rearticulation of gender and sexuality in the service of a critique of heteronormativity (Stüttgen 2010; Biasin, Maina, and Zecca 2014). While "Butt" is holding on to a notion of masculinity as pornographic value, it seeks to shift its representational politics: it showcases new masculinities of the imperfect and ungroomed (Rehberg 2012). "Butt" aims to mobilize the erotic value of “authentic masculinity”; that is, the documentary value of the pictures promises to give access to masculinity and pleasure beyond artifice. This project points toward a debate about the constructedness of gender and desire within feminism and gay studies (Butler 1990; Mulvey 2009; Bersani 2010). What is at stake in "Butt"'s dialogue between porn and art is an aesthetic of “reality.” The amateurish stars of "Butt" embody the philosophy of fanzines as magazines made by fans and for fans. As in other cultures of media convergence, the producers and consumers of "Butt" might be the same (Jenkins 2006). This aesthetic presented by the "microcelebrities" (Marwick 2016) of "Butt" is inspired by the documentary value of the different forms of so-called netporn (Jacobs...
such as DIY porn, realcore, and the interactive setting of porn 2.0.

Even though online porn also leads to a popularization of the commodified masculinities characterized by José Esteban Muñoz (1999, 87) as “white normative sex clone[s]”—the spectacle of an impeccable gym body—magazines such as Butt do manage to disseminate alternative body politics. The diversified types of men in Butt no longer submit unconditionally to the norms of propagated fitness and are legible as a countermovement against the dictates of “health pornography,” the critical potentials of which have been a controversial topic within gay studies (Miller 1992; Halperin 1995; Padva 2002). In this regard Butt also becomes legible in the context of HIV and AIDS: through its historical distance to the 1980s AIDS crisis and because of the medical advancements in HIV treatment since the second half of the 1990s Butt moves beyond the regimes of representation of 1980s and 1990s gay porn, whose mission was to give evidence of “gay health” as a reaction to the trauma of AIDS (Halkitis 2000). According to this line of thinking, Butt presents itself as a counter-counterreaction to the representation of the gay male body in the context of HIV and AIDS.

Transnational Utopia

Butt presents a hybrid, alternative picture of masculinity, in contrast to the globalized American porn identity. In contrast to the homogenized vision of male bodies in American pornography, the visual aesthetics of Butt must be understood as a form of transatlantic dialogue that generates a specific code, a combination of cultural signifiers that was also popularized in the first decade of the twenty-first century on a broader scale beyond queer post-porn with the advent of the hipster (Rehberg 2012, 2014, 2016). With this pop-cultural phenomenon, several forces, including race and class, intersect.

First and foremost, the post-pornographic hipster must be understood in terms of race. Next to the omission of other subject positions such as trans, it is Butt’s focus on whiteness that is striking. Nonwhite bodies are rarely shown; out of twenty-nine covers, only three featured nonwhite men, among them Kele Okereke, singer of the British pop group Bloc Party, on the cover of Butt issue number 28. In this regard, Butt proves to be rather homogenous with its representational politics, a gesture familiar from the New Queer Cinema (Davis 2013), and which can also be said of the culture of post-pornography as a whole, as noted by Tim Stüttgen: “Some people have criticized post-porn for being a white and Western genre and that might be true” (2010, 14).

But the white hipster bodies in Butt also claim their “naturalness” by departing from the code of white hegemony. Butt’s staging of whiteness and its claim of “naturalness” become truly legible only by means of a distinction between different forms of being white. Butt presents a “dirty” or “secondary” whiteness. This suggests that, in addition to race, the post-pornographic images of men also need to be deciphered with regard to their class
affiliation. In this respect, the imperfect corporeality of the images in *Butt* draws meaning from the culture of North American white trash, whose "less restricted access to sexuality"—that is, its pornographic value within the cultural imagination ([Penley 2004](#))—contributes to the sexiness of the young men in *Butt*. In addition to *Butt*'s white-trash masculinity, a queer European bohemian masculinity serves as a model for its alternative aesthetics. In contrast to the case of “white trash,” however, the European genealogy of the imperfect white male body is less about class and a direct access to a “natural” sexuality than about an aesthetic and intellectual contextualization of pornography itself. The body image of *Butt* claims the authenticity of a worker sexuality, while at the same time staging a pornographic image that is also always a critique of pornography. The status of the image between pornography and art, as well as the class and national moorings of *Butt*'s image of masculinity, thus remain ambiguous, but in the context of web culture and porn 2.0 they also represent an attempt at reimaging the sexual, aesthetic, and social utopias of the 1970s. *Butt*'s "post-AIDS" aesthetics mirror pre-AIDS aesthetics.

**SEE ALSO** *The Body Politic; Pornoterrorismo and Post-Porn; Pulp Fiction, Gay and Lesbian; Urban Queerness*

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Cabaret Theater in Latin America and the Caribbean

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The use of cabaret as political statement by Latin American and Caribbean LGBT artists.

Cabaret emerged in many parts of the Americas as an important form of popular entertainment in the early twentieth century and drew heavy influence from the German Kabarett and that tradition’s emphasis on political satire and dark comedy. Cabaret is a broad category of theater that contains singing and other musical numbers, as well as skits, usually woven together by an MC, or master of ceremonies. Cabaret theater almost always occurs in a pub, nightclub, or restaurant, such that audiences are eating and drinking during the show. In many parts of the Americas, cabaret came to include elements of burlesque and drag, which also contributed to its strong associations with LGBT nightlife.

Distinguishing Features of Latin American Cabaret

Cabaret performance in Latin America is most markedly distinguished from other cabaret traditions by the nature of its political content (such as satirical skits skewering current events in news and politics) and, in particular, its relationship to authoritarian dictatorships. Such regimes—both of the left- and right-wing variety—historically repressed homosexuality and persecuted queer people throughout the twentieth century. In many Latin American contexts, the Right associated lesbians and gays with communism and persecuted them as immoral dissidents. However, communist and socialist regimes often looked on queers as selfish, decadent, and unwilling to do their reproductive part to uphold the state. In some places, such as Cuba under Fidel Castro (1926–2016), the state persecuted gays because it found them incompatible with its idealized vision of the “New Man” that the state required to uphold the gendered ideals of the revolution. Consequently, Castro’s regime rounded up gay men into camps and forced others into exile. Given the widespread oppression of LGBT people under authoritarian regimes in the region, underground spaces such as bars and cabarets where LGBT people congregated became important sites of community. In particular, cabaret performance spaces, where queerness and skits espousing radical politics could take center stage, were important sites for both art and resistance. This history has shaped cabaret performance traditions in Latin America and molded them into the vibrant performance art scene present today.
Another important distinguishing feature of cabaret in Latin America is its relationship to (and frequent antagonism toward) the Roman Catholic Church, which has exerted powerful control in much of Latin America since the beginning of the colonial period. One important dimension of this relationship is the role of the carnivalesque, the aesthetic and social modality associated with pre-Lenten celebrations. During Carnival, everyday people are free to indulge in various forms of debauchery ranging from gluttony to sexual licentiousness, including greater tolerance for homosexual behavior (regardless of sexual orientation), cross-dressing, and spectacular forms of queer performance. (Despite such ostensible sexual liberation, there is also violence against LGBT people during this time that often goes unpolicied and unpunished.) For many countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, cabaret traditions have drawn on the tropes of the carnivalesque. Similarly, many cabaret traditions in Latin America have poked deliberate and ribald fun at the Catholic Church.

**Cabaret Performance in Mexico**

Mexico boasts perhaps the richest and most vibrant of queer cabaret traditions in Latin America, including many famous performance venues, such as El Closet del Sor Juana (Sor Juana’s Closet) and El Hábito (The Habit). There is an especially noteworthy genealogy of feminist performance art with roots in cabaret in Mexico, with Mexico City at its epicenter. Queer cabaret in Mexico dates back to the early twentieth century when *tandas* (a type of variety show) emerged as a popular entertainment. *Tandas* included singing, dancing, and skits satirizing political events. Although government repression of *tandas* eventually led to their demise, this tradition continued at El Hábito, a cabaret nightclub on the south side of Mexico City in Coyoacán (*Erdman 1995*). In 1980 Jesusa Rodríguez and her partner Liliana Felipe debuted at El Fracaso (The Failure; originally El Cuervo, or The Raven) and became immensely popular. In 1990 they opened El Hábito, fulfilling their dream of running a German-style cabaret modeled on the infamous ones found in Berlin. El Hábito became one of the most important venues for queer cabaret in Latin America, spawning several notable offshoots as frequent collaborators and performers opened their own venues, such as Tito Vasconcelos and David Rangel’s Cabaré Tito in the gay neighborhood of Zona Rosa in 1998. In 2005 El Hábito closed its doors permanently, with Rodríguez and Felipe having performed hundreds of shows there. A new cabaret group, Las Reinas Chulas (The Cool Queens), took over the space, which they renamed El Vicio (The Vice). Rodríguez and Felipe continue to perform in various other venues. They also do cabaret workshops with indigenous women in Mexico and work with street children.

**JESUSA RODRÍGUEZ (1955–)**

Jesusa Rodríguez is a Mexican director, actress, writer, playwright, performance artist, and social activist. Along with her wife, Argentine singer and actress Liliana Felipe
(1954–), she is one of the key figures in contemporary Latin American cabaret theater. In 1990 Rodríguez and Felipe founded a theater space in the Coyoacán, Mexico City, called El Hábito (The Habit). For fifteen years, they staged weekly cabaret performances that were improvised and based on the political happenings of the week. Aside from this contemporary political commentary, Rodríguez and Felipe developed a series of “Cabarets Prehispánicos” (Pre-Hispanic Cabarets), which, while based on pre-Columbian beliefs and texts (such as the Popol Vuh), pointedly addressed questions of empire and patriarchy in contemporary Mexican society.

At El Hábito, Rodríguez also began to develop works about seventeenth-century Mexican poet Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Her first major piece about Sor Juana, *Sor Juana en Almoloya* (Sor Juana in Almoloya) (1995), was similar in style to cabaret pieces presented weekly at El Hábito. In this particular performance, Rodríguez tackles the issue of corruption within the Mexican government while evoking the period of time within which Sor Juana was forced to abandon all writing and intellectual work upon being condemned by the bishop of Puebla in 1691. As part of her explorations of the life and works of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, Rodríguez took on the arduous task of memorizing the 975-verse “Primero sueño” (“First Dream”), one of the poet's most important and personal works. Rodríguez performed the poem in its entirety as part of her piece *Sor Juana, el primero sueño* (2002). In 2005, Rodríguez and Felipe, wanting to devote more time to activism and to developing pieces outside of their space, turned over El Hábito to the Mexican cabaret group Las Reinas Chulas (The Cool Queens), who changed the name of the space to El Vicio (The Vice).

After their time at El Hábito, Rodríguez and Felipe continued to develop and produce independent performance pieces. A notable piece titled *Juana la Larga* (Long Juana) debuted in 2013. In her 2014 essay “Archives, Bodies, and Imagination,” scholar María Elena Martínez recounts how Rodríguez and Felipe became interested in her historical archival work concerning an eighteenth-century inquisitorial case about a Guatemalan intersex woman known as Juana Aguilar (who was pejoratively nicknamed “Juana la Larga”). The piece interrogates colonial understandings of gender and bodies—with Rodríguez satirically playing the role of Doctor Narciso Esparragosa, the Enlightenment-era Guatemalan doctor who assessed the body of Aguilar to determine whether or not she was physically capable of committing sodomy. (He concluded that she was not.) The performances, however, have been at the center of a series of sometimes heated discussions about the ways in which Rodríguez’s performances represent trans and racialized bodies (in sometimes Orientalizing ways). Such scholars as Jack Halberstam, Lok Siu, and Diana Taylor have written about the performance and its reception in recent years. This piece, along with Rodríguez’s solo work and some of her other works with Felipe at El Hábito, have been archived and made available to the public by the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics through their Digital Video Library (HIDVL).
In addition to being a writer, actress, and performer, Jesusa Rodríguez is also a prominent activist. In 2006, for example, she founded the Resistencia Creativa (Creative Resistance) movement in response to electoral fraud in the Mexican presidential elections. In the days after the election, candidate Andrés Manuel López Obrador denounced the results and called for a meeting in Mexico City’s main plaza, El Zócalo. More than 500,000 people showed up to protest the election results. Rodríguez envisioned Resistencia Creativa as a kind of “massive cabaret” (HIDVL). Through art and culture, Resistencia Creativa has found and continues to find creative ways to perform acts of civil disobedience. In its first months, the movement’s focus centered on the issue of electoral fraud, but it has since taken on other equally critical social and political issues directly affecting Mexican society. Rodríguez continues to live and work in Mexico City, her work highlighting the intersection between LGBTQ and indigenous cultures and narratives, as well as continuing to shine a light on corruption in contemporary Mexican politics.

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To understand the significance of El Hábito and its relationship to larger political, economic, and sexual issues of the time, it is worth examining more of Rodríguez's work. Rodríguez is known for blurring genres, and she created performances throughout her career that drew on forms as diverse as Greek tragedy, pre-Columbian indigenous performance traditions, opera, sketch comedy, and musical revues (Taylor and Costantino 2003a). She adapted works from William Shakespeare, such as ¿Cómo va la noche, Macbeth? (How's Your Night Going, Macbeth?) in 1981, as well as operas such as Donna Giovanni in 1983. Rodríguez toured her shows throughout South America, the United States, and Europe.

In 1994 Rodríguez took to El Hábito's stage to perform in Supermachos '94, which covered the turbulent events happening earlier that year, such as the guerrilla uprising in the state of Chiapas; the assassination of presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio; and the abduction, ransoming, and near execution of the billionaire businessman Alfredo Harp Helú. The piece was structured as an allegory in which the Mexican Republic (represented as a blond, high-society flapper played by Regina Orozco) awakens to realize there is an insurrection. Her lover, the aristocratic president Carlos Salinas, tells her to pay a visit to the countryside where the instability lies. The town in question turns out to be populated by characters from the popular comic strip Supermachos. To pacify the Zapatista rebels and negotiate peace, she performs a series of nationalistic parody songs before holding a fraudulent election. She eventually learns that her Indian servant (played by Rodriguez) has been brutalized by the military and religious authorities, which prompts her to return to the capital, where she finds chaos as local factions fight with one another and the International Monetary Fund.

Supermachos '94 is typical of Rodriguez's work in that it mocks the political and religious establishment and draws on cutting-edge contemporary issues. However, it is interesting to note that she also took a jab at El Hábito's leftist intelligentsia in the audience by satirizing Subcomandante Marcos, the Zapatista rebel leader, by having the actor playing him begin to perform a burlesque-style striptease number (Erdman 1995). In her later work, Rodríguez continued to be timely and to mix critiques of politics and religion. For example, in Sor Juana in Prison: A Virtual Pageant Play (2000), the famous nun (who is often claimed as a lesbian icon) has a Macintosh computer in her jail cell alongside her old inkwell and uses her writing to eviscerate US political figures George W. Bush and Dick Cheney in between references to US television shows All My Children and The Rosie O'Donnell Show and US actress Susan Sarandon (Rodríguez 2003).
Another major figure to emerge from this tradition was Astrid Hadad. Hadad rose to fame in Rodríguez’s all-female opera *Donna Giovanni* in 1985, but she also had her own cabaret shows. Hadad was well known for mixing genres and styles, drawing from classic *rumbera* films of the 1940s and 1950s, melodramas, *ranchero* songs, and street theater, as well as German-style cabaret traditions. Invariably, Hadad uses stereotypical Mexican iconography (e.g., pistols, virgins, holiday decorations, tequila bottles) to playfully subvert dominant ideologies and notions of nationalism, often placing her physical body at the center of her work and calling attention to it as a mode of political address (*de Bragança* 2011). The use of nationalist symbols in this way was a common theme among feminist and queer performers in Mexico and may be one of Mexican cabaret’s unifying features (*Garrido* 2007).

A final cabaret performer from Mexico to consider is Orozco. Orozco trained at Juilliard in New York City and was renowned for her abilities in performing opera. However, she also created theater workshops, did theater for social change with indigenous women in the rural mountains, and campaigned for sex education and condom use, as well as working against domestic violence and child homelessness. She was also outspoken in her support of gay rights. Like Hadad, Orozco performed in Rodríguez’s *Donna Giovanni*, but she participated in its European tour when she was just eighteen. She also was a well-known film and television actress, having been nominated at the Venice Film Festival for a best actress award for her work in the 1996 film *Profundo carmesí* (*Deep Crimson*) (*Alzate* 2011). Orozco’s cabaret was unique because it combined her love of improvisational comedy with opera, and she relished subverting opera’s traditional style with her satire while not compromising the tremendous ability that came with her classical training. She simultaneously presented herself as a diva while mocking the archetype of the diva and making fun of her own body and self-presentation. This type of self-effacing humor is typical within Latin American cabaret theater, as it prevents the show from becoming too didactic or taking on the kind of earnestness that could cause the skits to become propagandistic, instead playfully emphasizing that the performer is “in on the joke.” Self-parody has also been an important part of queer performance art more broadly, such as in the work of Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, and Pomo Afro Homos.

**Cabaret Performance in Brazil**

Another Latin American country with a rich cabaret tradition is Brazil. Here again, the form and content of the performances were shaped by the experience of dictatorship and oppression. One of the most famous troupes in Brazil was Dzi Croquettes, an all-male drag troupe founded in the 1970s that drew on *tropicalismo*, a musical and artistic movement that was characterized by a blend of avant-garde artistic elements with popular motifs and a mix of foreign influences, such as the Beatles, with traditional Brazilian sounds, visuals, and ideas. This led to an overall aesthetic of gender blurring, psychedelic imagery, loud
colors, and ribald sexual provocations. The troupe eventually fled the dictatorship and performed in Europe, where they became a favorite of US entertainer Liza Minnelli, who helped launch them to international fame. The group marked a departure from the more mainstream gay liberation movement in Brazil and adopted a more radically queer anti-assimilationist stance (Alvarez and Issa 2009).

Another heir to this tradition were the so-called Divinas Divas (Divine Divas) of the Teatro Rival (Rival Theater), which was founded in Rio de Janeiro by Américo Leal. Teatro Rival emerged in the 1960s amid the Brazilian military dictatorship (1967–1985), which treated LGBT and queer people brutally. The Divas identified variously as drag queens, transgender women, travestis (a term related to but distinct from transgender deployed within Brazil), or gay men, frequently sliding across multiple gender and sexual categories and identifications. They reported a variety of complicated feelings about hormones, surgeries, and the kinds of words they wanted to use for themselves, which illustrates the complexity of gender and sexuality operating during this time period in Brazil.

The divas often performed cabaret numbers in the persona of classically glamorous female icons, which distinguished them from Dzi Croquettes’ carnivalesque and genderfuck aesthetics that aggressively blended hyperbolic elements of masculinity and femininity. Also, while the Croquettes went into exile in Paris, the Divas mostly stayed in Rio de Janeiro and suffered under the regime. They positioned this as an important political act because they could provide entertainment and escapism for the gay community after the military coup d’état at a time when so many other artists were fleeing.

Leal’s granddaughter created a documentary film, Divinas Divas (2017), which follows eight aged Divas as they reunite and perform together fifty years later. The leader who reconvenes her peers for this encore performance was the artist known as Rogéria. Some of the Divas, such as Camille K, who in the 1970s was continually beaten and assaulted for her clothing, now live full time in women’s clothes, which have included ostentatious costuming from the eighteenth century. Likewise, Marquesa identified as a woman. Other Divas included Jane di Castro, Divina Valéria, Fujika de Halliday, and Brigitte de Búzios. Many of the Divas eventually had careers that took them into television, the cabaret scene abroad, and more mainstream venues. Some of them also engaged in sex work part time.

One final Diva from Teatro Rival to leave a major legacy on cabaret and performance in Brazil was Eloína dos Leopardos. Eloína was inspired by shows with male striptease and nudity in San Francisco and decided to create performances featuring naked men, known as Os Leopardos (The Leopards), with their signature show called A noite dos Leopardos (The night of the Leopards). Here, a woman would perform a cabaret number, but scantily clad masculine men would dance and eventually perform nude with erect penises. Sometimes there would be showers onstage for the naked men to dance in. Gay men would reportedly fellate the men offstage in the wings to keep them hard between numbers.
Several of the men who performed with Os Leopardos also worked in gay pornography. Eloína opened her theater for this erotic male revue in Galeria Alaska in Rio de Janeiro and made her fortune as the producer.

Eventually, Os Leopardos became a major tourist attraction and catered to a largely heterosexual audience as an example of the imagined exoticness and hypersexuality of Brazil rather than the explicitly gay pornographic (and politicized) cabaret show that it had been. Eloína also became a samba sensation, competing with the famous samba school Beija-Flor. Eloína and Os Leopardos illustrate the overlapping worlds and co-constitutive influence of cabaret, showgirl spectacles, erotic revues, drag shows, carnival performances, and sex work in Brazil. It is also noteworthy that Galeria Alaska was the site of *Cabaret prevenção*, a cabaret put on by a nongovernmental organization that focused on performances about HIV/AIDS awareness. Thus, Galeria Alaska could provide space and opportunity to celebrate the pleasures of queer culture but also to provide lifesaving information and education, which illustrates the complicated purposes and possibilities of queer cabaret theater.

**Cabaret Performance in Other Latin American and Caribbean Contexts**

Throughout the region, cabaret traditions influenced performance art more generally, and it can be difficult to define the parameters of cabaret as a genre. However, there are many notable performers who press at these edges. In Colombia, Lucy Bolaños founded Teatro la Máscara (*The Mask Theatre*) in 1972. Although initially a mixed-gender group, in 1985 it became an all-female troupe. Even though the women perform political plays and adapt texts from various sources, they frequently include popular music performances in their shows as well. The group had to flee the right-wing extremist forces in the late 1980s, but they continued their work in Costa Rica until they could return. The group periodically attempted to foreground themes of homosexuality and lesbianism, such as in their show *La flor de Pilar* (*The flower of Pilar*), but they often found audiences hostile, a fact that illustrates the homophobia that exists even among the political left-wing dissidents and activists who made up a sizable portion of their audience (*Taylor and Costantino 2003c*).

Another artist who draws on a wide variety of entertainment traditions to create her work is Rosa Luisa Márquez in Puerto Rico. Márquez uses popular theater, the avant-garde, installations, and technology to create her politically charged works. She often tackles current issues, such as HIV/AIDS education, US imperialism in Puerto Rico, and homelessness. She worked with a number of major theaters and practitioners, including Agusto Boal and Bread and Puppet. As a child, Márquez was drawn to mime, dance, puppetry, and musical theater, among other traditions. She built a small theater in a poor part of San Juan in 1973 to house her Anamù Theatre Group. The troupe used a Latin
American–style collective dramaturgy based on Marxist improvisation about dramatic conflicts and group decision-making (Taylor and Costantino 2003b). Although the theater group stages a variety of shows, they often use street theater that is influenced by the performance traditions found in cabaret, having traded the smoke-filled bars like El Hábito for the open-air barrios.

**Broader Significance**

As cabaret theater in Latin America progressed throughout the twentieth century, it refashioned itself in response to various political situations and served as a site of critique and resistance to authoritarianism. It also became a diffuse genre, embracing ribald sexual elements that ultimately blurred into burlesque, striptease, and erotic reviews. In time, the form’s popularity diminished, but many performers went on to careers as performance artists. Indeed, it is often difficult to distinguish cabaret from these other genres apart from the nature of the venue (table seating, drink service, etc.). However, this shift also serves as a marker of the form’s impact and ability to shape other genres. The fact that it has often exported its political sensibilities also demonstrates the particular utility cabaret theater has had in queer activism in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**SEE ALSO Bars and Cabarets in Europe; Carnival and Sexuality in Brazil; Cinema, Latin American (Early Twentieth Century); Performance Artists in Latin America**

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Cabo Verde

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The status of the LGBT community, both historically and into modern times, on this island nation off the west coast of Africa.

Cabo Verde (known as Cape Verde prior to its official name change in 2013) is an archipelago country, located in the region known as Macaronesia, about 410 miles (660 km) from Dakar, Senegal. It comprises ten volcanic islands, nine of which are inhabited. Its territory was discovered, uninhabited, in 1456. It is a former Portuguese colony that became independent in 1975. The Creole population, a genetic and cultural mixture of Europeans and Africans, totals approximately 500,000 inhabitants. Twice as many Cabo Verdeans have emigrated to other countries. The official language is Portuguese, but the language that is broadly spoken is Cabo Verdean Creole. The country has a semipresidential regime whose democratic institutions have been continuously consolidated since its independence, especially since the political opening to a multiparty system in the 1990s.

Cabo Verde is known as one of the African countries that most respects the individual freedom of its inhabitants. There are two main reasons for the relative greater sexual freedom observed nowadays in Cabo Verde: Portuguese colonization, for which the dimension of sexual control seems to have been less rigid than in other colonial experiences; and the diasporic influence, because migration is economically vital to the islands and more than half of the Cabo Verdean population has long been living and circulating in other countries, particularly in North America and Europe.

Historical Prosecution of Homosexuality

Homoeroticism in Cabo Verde was first recorded by the legal-religious processes of the Portuguese Holy Inquisition in the seventeenth century. In documents from that period, at least three cases are recorded in detail. In 1633 the Cabo Verde bishop sent an emissary to the Holy Office of Lisbon denouncing sodomitic acts of the then governor of the archipelago, Dom Cristóvão Cabral, who was thirty-three years old. His list of crimes included anal sex, reciprocal masturbation, and anilingus, practiced through physical violence not only with men but also with women. The second case refers to twenty-eight-year-old priest Gabriel Dias Ferreira, in charge of the Ribeira Grande Parish, who was arrested in 1654 and accused of different homoerotic acts with eighty-two accomplices,
most of whom were black slaves between the ages of ten and twenty (Mott 1999). The third case refers to Portuguese priest Frutuoso Álvares, sent to Cabo Verde, who confessed to committing the “wicked sin” in the archipelago with two young men (Trevisan 2011).

The Holy Office was the strategy used by the Roman Catholic Church, during the Counter-Reformation, to control sexuality in lands under the purview of the church. Since the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, the church had determined that human sexuality should be at the service of only reproduction, which is why sodomitic acts (anal sex) were strongly repressed. The Portuguese Inquisition was enforced not only in the kingdom but throughout the whole colonial empire, which included the small archipelago of Cabo Verde. It is known, however, that there was greater liberality of customs in the Portuguese colonies than in the metropolis (Braga 2006).

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First LGBT Pride Parade in Cabo Verde, 2013. Trans individuals demonstrate in front of the Palácio do Povo in the city of Mindelo on the island of São Vicente. Cabo Verde was the first West African country and the second African country to host an LGBTpride parade (after South Africa).

Travestes (Transvestites)

Following the end of the Holy Inquisition in the early nineteenth century, it seems that Cabo Verde did not record any other case of a legal procedure related to homosexuality in the national territory, although the colonial law that criminalized acts “against nature” was in force in the archipelago until 2004 (Miguel 2016). Transvestism in Cabo Verde dates
back to Carnival festivities of at least the 1940s. Even after this period, the image of a transvestite remained in Carnival as a symbol of subversion. The boundary that separates gays and travestes (the local term for transvestites) is very tenuous and porous. The traveste identity not only refers to classifications regarding the intensity of masculinization/feminization of bodies but also has to do with class positions. In general, travestes are lower-income people who were born with male genitalia and, when wanting to become women, keep their bodies as feminized as possible and sometimes advocate that identity for themselves. In contrast with Brazilian transvestites, Cabo Verdeans travestes never have their bodies transformed by silicone implants and hormone treatments, technologies that are not always desirable, not locally available, and unviable from an economic point of view for them.

Travestes reported that since the 1970s the piping of a desalinization plant on the island of São Vicente was used for public and fortuitous sexual encounters (Miguel 2016). Depending on the island, travestes can walk the streets freely without fearing for their safety. However, because they are one of the most marginalized groups in the economic and social structure of the country, they have a harder time finding employment. Some of them still study, whereas others have small businesses or work in prostitution.

A hegemonic system of masculine sexuality exists in Cabo Verde that divides “men” from “gays”/“travestes.” Given the more marked gender division typical of Latin and Mediterranean societies, men are expected to act like “men” (and be the active ones in sex), while gays and transvestites can articulate in their bodies signs associated with the feminine (among them, being passive in sex). This position is articulated by Bela, a Cabo Verdean transvestite, as quoted in a 2015 article by Andréa Lobo and Francisco Miguel: “We in Cabo Verde, we are gays, we are travestes, but we never get involved with gays. We like to get involved with men. Men who do not like to take it in the ass. Men. We like men; we do not like gays, unlike foreigners. Abroad, gays like gays. But not us, we are different” (50). In the middle and upper classes, however, the Western model of homosexuality—where differences in sexual behaviors do not make such a difference in the experience of a couple—has been gaining more and more resonance.

**Lesbian and Intersex Invisibility**

In Cabo Verde, lesbians have been keeping out of public life for reasons that are not yet fully known owing to the scarcity of data on their social lives. It is known that they are part of the elite of the country’s capital, living in unofficial marital relations with their partners (Rodrigues 2009). When some of them were invited to take part in a debate on homosexuality on state television in 2013, they chose not to go, whereas gay men went. It is assumed that gender hierarchy in Cabo Verde makes it more difficult for women than men, who have greater freedom, to admit their homo- or bisexuality publicly. In spite of this, reports say that in 2016 a group of lesbians started a new LGBT nongovernmental
organization in the capital of the country. There is no available information about intersex people and their experiences in Cabo Verde.

**Homophobia and Violence**

There are no official data on homophobic violence in Cabo Verde. Accounts about verbal attacks or physical violence against LGBT people are not that common, but they exist. Some individuals report fights, name calling, and infrequent turmoil. *Mandar bocas*—the term for name calling directed publicly to homosexuals on the streets (but not only to them)—is many times interpreted by native homosexuals themselves as a joking courting rite by men that is not necessarily or always intended as mistreatment but rather as an invitation to sexual encounters (*Miguel 2016*).

**LGBT Advocacy**

In the 1990s, on the island of São Vicente, Cabo Verdian transvestites took to the streets in daylight dressed in feminine clothes to challenge the gender norms in place at the time. They were physically and verbally assaulted because of this demonstration. In that same decade the "Miss Gay" and "Miss Traveste" beauty pageants first took place, a phenomenon that aroused the curiosity and interest of the locals, including the non-LGBT public (*Silva 2015*). In 2010 the Associação Gay Cabo-Verdeana Contra a Discriminação (Cabo Verdean Gay Association against Discrimination) was founded. This nongovernmental organization, acknowledged by the state without resistance, has the purpose of fighting for the rights of citizens at the margins of society in the country, not limited to the LGBT populations. In 2013, in the city of Mindelo, on the island of São Vicente, the first Mindelo Pride took place, a weeklong event of activities that included photo exhibits, a film exhibit focusing on LGBT issues, and, at the end of the event, the first gay pride parade in the country. Thus, Cabo Verde became the second country in Africa—after South Africa—to have a LGBT pride parade with the consent of local authorities. Since then, the event has taken place every year without interruption. Among other agenda issues, the movement advocates the end of discrimination, the legalization of same-sex marriage, and more opportunities for the inclusion of LGBT people in the job market.

SEE ALSO *Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Christianity in Africa: Roman Catholicism; Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara; Inquisition, Criminal Courts, and Sexuality in Colonial Latin America; Travesti and Trans Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean*

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In Cameroon, homosexuality was in relative terms a subject largely discussed in discreet circles and was not an issue of much public discussion until late 2005 and early 2006, when the situation changed significantly. Two events played a defining role in putting LGBTQ issues in the spotlight, indirectly influencing the social climate for gays and lesbians. In 2005 the then-archbishop of Yaoundé (Cameroon’s capital), Victor Tonyé Bakot (1947–), openly condemned the practice of homosexuality in Cameroon in a sermon on Christmas Day, characterizing it as a moral corruption that was gaining ground among Cameroonian youths. The archbishop, without calling out individuals, accused high-level government officials of abuse of office by luring youths into homosexuality in exchange for access to professional opportunities. In January of the following year, three private newspapers published the names of government officials “rumored” to be involved in homosexuality. The publications received tremendous public attention as they conveyed allegations of scandal within government in a context where same-sex sexual practices are criminalized. Jumping on the bandwagon, other media organizations reprinted the list of alleged “top 50 homosexuals” in Cameroon published by the newspaper *L’Anecdote*. The fact that *L’Anecdote* presented no evidence to back its allegations did not seem to matter. These two open statements were akin to casting the first stone of indictment against same-sex sexuality, as increased homophobia against presumed LGBTQ people followed in their wake. Media debate programs focusing on homosexuality became more frequent, providing platforms for influential figures to bash and dehumanize homosexuals. The Cameroonian law against homosexuality (Section 347 of the penal code), which was seldom enforced, gained renewed interest as the police intensified prosecution of suspected homosexuals, albeit focusing on common people with little power (*Awondo, Geschiere, and Reid 2012*). The law prescribes six months to five years of imprisonment and a fine of 20,000 to 200,000 CFA francs ($35 to $355) for homosexual acts. Unlike the situation in most former British colonies, where anti-homosexuality laws are a legacy of colonial law, Section 347 was introduced through presidential decree in 1972 by Cameroon’s first (postindependence) president, Ahmadou Ahidjo (1924–1989). Being an authoritarian leader, Ahidjo instituted the law without any debate by the national assembly.
In music, the controversial song “Les pédés” (a pejorative term for gays) released in 2007 by the popular Cameroonian artist Petit Pays aptly depicts the contention around LGBTQ issues that the newspaper publications of 2006 stirred up in the public sphere. Interestingly, the rumor of same-sex practices within government that was at the heart of the public controversy was not a new phenomenon in the Cameroonian context. Already in 2001, an elaborate conspiracy theory publication, *Blood: Biya’s Power Lotion*, which accused Cameroonian president Paul Biya (1933–) of homosexuality and occultism, was in circulation. From the safety of self-exile, the author, Ebale Angounou, claimed that, as a high-ranking member of the Rosicrucian order, Biya engaged in homosexual intercourse with members of his cabinet as part of a mystical ritual that kept them loyal to him. The banning of the publication by the government only stirred curiosity, and its circulation underground fed stereotypes of homosexuality as occultism. Rumors, which are known to spread rapidly in the Cameroonian context and which are often widely embraced as truth (*Nyamnjoh 2005*) in the sense of “there is no smoke without fire,” helped to foster such stereotypes.

Perception of homosexuality as occult practice has a foothold in modern-day Cameroonian societies not only because of enduring traditional beliefs in the existence of witchcraft but also because this perception is aligned with preexisting notions about Rosicrucian societies. Since the colonial era, Freemason and Rosicrucian secret societies have been associated with homosexuality (*Geschiere 2010, 2017*). In this regard, LGBTQ people were considered wizards and “witches in the cultural sense and as modern bloodsuckers under the spell of the white man’s Freemasonry and Rosicrucian orders” (*Nyeck 2013, 157*). This view of homosexuality as imported from the West has endured (*Ndjio 2012*). Against this backdrop, homosexuality as a practice based on same-sex physical attraction is dismissed as utterly absurd. Meanwhile, homosexuality as a condition of the homosociality observed particularly in same-sex boarding schools, where boys or girls in puberty satisfy their sexual urges with their peers, are either hushed up or explained as due to demonic influence.

**The Role of Religion**

In precolonial Cameroon, a number of indigenous religious practices (*Schilder 1988*) encouraged “homosociality” and cross-dressing, aspects that are now associated with same-sex behavior (*Epprecht 2013*). The Betis, for example, had the *mevungu* ritual exclusively for females and the *so* ritual for males. Interestingly, the *so* ritual required that boys wear female attire during the final stage of their initiation into masculinity (*Houseman 1993*). In addition to such indirect intimations of same-sex practice in indigenous cultures, the German ethnographer Günther Tessmann (1884–1969) drew attention to homosexual relationships among the Bafia people in the early 1900s, which he claimed were fostered by their belief in the nonexistence of God (*Tessmann [1921] 1998*).
Over time, Christianity and Islam, both of which strongly disapprove of same-sex practices, have gained dominance over indigenous beliefs.

The Catholic Church, especially, has been very active in LGBTQ debates. In 2009 Catholic priests and Christians organized a protest march against the government’s signing of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (Maputo Protocol) in 2003, as they saw this as a potential prelude to government efforts to decriminalize homosexuality (Awondo 2016). Two years later, the National Episcopal Conference of Cameroon, through the state newspaper Cameroon Tribune, criticized the European Union for providing financial support to Cameroonian gay rights associations. Pentecostal churches, which have increased tremendously in number since the promulgation of laws on freedom of association in 1990, have also put up strong opposition to LGBTQ rights through charismatic preaching. This has notably been through presentation of homosexuality as (1) an “evil” that will prevent Cameroon from receiving God’s blessings (prosperity gospel); (2) a demonic affliction from which individuals require spiritual deliverance (healing gospel); and (3) a sign that the end of the world is at hand (end-time gospel) (Lyonga 2016).

Amid the intense contention around homosexuality, the government in 2013 communicated its official position on the subject, appropriating religion as the basis for the
law criminalizing same-sex sexual behavior. In a press release, the minister of communication, Issa Tchiroma, stated that the law reflected the culture and values of the wider Cameroonian public, who are Christians and Muslims. Within religious circles, overt dissenting voices to the general condemnation of homosexuality by the Christian churches in Cameroon are rare. In this regard, Jean-Blaise Kenmogne, a Protestant pastor, is notable as one of the few clergymen who have openly advocated for respect of the rights of homosexuals, notably through the publication of his book *Homosexualité, église et droits de l'homme* (2012; Homosexuality, the church, and human rights). Such advocacy from a rights-based perspective is in constant competition with rumors and statements of public figures that frame homosexuality as occult—a notable example being a book by the now-deceased ruling party member Charles Ateba Eyene, *Crimes rituels, loges, sectes, pouvoirs, drogues et alcools au Cameroun* (2013; Ritual crimes, cults, sects, power, drugs, and alcohol in Cameroon), which received significant media coverage. In numerous media statements, Ateba Eyene called Biya's attention to same-sex occult practices among the elites, which by implication presented the president as a solution to the issue rather than as a participant in these practices.

**Activism for LGBTQ Rights**

Before homosexuality emerged as an issue of public debate, groups advocating for the rights of LGBTQ people had no visibility. For instance, L'Association pour la Défense des Droits des Homosexuels (ADEFHO; Association for the Defense of Homosexual Rights), which has been very influential in the struggle for LGBTQ rights, was created in 2003 but became more visible only in 2006 (Awondo 2010). Led by the prominent lawyer Alice Nkom, ADEFHO has been instrumental in bringing the plight of homosexuals in Cameroon to the attention of the international community and in providing legal defense to several individuals detained and prosecuted for same-sex sexual acts. Furthermore, Nkom has been at the forefront of advocacy for LGBTQ rights on television debate programs, calling on the Cameroonian government to scrap the law against same-sex sexual acts because it infringes on the constitutional rights of LGBTQ people. Other associations, such as Alternatives-Cameroun and the Cameroonian Foundation for AIDS (CAMFAIDS), advance the struggle for LGBTQ rights from the standpoint of ensuring access to HIV outreach services for men who have sex with men, a key population at risk of contracting HIV.

Given the predominance of narratives that fan homophobia within the Cameroonian public, activism for LGBTQ rights occurs in a context of great risk. Nkom has reported receiving several death threats in relation to her campaign. In 2013 the offices of Alternatives-Cameroun were set on fire by unknown attackers. Shortly thereafter, Eric Lembembe, an outspoken LGBTQ rights activist and the executive director of CAMFAIDS, was tortured and murdered in his home—a crime widely believed to be related to his activism because he had received death threats. Lembembe's murder, which was widely condemned by rights
groups, further contributed to putting Cameroon into the international spotlight as a site of LGBTQ struggle. Challenges notwithstanding, these human rights groups, with the help of funding from international donors, are making progress in creating some measure of community, where LGBTQ people living underground can draw support from each other, as depicted in the award-winning 2013 documentary Born This Way.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Christianity in Africa: Anglican; Christianity in Africa: Pentecostal and Charismatic; Christianity in Africa: Roman Catholicism; Islam in Africa South of the Sahara; Witchcraft/Occult in Africa

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An elusive term, often used to describe a particular mode of behavior or way of being in the gay community that is associated with flamboyancy, affectation, vulgarity, and effeminacy.

The American interior decorator, author, and socialite Elsie de Wolfe (c. 1865–1950), on seeing the Parthenon in Athens, Greece, for the first time, declared “It’s beige! My color!” This is the motto with which Andrew Ross prefaces his 1988 article on the “Uses of Camp” (Ross 1999 [1988], 308). It is a good motto in that it illustrates, in the shortest space possible, many of the characteristics of camp: incongruity (the very small versus the very big; the ephemeral and frivolous versus the eternal; a debased stereotypical femininity versus the masculine sublime; “popular” culture versus “high” culture, etc.); a combination of preciosity and commodification (beige, used to describe a color, is a comparatively new piece of vocabulary: the Oxford English Dictionary places it firmly in the second half of the nineteenth century, connoting the specialized color palette of fashion designers and interior decorators, the latter being the profession that de Wolfe helped create in the early years of the twentieth century); overstatement and a flashy exposure of surfaces (two exclamation marks!); and a flamboyant self-assertion where an awed silence is called for (the unabashed assertion of similarity: “My color!”). In many ways, the example tells more about camp than any scholarly piece of writing can, not least the reason why camp has held and continues to hold the attention of literary and cultural critics.

What Is Camp?

When Fabio Cleto’s collection of core writings about camp was published in 1999, he had counted more than 1,000 pieces of critical writing but concluded that, in spite of this, “the slipperiness of camp has constantly eluded critical definitions … and all the ‘old’ questions remain to some extent unsettled” (Cleto 1999, 2). The list of “old” questions would include, for example, camp’s relationship to homosexual identities, its status as subversive of heterodoxy (and which heterodoxy?) or parasitic to it, the relation of camp to gender and to transgender, the question of its politics or lack of politics, and its commodification by or subversion of popular media formats. Indeed, there is at this moment no stable definition of what camp “is.” Susan Sontag, in her landmark essay “Notes on ‘Camp’” (1964), saw camp as a “sensibility” and as so elusive that in order to “snare” it (Sontag 1999 [1964], 54), she
opted for the very open form of a list of propositions that surround the issue—and not always without self-contradiction—rather than defining it. Philip Core, twenty years later, starts with a claim that in order to understand camp, a “working definition is essential,” only to then founder (campily?) on a list of characteristics: “Camouflage, bravura, moral anarchy, the hysteria of despair, a celebration of frustration, skittishness, revenge … the possible descriptions are countless” (1984, 9).

In 1993 David Bergman, editing an important collection of essays on the connection between camp and homosexuality, does provide, if not a definition, then a description that, according to Bergman, “everyone agrees” on:

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Camp is a style (whether of objects or of the way objects are perceived is debated) that favors “exaggeration,” “artifice,” and “extremity” … camp exists in tension with popular culture, commercial culture, or consumerist culture … a person who can recognize camp … or who can camp is a person outside the cultural mainstream … camp is affiliated with homosexual culture, or at least with a self-conscious eroticism that throws into question the naturalization of desire.

(4–5)

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Whether “everyone agrees” on this characterization of camp, however, immediately becomes problematic, and in any case, even Bergman’s definition leaves one key issue—that of perception and objects—unresolved. In “Uses of Camp,” Ross comes to the conclusion that “universal definitions of camp are rarely useful” (1999 [1988], 317). Much more recently, Zadie Smith speaks of “camp’s vast kingdom” in contrast to the word being “too often stupidly and narrowly used, or else brutally defined” (2018, 181). In the face of such slipperiness, from the very beginning, camp criticism’s best ploy has been an inductive method that tries to generalize (or not even that) from observation of the manifestations of camp, and this means lists (and the debating of them). Sontag establishes this pattern, which many would follow (e.g., Richard Dyer, Jack Babuscio, Mark Booth), by claiming a “canon of Camp,” listing anything from Max Beerbohm’s 1911 novel Zuleika Dobson, Tiffany lamps, or Vincenzo Bellini’s operas to “stag movies seen without lust” (1999 [1964], 54–55). Philip Core drives this approach to its logical conclusion by providing not so much a study of camp as a richly commented sort of encyclopedia of camp examples. More recent criticism tends to take the route of approaching camp, as it were, phenomenologically, by arguing individual cases of camp, taking a broad understanding of the term for granted, rather than trying to provide any ultimate definition or characterization (e.g., McMahon 2006; Stępień 2014; Hotz-Davies, Vogt, and Bergmann 2018; Drushel and Peters 2017).
In all of this, even today, any discussion of camp will begin with Sontag’s 1964 essay, a relevance recently confirmed by a collection of essays dedicated to Sontag’s continuing influence (Drushel and Peters 2017). Cleto, having reviewed the “state of the art” (1999, 23) of camp criticism in 1999, provides a list of (possible) characteristics rather than a definition: camp is “aestheticism, aristocratic detachment, irony, theatrical frivolity, parody, effeminacy and sexual transgression” (9). All of these can be found as elements of camp in Sontag’s essay, and she has left us with a number of memorable and often quoted phrases—for example that “camp sees everything in quotation marks” (Sontag 1999 [1964], 56), that camp is a “seriousness that fails” (59), that it is the “glorification of ‘character’” (60), and, maybe most importantly, that camp is “a solvent of morality” (62, 64).

At the same time, Sontag introduced a number of ideas that came to be highly controversial. First of all, there is the claim that camp is a “sensibility” or “taste”—a view that became influential and was subsequently modified by Jonathan Dollimore’s memorable suggestion that camp is more “an invasion and subversion of other sensibilities” (1991, 311). In the above example of the Parthenon, for example, one can detect many of the qualities cited so far, including the very palpable sense that de Wolfe’s utterance is designed to “invade” and undo from within the sensibilities of the sublime. For Sontag, the camp sensibility seems to reside both in the perception of an observer and in specific objects, people, and behaviors; depending on the degree of awareness, there is naïve and deliberate camp.

Camp, then, has been perceived in mutually connected, but also uneasily combined, ways: as the result of a particular perception and appreciation of objects, as a quality that resides in such objects, and as a mode of utterance and behavior embraced by a conscious practitioner of camp. Again, de Wolfe’s example is instructive: can the Parthenon (!) be camp? Are we witnessing de Wolfe’s exaggerated personality traits or a conscious camp effort? The distinction has haunted camp criticism for a long time. Maybe the best solution was offered by Mark Booth, who distinguished “camp” (as a set of outrageous and overstated performances) from “camp fads and fashions” (as those objects, persons, and behaviors that may attract camp readings) (1983, 15).

The Connection to Homosexuality

One of the key issues Sontag did not settle was the question of gender and sexuality. Camp, for her, seems to be something exclusively produced by men, even though many of its icons are women (or maybe “women”), and while she believes that the specific stigma of male homosexuality does have something to do with camp’s theatricality, effeminacy, and duplicity, she also asserts that camp is not per se a “homosexual taste” (1999 [1964], 64).

Against this, critics arguing from within or against the stigmatized position of homosexuals have recognized more than just an affinity between homosexuality and camp. Here, it is especially the experience of the closet that suggests such an affinity. The closet produces a
number of characteristic perceptual and communicative formations: double consciousness and imitative skill (the closet dweller as double agent “passing” in a straight and often hostile environment); skepticism about essences (the act—or art?—of passing requires close and analytical scrutiny of the gendered behaviors of others and tends to denaturalize one’s perception of the “givenness” of gender); and communicating in “code,” that is, fusing concealment with disclosure (*no one must know* and *those in the know must be able to know*). All of these are excellent preconditions for camp’s subversive quotations and misquotations from the canons of gendered habits ([Dyer 1999 [1976]; Babuscio 1999 [1978]]).

What is at stake here are two separate issues. If camp *is* connected to homosexuality, should it be seen affirmatively as a gay tradition, as something that enabled survival in pre-Stonewall days (and if so, what should happen to camp after Stonewall)? Or should camp be condemned as a perpetuation of stigma in its acceptance of society’s worst construction of homosexual men as less than manly (and, one might add, of “femininity” as the most abject position to be embraced by camp)? Dyer, for example, sees camp as “unambiguously gay male” and understands it as a form of gay self-defense that should, in all of its ambivalence, both in terms of homosexual stigma and the inclusion or exclusion of women, be seen as “the only heritage we’ve got” ([1999 [1976], 111; more recently, see Halperin 2012]). Andrew Britton, by contrast, found in camp a “language of impoverishment” that is “both reductive and non-analytical” ([1999 [1978–1979], 140]).
This brings us to another problematic of camp: is it political? Sontag, while clearly stating that camp has nothing less than the power to undo morality (and what is this, if not politics?), left no doubt that “the Camp sensibility is disengaged, depoliticized—or at least apolitical” ([1999 [1964], 54]). Britton undoubtedly would agree, as the reason for his harsh critique of camp lies exactly in the fact that it is not serious, dissolves certainties, including political ones, has no standpoint, and is, in other words, “non-analytical.” But this is where the continuing debate has also made the most inroads in defining not so much whether camp is “political” (no one would deny this at this point), but in how its politics work.

**Camp and Queer Performance**

This development coincides with and is powered by the conjunction of camp with its close relative, queer: “Camp and queer, in fact, share in their clandestine, substantial inauthenticity, and in their unstable and elusive status, a common investment in ‘heterodoxia’ and ‘para-doxia’ as puzzling, questioning deviations from (and of) the straightness of orthodoxy” (Cleto 1999, 16). Already in the late 1980s, Ross, addressing the question of whether camp is misogynist, noted a close connection between “non-essentialist feminism”
and camp (1999 [1988], 325), and this is the point: to anyone believing in an essential “woman,” “man,” “homosexual,” or “transsexual,” camp will always be an insult, an impiety as it were, as its very raison d’être lies in torqueing, twisting, questioning, and parodying the naturalness of gender and sexuality, especially, but not exclusively, in its manifestation in drag.

So, it is no surprise that Judith Butler should have chosen drag as the test case with which to argue her hypothesis that gender is the result of iterative performances of a model to which there is no original. In her reading of drag, camp reveals, in exaggerated imitations of the scripts of femininity, the imitative structure of gender itself, not in relation to a true original, as any essentialist understanding of gender would claim, but rather “the parody is of the notion of an original” (Butler 1990, 138). That is, for a notion of gender as “performative,” camp is of value as that queer place on the margin or at the extreme end of gender inscription from which heteronormativity itself can be questioned both in terms of gender and of nonheteronormative sexualities.

But this is only one side of the queer debate, for to see queer as merely deconstructive would be missing the point. This may be nowhere more clearly formulated than in Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s plea that an antiheterosexist politics must develop next to what she called “paranoid” readings (skepticism, suspicion, deconstruction, identification of the sources of oppression, etc.) and “reparative” techniques—that is, ways of understanding the world that are capable of sustaining stigmatized lives (Sedgwick 2003). This “reparative” function of camp has been noted from the earliest discussions onward—in most detail, perhaps, in Esther Newton’s pioneering 1972 sociological study of American drag artists—and it has been a mainstay for gay people even in the darkest moments of the AIDS epidemic (Lassen 2011).

**Relation to Femininity and Women**

Aligning camp with “nonessentialist feminism” has also breathed new life into the discussion of the relation of femininity, women, and camp. Starting from Pamela Robertson’s important 1996 work on women’s gleeful enactment of the obvious staging of femininity and masculinity in film and popular culture, to the discussion of the lesbian butch-femme tradition as a form of genderplay rather than the replay of heteronormative gender hierarchies (Case 1999 [1988]), to June Reich’s amused diagnosis that “the dildo most certainly is camp” (1999 [1992], 263), there has been a sizable debate on the role of women in camp. If we see camp’s practice as a form of gender pastiche (Butler 1990, 138–139), this also opens a door toward performativities of “race” as camp practices. The idea here is that we are dealing with a form of mimicry, in Homi Bhabha’s words, a practice of imitation that is “at once resemblance and menace” (quoted in Dollimore 1991, 313). Smith, commenting on Mark Bradford’s video installation *Niagara* (2005)—itself a work intertextually connected to Marilyn Monroe’s (camp?) gender performativity—insists that
as a resource of the marginalized, camp is a technique of “doing more than is necessary with less than you need,” and that a “hip-hop swagger is as camp as Marilyn's mosey” (2018, 181).

**Camp's Broadening Scope**

Ultimately, the theoretical sophistication of queer studies has breathed new life into camp studies so that the question of what should happen to camp after Stonewall has been answered: it is here to stay. This continued existence is facilitated by the appropriation of camp performativities in popular cultural formats, starting with pop in the 1960s—for example, in the work of Andy Warhol or John Waters (Ross 1999 [1988]; Meyer 1994). Camp has enjoyed a long tradition in the form of queer fan cultures “camping up” icons from (Hollywood) cinema, music, ballet, or opera (Cohan 2005; Shugart and Waggoner 2008), and it has become a fixed feature in rock and pop music (Leibetseder 2012).

This twentieth-century broadening of the scope of camp has led some critics to see its origins in the late nineteenth century, but there are good reasons to place its origins much earlier in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Booth 1983; King 1994). This is also the period that, according to Thomas Laqueur (1990), sees the gradual establishment of a strictly binary model of two naturally given and mutually exclusive biological sexes as opposed to the more gradational model of “one sex” that governed earlier. In this new “two-sex” gender regime, camp would be seen as coemerging as gender (and “sexuality”) essentialism’s skeptical sister, one possibly trying to hark back to the older tradition that was being superseded. Dollimore seems to be building on precisely this historical shift when he points to a surprising continuity between camp and early modern notions of “gender” and “sexuality” (1991, 320).

One thing in any case is certain: that camp not only has a future but also a longer past than may have been imagined. It has, and continues to have, a strong literary tradition (Kiernan 1990; McMahon 2006; Lassen 2011; Kellerman 2017). However, especially in recent decades, the discussion has shifted almost exclusively to those areas where “performance” may be taken literally as the deportment of bodies in space, be it on the screen or in the concert hall (Leibetseder 2012; Robertson 1996; Shugart and Waggoner 2008), opening up another crux in camp’s long history of critical oppositions (Cleto 1999): the question of whether camp is deconstructive of mass tastes, or is, in fact, itself commodified, or both (already argued by Moe Meyer and Ross). That is, can a performance by, say, Madonna or Lady Gaga, which reaches many millions and generates as many millions in revenue for its practitioners and all who profit from the sales of their products, be “camp”? Just how “subversive” can camp be under these circumstances?

Maybe the secret lies in camp’s unique solution to the question of cultural binaries. Newton notes that “camp usually depends on the perception or creation of incongruous
The art of camp seems to lie not so much in juxtaposition as in fusion, a “holding together” (Cleto 1999, 28, quoting Dyer), insisting on maintaining a nonexclusionary simultaneity of binaries that are elsewhere thought to be irreconcilable and foundational to the symbolic order: femininity and masculinity, homo and hetero, the vulgar and the precious, the dirty and the clean, and ultimately the abject and the dignified (Hotz-Davies, Vogt, and Bergmann 2018).

Maybe the greatest challenge in de Wolfe’s recognition of a shared sense of color between the Parthenon and herself is not so much that it juxtaposes the little woman and her clothes and the massive grandeur of the Parthenon, but that it insists that they exist and be perceived simultaneously, that the one is no more and no less magnificent than the other, that the very basis by which they are separated is, in the moment of de Wolfe’s utterance, momentarily erased. In Juliane Rebentisch’s 2014 turn to a “material” reading of camp, even the material world itself is arranged in a nonhierarchized assembly of “creatures” holding together people, trash, rubble, and much more in one holistic assembly. In dissolving the binaries that make stigma possible in the first place, noncommodified camp, then, would ultimately result in a vision in which stigma is not so much negotiated as rendered inoperable.

SEE ALSO Bars and Cabarets in Europe; Biological Essentialism; Cabaret Theater in Latin America and the Caribbean; Carnival and Sexuality in Brazil; The Closet; Language; Language in Europe; Madame Satã (1900–1976); Popular Music and Queer Identities

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Changes to Canada’s criminal code in 1969 that included the partial decriminalization of certain homosexual acts.

In Canada in 1969, homosexual acts were partially decriminalized as part of broad-ranging omnibus reform of the criminal law introduced by the Liberal government of Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau (1919–2000). This was part of a broader reform agenda that used the rhetoric of establishing a “just society.” The legislation known as the Criminal Law Amendment Act also included reforms regarding gambling, lotteries, the decriminalization of distribution of information on birth control, and the partial and limited decriminalization of abortion (Kinsman 2013).

Prior to 1969, all sexual acts between men were officially criminalized in Canada. The 1969 reform led to the partial decriminalization of the two offenses of “gross indecency” (very vaguely defined but most often referring to oral sex) and “buggery” (also vaguely defined but most often used to cover anal sex). While “gross indecency” was officially extended to cover lesbian acts in the early 1950s, charges such as “gross indecency” were rarely used for sexual acts between women, as lesbian oppression was organized more through social policies and family law than through these sex offense provisions (Pearlston 2017). While some have suggested that the reform “legalized” or entirely decriminalized homosexuality (Smith 2011), this was actually the partial and limited decriminalization of only two offenses that men engaging in sex with other men could be charged with. Even Canadian prime minister Justin Trudeau (1971–; the son of Pierre Trudeau) in his 2017 apology for the national security purge campaign against homosexuals and for other state discrimination against gay men and lesbians noted that “this didn’t end in 1969 with the partial decriminalization of homosexual sex.”

“Gross indecency” and “buggery” remained criminalized, but an exemption was introduced to decriminalize them when two people (and no more than two) with the age of consent set at twenty-one (much higher than for heterosexual activities, set at fourteen) engaged in these practices in "private"—basically behind bedroom doors (Hooper 2014; Kinsman 1996, 2013). These two offenses remained criminalized if they involved anyone under the age of twenty-one, if more than two people were involved, or if they were in “public.” This significantly higher age of consent was motivated on the basis that adolescent males
needed special protection from homosexual advances and established a legal basis for constructing gay men as a presumed sexual danger to boys and young men (Kinsman 2013).

Social Context and History Leading Up to the Reform

The homosexual law reform occurred in broader social and historical contexts. The social transformations and struggles leading up to the reform of the Criminal Code of Canada include gender, sexual, racialized, and class transformations in the post–World War II years, setting the stage for new sexual and political movements and regulatory strategies. Sexuality and sexual discussions (largely confined to heterosexuality) assumed a social centrality in more people’s lives. There was a shift in family formation, particularly a growing integration of married women into the wage-labor force, the development of new birth-control technologies, and the generation of new sexological knowledge, while women continued to be assigned the vast bulk of unpaid domestic and reproductive labor. The expansion of consumer capitalism led to the increasing commodification of social life, including sexuality, with women’s bodies used to sell consumer goods, and discourses of femininity. By the later 1960s in Canada, the massive transformations of capitalist, patriarchal, and racializing social relations led to less reliance on the centrality of the heterosexual family in capitalist and state relations, opening up spaces for struggles over sexual and gender regulation (Kinsman 2013).

In the context of these major social transformations, there was a clash between morally conservative strategies of sexual regulation that led to the entire criminalization of homosexuality and emerging liberal approaches to regulating sexual practices that led to partial decriminalization. Canadian state legal formation during these years was influenced by developments in both the United States and the United Kingdom. In the 1950s and early 1960s in the United States, the criminalization of homosexuality was extended through designating homosexuals as “sexual psychopaths” (Freedman 1987), basically defined as individuals unable to control their sexual impulses. Similar sentencing provisions were added to the Canadian Criminal Code. This designation conflicted with the liberal approaches that were generated to respond to the social shifts of the postwar years. This was typified by the Wolfenden Report (1957) in the United Kingdom, which was the product of a committee set up to address what were portrayed by the government and the media as the pressing social problems of street prostitution and male homosexuality (Home Office and Scottish Home Department 1957). The Wolfenden Report became a key text of liberal sexual regulation in Canada, given the legal frameworks and practices of sexual regulation inherited from British colonialism.

Dangerous Sexual Offenders and the Klippert Case

In Canadian state legal formation, as mentioned, growing influences from south of the
border led to the adoption of criminal sexual psychopath (1948) and, later, dangerous sexual offender (1960) provisions, which established that participation in consensual homosexual sex could get one sentenced indefinitely (Kinsman 2013). This development set the stage for the important Everett George Klippert case. Klippert was sentenced as a dangerous sexual offender on the basis of a series of convictions for “gross indecency” in Calgary and in the Northwest Territories. His lawyer appealed this decision all the way to the Supreme Court of Canada. The resulting Supreme Court majority decision in November 1967 agreed, in a literalist reading of the Criminal Code section, that because Klippert was likely to continue to engage in homosexual activities, he was correctly sentenced as a dangerous sexual offender (Kinsman 1996). The implication was that all sexually active homosexuals could be dangerous sexual offenders. The decision facilitated the law reform process by provoking considerable opposition, especially given that the Wolfenden Report–inspired decriminalization of consensual sexual relations between two adult men in private had been enacted on 27 July of that year in England and Wales. This led in December to the then justice minister (but soon to be prime minister) Pierre Trudeau’s famous remark, borrowing from the Wolfenden perspective, that “there is no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation” (quoted in Kinsman 2013, 195) and his proposals for homosexual law reform, introduced on 21 December 1967.

As Douglas Sanders, a homophile activist who had been involved in the Association for Social Knowledge in Vancouver in the 1960s, expressed it, the Klippert decision “wiped out any middle ground in the debate” because the most sophisticated argument against Criminal Code reform “was that changing the law was some form of approval” of homosexuality (quoted in Kinsman 2013, 194). However, it was now clear that, with the existing laws, continuing engagement in gay sex could lead to indefinite detention (Kinsman 1996). In responding to these pressures, Trudeau and the Liberal government looked to the recent reforms in England and Wales and the Wolfenden perspective that led up to them. The Wolfenden approach became very cogent in formulating a response in these circumstances.

**Impact of the Wolfenden Approach**

While the Wolfenden Report’s articulation of liberal sexual regulation and policing marked an important shift, it also maintained the morally conservative strategy of criminalization in the broadly defined public sphere. This was, in part, an attempt to privatize homosexuality and confine it to a limited private realm (Kinsman 1996). The struggles leading up to the partial decriminalization of homosexual sexual practices in 1969 in the Canadian state are linked to uses of this approach. This connection is also tied to the previously mentioned law reform in England and Wales in 1967 that set up a tension between sexual reform happening there and the Klippert decision and the extending criminalization strategy. The Wolfenden Report came to be used as an active text in
shaping and reorganizing sexual regulatory discussions toward law reform within the Canadian state.

The Wolfenden regulatory strategy was used by activists in a number of different social locations to open up space for law reform discussions and to facilitate popular educational discussions on lesbian and gay concerns (Kinsman 1996). Homophile activists organizing in the 1960s argued for tolerance toward homosexual men and women and also supported law reform efforts. This included a range of activities such as public meetings; organizing with the churches through the Canadian Council on Religion and the Homosexual; the short-lived formation of the Homophile Reform Society with the support of Sidney Katz, who was then an associate editor with Maclean's magazine and who also wrote articles on homosexual issues; raising homosexual law reform that actually went beyond the age limitations of the Wolfenden Report in the Criminal Law Subsection of the British Columbia Division of the Canadian Bar Association in 1966; and a paper by Sanders on sentencing for homosexual sexual offenses that supported law reform, originally written for the Association for Social Knowledge and then published in Criminal Law Quarterly in 1967 (Kinsman 1996).

These activities also included support for the early 1964 law reform effort of Arnold Peters, a maverick member of Parliament from the New Democratic Party (the Canadian social democratic party). He proposed a private member's bill to amend the Criminal Code along Wolfenden lines. Peters was also involved in homophile organizing with the Canadian Council on Religion and the Homosexual and the short-lived Homophile Reform Society, and was supported by the homophile activist Gary Nichols (Kinsman 1996). These initiatives, among many others, facilitated support for law reform in the media, in some church circles, within the legal profession, and in some official political circles. By the later 1960s, as pressure for homosexual law reform intensified, the Wolfenden public/private legal approach began to be raised in legal cases in Canada, even though at this point it had no official legal status (Gigeroff 1968; Kinsman 1996).

Attempting to move beyond the limitations of the Wolfenden approach, homophile activists challenged the discriminatory age restriction of twenty-one imposed on participation in homosexual sex. Sanders forwarded to Prime Minister Trudeau a resolution from the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO), a network of homophile and gay groups that the Association for Social Knowledge was involved in and which was also increasingly influenced by the rising militancy of the black civil rights and black power movements, as well as the student and antiwar movements. In this resolution, adopted at a conference in Chicago in 1968, NACHO stated that it wished to express its sharp disappointment that Mr. Pierre Elliott Trudeau ... has seen fit to
introduce the limited and inadequate provisions of the English homosexual law reform bill ... which makes 21 the age of consent for homosexual acts.... The Conference encourages the Canadian government to ... enact provisions for age of consent which are identical for homosexual and heterosexual acts.

(QUOTED IN KINSMAN 1996, 265)

Sanders also suggested that one way to increase gay and lesbian visibility in the lead-up to reform was for Association for Social Knowledge supporters to go door-to-door with petitions supporting the law reform measures. This suggestion was reluctantly accepted at one meeting but then rejected at the next by individuals who felt that if they rocked the boat they might hurt the chances of reform. The attempts by homophile activists to use the Wolfenden approach to open up space for popular education on homosexual concerns were contained by the shift to the official use of the report in the 1969 Criminal Code reform. These state discussions reduced the reform to public/private and adult/youth distinctions. As homosexual experience was worked up as private and public sex and along adult/youth lines, it led to the eclipsing of broader gay and lesbian initiatives for popular education, public acceptance, and a broader decriminalization (Kinsman 2013).

Sanders later described his experience of the 1969 reform. In his view, this strategy of public/private regulation

takes the gay issue and describes it in non-homosexual terms. [Decriminalization] occurs in a way in which the issue is never joined. The debate never occurs. And so homosexuals are no more real after the reform than before.... I felt that an issue had been stolen from us. That we had forgotten that the reform issue was an issue that could have been used for public debate and it had been handled in such a way that there had been none. The only thing that had a promise of helping people was a public debate. It didn't happen.

(QUOTED IN KINSMAN 1996, 264)

Gay experiences were transformed into distinctions between public and private, and there was, therefore, little transformation of popular understandings of gay men and lesbians.

The Reform Debate and Its Outcomes
The 1969 Criminal Code reform debate in Parliament saw the governing Liberal Party and the New Democratic Party support the reform along with some Conservatives, whereas most of the Conservatives and the Créditistes (a small Catholic-based right-wing social credit party from Quebec) were opposed. While the opposition mobilized morally conservative arguments, both sides of the debate tried to link their positions to the ideology that lesbians and gay men were “sick” or mentally ill. Supporters of the reform were able to seize this terrain through the argument that homosexuals were not all criminals and if they engaged in activities in private with another consenting adult (twenty-one or over), they should be under the care of a doctor, a psychiatrist, or a therapist, and not in jail. In the end, the vote in the House of Commons on 14 May 1969 was 149 to 55, and the reform became law in August 1969 (Kinsman 2013).

The reform was part of a new liberal strategy of sexual regulation based on public/private and adult/youth distinctions. This reform strategy directed the police much more specifically against homosexual sexual expression in public, which is why the number of men charged increased after the reform, and the police began to use the bawdy house legislation and its “acts of indecency” clause, which was added in 1917 (Russell 1982), much more pervasively. The public realm was constructed very broadly and the private realm very narrowly, embedding the notion that homosexual sex was more indecent than heterosexual sex in the law and policing. This was not a mistake made by homophobic individuals, but was mandated by the 1969 reform strategy itself.

The limitations of the 1969 Criminal Code reform were well understood by the early Canadian gay liberation movement. The August 1971 “We Demand” protest—the first gay and lesbian rights demonstration in Canada—was explicitly organized against the limitations of the 1969 reform. The cover letter for the demands of the demonstration, signed by Cheri DiNovo and Brian Waite, stated:

In 1969 the Criminal Code was amended so as to make certain sexual acts between consenting adults, in private, legal. This was widely misunderstood as “legalizing” homosexuality and thus placing homosexuals on an equal basis with other Canadians. In fact, this amendment was merely a recognition of the non-enforceable nature of the Criminal Code as it then existed. Consequently its effects have done but little to alleviate the oppression of homosexual men and women in Canada. In our daily lives we are still confronted with discrimination, police harassment, exploitation and pressures to conform which deny our sexuality. That prejudice against homosexual people pervades society is, in no small way, attributable to the practices of the Federal government.

(QUOTED IN KINSMAN 2013, 197)
The reform and the discussions surrounding it did lead to more visibility for gay and lesbian individuals and communities, and this soon moved beyond the narrow private sphere to become more public in character. In response, the police were marshaled against the emerging visibility of gay community formation and sexual cultures in the mid- to late 1970s as people moved beyond the privatization of homosexual sex sanctioned in the 1969 reform. This escalation of sexual policing included the “cleanup” campaign in Montreal prior to the 1976 Summer Olympics, the 1977 raid on the Montreal gay bar Truxx, and the major bathhouse raids in Toronto in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Kinsman 1996; Kinsman and Gentile 2010). The police continued to use gross indecency (abolished only in 1988), buggery (changed to anal sex in 1988, with an age of consent set at eighteen, which has been challenged in the courts and the Liberal government is committed to abolishing), indecent act (a section of the Criminal Code often covering masturbation and mutual masturbation), and the acts of indecency section of the bawdy house laws against men having sex with men. In response, there was a groundswell of organizing against these raids in Montreal, Toronto, and other centers that forced the police to retreat (Kinsman 1996).

**The Limitations of the 1969 Reform**

While significant in allowing homosexuals to engage in certain sexual activities in a very limited private realm, the Criminal Law Amendment Act did not remove the state from the bedrooms of the nation, as heterosexuality remained the normalized sexuality and as homosexuality continued to be constructed as “sick” and often as “criminal.” The public/private, adult/youth regulation that informed the 1969 reform was a strategy of liberal, but still oppressive, sexual regulation and policing (Kinsman 2007). “Liberal” in this context cannot be understood as progressive or liberationist but rather as a different strategy of social regulation and policing. Without underestimating the changes the Criminal Code reforms brought about, it was only a partial relaxation of the earlier morally conservative total criminalization strategy with regard to homosexual sexual activity. Although the reform was a new strategy of regulation, it was not aimed at establishing social equality for gay men and lesbians with heterosexuals. Instead, it shifted sexual policing to focus on homosexual sex in a broad public realm (including when more than two people were involved), as well as that involving young people. Continued organizing by movement activists would be necessary to repeal the laws the police were able to use against consensual gay sex and to limit police actions against consensual homosexual sex.

**SEE ALSO** Antisodomy and Buggery Trials; Bathhouse Raids, Toronto (1981); Chechnya, Detention Camps in; Fortune and Men’s Eyes; Human Rights in Europe; Inquisition, Criminal Courts, and Sexuality in Colonial Latin America; Section 377 and Section 377A; Section 377 in South Asia; Sins against Nature in Colonial Latin America; Sodomy Laws in the United States;
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Cape Town

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The South African port city known as the Gay Capital of Africa.

The city of Cape Town is nicknamed the Mother City because it was the first area of European settlement in South Africa; the colonial remnants of Cape Town offer European travelers a rich cultural heritage (Bickford-Smith 2009). Tourists are attracted to the dramatic mountains, glistening beaches, the flora and the fauna of the Cape, long summer nights, and the city's colonial architecture. Immigrants are similarly drawn to the city because of its location and job prospects in a country with the most progressive constitution in Africa. Yet, this image of Cape Town is counterbalanced by a legacy of slavery that “continues to shape the present in profound ways,” as noted by Gabeba Baderoon (2014). The Cape also has a long history of serving as a penal colony for political and religious exiles, extending to antiapartheid activists banished to Robben Island, located 6.9 kilometers (4.3 miles) off the coast of Cape Town. Among the recorded cases of execution in the Cape for homosexual activity was that of Klaas Blank (c. 1705–1735), a young Khoi man from the southwestern part of the Cape and a prisoner on Robben Island, popularized by the 2003 film Proteus (Newton-King 2005).

Historical Overview

As early as the late nineteenth century the city of Cape Town was already considered a global tourist destination owing to the rise of railways and steamships, which facilitated travel within and to South Africa. European elite and travelers alike found home in the colonial establishments of the Cape vineyards, castles, and memorials. This contributed to the whiteness of the city, branding Cape Town as a destination for what could be seen as white leisure, differentiating itself from other (South) African cities. But this was not to last very long. Sanctions during the violence of the apartheid years (1948–1991) and the forced removals of people of color from the inner city affected the country and the city's tourist industry. This later changed during the democratic transition, with political figures such as Nelson Mandela being released from prison and Robben Island being accessible to travelers as a prime tourist site. The dawn of the new democracy ushered in many opportunities, including a vibrant multicultural, cosmopolitan culture and an explosion of queer life, which had always been part of Cape Town culture.
Since the 1900s the figure of the *moffie* (a South African term for a gay or effeminate man) appears in what was known as the Coon Carnival but has since been renamed the Cape Minstrel Carnival. The event is a male-dominated annual carnival that occurs in Cape Town on 2 January (*Jeppie* 1990). The moffie queens played an important role in leading the carnival through the streets of Cape Town, from organizing their own troupes in the 1930s to being included in the official lineup starting in 1952. At the same time there has been a stigma against women—especially lesbian women—participating in the carnival (*Gevisser* 1994; *Baxter* 1996; *Pacey* 2014). The drag queen or moffie, as popularly known in Cape Town, is simultaneously an undesirable figure and a source of beauty and entertainment (*Matebeni* 2016). In the carnivals of the 1950s, the moffie was perceived to be sexually abnormal, was pathologized, or was “symbolized [as] the most subversive” (*Jeppie* 1990, 82).

A booming gay subculture was visible during the period of World War II (1939–1945). Cape Town's suburbs were abuzz with a rich social life of gay men cruising in places such as Sea Point and being entertained by moffies or cross-dressers in drag pageants in coloured areas in Athlone, while cross-dressers occupied prominent positions as hairstylists around the city. Many drag icons were featured in local and national print media and became the face of avant-garde Cape Town. In the late 1960s stringent laws on homosexuality under the amended Immorality Act affected many gay subcultures, including that of Cape Town. While a vibrant coloured gay and drag community existed, what soon characterized gay life in the late 1960s was an “apolitical’ and accommodationist” white gay subculture (*Gevisser* 1994, 63), resulting in the gay identity politics and AIDS activism of the 1970s and 1980s.

One of the first organizations to have an impact in LGBT politics in South Africa in the early 1980s was the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA), which had a Cape Town chapter that focused mainly on health issues. GASA had an apolitical stance. Its offshoot Cape Town organizations, such as Lesbians in Love and Compromising Situations (LILACS) and Lesbians and Gays against Oppression (LAGO), were overtly political. LILACS took feminist and political stands, with members who felt sidelined by the male focus and apolitical stance of GASA. LAGO, which came a bit later, had the political intent of injecting gay rights issues into the antiapartheid struggle. By 1984 many of the members of these organizations under the GASA Cape Town chapter were part of the AIDS Action Group. By this time HIV had hit the gay community in Cape Town hard (*Pegge* 1994), as organizers were not always clear about where to seek help. Gay rights and AIDS activism during this time set the tone for the Treatment Action Campaign's strong and successful effort to push the South African government to provide access to treatment (*Mbali* 2013). Some of the key figures in the Treatment Action Campaign were gay and lesbian activists who had been organizing in Cape Town since the 1980s.

**Gay Cape Town in the Twenty-First Century**
The claim for space is an integral part of contemporary Cape Town. In present-day Cape Town, the demarcations of the city enforce a racial, class, and gender divide that banishes black people, coloured people, and gender nonconforming people to the townships and the Cape flats, leaving the city to be occupied by the majority of wealthy white people (Leap 2005). While gay and lesbian organizations in Cape Town existed since the late 1980s, these had a predominantly white membership base and operated within the city center. For example, the Triangle Project, currently based in the heart of the city, remains the oldest LGBT organization in South Africa. Cape Town has also boasted the most popular gay and lesbian film festival, Out in Africa, which until 2014, when it closed its doors after twenty years, was based in the city center. The Mother City Queer Project and the Cape Town Pride festival remain the most popular gay tourist attractions in Cape Town.

Pride itself is a site of contestation as evidenced by the controversy generated by pride events in South Africa. The 2016 Cape Town Pride slogan “Gay|Proud|Colourblind” angered black and coloured LGBTQ people in Cape Town because its stated desire to be “Colourblind” was perceived to be insensitive to those LGBTQ individuals who have suffered discrimination based on their race. Some argued that the slogan attempted to conceal the very blatant structural injustices that ensured that black people were kept out of the city. In essence, this ideology, produced by white gay male organizers of Cape Town Pride, “justifies and defends the racial status quo” and its embeddedness in power relations (Rodriquez 2006, 645). At the same time, the focus of the Pride event prioritized men who have sex with men as the sole category for health interventions, in particular with respect to HIV/AIDS, disregarding the ways in which HIV affects lesbians, bisexual women, and transgender people (Matebeni et al. 2013; Sandfort et al. 2013; Stevens 2012). There has been a radical departure from the first Pride march that took place in Cape Town in 1993, organized by the activists Theresa Raizenberg, Taghmeda (Midi) Achmat, and her brother Zackie Achmat who started the HIV/AIDS advocacy campaign Treatment Action Campaign (Achmat, Raizenberg, and Holmes 2003; Achmat and Raizenberg 2006). In the early 1990s the Pride march had a very specific political agenda—fighting against discrimination—and was organized by activists. This changed as Cape Town Pride became a capitalist venture with a heavy focus on commercialization (Nath 2012).

**Queering Cape Town**

For many black and coloured LGBTQ individuals, Cape Town is a gay capital only for those who can enjoy the luxury of not having to negotiate all forms of class, gender, sex, and racial injustices and oppressions associated with post-apartheid identification. It is this patriarchal and racist narrative of gay Cape Town that requires queering—an interrogation of the forms of exclusionary practices that have separated the city’s inhabitants along lines of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation.
In this queer narrative, black queer persons—those deemed nonnormative or not desirable, or who exist on the margins of the city—become part of the fabric of the city. These are bodies that unsettle the white able-bodied (homo)normativity of the city: black lesbians whose stories remain untold or are noted only in relation to violence and hate crimes (Matebeni 2015); trans people, who experience exclusion in educational institutions in the city, in lesbian and gay organizations, and in how they for decades crafted their own forms of communication and organizations even as unwanted and unrecognized citizens; and refugees and asylum seekers, who are considered foreign and have to regularly dodge xenophobic, transphobic, and homophobic attacks in a postapartheid city (Camminga 2017).

In these narratives, transwomen sex workers expose the rich queer tapestry of a different Cape Town—through their interactions with the justice system and in their access to health care, and how every day on the streets of the city they put their bodies on the line, pleasing heterosexual men and appearing as the “moffies” and drag queens who have famously marked the city as “gay.” While they occupy the streets every day, they are still considered outsiders engaging in work that is criminalized. Some would argue that until Cape Town treats all its citizens equally and addresses the racial and gender injustices that have plagued the city since colonization, slavery, and apartheid, the claim to be the gay capital of
the continent will remain a fallacy for the majority of the city’s inhabitants.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; HIV/AIDS in Africa; Language in Africa; Sex Work/Sex Tourism/Sex Trafficking in Africa; South Africa

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The intersections and contradictions of Carnival and queer expression.

Carnival in Brazil is a national holiday officially consisting of the four days preceding the Christian solemn religious observance of Lent, beginning on the Saturday before the official start of Lent on Ash Wednesday and ending on Fat Tuesday, although in reality the holiday itself extends to Ash Wednesday. Some cities, such as Rio de Janeiro, the twin cities of Recife and Olinda, and Salvador—famous for their Carnival celebrations that are often funded by public money—offer scattered large-scale street parties that go far beyond this official holiday, some of them happening as early as forty-five days before Lent. So perhaps the first thing to understand about Carnival itself as a cultural event, in Brazil and elsewhere, is that everyday social conventions tend to be suspended in favor of elaborate celebrations that highlight the body as a transient medium for a continuous figuration and recreation of the self and the social world, a process that is actually sanctioned by political authorities and society at large. For that reason, Carnival is rife with social meaning and symbolism for LGBTQ-identified individuals and other marginalized groups in Brazil, populations forced to endure multiple forms of rejection and the feeling of inadequacy in everyday life.

Beginning on Friday evening, many busy streets and avenues throughout the country are closed by the state authorities in order to become the space for festivities and all sorts of celebratory rituals, making most kinds of work schedules impossible to continue for many days in a row. The streets and other public spaces acquire new uses and give way to new types of social interaction, mostly structured by the dynamics of partying and satirical performance. In Recife, for instance, the biggest Carnival bloco (street parade), Galo da Madrugada (Rooster of Dawn), starts at 7:00 AM right in the city center, typically drawing a crowd of over 2 million people. In Rio de Janeiro, foliões (Carnival partygoers) may choose to sleep in the afternoon in order to attend the escola de samba (samba organizations in lower-class communities that parade and compete during carnival) parades that run throughout the night and into dawn. The institutionally sanctioned suspension, and often inversion, of everyday experiences of space and time during Carnival renders Brazilian society at large “unstructured or rudimentarily structured,” to use Victor Turner’s terms in his analysis of liminality ([1966] 2008, 96). Carnival goers submit to the general authority of the ritual, which in this case is composed of a clear and unapologetic celebration of the
carnal, hedonistic inclinations of the body, usually repressed by the demands of labor, family life, and moral values.

**Homosexual Visibility and Social Inversions**

This temporary upending of social hierarchies of course has had a huge impact on sexual and racial minorities, who have managed to take advantage of the possibilities afforded by this institutional loosening up of social conventions in order to express and perform their identities more assertively. Particularly, *travestis*—a well-known Brazilian minority group of biological males who tend to be attracted to men, who dress, and sometimes identify, as women, and who despite making use of hormone therapy and silicone gel for corporeal modification do not typically undergo genital surgeries—and gay men in general acquire an exuberant visibility during Carnival, and the performance of gender inversion is often invoked as an embodiment of the very spirit of Carnival.

The visible presence of travestis and the utter abundance of gay *blocos*, gay *bailes* (balls), gay beauty contests, gay costume pageantries, and gay-occupied street strips throughout many large cities during Carnival week may give the outsider the false impression that Brazil is a tropical gay paradise, a place where deviance and gender fluidity is the rule. In reality, such scholars as Barbara Browning (1995), Don Kulick (1998), and James N. Green (1999) have shown that such idealized descriptions of Carnival as a time of absolute queer harmony and freedom do not reflect the actual experience of most LGBTQ Brazilians, particularly not the experience of those from lower social classes, including the *travestis*. 
Revelers at the Banda de Ipanema during the Rio de Janeiro Carnival, 2015. Cross-dressers participating in public street revelries, such as this man dressed as a bride and handing out flowers to bus passengers, is a hallmark of the Rio Carnival.

In a discussion of the coupling of Carnival and homosexuality in Brazil, it is important to remember that Brazil is a country marked by profound social inequality and economic disparity, often played out on racial lines. While an obvious increase in homosexual visibility and the many kinds of Carnival gender and socioeconomic inversions should, and indeed must, be read along the political sense of possibility they evoke, it is prudent to also approach Brazilian Carnival as a particular mode of intensifying the historical contradictions and social conflicts that give shape to that society.

Contradictions and Social Conflicts

In Beyond Carnival: Male Homosexuality in Twentieth-Century Brazil, Green revisits these contradictions when he writes, “Mainstream Brazilian society has accommodated itself uneasily and unevenly to the expansion of homosexual territories within pre-Lenten festivities. Public and official responses have shifted between acceptance and repression, between curiosity and disgust” (1999, 201). According to Green, drawing primarily from historical sources and oral histories in Rio de Janeiro, one finds records of homosexual men “invading” masked Carnival balls in feminine attire as early as the very beginning of the twentieth century. These men later organized groups of cross-dressers who would participate in public street revelries, which continue to be a landmark of the Rio Carnival today, exemplified by blocos such as Banda de Ipanema, which attracts thousands of foliões, gay and otherwise. Green also writes that gender impersonation and performance began to appear in Carnival drag balls by the 1940s, growing considerably in numbers, size, and visibility during the entire next decade, and becoming a prominent space for the emergence of an exclusive homosexual subculture. By the mid-1970s, though, these “drag balls had become an integral part of the Carioca [i.e., Rio de Janeiro] Carnival. They attracted extensive and positive media coverage and an international host of participants. Concurrently, luxury costume contests at the government-sponsored ‘official’ Carnival ball held at the Municipal Theater became another venue for homosexual men. Their creations became the epitome of the sumptuous Carnival fantasia (costume)” (Green 1999, 201). Even today, homosexual men dominate the venues for costume pageantry in Rio and other cities, including Recife and Salvador.

But solely focusing on the positive aspects of this relationship would be missing the point. Drawing from the Brazilian historian Maria Clementina Pereira Cunha’s work, Green writes that pre-Lenten festivities should be framed less as an inverted mirror of the Brazilian social structure and an expression of communal egalitarianism than as a moment in which different social classes (as well as races and sexualities) express and play out social conflicts. Likewise, Green argues that cross-dressing also reveals and reflects deeply
embedded social tensions. Instead of understanding Carnival as an “act of inversion,” for many Brazilian homosexuals these gender performances provide the opportunity for an "intensification of their own experiences as individuals who transgress gender roles and socially acceptable sexual boundaries the entire year” (1999, 203).

Along these same lines, drawing from ethnographic data collected in the city of Salvador, Kulick argues that as far as travestis are concerned, Carnival offers no better shelter against abuse and physical attacks than any other time during the year. As he walked back home with a group of travestis who had participated in the annual gay beauty Carnival contest in Salvador, Kulick himself witnessed a bloco de travestidos—ironically a group of heterosexual men parading down the street dressed as women—hurling at the real travestis “exactly the same kinds of insults and abuse that travestis have all grown wearily accustomed to hearing from men at any other time of the year” (1998, 37).

Similar contradictions can be found in going through the records of Carnival culture in other Brazilian cities. In Fortaleza during the 1940s, for instance, a time when the city hosted two US military bases, a large Carnival bloco de travestidos called Bloco das Coca-Colas was noted for promoting a misogynistic and xenophobic satire of what these men called the “coca-colas” (local women who broke with regional moral values of the time by hanging out and dating American soldiers in public spaces, such as the beach and US military-exclusive parties, where supposedly they drank Coca-Cola before it was available to the larger public). According to local intellectuals, the Bloco das Coca-Colas was all men, both “manly” and “effeminate,” but united in being equally dressed in drag as a way to mock the young women who already faced social scorn for their choices and for their sexual relationships with members of the US military.

Gay pride during Carnival has often articulated itself around contradictory signs. A case in point is the famous (and infamous) marchinha de carnaval (Carnival song) “Cabeleira do Zezé.” Composed in 1964 by João Roberto Kelly, an entrepreneur who popularized the professional drag show Les Girls in Rio de Janeiro in the 1960s, the lyrics scorn a man with long hair: “Look at Zezé’s long hair. Do you think he is? Do you think he is?” Green notes that foliões in Carnival balls in Rio filled the missing response with the shout “Bicha!” (“Queer!”), as a pejorative reference to effeminate men. But in the Carnival gay balls in Praça Tiradentes, the queer folks shouted the same filler as an “affirmation of their sexual identity” (1999, 228). In subsequent years, this song would become one of the most played tunes in the history of Brazilian Carnival, continuing to evoke multiple meanings. “It retained its pride-laden content for gay revelers, while also serving as a vehicle for Brazilians who retained a hostile attitude toward homosexuality to make fun of effeminate men” (228). Every year during Carnival, social media activists recuperate the heated debate of whether the song is homophobic or not, and every year gay Brazilians fail to resolve this contradiction.
In her account of Carnival in Bahia, Browning (1995) also highlights the difficulties in creating easy, onesided narratives and interpretations about the sexual and racial politics that get played out in the festivities. Browning is particularly interested in the Carnival blocos afro, dance and percussion groups that are also community associations whose street parades revolve around themes and rhythms that emphasize Afro-Brazilian heritage. In Salvador, these neighborhood grassroots organizations and their street performances turn toward diasporic retellings of a history of continuity with Africa, revealing Carnival as a potentially powerful means of educating Afro-Brazilian peoples and mobilizing them into political awareness. Interestingly, in her discussion of these groups, which are far from exclusively gay, the homosexual subject emerges as a figure imbued with aesthetic and even religious prowess. The blocos afro Filhos de Gandhi, Olodum, Ilê Aiyê, Ara Kêto, and Muzenza, all draw on secularized versions of religious rhythms played for orixás (African divinities) in Candomblé (the syncretic Afro-Brazilian religion that has deep roots in Brazil’s colonial past). The blocos afro grew popular during the 1980s, and they are today one of the cornerstones of Carnival in Salvador, Bahia. Approaching the carnivalesque tradition of cross-dressing discussed above, through the context of Bahia, demands that one step back from the party and turn toward an understanding of a larger structure of minority sexual and racial belonging that gets articulated in Candomblé, where gods and goddesses are often described as bisexual and androgynous, and where gay men are capable of embodying female principles and taking on a central role in the magic labor of the religion.

Performing Racial Political Affiliations

In the context of Candomblé and the Carnival traditions that stem from it in Salvador, racial political affiliations are also performed through a deconstructive play in gender roles. As Browning notes, “While the embodiment of the orixás in the candomblé is not imitative, it does demonstrate the irrelevance of the specific body in establishing ‘real’ gender” (1995, 154). According to Browning, while in the Bahia Carnival the explicit message of the dances that derive from Candomblé is not one of shifting gender roles, the blocos and afoxés (Carnival groups more rooted in the Afro-Brazilian religion) “always hold open a place for the bicha” (155), understood by many of the heterosexual organizers to have a closer relation to the orixás and therefore also having superior dancing skills. So here, through the mediation of religious tradition and affiliation, there is a more sexually mixed Carnival, where gay men find the space to come out more openly next to their heterosexual saint-brothers (men who have been initiated in Candomblé by the same priest or priestess)—thus with full support from their diasporic religious community.

Browning thus discloses the dynamics of cross-identification and political affiliation happening through multiple performances during the Carnival. Through samba, often described as a sexy rhythm and dance, and its variations, “a racial history is lived in the
modality of sexuality (1995, 159). Gender and sexuality, informed by Afro-diasporic values and divine principles, are constructed in specifically Afro-Brazilian terms, which openly refuse the humiliation of the homosexual body. Carnival thus emerges as a privileged site not only for theorizing but also for living intersectionality—a fact that has significant meanings, potential, and even limitations for LGBTQ peoples in Brazil, as elsewhere in Latin America.

**SEE ALSO** Grupo Gay da Bahia; Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo, Brazil; Travesti and Trans Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Cavafy, C. P. (1863–1933)

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Greek poet whose homoerotic works made him a queer icon.

When, in 1973, the Canadian poet Ian Young penned a portrait of the Greek poet Constantine P. Cavafy for the San Francisco fanzine Gay Sunshine, he concluded with these lines:

Later, in the more perfect society
Someone else made just like me
is certain to appear and act freely.

(17)

The poem this extract comes from, aptly titled “Hidden Things,” had been recently unearthed in Cavafy’s personal papers alongside other poems and personal notes, published in Greek (1963) and soon translated into English (Savvas 1969 and Cavafy 1971). Cavafy, a poet from Alexandria, Egypt, who wrote his best work in Greek in the first decades of the twentieth century and died in 1933, had already acquired a considerable international following, especially among a learned audience, for his historical and erotic poems. But in the 1970s the elements were there for him to be turned into an icon. The persistent way his poetry, published or unpublished during his lifetime, had engaged with social marginalization, closeting, and the disavowal of homosexuality was now becoming more evident. He looked now even more like a precursor to the unfolding gay liberation movement, an early voice finally vindicated by the very culture that publications such as Gay Sunshine saw themselves as representing. Young would go on to publish his own poem “For Constantine Cavafy” in a subsequent issue of the magazine, and there the tone is jubilant:

Sometimes,
Remembering my silences,
A decade later, with the AIDS epidemic spreading and homophobia once again on the rise, these lines would already sound quite out of tune, as if history had played an ironic joke at the poet’s expense. They might, though, have seemed even more Cavafian for that very reason, because in many a Cavafy poem, statements of power, knowledge, victory, happiness, and success are made just before the events that will radically alter their course and meaning. Today, given the long history of Cavafy’s immense influence around the world, his importance for queer expression and theorizing seems to be based less on his early and unapologetic portrayal of men desiring (and having sex with) men and more on his complex thinking about social construction, the dynamics of the closet, and the historical contingencies that can at times allow, color with dramatic irony, or disavow certain political and identitarian statements.

**Early Life and Writing**

C. P. Cavafy was born in Alexandria in 1863 to a wealthy family of merchants. At the time a multicultural city that prided itself on its “European attitudes,” Alexandria was home to a large Greek diasporic community. After a youth that was marked by the death of his father and some years spent in London and Liverpool, England, where the family had financial interests, as well as in Istanbul near his mother’s relatives, Cavafy returned to his native city in 1885. There he settled into a quiet life spent between the Alexandrian cafés, bookstores, and social clubs where the Greek community gathered, with his unassuming flat on the second floor of a three-story building on Rue Lepsius (today a museum), and his lackluster clerical job in the British-led (and Dantesque-sounding) Third Circle of Irrigation. He lost his wealth, outlived most of his extended family, and nursed a sense of solitude and permanent bereavement that was often expressed in his later poems and has come to shape the popular image readers have of him.

Little more is known about his personal and private life apart from the fact that, after a certain moment in the early 1900s, he started writing and publishing poems with overtly homoerotic and homosexual content. His seems to have been the life of many a late Victorian homosexual artist but led in reverse: rather than adopting a semi-open homosexual lifestyle that would then be expressed in art in code, Cavafy had a rather
discreet life— with no affair ever becoming public knowledge, not even as gossip— while at the same time publishing openly erotic poems received by all around him and further afield as autobiographic and confessional. “Cavafy was a homosexual, and his erotic poems make no attempt to conceal the fact…. [He] is exceptionally honest. He neither bowdlerizes nor glamorizes nor giggles,” wrote the Anglo-American poet W. H. Auden (1907–1973) many years later (1961, ix).

“Honesty” and his constant references to his native city of Alexandria in its mythical, historical, and contemporary versions became the trademarks of Cavafy’s poetry, especially for a growing international readership (Keeley 1976). This is an image (to an extent self-promoted) of Cavafy as a detached and brave voice, steeped in Greek history, part of the soul of the city of Alexandria, and unashamedly queer. It is exactly this Cavafy who was memorialized by the British writer E. M. Forster (1879–1970) in a phrase destined to become proverbial: “a Greek gentleman, in a straw hat, standing absolutely motionless at a slight angle to the universe” (1923, 110). Forster first met Cavafy in Alexandria in 1916, and the two kept a warm correspondence until the poet’s death (Jeffreys 2009). He became a keen advocate of Cavafy’s work, arranging for it to be published and circulated in English, as well as writing some of its earliest critical appreciations. Most critics today agree that what fascinated Forster about Cavafy, apart from a vision of ancient and modern history intertwined in the context of cosmopolitan Alexandria, was the Greek poet’s ability to write about homosexuality and love without obscuring the former or resorting to a despecification of the latter (Moffat 2010).

**Ancient Eros, Modern Preoccupations**

It is not the case, however, that code, anxious confession, or agony had been absent from Cavafy’s life. Of the little archival material (now in the Cavafy Archive in Athens) that survives from his earlier period, it is known that during the 1890s and early 1900s the poet agonized over his health, the care of the body and the self, and the propriety of his actions. He repeatedly wrote in his private notes phrases such as “I sinned again,” “I gave in once again; but now I take a decision and I swear again,” and so on (quoted in Liddell 2000, 67, 72–73). Critics tend to interpret those private memos as related to his struggle against practices that were considered degenerative at the time; masturbation, homosexual conduct, or (even) excessive drinking of alcohol have each in turn been suggested as the possible sources of anxiety for the younger Cavafy. More recently, of course, commentators have been quick to point out that all these anxieties do not cancel each other out but are linked through the larger biopolitical priorities framing the late nineteenth century and feed into the discursive networks that would help constitute male homosexuality as an identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

No matter what tormented him at the age of thirty, by 1902 and approaching the fifth decade of his life, Cavafy seems to be “clearing the ground” (McKinsey 2015). His memo
entries start talking more concretely about “sexual deviance [that is] the root of greatness,” and by 1905, in a series of notes meticulously collated and safeguarded, he describes his willingness to find “those words that would be able to tell and hide” in order to speak about “that Eros” that exists in all nations “albeit in a few people of course,” and to wonder about how to write texts able to “offer enlightenment and emotional fulfillment to those who are made like me” (Cavafy 1983, 29, 35, 36 [translated by Dimitris Papanikolaou]; cf. Papanikolaou 2013). In 1908 he composed “Hidden Things,” a poem that reads like a manifesto, as it opens with the inability to speak, and closes with the promise of the condition’s eventual reversal:

> From all I did and all I said
> let no one try to find out who I was
> ... An obstacle was often there
> to stop me when I’d begin to speak
> ... Later, in the more perfect society
> someone else made just like me
> is certain to appear and act freely.

*(CAVAFY 1978, 142)*

It is no coincidence that this poem—like Maurice, Forster’s novel about homosexuality, written in 1913 and 1914 (and later revised) but only published posthumously in 1971—would itself remain “hidden.” It was kept in the poet’s archive alongside many other poems marked with the phrase “Not for publication but may remain here.” Yet other outspoken poems were written, edited, and finished, eventually finding their way to publication in the decades after 1910, in what was a very calculated and long-term tactic of “training” the public to accept his more radical content. Cavafy's idiosyncratic strategies of publication effectively supported this tactic: he published few poems every year in pamphlets, magazines, and newspapers, or in self-collated collections that were circulated outside the book market to friends and correspondents (Cavafy 2007).

Evidently, Cavafy's erotic poetry self-consciously belongs to a long tradition: aestheticism, idealism, and art-for-art’s-sake are used to express queer desire in code; decadence is validated as a set of intense and modern experiences that crucially include sexuality; comradeship, classical teaching (*paideia*), erotic fulfillment (*hedone*), and Hellenic settings are employed to make homosexual representation acceptable; and artworks are first circulated among the initiated and the willing. All these strategies would remind readers of the way the classical Greco-Roman past is used by modern authors associated with the movements of aestheticism and decadence, such as Walter Pater (1839–1894), John
Addington Symonds (1840–1893), the circle of Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), or by the clandestine circle of poets who became known as the Uranians. In the same decades as Cavafy's homoerotic writing was published, the German photographers Wilhelm von Gloeden (1856–1931) and Guglielmo Plüschow (1852–1930) started producing homoerotic photographs in "Arcadian settings," that were then circulated to a large network of clients and correspondents.

Nevertheless, Cavafy follows, but crucially revolutionizes these strategies. The ancient references become complicated, almost never alluding to ancient myth or classical Athens, focusing instead mostly on the Hellenistic, Roman, and Late Antique periods and on the margins, not the center, of the Greek-speaking world (as, in fact, Cavafy's Alexandria was). As erotic poems set in these environments converge (often in the very sequence of their publication) with more strictly “historical” poems, Cavafy's focus remains persistently on moments of syncretism, upheaval, and dramatic change and fall, as well as on the intersections of power with knowledge. Daring homosexual references, thus, become an integral part of a larger tapestry of historical consciousness and identity flux. Something similar happens in his poems set in contemporary Alexandria: there, a poetic voice, the autobiographical element of which is both implied and bracketed off, keeps focusing on art, desire, homosexuality, social precarity, memory, loss, and the passing of time, but also, crucially, on their intertwinenement (cf. Alexiou 1983). Particularly characteristic of this process, the series of poems titled “Days of …” focus on a key moment in their protagonists' life. In “Days of 1909, '10 and '11,” for instance, the poetic voice narrates the story of a young worker in a blacksmith's shop, dressed in poor clothes, his hands “completely grimed with rust and oil.”

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Evenings, when he was closing up the shop,
if there was anything he was really longing for,
some tie that cost a little bit of money,
some tie that was just right for a Sunday,
or if in a shop window he’d seen and yearned for
some beautiful shirt in mauve:
one or two shillings is what he’d sell his body for.

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Even though the main point throughout the poem remains the youth's precarity and unfair social treatment, the queer viewpoint that makes these observations cannot possibly be disavowed, especially as a whole tradition of homoeroticism and its depiction in art is self-consciously thematized in the poem's closing lines:
I ask myself whether in antique times
glorious Alexandria possessed a youth more beauteous,
a kid more perfect than he—for all that he was lost:
for of course there never was a statue or portrait of him;
thrown into a blacksmith’s poor old shop,
he was quickly spoiled by the arduous work,
the common debauchery, so ruinous.

(CAVAFY 2009A, 156)

In such ways, this slowly developing oeuvre of relatively short, self-contained, and interrelated poems demands to be read as a whole, with queerness as one of its major building blocks. In “ancient” or “modern” settings, the homoerotic is never far away, sometimes implied as a viewpoint, at other times crucial to an identitarian statement or a life decision (Syrimis 2003). Progressively, the erotic poems (more than half of Cavafy’s published oeuvre) develop a realist and unapologetic depiction of specific moments in homosexual men’s lives, passions, traumas, and travails, and seem to respond directly to the problematic depiction of homosexual life stories in the work of modern sexologists (Papanikolaou 2013; Coavoux 2016). Cavafy’s work has often been hailed as a poetry of eroticism and reflection (what Mark Doty once called “memory’s erotics”), yet its most radical element is that it is also a poetry of modern homosexuality and its intersections.

By the end of his life, instances from homosexual life-stories had become so central in Cavafy’s material that he appears to have meticulously calculated new ways to broaden his range. Some of his unfinished poems venture into new territory: he talks about gangs of gay men stealing from the rich and sharing the loot, homosexual petty criminals who sleep with each other after a heist, or men who read in the newspaper that someone with whom they had a one-night stand has just been the victim of a sexual crime (Cavafy 2009b; cf. Coavoux 2013). For a contemporary reader, there is no doubt that with Cavafy, one has left behind the aestheticism and diffuse homoeroticism characteristic of the previous century and entered a new phase in the representation of gay love (Robinson 2005). In these terms, to claim that Cavafy is the first modern gay poet might not be such an anachronism or overstatement after all. As the polemical editorial of the first journal of Greek studies to have addressed the issue once insisted, “Cavafy is neither ‘perverse’ nor ‘obsessed’ nor even ‘erotic.’ Cavafy is gay. Cavafy articulates a specifically homosexual strategy of liberation and historical consciousness” (“Editors’ Statement” 1983, 6).

**Queer Afterlives**

Throughout the twentieth century, Cavafy’s reputation as a gay icon kept growing, as did
his specific impact on queer literature and art. A number of artists turned to Cavafy's poetry in order to make a statement about their own identity, often creating work that would become influential in queer culture in its own right. David Hockney's (1937–) famous “Illustrations for Fourteen Poems on C. P. Cavafy,” first published in a collector's edition in 1966 to accompany a new English translation of erotic Cavafy poems by Nikos Stangos and Stephen Spender (Cavafy 1966), is perhaps the best known example. Not directly referring to the poems they are meant to illustrate, the etchings show male couples in everyday scenes, making clear the homosexual nature of their relationship and the deep bond it creates. They are calculated to be both aesthetic and political statements, prefiguring later developments in Hockney's art while also marking the moment just before the eventual decriminalization of homosexual acts in private in Britain in 1967. Other queer artists who have produced notable work “after Cavafy” include the photographers Duane Michals (1932–) and Dimitris Yeros (1948–); the authors James Merrill (1926–1995), Cathal Ó Searcaigh (1956–), Mark Doty (1953–), Marguerite Yourcenar (1903–1987), and William Plomer (1903–1973); the songwriter Lluís Llach (1948–); the choreographer Dimitris Papaioannou (1964–); the painter Yannis Tsarouchis (1910–1989); and the director Constantine Giannaris (1959–) (Papargyriou and Papanikolaou 2015; Jeffreys 2015).

In the twenty-first century, Cavafy's erotic poetry has given rise to novel critical approaches informed by gender and queer theory, which underline his modern attitude toward homosexuality and its relevance to contemporary developments (Papanikolaou 2014). With emphasis on his erotic poems, Cavafy's work has been connected to identity, place, and (post)colonialism (Halim 2013); cultural capital (Dimirouli 2014); classical reception (Mendelsohn 2003); the confluence of sexuality, modernism, and capitalism (Roilos 2009); the power of language to shape perception and identity (Boletsi 2006); the cultural economy of a sexual-world system (Kahan 2017); and, of course, and perhaps more promisingly, the importance of affect and emotions for a new theory of social belonging and ethical subjectivity (Faubion 2010, 2014; Sedgwick 2011). Cavafy has become global in a manner that perhaps few queer poets have managed, as became evident in the 2013 global celebrations of the 150th anniversary of his birth; the full digital publication of his archive, scheduled for late 2018, is expected to widen this global appeal even further and offer a platform for new artistic and research projects cementing the iconic status of the poet.

SEE ALSO Aestheticism and Decadence, Nineteenth-Century; Classical Studies; The Closet; Homoerotic Poetry of Abū Nuwās; Homoeroticism in the Plays of Ibn Daniyal; Literary Discourses in the Ottoman Middle East (1500–1900); Poets in Latin America; Sappho, Nineteenth-Century Rediscovery of

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The Central American solidarity movement, also known as the Central American peace and justice movement, was one of the largest social justice formations of the late twentieth century. Active from the mid-1970s through early 1990s, it centered principally on conflicts in Nicaragua and El Salvador, with lesser attention to the Guatemalan civil war. In Nicaragua, the Sandinista Revolution (1979–1990) overthrew the country’s Somoza dictatorship, instituted socialist reforms, and battled the US-sponsored contra war. In the Salvadoran civil war (1980–1992), left-wing forces fought the right-wing government, which was led by a military junta and also backed by the United States. The Guatemalan civil war (1960–1996) saw government-sponsored genocide against hundreds of thousands of indigenous Guatemalans.
LGBTQ Activists in New York Demand the United States Keep Out of El Salvador, 1980. The Central American solidarity movement linked activists in Central America and the United States, including many gay and lesbian activists who saw work toward sexual freedom as interwoven with organizing to oppose US military intervention in Central America, to support national self-determination for Central American countries, and to achieve socialist change.

The Central American solidarity movement was a transnational network that especially linked activists in Central America and the United States, as well as elsewhere in Latin America, in Canada, and in Europe. Central American solidarity found origins in the Central American diaspora, the internationalist left, and liberation theology. Its activists supported the region’s radical struggles, opposed right-wing governments and US intervention, and defended migrants and refugees. In addition, and of particular importance to LGBTQ history, the Central American solidarity movement drew in significant numbers of lesbian and gay activists from around the world. Many lesbian and gay activists saw their work advocating for sexual freedom as interwoven with organizing to oppose military intervention, support national self-determination, and achieve socialist change.

Lesbian and gay solidarity with Central America gained particular strength in relation to the Nicaraguan Revolution and through activism located in the San Francisco Bay Area. In addition, the solidarity movement influenced LGBTQ/LGBTI and HIV/AIDS activism both within and outside Nicaragua. Because this entry examines the Central American solidarity movement through the lens of gay and lesbian involvement, it centers primarily on
Central American migrants and exiles created the first organizations and networks of the solidarity movement. These activists sought not only to win international support but also to develop their political and armed struggles at a distance from right-wing regimes. Nicaraguans and Salvadorans organized from within Mexico, Costa Rica, and the United States, and they drew political and financial support from the Cuban and Soviet governments. They worked in cooperation with Nicaragua's Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN; Sandinista National Liberation Front) and with Salvadoran groups that in 1980 merged into the Frente Democrático Revolucionario (FDR; Revolutionary Democratic Front) and the Frente Farabundo Martí para la Liberación Nacional (FMLN; Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front). Solidarity efforts expanded over the 1970s as Central American immigrant and refugee populations grew. At the same time, right-wing organizing also developed transnational ties, and ideological divides fractured Central American immigrant and refugee communities. In both the United States and Central America, right-wing activists upheld social conservatism, while socialist thought—despite patterns of sexism and homophobia in the left—offered openings to feminism and to lesbian and gay freedom. This split affirmed the value of Central American solidarity for many lesbian and gay radicals.

The first two solidarity organizations were founded in San Francisco in 1974 and 1975, respectively: El Comité Cívico pro Nicaragua en los Estados Unidos (Civic Committee for Nicaragua in the United States; commonly known as El Comité Cívico) and El Comité de Salvadoreños Progresistas (Committee of Progressive Salvadorans). These groups were founded by Central American migrants and exiles, and they were soon followed by others around the United States, with principal bases of organizing in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Washington, DC. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, non–Central Americans in the United States were joining the solidarity movement, creating such organizations as the Non-Intervention in Nicaragua Committee (NIN), the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), the Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, and the Pledge of Resistance. The movement met repression both inside and outside Central America. Inside the United States, the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) broke into and stole files from CISPES offices; the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) monitored phone calls between Sandinistas and members of Congress; and Salvadoran death squads operated against leftist Salvadorans living in Los Angeles.

Central American solidarity grew in response to several events, including the Sandinistas' seizure of power in 1979, the 1980 escalation of the Salvadoran civil war, and the acceleration of US intervention by the Reagan administration in 1981. Nicaragua's Sandinista Revolution unseated the decades-old, US-sponsored Somoza dictatorship and
pursued a socialist agenda of social welfare, equality, and economic redistribution and development, although it also restricted political dissent and continued the subjugation of indigenous and black Nicaraguans. Some solidarity activists, especially Central Americans and others on the left, directly supported revolutionary struggles in Nicaragua and El Salvador. Others concentrated on opposing military intervention and assisting immigrants and refugees. Travel brigades became important in Nicaraguan solidarity after the Sandinista government requested international help with its coffee harvest in 1983. These travel projects proliferated to include observation in war zones, health training, and technical assistance for rural development. In the Salvadoran and Guatemalan wings of the movement, activism especially centered on documenting human rights abuses and providing church-based sanctuary to immigrants and refugees.

Lesbians and gay men participated in Central American solidarity work in large numbers. One reason for this was timing: Central American solidarity developed at a time in which lesbian and gay activism was both flourishing in general and closely tied to other social justice movements. Activists in the gay and lesbian left had long opposed US militarism, and both leftists and liberals saw that the same politicians backing intervention in Central America also opposed gay and lesbian rights. Furthermore, Central American solidarity became a means to develop transnational gay and lesbian organizing. In addition to simply participating in the solidarity movement as individuals, a number of activists developed specifically gay and lesbian solidarity groups and explicitly linked the politics of national self-determination to sexual freedom.

Gay and Lesbian Solidarity with Nicaragua

Lesbian and gay solidarity with Central America developed most extensively within the Nicaragua movement and in the San Francisco Bay Area. There were several reasons for this. First, in 1979 Nicaragua's Sandinista Revolution ousted the Somoza dictatorship and won power. Although the Sandinistas faced the contra war, they embarked on a program of socialist change that appealed strongly to gay and lesbian radicals who embraced socialist feminism and saw it as interwoven with their sexual politics. By contrast, the Salvadoran and Guatemalan movements operated in more defensive modes, as necessitated by war against right-wing military governments. In these movements, the pressures of war and the prominence of church-based organizing tended to push gay and lesbian politics to the side. A second factor encouraging lesbian and gay solidarity with Nicaragua was that the Sandinistas included many prominent women leaders, and the FSLN approached women's rights as an important topic of debate and policy change. Activists both inside and outside Nicaragua believed that women's status in the Sandinista Revolution might open paths to gay and lesbian inclusion. Third, Nicaraguan solidarity developed a stronghold in San Francisco's Mission District. This neighborhood was home to a sizable lesbian feminist community and next door to the prominently gay Castro District. Reflecting this geography,
gay and lesbian newspapers and organizations in the San Francisco Bay Area discussed Nicaraguan and Central American solidarity as both local and global issues. Activists often saw solidarity as interwoven with efforts at anti-racism in the gay and lesbian community, and they broadcast the existence of lesbian and gay solidarity to activists across the United States and around the world.

Solidarity activists often held romanticized views of Central American revolutions and revolutionary leaders. Such views also shaped lesbian and gay solidarity and became expressed in multiple, even competing ways: through admiration for militant women leaders, through overblown hopes for gay and lesbian inclusion in the Nicaraguan Revolution, and through claims that homosexuality was foreign to Central America. Yet, lesbian and gay solidarity was also a site in which perceptions of Central America and its revolutions could be tested and challenged. Gay and lesbian radicals who were people of color, particularly those who were Nicaraguan or otherwise Latin American, played especially important roles in propelling more sophisticated and complex understandings. But while Central American solidarity prompted debate over transnational sexual politics, such dialogues were interrupted by the broader collapse of the solidarity movement in the 1990s.

**Origins in San Francisco and the Nicaragua Diaspora** The first documented instance of gay and lesbian solidarity with Central America was an evening of political theater held in June 1978 in San Francisco and organized by the Gay Latino Alliance and Bay Area Gay Liberation. The Nicaraguan solidarity group NIN initially backed the effort but pulled its support just before the event occurred. The next year, just as the Sandinistas were seizing power, some of the same gay and lesbian activists who had organized the theater event created Gay People for the Nicaraguan Revolution (GPNR, also known as Gays for Nicaragua).

GPNR was the first organization recorded to be created expressly for the purpose of lesbian and gay solidarity with Central America. Its politics linked socialist feminism, opposition to US militarism, and unity against the right. It formed contingents in solidarity marches and made frequent presentations to gay and lesbian organizations on college campuses and at cultural events, as well as from the speakers’ platform of San Francisco’s Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day. Furthermore, it helped establish a rhetoric that mobilized lesbian and gay solidarity through admiration for Sandinista women militants. The group was mostly composed of white women, but among its members was a Nicaraguan-born gay man, Roberto Gurdián, who had helped to organize the political theater event in June 1978.

Central American–born activists played important roles in gay and lesbian solidarity, as well as solidarity more broadly. Gurdián had come to San Francisco in the mid-1970s, and his brother was one of the founders of Casa Nicaragua, an important group in the Nicaraguan community at large. In part because of this relationship, GPNR received mail at
the Casa Nicaragua office, and it also collaborated with Casa Nicaragua members by providing childcare at meetings and events and by holding a workshop on gay and lesbian issues. The ties between the groups helped GPNR gain recognition from some members of the Sandinista leadership and to send representatives to international solidarity conferences. Another figure in early lesbian and gay solidarity was Rita Arauz, a Nicaraguan who had moved to San Francisco in the mid-1960s, come out as a lesbian feminist in the 1970s, and then joined the FSLN's international solidarity network. When Arauz returned to Nicaragua in the 1980s, she played an important role in gay, lesbian, and AIDS organizing there.

**Expanding Networks and Travel Brigades** Lesbian and gay solidarity with Nicaragua fostered involvement in the Central American solidarity movement more broadly, particularly as related to El Salvador. In 1983 activists in San Francisco helped pass Proposition N, an initiative calling on the United States to end support for the Salvadoran government. The activists’ campaign included the Lesbian and Gay Task Force, which mobilized voter turnout, held speaking events, and coordinated contingents in anti-intervention marches and for San Francisco’s Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day. After the electoral victory, the task force was remade into a group called Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention (LAGAI; pronounced “la gay”). LAGAI remained active as of 2018, including through a Palestinian solidarity effort called QUIT (Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism). During the 1980s, LAGAI frequently participated in direct actions against US intervention and promoted lesbian and gay solidarity through speakers and other community events. It also helped fuel an expanding network of lesbian and gay solidarity groups.

**VICTORIA MERCADO BRIGADE**

The Victoria Mercado Brigade was the first specifically lesbian and gay brigade to travel to Nicaragua during the Sandinista Revolution. Purposefully composed of a majority of people of color and largely women, the group traveled from San Francisco, California, to Managua, Nicaragua, in May and June 1985. The project’s physical work entailed building the foundation for a community center in the Managua neighborhood of Shelim Shible. Participants also lived with host families, attended meetings with Nicaraguan organizations, and met informally with Nicaraguan lesbians and gay men. The brigade raised the profile of lesbian and gay participation in the solidarity movement and fostered lasting exchanges between lesbian, gay, and AIDS activists in Nicaragua and the United States, particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Plans for the brigade began in 1984 in meetings held by Lesbians and Gays Against Intervention (LAGAI), a group that organized lesbian and gay participation in Central American solidarity efforts and that had developed out of a 1983 campaign to call on the US federal government to end all aid to the government of El Salvador and to withdraw the US military from the country. But LAGAI members were divided over the
utility of a brigade, and other activists were concerned about the project’s predominately white leadership. A network of lesbians of color took over the project and adopted the name of Victoria Mercado, a Chicana lesbian and labor activist who had been murdered in Oakland in 1982.

As a group that was both lesbian and gay and led by people of color, the Victoria Mercado Brigade challenged major precepts in Central American solidarity work, as well as in lesbian and gay organizing. Many solidarity activists presumed homosexuality to be foreign to Central America and asked lesbian and gay participants to be silent about sexuality. But, like other lesbian and gay leftists of the time, Victoria Mercado Brigade members saw sexual liberation and anti-imperialism as interdependent rather than in conflict. Furthermore, as lesbian and gay people of color, they sought to counter views of lesbian and gay identities as white and middle class. The brigade grew out of racially diverse networks in San Francisco’s Mission District. Its leadership was rooted in a writing group of women of color, and it raised funds through multiracial benefit concerts. The trip’s thirteen participants included four Latina women (Chicana, Cuban, and Puerto Rican), four black women (one of whom was both black and Filipina), two men of color (one Native American, the other Chicano), and three white people (two women and one man).

Following its trip, the Victoria Mercado Brigade organized presentations in the Bay Area in which members discussed their experiences, including what they had learned about gay and lesbian politics in the Sandinista Revolution. It published reports in the gay and lesbian press, mobilized a contingent and speakers at the 1985 San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Freedom Day, and helped to inspire at least two other gay and lesbian travel projects from the United States (one from Philadelphia and another from Boston). The Victoria Mercado Brigade played an important role in advancing political exchange among lesbian, gay, and AIDS activists inside and outside Nicaragua.

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A significant aspect of the expansion of lesbian and gay solidarity could be seen in organizing and cultural work by Latinx people and people of color. (Though not in usage during the 1980s, today Latinx is becoming adopted as a gender-neutral term for Latino and Latina people and communities.) The playwright and actor Rodrigo Reyes, earlier a leader of the Gay Latino Alliance, created plays and other artistic works addressing the intersections of gay, Latinx, and Central American identities and issues. Amaranto, a group of lesbian and gay Latin American immigrants in the San Francisco Bay Area, became an important support network. The San Francisco Women’s Building further facilitated connections between solidarity activism and women of color feminisms. For example, it served as the organizational sponsor of Somos Hermanas, a women’s solidarity organization whose members were majority women of color and about half of whom were lesbian or bisexual. Another important example could be seen in the first gay and lesbian brigade to Nicaragua, the Victoria Mercado Brigade, which traveled in 1985. Seeking to counter images of gay and lesbian identities as inherently white and North American, it was purposefully composed of a majority of people of color.

Although most heavily concentrated in the San Francisco Bay Area, lesbian and gay solidarity with Central America also developed in several other locations, with examples including the Boston organization United Fruit, and a Philadelphia-based lesbian and gay brigade to Nicaragua. Solidarity work received significant attention in the Boston-based Gay Community News, which had an international reach, as well as through publications that reported on the development of Nicaraguan gay, lesbian, and AIDS activism (Rose 1988; Schapiro 1988).

**Impacts in Nicaragua and the United States**

From the early years of solidarity organizing, lesbian and gay Nicaraguans engaged in dialogue with activists from other countries. Through these exchanges, Nicaraguans joined in transnational discussions about the status of sexual politics under both socialist and capitalist systems. The first known lesbian and gay organization in Nicaragua began to develop in 1985 and formally incorporated in 1986. By late 1987, activists from this group had formed an HIV/AIDS project. This project, which was independent from but sponsored by the Sandinista government, became known as the Colectivo de Educación Popular.
contra el SIDA (Popular Education Collective against AIDS). Throughout their organizing efforts, Nicaraguan gay, lesbian, and AIDS activists mobilized the resources and communication networks of the solidarity movement to advance their own goals for inclusion in the Sandinista Revolution.

Another impact of Central American solidarity could be seen within the AIDS direct action movement in the United States. This movement is typically described as beginning with the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP), which formed in New York City in March 1987. However, the first instances of direct action to confront AIDS, and the first two AIDS direct action organizations, developed well before ACT UP, and were products of lesbian and gay solidarity organizing in the San Francisco Bay Area. The most important example can be seen in the AIDS Action Pledge, which formed in summer 1986 and modeled itself on the Central American solidarity organization Pledge of Resistance. Central American solidarity helped activists redefine AIDS from a sign of pathology to a human need that could be met by a stronger welfare state. They encapsulated this politics through the slogan “Money for AIDS, not war.” This slogan circulated across the United States, including through the 1987 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, and was later used by ACT UP.

The Central American solidarity movement constituted a major dimension of LGBTQ activism during the 1980s. Its influences were comparable to the influences of the anti–Vietnam War and Black Power movements on earlier gay liberation. Lesbian and gay solidarity had lasting effects both within Central America and through the HIV/AIDS movement in the United States. It engaged debates regarding the political economy of sexuality and the transnational circulation of sexual politics that remain central to LGBTQ activism and scholarship today.

SEE ALSO ACT UP; Gay Latino Alliance (GALA); The Nicaraguan Revolution

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The imprisonment of men in the Russian republic of Chechnya for alleged homosexuality.

The existence in the Russian republic of Chechnya of detention camps for men deemed to be homosexual was revealed in April 2017 by Elena Milashina, a journalist with the Moscow newspaper Novaya Gazeta. Further investigations confirmed that more than 100 men had been incarcerated for alleged homosexuality in two unofficial jail facilities in the town of Argun and the village of Tsotsi-Yurt—both situated near Grozny, the capital of Chechnya (Lokshina 2017; Dearden 2017; Knight 2017). At least three men were reported murdered (Milashina and Gordienko 2017). These detentions were undertaken by the republic’s official law enforcement officers, including the special forces commander Abuzaid Vismuradov (Milashina 2017b), with the complicity of Chechnya’s parliamentary speaker, Magomed “Lord” Daudov, considered to be one of the closest friends of the head of the republic, Ramzan Kadyrov (Lokshina 2017). The authorities of the republic refuted these reports, citing the absence of LGBT persons in the region (Walker 2017a).

The Russian LGBT Network organized evacuations of the victims and LGBT individuals who felt threatened by the actions of Chechen authorities. The victims were transferred to Moscow and Saint Petersburg to initiate procedures for acquiring refugee status outside Russia. The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs assisted in obtaining international passports, while some European Union states expressed readiness to accommodate the victims (Ponniah 2017). By mid-summer 2017, 120 persons had applied to the Russian LGBT Network for help, 75 had been evacuated, and 27 had left Russia (Russian LGBT Network 2017b). In September, the Canadian charity organization Rainbow Railroad reported that another 35 victims were granted refugee status in Canada (Gilchrist 2017). Yet, detentions in Chechnya continued as of 2017.

How the Camps Were Established

At the outset, the antigay campaign in Chechnya was associated with attempts to organize an LGBT pride parade in neighboring regions in March 2017 (Milashina 2017a). Victims’ testimonies (Gessen 2017) permitted the reconstruction of a different picture relating to more general, extralegal practices of local police forces, as some gay men were detained as
early as autumn 2016 and claimed they were not the first ones to find themselves in the unofficial jails (Lokshina 2017; Khazov-Cassia 2017a). In fact, the detention of one individual arrested by police on 21 February on charges of substance use was enough to initiate a purge of gay men in the republic (Milashina and Gordienko 2017). His smartphone contacts served as a list of suspects: once caught, a person became the source of information for police officers who intended to find his associates. As ex-detainees recall, they were kept together with substance users; drug use, like homosexuality, is also not illegal in Russia but is punished nonetheless. While in jail, the detainees were tortured with electric shocks and beatings in order to make them disclose the names of their connections. Their cellular phone contacts were inspected for more potential victims. The information would be used for blackmail or to further extralegal investigations. Thus, the number of victims snowballed (Gessen 2017; Khazov-Cassia 2017a).

Perceived sexual identities of the detainees have not always matched their own self-understanding. Although police officers targeted gay men, some of their victims were bisexual or heterosexual individuals. Nevertheless, this was not always regarded as a reason to stop the illegal persecution. The detainees were kept in the detention camps for different amounts of time, from a week to several months (Gessen 2017; Milashina and Gordienko 2017; Khazov-Cassia 2017a). Those who survived torture were handed back to their families. The sexual identity of the detainees was revealed to their families, and police officers then instructed these families to commit honor killings to wash away the “shame” of homosexuality from their kin (Washington Post 2017). Journalists discovered at least two such cases in which the instructions were followed (Milashina 2017a).

The existence of detention camps for gay men was reported to Russian federal government officials (Lui 2017). Continuing their investigation, journalists found a list of twenty-seven persons executed for a variety of accusations, from terrorism to being gay (Bobrova and Milashina 2017). This information was forwarded to federal law enforcement agencies with all relevant details. The Russian Federal Investigation Committee initiated inspections of Chechen police practices (Walker 2017b). The chief of inspection was soon removed, however, and eventually the federal committee did not uncover any “facts” relating to violence against LGBT people in Chechnya. As of October 2017, the Russian ombudswoman, herself a former police officer, continued to press the investigation committee (Bobrova and Milashina 2017).

Although only men were placed in the detention camps, the situation for lesbians in the republic of Chechnya is also alarming. The camps-related story prompted journalistic investigations into the everyday experiences of women who secretly identify as lesbians. Forced marriage, rape, and honor killings are among the methods used by the women’s families to violently control their sexuality (Khazov-Cassia 2017b).
Cultural Attitudes toward Homosexuality in Chechnya

The situation relating to the detention camps in Chechnya signals a break with the established culture of silence surrounding homosexuality that had previously characterized the environment in the republic of Chechnya and that corresponded to the more general conditions of LGBT citizens in Russia (Kondakov 2014). Some of the victims were Chechen television reporters and singers whose homosexuality had been tolerated by the society until then. Earlier reports from 2013 revealed the existence of a Chechen gay underground (Leonova 2013). The accounts of a transgender refugee confirm that the current situation is dramatically different from both that of the Soviet period and of a more recent history (Taylor 2017).

Chechnya is a predominately Muslim region (Abdulagatov 2014) and as such, in the framework of colonial logic, has served as a barbarian Other for Russia (Reznikova 2014; Russell 2005; Essig 1999), including with regard to its Muslim traditions related to homosexual practices (Healey 2001). During the Soviet period, the patriarchal norms of the society were destabilized by Soviet anti-religious campaigns and policies involving women
in paid work (Szczepanikova 2012). As a consequence, religion and patriarchal rule were privatized: in many respects, expressions of patriarchy were conditioned by arrangements in specific households (Sokirianskaia 2005; Kurbanova 2011).

In the post-Soviet period, however, all further developments have been structured by the war between the Chechen government and Russian federal forces (Sakwa 2005). Chechnya enjoyed relative independence between 1991 and 2000, and federal military operations ceased only in 2009 (Sakwa 2010). The war contributed to the militarization of public life, poverty, a degradation of education, and the spread of lawlessness. This led to the strengthening of the patriarchal order within the “war generation” as a result of the lack of education and general disenfranchisement (Szczepanikova 2012). Besides, the Kremlin-backed leader of Chechnya, Akhmad Kadyrov (who previously served as the major mufti of the independent Chechen state) promoted a particular kind of Islamization (Wilhelmsen 2005): a puritan Sufist version of the religion as opposed to a violent Wahhabism (Russell 2008). After his assassination in 2004, his son reinforced the political deployment of Islam in the republic through official policies and the support of vigilante groups policing public expressions of gender (BBC News 2016).

Revival of dogmatic Islam, conditions of war, and authoritarian postwar administration have produced an environment in which ignorant attitudes toward sexual diversity, so common in Russia, are amplified in Chechnya. Police brutality and atrocities are part of the experience of LGBT citizens in many regions of Russia. Chechnya, however, is distinguished by the scale of these practices, best exemplified in the existence of detention camps for gay men.

SEE ALSO El Baile de los 41; Bathhouse Raids, Toronto (1981); Human Rights in Europe; ISIS Gay Trials; Queen Boat Trials (2001–2002); Russian Gay Propaganda Law

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Chevalier d'Éon or Mademoiselle Beaumont (1728–1810)

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The colorful life of the famous eighteenth-century French cross-dresser.

Charles-Geneviève-Louis-Auguste-André-Thimothée d'Éon de Beaumont, also known as Mademoiselle de Beaumont, is a historical figure surrounded by wide speculation. He was a member of the group of spies Le Secret du Roi (King's Secret) in the service of the French king Louis XV (1710–1774). It has been claimed that as a French diplomat he entered the court of the Russian empress Elizabeth by posing as a woman, Lía Beaumont, and facilitated the rapprochement between France and Russia, for which he received the Cross of Saint Louis.

In 1763 he was sent to the British court now dressed as a man with the aim of facilitating a French invasion of Britain, but his lifestyle and difficult behavior soon had the French government attempting to recall him. Using his leverage as a royal spy and ambassador with access to incriminating documents, d'Éon threatened to reveal all. He published a book of diplomatic correspondence in 1764, making him a sympathetic figure in Britain because of the embarrassment the book’s publication caused the French government. Louis XV decided to continue to use d'Éon, who now had even better coverage as a spy given his contentious relationship with the French government.
Chevalier d’Éon or Mademoiselle de Beaumont. The colorful story of this famous eighteenth-century French cross-dresser led to the coining of the term eonism to refer to men who dressed as women but did not engage in homosexual practices. Eonism was used as a term for transvestism until the mid-twentieth century.

Around 1770, rumors began to circulate that d’Éon was actually a woman, which grew to the point that London’s gamblers began placing bets as to his/her “real” gender. He held to this story when recalled by Louis XV’s successor and son, Louis XVI (1754–1793), while taking several months to negotiate the conditions of his return. When d’Éon did finally return to France in 1777, it was under the condition that he dress as a woman.

Finding life in the French court oppressive as a woman, d’Éon returned to Britain in 1785. When the French Revolution resulted in his pension being cut off, d’Éon was forced to share a flat with a widow, and he died there in 1810. The widow made the startling discovery that d’Éon had male genitalia while preparing the body for burial, a fact that was widely reported in the newspapers.

Based on d’Éon’s story, the English sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859–1939) coined the term eonism in 1928 to refer to the inversion in the sphere of clothing among men who did not abandon their “active” role, unlike sexual inversion. Ellis considered d’Éon a pseudo-transvestist. Ellis had regarded sexo-aesthetic inversion or eonism as an “intermediate sexual anomaly.” Eonism was used as a term for transvestism until the mid-twentieth century,
when an interpretative shift took place.

Critical approaches to d'Éon provide insights into social and sexological interpretations from the eighteenth century, as well as into the modern construction of the self and the complexity of British attitudes toward “the French” and the communities that took refuge in London in the eighteenth century. Certain researchers have clarified d'Éon’s theological self-narratives from his manuscripts: they reveal an ethical and moral regeneration associated with dressing as a woman. Despite the divergence among academics connecting his attitude to political and strategic objectives, d'Éon demonstrated the possibility of both sexes coexisting, as revealed by his insistence on dressing as a woman and at the same time wearing the Cross of Saint Louis, a military order and reflection of male social status. D'Éon's legacy forces transgender studies to examine cross-dressing in the early modern period and to read the practices of that period in the light of their political and social contexts.

SEE ALSO Cross-Dressing in the West; Transvestites/Transsexuals

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Christianity in Africa: Anglican

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The position of the Anglican Communion in Africa on sexual minorities.

It is, at first sight, somewhat surprising that the Anglican churches in Africa have taken on such a controversial role in debates about same-sex relationships. Anglicans worldwide like to portray themselves as quintessentially moderate: avoiding hard-line dogmatic positions; balancing "scripture," "reason," and "tradition"; encouraging cool debate; and being slow to judgment and quick to mediate in disputes. Such a self-image risks accusations of arrogance and complacency. Evangelical Anglicans, in particular, have never felt altogether comfortable with what they see as the liberal values and tendency to compromise of the Anglican establishment. In places such as Uganda and Nigeria, the Anglican church is both evangelical and institutionally strong, and church leaders have traditionally assumed a leading role in shaping public morality. In both countries, Anglicans have been at the forefront in urging their governments to enact punitive measures against same-sex activity. In South Africa, by contrast, Anglicans are comparatively weak numerically. Yet there, too, the Anglican church has influence, partly as a result of its sustained opposition to apartheid (at least among its leadership) over many years. In the figure of Archbishop Desmond Tutu (1931–) it has a Nobel Peace Prize laureate with a high profile both within South Africa and worldwide. Tutu's criticisms of homophobia and support for LGBTI rights have made an important contribution to postapartheid debates on sexuality.

African Anglicans have had an increasing role in shaping the worldwide Anglican Communion. Numerically, they constitute over half the global Anglican membership. Nigeria claims more members than the Church of England itself, and Uganda's Anglicans are a third of the total population—also far higher (as a percentage) than that of England. Anglicanism is a vibrant African religion, with strong roots in indigenous society; it is increasingly unwilling to play the passive role in shaping communion affairs that it had, perforce, taken in colonial times and that persisted long after the end of the colonial era. The sense of a common Anglican identity, transcending national and ethnic roots, has also been an important factor in highlighting debates on homosexuality as threats to the unity and cohesion of the communion as a whole. Debates in the preceding decades about women's ministry were vigorous, but gradually a consensus emerged that allows the various provinces of the Anglican Communion to make their own decisions on these
matters and to achieve a mutual acceptance of difference. The debates on sexuality have followed a very different trajectory.

**Historical Background**

For the Anglican church in Africa, homosexual conduct from time to time surfaced as a matter of discipline concerning missionary and clerical personnel. In 1869 Bishop Edward Twells of the Orange Free State resigned his see in order to avoid an impending trial over alleged abuse of adolescents and young men (Southey 1997). What W. S. F. Pickering (1989) describes as the homoerotic subculture of English Anglo-Catholicism has its parallels in the church in South Africa into the twentieth century, where high church traditions were dominant and English celibate religious and single clergy were numerous. But even in the evangelical Anglican missions of East Africa, homosexual activity might give rise to concern. At King’s College Budo, in Uganda, the Anglican tutor to the Kabaka (or king) was dismissed in 1942 after accusations of homosexual activity in the school. This was particularly sensitive because the young Kabaka, Mutesa II (1924–1969), was a student at the school at the time. Christian missionaries had long denounced his grandfather, Mutesa I (c. 1838–1884), for the homosexual practices of the Buganda court in the 1880s, and for a teacher to be implicated in such activities in the leading Protestant school in the 1940s was embarrassing (Summers 2006).

**Debates on Homosexuality from Lambeth Forward**

As a wider pastoral issue for the African church, the issue of homosexuality emerged suddenly in 1998 at the Lambeth Conference, an assembly of Anglican bishops worldwide that has traditionally been held every ten years. Initially the debate had been seen by African Anglican leaders as a Western ethical issue with little direct impact on African Christianity. Heterosexual relations were seen as the universal accepted norm for all people. The main Christian task in Africa was to find ways of encouraging monogamous marriage in societies where this was largely seen as neither feasible nor desirable. It was not so much that African Christians did not recognize homosocial and homoerotic feelings (which had indeed been traditionally expressed much more openly than in more regimented Western societies), but the idea of same-sex unions as an alternative to marriage and the production of children was considered new and potentially threatening. There had been no sustained discussion of homosexuality as such in African Christian ethical thinking.

It was not Africans who initiated the debate within Anglicanism. Instead, conservative forces within the Episcopal/Anglican churches in the West were fearful that discussions at the Lambeth Conference of 1998 might encourage the gradual acceptance of same-sex unions and the welcoming of openly gay and lesbian clergy within the life of the church. In the Episcopal Church of the United States, in particular, conservative forces felt that they
had been marginalized for too long. They saw in the growing and vibrant churches of the Global South allies who still held strongly to “biblical” and “traditional” Christian moral values, and who could readily be encouraged to voice their concerns. In 1997, in Kuala Lumpur, a meeting of Anglican church leaders from the Global South (known as the Anglican Encounter in the South and chaired by the archbishop of Nigeria, Joseph Adetiloye [1929–2012]) addressed these perceived dangers:

> We are deeply concerned that the setting aside of biblical teaching in such actions as the ordination of practicing homosexuals and the blessing of same-sex unions calls into question the authority of Holy Scripture. This is totally unacceptable to us. This leads us to express concern about mutual accountability and interdependence within our Anglican Communion.

("KUALA LUMPUR STATEMENT" 1997)

These sentiments found expression in the debates at Lambeth the following year and led to Resolution 1.10d, in which more nuanced expressions of the problem of same-sex activity that had occurred in the drafting stage were replaced by a much more forceful statement. The resolution affirmed that marriage was between one man and one woman for life, unequivocally “rejecting homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture” (Anglican Consultative Council 2005, 9). Subsequent African Anglican involvement in communion matters on a worldwide level has largely been dominated by these issues. Africans were at the center of the creation of an alternative Anglican forum to the Lambeth Conference: the Global Anglican Future Conference, which first met in Jerusalem in 2008 (preceding a boycott of the 2008 Lambeth Conference by many African bishops) and subsequently in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2013. Some African bishops (particularly those from Uganda and Nigeria) have also shown increasing disinclination to attend the primates’ meetings, in which archbishops or presiding bishops of autonomous Anglican provinces discuss issues more informally. Justin Welby (1956–), the archbishop of Canterbury, did persuade all to come to such a meeting in 2017, to discuss the changed canon on marriage of the US Episcopal Church. The primates passed a censure motion and forbade the Episcopal Church from representing the Anglican Communion at ecumenical meetings and from having a voice in discussions on church doctrine. The perceived ineffectiveness of such measures caused the archbishops of Uganda, Rwanda, and Nigeria to refuse to attend a meeting hastily arranged in the light of a similar change in the marriage canon by the Scottish Episcopal Church. In North America, and more recently in the United Kingdom, dissident traditionalist groups have broken away from the established Anglican churches over the issue of sexuality. They have sought support and episcopal oversight from African bishops in Rwanda, Nigeria, and Uganda.
At the same time, however, bishops within Africa, despite the hostile climate of opinion, have taken a more moderate stance and assumed important positions in the institutions of the Anglican Communion worldwide on retirement: Josiah Idowu-Fearon (1949–), formerly the archbishop of Kaduna in Nigeria, became the secretary general of the Anglican Consultative Council in 2015 (to the disapproval of the Nigerian hierarchy), and the retired archbishop of Burundi, Bernard Ntahoturi (1948–), was appointed director of the Anglican Centre in Rome in 2017. Both bishops support the Lambeth 1998 resolution. They do not accept the notion that same-sex relations are compatible with Christian teaching. Idowu-Fearon has, however, spoken out against the criminalization of gay people in Nigeria, which put him at odds with his fellow bishops. Ntahoturi, who has been involved in peace-building processes within Burundi, has strongly advocated for continuing dialogue and amicable relations between the divided Anglican provinces.

The Environment for Sexual Minorities in Specific African Nations

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Anglican Archbishop Henry Luke Orombi of Uganda in 2005. Both Orombi and his successor Stanley Ntagali have spoken strongly against homosexuality and have been hostile to the emergence of moderate voices within their church. The Anglican Church in Uganda has been at the forefront in urging society to reject homosexual practices as both un-Christian and un-African.
The widely reported arguments within the global Anglican Communion have tended to foster within Africa itself an environment extremely hostile to balanced ethical debate on the issues. In Uganda, an Anglican member of the nation’s parliament, David Bahati (1973–), introduced the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in 2009 to dramatically increase the existing penalties under the old colonial laws on sodomy. The bill widened the scope of offenses, included penalties for failure to inform the authorities about same-sex sexual activity, and, in its first draft, mandated the death penalty for certain repeat offenses. The bill became law in 2014, but the nation’s Constitutional Court nullified the law later that year because it had been passed without the constitutionally mandated quorum. The bill was widely endorsed by the Anglican leadership, although they did urge the removal of the capital punishment penalties. Archbishop Henry Luke Orombi (1949–) and his successor, Stanley Ntagali (1955–), have both spoken out strongly against homosexuality and have been hostile to the emergence of moderate voices within their church. Anglicans have certainly contributed to the moral panic that has characterized public debate in Uganda, particularly over what is seen as a “gay agenda”—a fear that rich gay foreigners are coercing and bribing schoolchildren into “becoming homosexuals.” While avoiding the extreme rhetoric of some Pentecostal preachers, the Anglican Church of Uganda has been at the forefront in urging society to reject homosexual practice as an unacceptable way of life that is both un-Christian and un-African. Orombi prohibited the acceptance of grants from the US Episcopal Church, arguing that to accept such “bitter money” would diminish the life and witness of the church. Arguments about money and the ability of forces in the opulent Global North to purloin individuals and institutions came to be used on both sides of the debate to discredit opponents. Taking a stand against a morally permissive Western culture was seen as important partly because it asserted the autonomy of African Christianity and marked its emergence from self-imposed dependence on a Western Christianity that had compromised biblical orthodoxy.

Bishop Christopher Senyonjo (1931–), in retirement, has been the lone bishop supporting local gays and lesbians and providing supportive counseling for Uganda's LGBTI community. He was much criticized by fellow church leaders for welcoming a gay organization, Integrity Uganda, perceived as an American gay advocacy group masquerading as an indigenous organization. Senyonjo was subsequently dismissed from office in the Church of Uganda. Canon Gideon Byamugisha (1959–), a longtime HIV/AIDS activist, has spoken out against intolerance of gay people, warning of the dangers of stigmatizing a minority group as had happened in the Rwandan genocide. Law professor Sylvia Tamale (1967–) and feminist academic Stella Nyanzi (1974–), both with Anglican backgrounds, are outspoken in advocating for gay rights in Uganda. The murdered gay activist David Kato (1964–2011) was the son of an Anglican pastor; and a blogger who operated under the name of “Gay Uganda” provided a lively, ironic, often sardonic, commentary on what he considered to be the homophobia of Christian leaders, not least from the Anglican church in which he grew up. Public debate on issues of homosexuality in
Uganda (and in Kenya) is much more robust than the image in the West would allow. However, annual Martyrs' Day celebrations (commemorating the massacre of Christians between 1885 and 1887) have increasingly focused on a homosexual theme: the fury of Kabaka Mwanga, the young king of Buganda, because of the refusal of one of his Christian pages to comply with his sexual desires. This was previously a relatively minor theme, compared with issues of loyalty, nationalism, arbitrary power, and repression of dissidents, which had resonated strongly in the 1970s, during the repression of the regime of Idi Amin (1925–2003).

In Nigeria a bill to outlaw same-sex marriage was passed into law in 2014, with strong support from Nigerian Anglican leaders. Archbishop Peter Akinola (1944–) and his successor, Nicholas Okoh (1952–), have been prominent in condemning what they consider to be Western apostasy that puts in doubt the value of retaining the traditional links with Canterbury, which had previously defined what it means to be Anglican. At the 2011 Divine Commonwealth Conference in Abuja, Nigerian Christians (with strong Nigerian Anglican representation) roundly condemned the British government’s attempt to make British aid dependent on adherence to the human rights of gay people.

It is clear that [the British prime minister's] true agenda is to force the normalization of homosexuality and gay marriage as a “human right.” While acknowledging the sacred worth of every human being we reject this erroneous notion as contrary to God’s intention for humankind.

(CHURCH TIMES 2011)

A common trope in discussions about homosexuality among Nigerian Christians is that homosexual desire is itself an enslavement from which a person needs deliverance. This is reinforced by bitter memories of slavery and the slave trade, which feed into suspicions that there is a “gay agenda” on the part of the West aimed, yet again, at the emasculation of African humanity. There is also anger at the seeming hypocrisy of “the West,” which formerly denounced African sexualities as barbaric and continues to lack understanding of the cultural context of polygyny. As Ntagali has written:

Judgement and condemnation will not help; after all there are many who will say that polygamy is in itself essentially a responsible, caring, legal and enduring relationship that is fully accepted in many parts of the world. There are many who will say that a marriage such as this cannot be broken up. Who will be sent away? Who will be denied the fellowship of the church? The
This raises the question (not addressed by Ntagali) of why such tolerance and empathy cannot be extended to African gay relationships.

Strained relations with Islam have also become a factor in the debate about homosexuality, with Anglican leaders complaining that liberal Anglicans in the United Kingdom and the United States are ignorant of and unsympathetic to the volatile religious divide in Nigeria and citing the use a militant Islam can make of discrediting Nigerian Anglicans for being part of a worldwide faith where decadent moral values prevail. The abduction of Christian girls and assassination of Christian students by Nigeria-based radical Islamic sect Boko Haram have little direct connection with homosexuality, but they add to the sense of anxiety on the part of Anglicans and reinforce the need to stand firm for traditional Christian values.

This political and social climate has not been conducive to tolerance of sexual minorities and has inhibited the emergence of openly gay communities in Nigeria. One Nigerian Anglican gay activist, Davis Mac-Iyalla (1972–), a respected Anglican school principal and lay reader, was dismissed in 2004 when his own sexuality became known. His campaigns for acceptance of gay people in the Anglican church were considered unacceptable. He suffered periods of imprisonment in Nigeria and eventually went into exile. Mac-Iyalla has written an autobiography, *Fiyabo* (2014), outlining the sufferings of gay people and their families in Nigeria and the attempts of the church to discredit him.

Whereas in Uganda and in Nigeria the law has progressively eroded the rights of same-sex-loving men and women, in South Africa the constitution of 1996 has promoted equal rights and freedoms for sexual minorities. These developments have been welcomed and encouraged by a succession of archbishops: Tutu, Njongonkulu Ndungane (1941–), and Thabo Makgoba (1960–). Prominent in the struggle against apartheid, Anglican leaders have been concerned to fight against the rise of a “new apartheid,” among other injustices, including discrimination against people on the basis of their sexuality. In South Africa the Anglican church has firmly stood out against deep-seated homophobic attitudes in the larger society, a legacy of the apartheid era, with its regressive attitudes toward women and its assault on masculine self-worth. But this progressive liberalism has also had conservative critics within the church.

Those Anglican African churches that have taken a strong stance against gay inclusion have felt confident that their position has wide popular support both within the church and in the wider society. But this is a precarious position. They can also be seen as part of an
authoritarian and repressive establishment that uses the sexuality debate to avoid the contentious topics of corruption, inequality, and the erosion of democracy and freedom. Outside South Africa, there has also been a lack of theological, biblical, and ethical analysis of the issues, as well as of critical reflection on the human consequences of the attempt to repress sexual minorities.

SEE ALSO Christianity in Africa: LGBT Friendly; Christianity in Africa: Pentecostal and Charismatic; Christianity in Africa: Roman Catholicism; Nigeria; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity; South Africa; Uganda

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Christian beliefs and actors are key factors fueling homophobia and opposition to LGBT rights in contemporary Africa. Yet simultaneously, many LGBT Africans identify as Christian, attend Christian churches, and practice the Christian faith, finding ways of negotiating and/or reconciling their sexuality and religious identity (van Klinken 2015). Moreover, several African Christian theologians and church leaders have been actively involved in supporting LGBT people and advocating for LGBT rights. The South African archbishop Desmond Tutu (1931–) is the most well-known example, but another name to be mentioned is Bishop Christopher Senyonjo (1931–) from the Anglican Church of Uganda. After his retirement as bishop in 1998, Senyonjo developed a ministry for LGBT persons in Uganda, and in 2010 he established the St. Paul’s Reconciliation and Equality Centre in Kampala, inspired by the exemplary love of Jesus Christ and the belief in the parenthood of God regardless of people’s sexual orientation (Senyonjo 2016). These progressive church leaders and theologians consider the popular usage of the Bible to argue against homosexuality “selective and arbitrary,” and they argue that the overall message of the Bible is one of love, inclusion, and liberation (Mombo 2006, 146).

According to Ezra Chitando and Tapiwa P. Mapuranga (2016), faith-based organizations have played an important role in facilitating interactions between church leaders and LGBT activists in several parts of Africa, especially as part of the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. They point to the work of the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiatives and Advocacy (EHAIA) and of the International Network of Religious Leaders Living with or Personally Affected by HIV or AIDS (INERELA+), which was founded in 2002 by the Reverend Canon Gideon Byamugisha (1959–) from Uganda and was active in fifteen African countries as of 2017. The work of EHAIA and INERELA+ has become inclusive of LGBT people out of the experience “of addressing HIV and AIDS stigma and discrimination” and because of the “notion that all human beings are created in the image of God” (Chitando and Mapuranga 2016, 178, 179). Another major development is the emergence of Christian LGBT organizations in various parts of Africa, such as the following examples.
Metropolitan Community Churches

Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) began as a North American denomination, founded in 1968. It seeks to build churches that promote inclusion, human rights, and justice specifically in relation to the LGBTQ community. According to its website, MCC is active in five countries on the continent: Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. Apart from South Africa, it is difficult to verify the current level of activity. In South Africa MCC has various branches, in Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Pretoria. Its majority-black congregation in Johannesburg, the Hope and Unity Metropolitan Community Church, was founded in 1994 by the Reverend Tsietsi Thandekiso. The church challenges the idea that homosexuality is incompatible with African cultures and helps members integrate their sexuality, faith, and African cultural identity (Reid 2010).

House of Rainbow Fellowship

House of Rainbow Fellowship aims to help people of faith reconcile their sexuality and spirituality. Founded in 2006 by the British Nigerian gay theologian the Reverend Rowland Jide Macaulay, the fellowship according to its website was active in eleven countries in Africa (Botswana, Burundi, Ghana, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia), as well as in two European countries (Sweden and the United Kingdom), as of 2017. Macaulay, who was ordained in the MCC, describes House of Rainbow as a “radically inclusive and affirming mission” following the example of Jesus’s inclusive ministry, specifically catering to LGBTI Christians of African and African Caribbean descent (Macaulay 2010, 11).

**DESMOND TUTU (1931–)**

Desmond Tutu is the best known among those African Christian leaders who have spoken out systematically and radically in favor of the recognition of same-sex sexualities and LGBT human rights. Ordained as an Anglican priest in 1960, he served as general secretary of the South African Council of Churches from 1978 to 1985, as bishop of Johannesburg from 1985 to 1986, and as archbishop of Cape Town from 1986 until his retirement in 1996. Influenced by the tradition of black liberation theology, which emerged in North America and South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, Tutu became a vocal critic of apartheid, the system of white-minority rule and racial segregation in South Africa (1948–1994).

After the end of apartheid, Tutu coined the term *rainbow nation* for the new, democratic South Africa, reflecting his vision of a society organized on the basis of equality, diversity, and inclusion. For Tutu, this applied not only to the question of race but also of sexuality. Denouncing the ways in which Christianity in South Africa has been involved in perpetuating both racism and homophobia, Tutu stated, "If the
church, after the victory over apartheid, is looking for a worthy moral crusade, then this is it: the fight against homophobia and heterosexism” (1997, x). Tutu’s thoughts on this matter are informed by the idea that both race and sexual orientation are innate and are part of the way God created humankind; therefore, they cannot be a ground for discrimination. Both racism and homophobia reflect, according to Tutu, “the ultimate blasphemy” (x), as they make certain children of God doubt—because of their race or sexuality—whether they are truly children of God. Referring to the American civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968) and his dream of an inclusive and diverse world as a source of inspiration, Tutu claimed that “as God has made me black, so God has made some of us gay. And how incredibly wonderful is it that God has created each of us to be who we are” (2012, 149).

It is difficult to assess Tutu’s direct influence on legal changes in post-apartheid South Africa, where discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is explicitly prohibited in the country’s 1996 constitution and where same-sex civil unions were legalized in 2006. Yet it is clear that the outspoken stance of a prominent, highly respected figure such as Tutu has made a significant contribution to the building of a culture and society in which the human dignity and rights of gay and lesbian people are being respected. Importantly, as a black African and Christian leader, Tutu challenges the popular rhetoric of homosexuality being “un-African” and “un-Christian,” presenting a theology and spirituality based on the African indigenous concept of ubuntu, according to which one can be human only in relation to and in harmony with others, in all the diversity with which God created humankind (Battle 2009).

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Other Sheep Africa

Other Sheep works for the inclusion of LGBT people of faith within their respective faith traditions. Founded in 1992 in Latin America, the organization has been active in Africa since 2007, especially in the eastern part of the continent. With the Reverend Michael Kimundu, a Kenyan Anglican priest, as president, the organization worked from its headquarters in Nairobi developing activities in such countries as Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. However, the organization’s current state and level of activity is difficult to verify.

United Coalition of Affirming Africans

The United Coalition of Affirming Africans (UCAA) is an initiative of an African American organization, the Fellowship of Affirming Ministries (TFAM). TFAM aims to promote a “theology of radical inclusivity,” and it did so initially in the black church in the United States but since the first decade of the twenty-first century in Africa also. Through national chapters in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, it brings together progressive African Christian clergy and LGBT activists, training them to be at the forefront of dialogues about culture, theology, and sexuality. In Nairobi, Kenya, TFAM also has established an LGBT-inclusive Christian church. The UCAA and TFAM frame their activities in an explicitly Pan-African narrative according to which progressive black Christians fight against the influence of American white conservative evangelicals (van Klinken 2017).

Catholic Church

The Catholic Church in Africa has kept a relatively low profile on LGBT issues: it has generally not engaged in the virulent antigay rhetoric typical of many Protestant (especially Anglican and Pentecostal) churches, but neither has it actively participated in pro-LGBT Christian initiatives. Yet at least one prominent African Catholic theologian, Agbonkhianmeghe Orobator (originally from Nigeria but currently serving as principal of Hekima University College in Nairobi, Kenya), has spoken out frankly. In response to Pope Francis’s exhortation Amoris Laetitia (2016), Orobator publicly interpreted this document as a call to “embrace wholeheartedly African families and their LGBT members who have been stigmatized, marginalized, and excluded from the life of the church,” and he used the notion of the church as “family of God” to emphasize values of inclusion and hospitality (quoted in McElwee 2016).

SEE ALSO Activity in Africa South of the Sahara; Christianity in Africa: Anglican; Christianity in Africa: Pentecostal and Charismatic; Christianity in Africa: Roman Catholicism; HIV/AIDS in Africa; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity
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LGBTQ debates and the life of sexual minorities in contemporary Africa cannot be disentangled from religious discourse and its influence on the African public sphere and political domain. The level of religiosity on the continent, across the three dominant religious expressions of Islam, Christianity, and traditional African religions, grew steadily in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries to the point that many consider Africa as the future center of gravity of the world’s Muslim and Christian populations. By 2050, nearly four in ten (38%) of the world’s Christians will be based in sub-Saharan Africa, up from 24 percent in 2010 and from the tiny figure of 2 percent in 1910 (McClendon 2017). Religious influence in Africa has never been relegated to the private sphere or diminished in importance as predicted by Western theories (and experiences) of modernity. On the contrary, religion has continued to influence and shape the life of African citizens and their public affairs (Ellis and ter Haar 2007). Religious leaders, ideas, idioms, and institutions are an important reservoir of political creativity and material support (such as health care, education, and financial services), often in contrast to the failures of the postcolonial African state’s capacity to offer adequate service delivery and political stability and transformation (Bompani and Frahm-Arp 2010).

Within the rapid growth of Christianity on the continent, it is important to highlight the even more rapid growth of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches and Charismatic expressions since the late 1970s. Although this movement is far from homogeneous, and is in fact extremely diverse, for the sake of the analysis of LGBTQ matters in relation to Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in contemporary Africa, it is sufficient to highlight two specific traits: (1) these Christian groups moved from being small minorities to dominant and vibrant voices in the African public sphere in less than forty years; in more recent years they also moved away from being generally aloof from the materiality of the everyday politics to becoming active political actors; (2) with their voice and visibility raised, their theological and phenomenological understandings started to be publicly expressed and elaborated with the intention to influence public policies and the running of the African state.
It is through this process that it is possible to observe the emergence of a highly moralized interpretation of politics and the moralization of the public sphere and political debates in many African contexts. Drawing from Pentecostal and Charismatic interpretations that dichotomize sinful and holy public behaviors, Pentecostal and Charismatic voices started to articulate clear distinctions and identify groups to be excluded from the national community of moral citizens, among which LGBTQ communities became a priority target. The rise of the religious moralization of politics also coincided with the rise of LGBTQ communities’ visibility and fight for better rights in several African countries, while, internationally, LGBTQ groups were winning rights and engaging with both secular and religious communities.

For example, in 2008 the Lambeth Conference, which brings together the global Anglican communion every ten years, was the site of fierce debates over the inclusion of openly gay and lesbian clergy and the celebration of same-sex marriage following the consecration of an openly gay and partnered bishop in the American diocese of New Hampshire in 2003 (Vanderbeck et al. 2011). About a quarter of the invited bishops (including a substantial number from sub-Saharan Africa) ultimately boycotted the conference and accused Rowan Williams, the then archbishop of Canterbury, of colonial and discriminatory attitudes toward the voices of the bishops from the Global South despite their growing numbers. (Indeed, over 50% of the total communion's 80 million adherents live in sub-Saharan Africa.) The Lambeth Conference of 2008 had an enormous impact on many Christian communities on the African continent, especially on Pentecostal and Charismatic groups, who started to express their distinctiveness from what they perceived as the liberal North and its “illnesses”—growing secularization and a growing distance from the “African way” of understanding the guiding moral role of religion in society. This historical convergence fused together, on one hand, the politicization of Pentecostal and Charismatic groups and their highly moralized public action and, on the other hand, the politicization of homosexuality on the continent (Awondo, Geschiere, and Reid 2012) with the rise of LGBTQ activism and the related emergence of countermeasures brought in by political and religious conservative actors. And this convergence frames the contemporary interplay between Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity and LGBTQ debates and the life of sexual minorities in Africa.

**Charismatic and Pentecostal Christianity in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Under the umbrella of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches there is an incredible liturgical and everyday diversity that evolves and overlaps, and denominations often use terms interchangeably. Nevertheless, since the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States, Pentecostal and Charismatic movements can generally be classified in three waves that represent three movements: classical Pentecostals, with a more uniform
doctrine and more centralized structures, initiated by the Azusa Street Revival in California in 1906; the Charismatic movement, which emerged in the 1960s and did not separate into a new Christian denomination but applied Pentecostal characteristics to historical denominations, such as Anglican charismatics or Catholic charismatics; and the more recent neo-Pentecostals or Pentecostal-Charismatics, who since the late 1980s rapidly expanded and became the most dynamic form of Christianity in the Global South. Owing to their dynamism, expansion, and dominance, the last two expressions are commonly the focus when discussing Pentecostalism in sub-Saharan Africa. The rapid growth of the movement since the late 1980s paralleled economic crisis, political instability, and the harsh effects of the international imposition of neoliberal socioeconomic interventions in the form of structural adjustment programs. This was fertile ground for the healing and empowering potential of Pentecostal and Charismatic theology, which with its focus on improving the material and spiritual life in the present offered relief from the harshness of daily life for many Africans.

All three groups share certain basic religious doctrines, such as the need for believers to have a conversion experience (to be “born again”), personal salvation, and the principle of evangelization (the call to convert others to the doctrine). Pentecostals and Charismatics place an emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, divine healing, direct revelations from God, and prophecies, and they have very strict ethical rules. Neo-Pentecostals also have a clear emphasis on the spirit of accumulation and prosperity through action and praying. Many authors point to this emphasis to explain the success of the movement on the African continent during times of deepening poverty and uncertainty (Comaroff 2009; Freeman 2012), whereas others tie the success of those churches to their spiritual and emotional character, as well as their ability to deal with and make sense of African spiritual worlds made of evil sources, witchcraft, and guiding spirits (Kalu 2008).
Their theology draws on clear dichotomies that separate the past of the believers from the moment of conversion, while also distinguishing between rightful and acceptable behaviors versus sinful and demonic ones. As part of a religious movement that engages with emotions and with invisible forces, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches must fight a daily battle to guide the life of the religious community and to liberate it from evil spirits that possess and corrupt the body and the soul of African citizens. According to this interpretation, political corruption, greediness, mismanagement, the perceived lack of moral behavior, and lack of respect toward the elderly and authority—problems that are often publicy raised as barriers to the “progress” of African societies—are also all interpreted as evils against a righteous and holy way of living a Christian life. It is through praying and action that Pentecostal and Charismatic Africans are invited to fight those vices and sins and to play an active role to change the social and political reality. If, initially, Pentecostal and Charismatic churches viewed the political sphere as an avoidable demonic realm, then in the twenty-first century, the urgency of fighting evil and sinful behaviors has driven their political activity to the point that religious and political discourse are becoming increasingly indistinguishable. It is sufficient to witness the active role Pentecostal and Charismatic churches and leaders played in twenty-first-century elections in Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, Zambia, and Uganda in supporting certain candidates and influencing the electorate. It is also important to highlight the instrumental use that some
African politicians make of moral Pentecostal discourses by ostensibly demonstrating support for those moral campaigns in the hope of reciprocal support and votes from Christian constituencies (Ukah 2017). Often these churches speak of this being a critical time for religiously inspired sociopolitical transformation, especially in light of changing values and attitudes toward sexuality and family norms.

Indeed, sexuality and sexual behavior are in some way at the forefront of the construction of the moral framework of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in Africa. First, the sexuality discourse links to the idea of reproduction and continuation of the religious community that is expressed in heterosexual married couples. Second, morality, respectability, and integrity assign a clear place in society to everyone according to divine will. Fixed sex roles control and maintain the moral order; any alteration would cause chaos and destruction that correspond—still in Pentecostal terms—to the success of evil over good forces (Bompani 2016).

**Intracountry Realities**

Given the strong role played by morality and normative sexual interpretations in these churches, it is perhaps no surprise that LGBTQ groups, which also gained visibility and became increasingly organized in the African public sphere since the late 1990s (Currier 2012), are the community that most overtly challenges the Pentecostal-Charismatic fixed order in which heteronormative families reproduce and nurture future generations of moral citizens. LGBTQ groups are by extension considered de facto dangerous enemies of this Pentecostal-Charismatic vision and, according to this interpretation, should be excluded from and deprived of their rights and privileges as citizens. This explains the support that Pentecostal and Charismatic churches have given to the implementation of tight legal measures against sexual minorities in Africa. Such measures have included the Anti-Homosexuality Act in Uganda, which was signed into law in February 2014 but then struck down by the country’s Constitutional Court a few months later, and the Same Sex (Prohibition) Act signed into law in 2014 by Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan. Other anti-LGBTQ feelings and actions have been well documented in other countries, including Kenya, Zimbabwe, Malawi, Ghana, and Zambia. Even in South Africa, where LGBTQ lives are officially and legally protected by an inclusive and progressive constitution, Pentecostals contest liberal rights around gender equality and sexual minority rights; and they find in this engagement a common unifying terrain for public and political action across otherwise diverse churches (Burchardt 2013).

There is a counterpoint to the interplay sketched out above. Although most of the academic and public reflections generally focus on the public role of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in negatively affecting the life of sexual minorities in Africa, it is equally relevant to note that at a personal or individual level many LGBTQ African people are religious themselves, and many are Pentecostals or Charismatics. In fact, within the
movement there are groups, individuals, and even churches that counteract the dominant exclusionary and conservative discourse, even if this is not always publicly recognized. For example, the Deo Gloria Family Church and Victory Ministries Church International, both based in Durban, South Africa, are affirming and inclusive churches. Even in contexts in which supporting LGBTQ groups remains against the law, as in Uganda, there are small underground organized Pentecostal communities that preach a more liberal gospel (found through fieldwork research in Kampala, 2012–2014). This suggests that one must search beyond simple dichotomous interpretations holding that all LGBTQ activism is secular and that all churches are homophobic, given that in African contexts activism does not coincide with the negation of religion as an absolute oppressive force. On the contrary, religion remains embedded in the private and sometimes public lives of many African sexual minorities involved in the fight for their rights. Understanding religion in Africa, especially Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, is central to understanding the continent’s social, cultural, and political past, present, and—especially—future.

SEE ALSO Christianity in Africa: Anglican; Christianity in Africa: LGBT Friendly; Christianity in Africa: Roman Catholicism; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity

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Christianity in Africa: Roman Catholicism

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The position of the Roman Catholic Church in Africa on sexual minorities.

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) is the largest single Christian denomination in Africa south of the Sahara, with over a fifth of the region’s population as its members. Through missionaries and national churches, the RCC has wielded enormous influence over the religious, cultural, and legal norms that regulate sexuality; the heteronormative patriarchy inherent to Catholic tradition has both accommodated and reinforced similar tendencies in African societies (Alava 2017; van Klinken 2013b). Catholic teaching on sexuality is shaped both from above, through formal doctrine formulated and upheld by the church hierarchy, and from below, through interpretations and emphases deriving from responses to particular contexts. In their reflections on the process of engagement between Christian doctrine and African cultures, referred to in Catholicism as inculturation theology, African Catholic scholars have sought to counter the negative stereotypes created through colonial and missionary accounts of the continent. Often, however, this has been achieved through the creation of an idealized image of one homogenous “African culture,” which is construed as being fundamentally averse to sexual diversity (van Klinken and Gunda 2012).

African Emphases in Catholic Sexual Ethics

African Catholic teaching on sexuality stands on three pillars: the sacramental status of marriage, specific understandings of so-called natural law, and an emphasis on community and procreation over individual rights or sexual pleasure. For the RCC, the sacramental union between a man and a woman symbolizes the union between Christ and the church. Marriage is perceived as the foundation of both church and society, for which reason protecting it from perceived threats is considered pivotal.

Natural law, which claims that certain moral principles are recognized universally, is an essential premise of Catholic moral theology. In African Catholic theology, natural law arguments are commonly coupled with particular interpretations of biblical creation stories and with essentializing claims about “African tradition.” Man and woman are seen as having been created fundamentally different and complementary, a view that is claimed to form the heart of African conceptualizations of personhood, in which “the bipolarity of man-woman is a most important dimension.... Neither as man nor as woman are human
beings complete but rather both together constitute a whole human being” (Bujo 2009, 37). While many African priests have joined early missionaries in condemning certain African customary practices, others have explained polygyny, (asexual) female-female marriage, and the practice of levirate, whereby a widow can be inherited by the deceased husband’s brother, as having served the interests of the community (Magesa 1998).

In the view of the most influential of Catholic theologians in Africa, the community rather than the individual is at the heart of sexual ethics. The morality of sexual behavior is thus assessed in light of its contribution to marital stability and the transmission of life from the ancestors to posterity (Bujo 2001). While some African theologians have criticized the negative tone adopted by the RCC in matters of sexuality (Kisembo, Magesa, and Shorter 1998), they unite in teaching that sexual pleasure belongs strictly within marriage and that searching for it elsewhere is destructive.

Debates over LGBTQ Rights in Africa

Formal Catholic doctrine distinguishes between homosexuality as an intrinsic tendency and homosexual acts, only the latter of which are deemed sinful. African Catholic theologians cast minority sexual identities and practices not only as against church teaching but as
foreign and abhorrent to their continent. For example, Joseph K. Njino claims that “homosexuals are dismissed as sub-human or abnormal people in traditional African cultures” (2004, 349), while Bénézet Bujo writes that the supposedly new sexual practices imported by foreigners “destroy the people of Africa, and bring on them a culture of death” (2009, 158). Even when it is acknowledged that some people may be “born gay,” African Catholic writers teach abstinence, in line with the RCC’s official stance.

Although some of the RCC’s national episcopal councils have called for respect for LGBTQ minorities, they have all supported legislative measures — excluding the death penalty, which the RCC universally opposes — against minority sexual practices. Individual priests have used their pulpits for hate speech, although perhaps the most important contribution of the church toward LGBTQ minorities has been the heteronormative silencing of their existence (Alava 2017).

The stances of Catholic churches in recent debates on homosexuality in Africa are not mere reflections of formal church doctrine or local theology but are profoundly influenced by broader societal dynamics. The growth of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity has pushed the RCC to adopt increasingly fierce rhetoric, particularly in those countries where it has been accused of being unpatriotic, of harboring homosexual priests within its ranks, or of having originally imported homosexuality to Africa (Nyeck 2016; van Klinken 2013a). Conservative Catholic organizations such as Human Life International have invested financial and personnel resources to strengthen antigay stances in the region, whereas LGBTQ-friendly voices heard within the global RCC have been almost completely absent in Africa south of the Sahara.

**Ongoing Debates and Future Trajectories**

Around the time of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), rather liberal views on sexual ethics were accommodated, only to be sidelined again under the papacies of John Paul II (1978–2005) and Benedict XVI (2005–2013). Pope Francis (2013–) has shown moderate support for sexual and gender minorities, but African bishops have vocally demanded that the RCC retain its conservative stances (Miller 2015). African Catholics, however, have historically shown remarkable flexibility in accommodating the contradictions between formal doctrine and customary practices. Even in regions where the RCC is highly influential, the norms that govern sexuality have not been dictated by the church but are negotiated “in the dynamic space between religious, ‘traditional,’ and ‘modern’ moral sensibilities” (Alava 2017, 45). Furthermore, failure to follow Catholic teaching does not lead individuals to be ostracized from local RCC communities. Thus, although this is far from full acceptance of LGBTQ minorities, Catholic churches in Africa could at least draw on their tradition of inclusive pastoral practice, as well as on theological resources such as the notion of human beings as images of God (Phiri 2016), to counter the violent antigay activism witnessed in many religious communities in the region. In those contexts where
prominent representatives of the RCC have joined actively hostile antigay lobbies, this may appear a wishful and unlikely scenario. Yet the decriminalization of homosexuality in 2004 in Cabo Verde, where over 90 percent of the population is Catholic, and the approval of antidiscrimination work law in Mozambique in 2007, where Catholics, at 28 percent of the population, are the largest religious group, point to the possibility of change toward greater acceptance and inclusion of LGBTQ minorities within Catholicism in Africa south of the Sahara.

SEE ALSO Christianity in Africa: Anglican; Christianity in Africa: LGBT Friendly; Christianity in Africa: Pentecostal and Charismatic; Ethiopia: Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity; Uganda

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Representations of same-sex desire in English-language films made in Africa or by directors of African descent.

Representations of same-sex desire and practices in English-language African cinema are deeply entangled with the regional dynamics of African political history and the history of African cinema. Although such representations address a range of themes, they predominantly give voice to sexual counterpublics that challenge dominant constructions of sexuality. The cinema of Nigeria—known as Nollywood—would be the exception to this trend: its representations are generally negative, and the plots are predicated on the reintegration of individuals with nonnormative sexualities into socially sanctioned sexual practices.

Historically, South African cinema has had the largest archive of same-sex representations, but twenty-first-century anti-LGBTQ political rhetoric has spurred a dramatic rise in the production and dissemination of narratives about nonnormative sexualities across Africa. Because of the historical connections among these representations and regional political cultures, any appraisal must attend to the historical absence of nonnormative sexualities from African cinema, the rise of African LGBTQ activism, the emergence of political homophobic discourses, and the backlash against the so-called imperialist global gay agenda. Discussions of African same-sex sexuality in film also face a central dilemma about the designation *African* because many films about this subject are produced by teams from outside the continent. Rather than qualify these representations as exclusively African, it might be more productive to agree that the growing archive consists of films produced by Africans and non-Africans but that such films focus on Africans. What follows is a short introduction to the themes, aesthetics, and histories of these representations.

**On Taxonomies of Same-Sex Representations**

There is an ongoing debate on the proper taxonomies that can be deployed in studies of African same-sex representations. Scholars point to the diversity of “African intimacies” ([Hoad 2007](#)) or “vocabularies of the non-normative” ([Matebeni and Msibi 2015](#)), and Martin P. Botha ([2014](#)) specifically cautions against Western LGBTQ terms. However, (documentary) filmmakers regularly deploy those very terms, as they narrate experiences
framed within African LGBTQ activism or demands for legal rights. The preponderance of human rights framings prompted Karl Schoonover and Rosalind Galt to ask if non-Western nonnormative sexualities can be understood only within the framework of human rights demands or if there are advantages to representing “non-Western queer desire ... in terms of Western gay identity politics” (2016, 2). As this survey shows, the answer to that question can only be complex and nuanced. As much as scholars find a wealth of African sexual taxonomies, the situation in some African countries drives the human and legal rights framework. Because individuals are harassed, arrested, or forcibly interpolated by state and nonstate actors as gay or lesbian, they unvaryingly respond to such stresses at the interface of those interpolations. Gay identity politics is consequently not always a matter of choice. Besides, the labels in the LGBTQ initialism are simply some of the multiple names circulating and adopted across various scales. Some documentary films reveal practices of code-switching as individuals switch languages, labels, and their complicated cultural constructions of sexuality.

The debates about the proper sexual taxonomies or the efficacy and purchase of the human rights frame cannot be addressed adequately in this survey. Suffice it to note that there are slippages between the representations in cinema and the multiplicity of sexual vocabularies that circulate on the African continent. Filmmakers also do not work exclusively within the rights claim-making frame, and they deploy the LGBTQ labels—even when they critique them—because these labels have become ensconced within political and cultural discourse. Even when scholars and artists prefer terms such as same-sex sexuality, they still deploy LGBTQ terminologies because cinematic representations emerge into a world in which these terms circulate even if they do not completely capture the nuances of indigenous terms and sexual subcultures. Moreover, films produced in English almost implicitly presume a target audience familiar with the LGBTQ labels. These distinctions are especially relevant for documentary film, as they underscore the proliferation and improvisation of queer identities for different audiences.

Cinematic representations fall into genre productions: shorts, feature films, and documentaries. They also follow the broad inflections of African cinema in terms of the material conditions of production, regional cinema histories, and the interplay between cinema and local theatrical and televisual cultures. South Africa’s history of colonialism and apartheid and its unique constitutional protection of sexual orientation lends its cinema a distinctive landscape. Kenya and Uganda have emerged as important sites of cinematic production in East Africa. In West Africa, Nigeria’s major cinema, Nollywood, churns out sensational melodramas that routinely offer unsympathetic representations. Nollywood is slowly being challenged, however, by activist production and the emergence of newer directors deploying nuanced scripts. Documentary film production largely responds to ongoing legal contestations and activist struggles or, alternatively, it archives LGBTQ histories. Finally, Africans living in the diaspora have started producing films about the impacts of race, migration, and economic inequalities on queer African lives on the
continent and abroad.

**Documenting African LGBTQ Lives**

Documentaries (nonfictional films that record stories about real-world places, incidents, and people) have emerged as an important vehicle for representations of African LGBTQ groups. These films use techniques of nonfiction film to mediate the realities of LGBTQ groups, and they cover a range of subgenres with distinct aesthetic templates and themes. They record the existence of same-sex desire, discredit claims that homosexuality is un-African, archive LGBTQ histories, note the disparities between men and women, and promote the struggle against homophobia and for political rights. The distinctions between the histories of LGBTQ communities in South Africa and the rest of English-speaking Africa are most visible in documentary cinema. Whereas South African documentary is mostly produced and directed by South Africans, documentary films about the rest of anglophone Africa have been produced largely by directors and producers from outside the continent. Such films are prompted by controversies surrounding proposed repressive legislations (such as Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Bill and Nigeria’s Same Sex Marriage [Prohibition] Act) and the global culture wars around sexuality—that is, the intense debates over the emergence of LGBTQ demands for rights across the world and, especially, the use of LGBTQ rights as a barometer of political justice among countries (Gevisser 2015).

Outside South Africa, documentaries exhibit thematic clusters around the struggle against repressive legislation and homophobic violence, public advocacy for community support, and the formation of resource networks for LGBTQ individuals. Uganda has emerged as a hotbed of documentary filmmaking as a result of the global media coverage of the controversy surrounding its Anti-Homosexuality Bill (signed into law in 2014 but struck down as invalid by Uganda’s Constitutional Court later that year) and the support of American Pentecostal churches for anti-LGBTQ measures. Documentaries such as *Africa’s Last Taboo* (2010), *Call Me Kuchu* (2012), *God Loves Uganda* (2013), and *And Still We Rise* (2015) draw attention to the struggle of sexual minorities and the extralegal violence against them. These films capture both the vulnerability of individuals and their resilience and activism in groups such as Freedom and Roam Uganda and Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG). In West Africa, *Born This Way* (2013) and *Veil of Silence* (2014), from Cameroon and Nigeria, respectively, chronicle experiences in LGBTQ communities. *Veil of Silence* charts debates in the lead-up to Nigeria’s Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act, which became law in January 2014. *Born This Way* records the activities of two young gay men, along with lawyer Alice Nkom’s noted legal intervention on behalf of LGBTQ individuals in Cameroon.

*The Pearl of Africa* (2016) extends the thematic range of existing documentaries. This film, about the transition process of the transgender activist Cleopatra Kambugu, is set against the backdrop of Uganda’s Anti-Homosexuality Bill and the popular expressions of
homophobic sentiment featured in other documentaries. The film's focus on Cleopatra's life with her partner, Nelson, sets it apart from other documentaries. Its advent acutely underlines the absence of transgender experiences in existing representations of nonnormative sexualities in anglophone African cinema. The exploration of religion in *Voices of Witness Africa (2009)*, directed by Cynthia Black and Katie Sherrod, offers a counterpoint to the virulent denunciations of homosexuality in Pentecostal churches that appear in most documentaries about LGBTQ activism in Uganda. Based on interviews with Ugandans, Kenyans, and South Africans, it explores the lives of members of the Anglican church following the debates at the Lambeth Conferences of 1998 and 2008 and the controversial split within the Anglican church on support for homosexuality.

**NOLLYWOOD**

Compared to other African cinemas, the Nigerian cinema industry known as Nollywood (a conflation of the words *Nigeria* and *Hollywood*) boasts a surprisingly large number of films with representations of nonnormative sexuality. This output, however, is comprehensible because Nigeria ranks second globally in terms of cinematic production. In cinema studies, scholars increasingly distinguish between Old and New Nollywood. The terms define periods and practices in Nigerian cinema history. Old Nollywood roughly designates the period from the early 1990s to early twenty-first century when straight-to-video films shot on shoestring budgets and within short time spans—about ten days—were distributed through local marketing networks on VHS cassettes and, later, DVDs. Such films are heavily influenced by Nigerian televisual production culture. New Nollywood describes the newer twenty-first-century film production with bigger budgets and improved film production values, with the films created to be projected in cinemas. New Nollywood has not superseded Old Nollywood: the two styles of cinema production now occur together.

Nollywood uses film as an interface for popular discourses, including representations of same-sex sexuality (*Okome 2007*). These films reflect popular discourses about sexual practices and identities that were becoming visible in public space for the first time from the 1990s onward.

Filmmakers responded to new discourses about nonnormative sexual desires by using gay and lesbian characters to flavor ready-made film templates. Therefore, most of these films can hardly be considered adequate responses to the realities of LGBTQ lives in Nigeria or serious reflections on the debates about new discourses of nonnormative sexualities. Instead, some of these films exploit the controversies around these new sexual discourses for commercial profit, while others reflect the distorted perceptions of LGBTQ groups in Nigerian popular imaginaries. Nollywood's LGBTQ representations fall within recognizable formats: the relationship or marriage melodrama in which homosexuality disrupts a relationship; the crime plot in which
homosexuality is deployed for negative characterization of an individual; the miseducation plot in which an individual's homosexuality is ascribed to parental oversight; the more generic queer occult seduction narrative in which an individual succumbs to same-sex desire after being seduced by a powerful or wealthy benefactor allied with supernatural forces; and the film of queer voyeurism in which filmmakers portray sensational and titillating images of same-sex erotic practice. These films combine these routinized plotlines while also relying heavily on melodrama (Green-Simms 2012; Green-Simms and Azuah 2012; Tsika 2016).

Although Nollywood films generally demonize putatively gay and lesbian characters or portray them as psychologically disturbed, the mixed templates and doses of melodrama create ambiguous representations. Films such as Emotional Crack (2003), Women Affair (2003), Law 58 (2015), and Men in Love (2010) permit complex readings because they introduce conspicuous scenes of sexual intimacy, illuminate the flexibility of sexual desire, and show mutual support between characters before the films turn to the requisite deus ex machina resolution in which gay and lesbian characters convert to Christianity, die, or are captured by the police. Characters are consequently portrayed within social constraints that occasionally underscore the limitations placed on the uninhibited expressions of sexual desire. Women Affair, for example, suggests the potential for Nollywood representations of LGBTQ lives outside of melodrama. While the film ends with the ubiquitous queer arrest, ascribes homosexuality to failed parenting, and portrays the instigating lesbian character as manipulative, it communicates affections between lesbian couples, as well as the silence and exclusion forced on individuals with nonnormative sexuality.

Interpretations of Nollywood films with regard to nonnormative sexualities must account for Nigeria's National Film and Video Censors Board regulations, which stipulate the inclusion of condemnatory discourses in the framing of same-sex desire. The stipulations guarantee that representations of same-sex desire remain ambiguous or never end in positive resolutions. In interviews that accompanied the release of Busted in 2017, Face Onu and Lisa Onu, the film's producers, position the film as an urgent pedagogical intervention that will educate Nigerians. In a 2017 interview with the Nigerian journalist Azuka Ogujiuba, Face Onu denied knowledge of LGBTQ communities in Nigeria and suggested that the film would “help curb their activities” and change “them positively without necessarily hurting them.” While such declarations suggest that Nollywood filmmakers are against expressions of same-sex desire, they could also be marketing strategies that respond to the demands of film censors. Invariably, cinema scholars must consider restrictive censorship as one of the determining conditions that inform the aesthetic of LGBTQ representations in Nollywood. Ultimately though, Nollywood films have contributed immensely to creating a wider awareness of same-sex sexuality in Nigeria and in Africa.
South Africa’s unique history of LGBTQ activism and its contradictory coexistence of guaranteed constitutional protection and homophobic violence provide the context for more diversified documentary narratives. This body of films has attracted more critical attention than its counterparts from other African countries. Films document the history of LGBTQ history in general, with attention to life under apartheid and the activism that led to South Africa’s landmark constitutional provision. Characteristic of films documenting historical activism is Simon and I (2002), a film on the noted activists Simon Nkoli and Beverley Palesa Ditsie. While it lauds Nkoli’s pioneering role in activism, it equally identifies the marginalization of experiences specific to women within the nascent movement. Other notable films on LGBTQ history include two films by Jack Lewis, A Normal Daughter: The Life and Times of Kewpie of District Six (1997) and Sando to Samantha: Aka the Art of Dikvel (1998). In his overview of queer representations in South African cinema, Botha describes both films as “oral histories of gay subcultures in Cape Town” (2014, 74). Films such as Property of the State: Gay Men in the Apartheid Military (2003), The Man Who Drove with Mandela (1998), and Abdurrazack “Zackie” Achmat’s Apostles of Civilised Vice (2000) demonstrate the thematic diversity of apartheid-era LGBTQ experiences. Occasionally, films addressing elements of life seeming unrelated to LGBTQ matters illuminate aspects of same-sex practices. This is the case with Don Edkins’s 1992 documentary on South African mines, The Color of Gold, which documents male-male sex practices (Epprecht 2004). Some documentaries, such as Paulo Alberton and Graeme Reid’s Dark and Lovely, Soft and Free (2000), explore communities outside of activism or big urban centers in order to provide insights into quotidian lives and move beyond the focus on activism against violence in dominant representations. Achmat, the director of Apostles of Civilised Vice, is also an HIV/AIDS activist, and his activism has been the subject of two
films: Brian Tilley’s *It’s My Life* (2001) and John Greyson’s genre-defying *Fig Trees* (2009).

The need to tackle sexual violence against lesbian women in South Africa has thrust political activism and community education to the forefront in representations of lesbian experiences in South African documentaries. Lovinsa Kavuma’s 2006 documentary short *Rape for Who I Am* introduces the key themes of such films: the impact of social inequality on the experience of nonnormative sexuality for women, the importance of campaigns and activism against sexual violence, the demand for prosecution of sexual crimes, and the emphasis on women’s support networks. A number of documentaries have been created around the work of the visual activist Zanele Muholi, who features prominently in *Rape for Who I Am* as a provocative artist activist. She codirected *Difficult Love* (2010), which presents her art and her investment in community building; it foregrounds, as well, sexual violence against lesbians. She contributed a short film to Puma’s 2013 Films4Peace initiative, and she made short contributions to larger documentary projects. Her short film *We Live in Fear* is part of the video project LGBT Rights Around the World, commissioned by Human Rights Watch. She also explains her work in the clip “Zanele Muholi,” which is part of a collection of shorts commissioned for the 2016 Infinity Award: Documentary and Photojournalism, sponsored by the International Center of Photography. *Breaking Out of the Box* (2011), directed by Busi Kheswa and Zethu Matebeni, also documents sexual violence against lesbian women; it presents the responses of lesbian individuals and their allies to such violence and forms of erasure.

Films that respond to violence and repressive legislation raise a set of questions about audience and reception because they are often made by European and North American teams that face or anticipate criticism about their relations to African activists or interest groups. These films do important work in archiving LGBTQ activism and the lives of individuals in countries such as Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Nigeria, and Cameroon. However, they also invite critical scrutiny because the predominance of non-African producers underscores Africans’ lack of access to media technology, funds, and distribution networks. When documentaries address marginalization, well-being, and the effects of homophobic violence, they inevitably foreground the vulnerability of the participants in the films; such vulnerability remains even when filmmakers methodically counterbalance it with scenes of celebration or with narratives of success. There is a danger that the focus on activists, nongovernmental organizations, and crisis flash points in documentaries results in the selection and recirculation of the same stories, because the same individuals and their stories appear in several films. These repetitions generate numerous effects. Cumulatively, they provide layered insights into networks of African LGBTQ activism and the lives of individuals transformed by homophobic rhetoric and actions. Yet, although the emphasis on crisis and struggle is meant to showcase activism and resilience, the films may risk voyeurism or, in some cases, portray individuals through a documentary gaze complicit in the indignities inflicted on Africans arrested on suspicions of homosexuality.
Clearly, these documentaries cannot be evaluated in the immediate aftermath of their production because they emerge into arenas of cultural contestations. In some parts of Africa, the sexual identities named in the LGBTQ initialism are considered novelties. Thus, collaborative ventures produced by European and North American filmmakers and their African participants could be accused of fostering postcolonial exoticism or otherness. Alternatively, these documentaries may face the charge of summoning new confessional subjectivities professing identities and identifications promoted by neoliberal regimes of aid administration and humanitarian interventionism. It is certainly possible that some documentary participants may “benefit” materially or otherwise, but alltoo-quick appraisals of these documentaries misevaluate the complex and divergent motivations and situations of participants, the potential reception of the documentaries by different audiences, and their future place as just one component of an emerging archive that gradually includes African-produced narratives. What is clear in these documentaries is the appearance of a new set of narratives, and the Africans who appear in these films would rather have their compatriots as ideal listeners. It is the absence of indigenous ideal listeners that orients African LGBTQ individuals and spokespersons toward international audiences. As such, these documentaries anticipate a future time when the much-needed intra-African debates and representations emerge.

Documentaries that register future anticipations come with their own complexities. The microdocumentary *How 2 Gay Men Live in a Country Where Homosexuality Is Illegal* (2014) anticipates such a future dialogue. Although it exhibits some narrow-mindedness when it frames the United States against Ghana as the place where LGBTQ groups enjoy freedom, the film still mediates a reality away from the urgency of political debates when its participants simply state a desire for self-expression. Overall, future scholarly criticism has to address the emergence of online archives with microdocumentaries that are pitched toward articulating the presence of specifically LGBTQ-identifying Africans or those who express the anticipation of a future Africa in which all sexualities will be tolerated. None on Record is a digital media organization that started out as an oral history project collecting the narratives of Africans with nonnormative sexualities. As of December 2017, the organization maintained a growing online archive of microdocumentaries in which Africans, on the continent and in the diaspora, narrate their experiences as individuals with nonnormative sexual desires. These online microdocumentaries, virtually an archive of queer life stories, assemble nuanced narratives illuminating the complexities of living in Africa now, while also anticipating a time beyond the current limitations on LGBTQ lives.

*Forbidden Games: The Justin Fashanu Story*, a documentary on the life of Justin Fashanu, an openly gay British soccer star born to a Nigerian father and a Guyanese mother in London, offers a mirror site for international documentaries on African LGBTQ lives: it refracts the complex transnational contradictions present in the reception of African LGBTQ narratives through histories of colonialism, immigration, social inequality, rural versus metropolitan queer regionalisms, British conservative politics, nationalism, racism, and homophobia.
Because the film was produced in 2017, almost twenty years after Fashanu's death, the delay between his suicide and this public testimony to his experiences illustrates the point about the anticipatory element in LGBTQ documentaries. Fashanu's life was affected by an array of factors in much the same way that African narratives are not single-issue narratives. Whatever controversies Fashanu might have courted in his lifetime, the intricacies of his experience as a Nigerian British gay sports celebrity should be considered alongside African voices emerging outside Africa. By focusing on the world of sports, the film pinpoints a jointly shared terrain of intolerance that cuts across moral positions embedded within the divide between Africa and the West. The belated attention to his experience and the global persistence of intolerance in sports also negate constructions of any easy temporalities in which the West is in advance of the rest. Such complexity is much needed in representations of LGBTQ narratives.

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**Movie Poster for Call Me Kuchu (2012).** This documentary focuses on the legal battles of Ugandan LGBTQ activists against local tabloids that denounce individuals as gay or lesbian. Prominent activist David Kato was murdered during the filming, and reactions to his death are chronicled in the movie.

Cross-cultural documentary filmmaking poses unique challenges to filmmakers. In response, filmmakers frequently use self-reflexive narrative methods to alert audiences to the material conditions and infrastructure of documentary filmmaking: they include in the films information about the material constraints of production and uneven access to media.
technology, articulate the construction of the framing gaze within discussions, use first-
person narration, and emphasize the subjective status of the countervailing opinions
expressed in the film. Some films remain seemingly untouched by the dilemmas of reflexive
narrative constitution. *Africa's Last Taboo* (2010), for example, seems caught between
voyeurism and the director's desire for change. The documentary was produced for British
television corporation Channel 4 as part of its *Dispatches* series in which investigative
reporters visit political hot spots. The film follows the pattern of crisis documentary that
Sorious Samura had established with his 2000 documentary short *Cry Freetown*, on the
Sierra Leonean civil war. This crisis mode might explain the emphasis on the repressive
political actions of multiple actors and the responses from LGBTQ communities.

In some cases, reflexivity is forced on filmmakers when local occurrences radically
transform the contexts of filmmaking. *Call Me Kuchu* (2012) focuses on the legal battles of
members of SMUG against local Ugandan tabloids that denounced individuals as gay or
lesbian in a blatant scandal-mongering hunt for newspaper sales. It starts out documenting
the tenacity of SMUG activists, but it takes an unexpected turn when activist David Kato is
found murdered. The film's swerve into a landscape of grief, recriminations, and public
vitriol against the LGBTQ community serves as a powerful counterpoint to accusations that
LGBTQ narratives are performances choreographed for non-African audiences. As Nancy
Nicol, codirector of *And Still We Rise* (2015), reveals, filmmakers are aware of the ethical
dimensions of documentaries produced and financed by groups from the Global North
(*Daily Xtra* 2016). According to her, Uganda has become a destination for documentary
production; Western individuals perform academic research and document the dilemmas
and struggles of African groups and then depart to publish articles in journals or circulate
films in venues that are not accessible to African participants in such research and films.
The participants in such documentaries must clearly contend with potential negative
outcomes of their public appearances and associations with homosexuality. Nicol
demonstrates the efforts of filmmakers to create long-term sustainable links with
documentary participants. The project website explains that all income from the film goes
to SMUG. The film was also screened in Uganda at the memorial service for Kato on 26
January 2015.

**Feature Films: Regions, Genres, Politics**

Feature films about same-sex sexuality in English-speaking Africa address sites in South
Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Uganda. Apart from films from the Nollywood repertoire, many
of these films are international collaborations. Nollywood companies have produced the
greatest number of cinematic representations. The politics and aesthetics of Nollywood
productions situate them in an ambiguous zone in that the representations are often
negative, stereotypical, and overlaid with symbolism drawn from the mythical,
mystical/spiritual, and religious repertoire of Nigerian theater practices, from popular
narratives of the occult, or from the rhetoric of late twentieth- and twenty-first-century Pentecostal evangelism.

*Emotional Crack* (2003) and *Men in Love* (2010) illustrate the prevailing conventions of Nollywood representations. In both films, the arrival of a gay/lesbian interloper disrupts a troubled marriage until the removal of said disruption reconsolidates the marriage. *Emotional Crack* has been recognized as the film that paved the way for a succession of lesbian-plot films in Nollywood (*Green-Simms and Azuah 2012*). The plot revolves around a love triangle consisting of the bisexual Camilla and the married couple Crystal and Chudi. Camilla has affairs with both Chudi and Crystal but appears most enamored of Crystal. When the latter rebuffs her for Chudi, Camilla kills herself. *Men in Love* relies on a similar triadic constellation that culminates in the expulsion of the homosexual threat. When Charles runs into his old schoolmate Alex, the latter’s homosexual desires threaten his marriage to Whitney. Alex first drugs and rapes the married Charles and then “enchants” him with a juju spell. The two men live as a couple until Whitney calls on a pastor to release her husband from the spell and asks the police to arrest Alex. Nollywood’s forced resolutions, its convoluted twists, and its baffling character developments manifest the tensions inherent in the production and dissemination of LGBTQ representations. Rather than condemn Nollywood directors, viewers must consider how they conform to prevailing Nollywood paradigms that use film as an interface for popular discourses (*Okome 2010*). That is, Nollywood filmmakers mostly responded to the emergence of public discourses about nonnormative sexual desires by interjecting gay and lesbian characters or subplots into readymade film templates. The perplexing portrayals in films focusing on gay and lesbian themes reflect the distorted apprehensions of LGBTQ communities in Nigerian popular imagination.

African directors adopting the language of international cinema are diversifying cinematic representations of same-sex desire beyond the Nollywood template. Some directors enter into collaborative ventures with filmmakers, organizations, and sponsors from outside Africa. Such films showcase a more affirmative stance to same-sex sexuality. The Nigerian filmmaker Kenneth Gyang offers a refined treatment of sexual identity in *Confusion Na Wa* (2013). The film allows a potentially gay character to work out his sexuality away from the public gaze. An important subplot in *Nairobi Half Life* (2012), directed by the Kenyan filmmaker David “Tosh” Gitonga, involves the relationship between an amateur actor and a male colleague who desires him. In a manner similar to that of *Confusion Na Wa*, the film situates references to nonnormative sexuality within a wider examination of social inequality and the silence about marginalized lives in society. Both films also explore same-sex desire outside of any specific identity category. *Outed: The Painful Reality* (2015), directed by the Ugandan filmmaker Kamoga Hassan, has received much attention online. Hassan explains, in an interview, that the film is a response to a real incident of mob violence in which a man was killed after his name appeared on a list of purported homosexuals in a Ugandan tabloid newspaper (*Nichols 2016*).
Kenyan filmmaker Wanuri Kahiu's 2018 movie Rafiki (“friend” in Kiswahili) is the country's first film to be nominated for an award at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival. The film tells the story of an affair between two young women who fall in love against all the social and moral conventions of the country they call home, where homosexuality is illegal. The director explained the significance of the title in an interview included in the movie's press kit: “Often when Kenyans of the same sex are in a relationship, they forgo the ability to introduce their partners, lovers, mates, husbands, or wives as they would like, and instead call them ‘rafiki’” (Kahiu 2018).

Inspired by “Jambula Tree,” a short story set in Uganda that won writer Monica Arac de Nyeko the 2007 Caine Prize, Rafiki tackles a taboo subject on a continent where thirty-four out of fifty-five countries, including Kenya, criminalize homosexuality, and only South Africa guarantees LGBTQ people rights backed by a constitution.

Set in the city of Nairobi, the film focuses on a budding romance between two teenage girls, Kena and Ziki, who are the daughters of rival politicians. Their dream of living a life other than the heterosexual marriage expected of “good Kenyan girls” is challenged by their conservative society when their relationship is discovered, resulting in backlash and even violence. The film forces its viewers to consider whether it is better to discover one’s sexuality in a loving relationship or to stay under the radar for reasons of safety.

Kahiu’s positive portrayal of a lesbian relationship resulted in the movie being banned by the Kenya Film Classification Board prior to its screening at Cannes. According to the board’s CEO, Ezekiel Mutua, the movie “legitimizes homosexuality against the dominant values, cultures, and beliefs of the people of Kenya” (quoted in Moore 2018). In getting banned at home while being feted abroad, Rafiki follows in the steps of Stories of Our Lives, a 2014 film that was a great success in representing the authentic narratives of LGBTQ Kenyans. Kahiu noted a troubling trend in the censorship in East Africa of local and international films and television shows that feature LGBTQ content: “This has muffled conversations about LGBTI rights and narrowed the parameters of freedom of speech. My hope is that the film is viewed as an ode to love, whose course is never smooth, and as a message of love and support to the ones among us who are asked to choose between love and safety. May this film shout where voices have been silenced” (Kahiu 2018).

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Short films often offer more adventurous representations or address themes disregarded in feature-length films. The Kenyan short *Fluorescent Sin* (2011), directed by Amirah Tajdin, depicts a female impersonator seemingly stranded at a deserted Nairobi railway station. The film begins with the individual’s voice-over, but it turns into a soliloquized reflection on the difference between the person’s desired location and the existent situation. *Hell or High Water* (2016) is a short film produced by the Nigerian nongovernmental organization the Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERs) and directed by Oluseyi Asurf. This didactic film may be grouped with recent work from LGBTQ interest groups using screen media to disseminate affirmative narratives about nonnormative sexual identities and practices. *Stories of Our Lives* (2014), directed by the Kenyan filmmaker Jim Chuchu, is a collection of short films with high production value that are based on narratives selected from an anthology of autobiographical narratives, *The Stories of Our Lives*, collected and edited by a group of Kenyan activists called the Nest Collective. The short films clearly aim to educate an African public while presenting a nuanced range of experiences—from sexual pleasure to homophobic violence to self-discovery. The Nest Collective anthology and film may indicate directions for future developments in African-generated LGBTQ representations.

Directors of African descent living in Europe and North America have had the freedom to produce nuanced and experimental films. Adaora Nwandu’s 2006 film *Rag Tag*, produced in the United Kingdom and set in Britain and Nigeria, can explore homosexuality and allow declarations of same-sex love and affection because it was produced outside Nigeria. Significantly, the film contrasts two generations’ stories of same-sex love in its two locations. It thus draws attention to the different expressions and elaborations of same-sex love and partnerships the two locations permit. Akosua Adoma Owusu, a Ghanaian American director, has produced two short films: *Reluctantly Queer* (2016) and *On Monday of Last Week* (2017). The latter is based on an eponymous short story by the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.

Like their documentary counterparts, South African feature films that spotlight LGBTQ lives are inextricably connected to the country’s history of colonialism and apartheid, to post-apartheid life, and, more recently, to the supposed incompatibility of homosexuality with
African cultural values. Botha has published significant studies in which he catalogs the production history of South African LGBTQ representations. He names two films from 1988 as the earliest cinematic representations: Cedric Sundstrom’s thriller-horror flick *The Shadowed Mind* and Helena Nogueira’s *Quest for Love* (*Botha 2003, 2014*). While the former locates same-sex desire within an institution for patients with sexual dysfunctions, the latter portrays lesbian lives in the context of racial apartheid. Twenty-first-century films are collaborative international productions that would qualify as part of a globally circulating queer cinema. Films such as *Proteus* (*2003*) and *Skoonheid* (*2011*) belong in that category. While both scrutinize the intersections of racial and sexual politics in South Africa, their production value, film aesthetics, and use of recognizable coming-out templates lend the films a familiarity that facilitates an outercontinental circulation.

*Proteus*, directed by Greyson and Lewis, is the better known of the pair and has been much studied. It explores same-sex love between a white inmate and a coloured inmate in an eighteenth-century prison on the infamous Robben Island. The extensive use of anachronisms sutures multiple layers of the South African and European histories of sexual and racial discrimination to generate a significant contemporary timbre. *Skoonheid* refracts attitudes toward South Africa’s sexual minorities through the eyes of a racist and “homophobic” Afrikaner; François is married to a woman, enjoys sex with white men, but vehemently rejects the public emergence of multiple nonnormative sexual identities after apartheid. The film addresses schisms within South Africa’s LGBTQ communities, and it does not shy away from the subject of male-male sexual violence. Catherine Stewart’s 2015 film *While You Weren’t Looking* goes much further than *Skoonheid* in its representation of new and persisting formations of racial and class inequalities beyond apartheid. The film deserves special attention for its portrayal of sexual violence against lesbians in South African townships. While parts of the plot may feel rushed or didactic, the film imparts an earnest preoccupation with an ongoing struggle for safer environments for LGBTQ individuals.

Some feature films are either formal adaptations or are inspired by or derived from novels and life writing. Adaptations constitute an important interface between cinematic and literary representations of African sexual cultures. Though currently understudied, this interface records tensions that attend the retelling of existing narratives and the transposition of representations from one medium into another. The varying degrees of fidelity to the source material deserve further study as signs of complex narrative circulations. *Disgrace* (*2008*) is an Australian production of J. M. Coetzee’s novel, but the film entirely expunges the lesbian elements of the novel that impart greater depth to the novel’s complicated exploration of sexuality. An amplification of the novel’s lesbian component in the film could have reinforced this filmic adaptation. *The World Unseen* (*2007*) was adapted and directed by Shamim Sarif, the author of the eponymous novel. Although the film remains firmly tethered to the novel, the elimination of a crucial role in the novel—that of the disabled sister-in-law—lends the two lead actors in the film greater
emotional weight. Finally, Khalo Matabane’s *The Number* (2017) draws on Jonny
Steinberg’s ethnography of a famous prison gang, *The Number: One Man’s Search for
Identity in the Cape Underworld and Prison Gangs* (2005). While not primarily about same-
sex desire, the film thematizes the subject of prison homosexuality, a topic that features
prominently in African prison narratives. A subplot about coercive male-male sex in prison
involves a new young inmate who is branded a “wife” and later raped by a prison gang
leader early in the film. While the rape primarily focalizes the gang leader’s moral
transformation, the inclusion of a bathroom scene in which the raped man sits under a
cascading shower resonates powerfully, in this male-dominated film, as a symbol of the
silence surrounding the experience of rape victims in prison.

In 2015 Netflix produced a cinematic adaptation of *Beasts of No Nation*, a 2005 novel by the
Nigerian author Uzodinma Iweala. As a major international production directed by the
American filmmaker Cary Fukunaga but featuring well-known and unknown African actors,
the film exemplifies the difficulties of stringently circumscribing what constitutes African
representations and of separating same-sex sexuality from the new sexual discourses that
proliferate in proximity to public debates on same-sex sexuality. Iweala’s novel includes a
scene in which a rebel army commander rapes a child soldier; the film hides the details of
the sexual scene from the camera’s gaze but depicts its lasting impact on young boys. While
this is, arguably, an American adaptation of an African novel, it flirts with discourses
constructing homosexuals as pedophiles or strategically linking homosexuality to
pedophilia. The latter is certainly the case in Kunle Afolayan’s 2014 film *October 1*, in which
a serial rapist’s predilections are attributed to his childhood sexual abuse by a Catholic priest.
While hardly original, the plot, through its reliance on pedophilia, lends itself to ready
association with fears of child molestation that began circulating after the introduction of
politically motivated homophobic discourses in Nigeria.

Cinematic representations have become an interface for debates about emerging sexual
identities in African countries. In all, these films exhibit generic themes and continuities.
Feature film productions exhibit preoccupations with sexual taxonomies, while
documentary films largely work with the LGBTQ initialism. In the face of repeated
repudiations of such sexual identities as being un-African, documentary films readily
deploy LGBTQ terms to articulate the belonging of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and
queer Africans even if they also document regional taxonomies in African languages.
Despite the focus on violence and legal repression in documentaries, the example of South
Africa suggests there will be future productions of more diversified documentary
representations in other African countries once those countries relax their laws against
same-sex sexuality. While Nollywood productions are incredibly melodramatic, factoring in
the conventions of melodrama and the restrictions of censors on what the films can and
cannot represent lends depth to the tensions in the films. Feature films are contextualizing
the textures of LGBTQ experiences while paying attention to the regional histories that
shape them. A comparative analysis of South African films such as *Proteus* and *Skoonheid* to
films such as *Nairobi Half Life* and *Confusion Na Wa*, which are not primarily about homosexuality, reveals a shared investment in the discursive constructions of sexuality, their social legitimations or contestations, and the consequences thereof in emerging African cinema. Whether overly melodramatic, sloppily rendered, or coolly understated, these films offer ever more complex and diverse representations of African LGBTQ lives. Increasingly, the films explore the forms of intimacies individuals share under whichever conditions they may live. Overall, this brief survey suggests that filmmakers are crosshatching portrayals of same-sex sexualities with attention to various forms of social inequality.

The growth of African queer film festivals can be taken as a measure of the expanding interest in cinematic representations of same-sex sexuality and an increasing cultural activism and assertiveness. Festivals in South Africa, Uganda (Queer Kampala International Film Festival), Kenya (OUT Film Festival), and Zimbabwe (Rainbow 263 Film Festival) underscore the growing significance of cinema as a tool of cultural mediation for African LGBTQ communities. The website of the Queer Kampala festival (2018) explains the importance of screen media: “Together, we can end victimization of the LGBTQ community using social justice film-making, a tested and proven effective tool in changing hearts, minds, and laws!!” This assertion is best taken as a rallying cry that predicts how cinematic representations can eventually reflect the breadth of African conversations on nonnormative sexualities. Such a future will arrive when African sponsors from within individual countries underwrite the costs of these festivals.

**SEE ALSO** *Cinema, African (Francophone)*; *Literature, African (Anglophone)*; *Literature, African (Francophone)*

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In the conservative social climate of the African continent, even movies depicting nudity or sex scenes between heterosexual characters can be subject to censorship or public disapproval, much less films dealing with taboo topics such as same-sex sexuality. Only a handful of films in French-speaking Africa south of the Sahara have dared broach the subject: *Dakan* (1997; Guinea), *Woubi chéri* (1998; Côte d’Ivoire), *Karmen Geï* (2001; Senegal), *Sortir du nkuta* (2009; Cameroon), and *Born This Way* (2013; Cameroon). Because of the lack of support for such films in Africa, these films are directed and funded by foreign countries and citizens who are interested in investigating African sexual identities which, it can be stated, is both a taboo and an exotic experimentation.

In ways both similar and varied, these films highlight the challenges of being LGBT in francophone Africa. In several countries, nonnormative sexualities are perceived as a social abomination that is a Western import. Being gay, lesbian, transgender, or bisexual is not considered to be part of an African identity, and an often-repressive legal system supports the perspective that LGBT individuals should be treated as criminals and outcasts. This entry looks specifically at *Dakan*, a fictional story of two gay Africans, and the documentaries *Woubi chéri* and *Sortir du nkuta* to explore these themes further.

**Dakan** (1997)

*Dakan* (Destiny) was the first feature film to focus on homosexuality in Africa south of the Sahara when it was released in 1997. It was directed by Mohamed Camara (1959–), a French Guinean whose productions often address social taboos. After *Denko* (1992), which discusses incest, and *Minka* (1994), about child abuse and suicide, he directed *Dakan* not necessarily because he views himself as an LGBT activist but in order to describe human emotions and sensibilities. The funding for *Dakan* was cut by the Guinean government when officials realized it was about homosexuality, and people violently protested when it was being shot (*Barlet 2012*). *Dakan* is a drama that chronicles a forbidden love between Manga and Sory, two young male students whose relationship starts in high school. The two boys are caught between two worlds: “tradition” and “modernity,” African identity and Western influence. Sory belongs to a wealthy (or at least comfortable) family, with a father
always dressed in suits and who speaks only French. Manga comes from a modest background, with a single mother who often wears traditional African clothing.

When Sory reveals to his father that he is in love with Manga, the father is in total shock. He reminds Sory about the company and his social reputation that will be ruined forever, as well as the fact that his son will be treated like a criminal. As for Manga's mother, she is not any less devastated when her son asks if there is anything wrong with falling in love with a boy: "It never happens. Since time began, it's never happened." When Manga emphatically asks why, his mother literally screams, “Boys don't do that! That's all there is to it!”

In a context in which homosexuality is not accepted, the two lovers are forced to part ways from each other through the influence of both parents. Sory has to work for his father's fishing company, and Manga is sent to the bush to be “cured” of his unwanted desires. When Manga returns to the city and looks after his sick mother, now in a wheelchair, he falls in love with a young lady, Oumou, who is also caring for her mother. However, Manga does not have any erotic feelings toward her at all and continues to think about his lost male lover, Sory. He eventually finds Sory, who has deserted the family company and is established in the village with a wife and a child. The film ends with the two entering a vehicle and leaving the village. So, for both parents who had placed hope in and put so much pressure on their children in order to prevent a nonnormative relationship, the identity developed by the boys becomes a real social and emotional disaster. This family shame, central to much of African queer studies scholarship (Halperin and Traub 2009), is clearly an important trope in the representation of homosexual identity in the film.

Such shamefulness is also depicted through the choice of space used to experience gay sexuality. In Dakan, homosexual relations unfold in the dark. Camara's film, nevertheless, discreetly suggests that homosexuality is a common practice in this African society. Thus, if Manga and Sory are the only homosexual couple in the film, the mise-en-scène implies that other young men are tempted by such sexuality. In fact, Sory appears to be the star that attracts a rather considerable number of young men. At school, while Manga awaits his friend, the latter engages in a conversation with a young boy who, according to Manga, enjoys Sory's favorable attention. Furthermore, when Sory leaves to meet with his wife, a young boy waits for him at the staircase and tendentiously signals to him by winking. At a bar, while Sory awaits Manga, another young man keeps him company. They are very close to each other, and the mise-en-scène brings into action the young man’s concupiscent gaze.

Clearly, Dakan establishes the germination of homosexuality as natural, if not inevitable. Moreover, the title of the film, which translates as “destiny,” implies that, despite Sory's marriage and Manga's promising relationship with Oumou, the two men are inevitably attracted to each other. The director also implies the inevitability of maternal love. The filmmaker makes the mother a victim who is defeated and resigned forever to her fate. However, she offers to her son the same bracelet that she had previously offered to Oumou,
asking him to give it to Sory. It is engraved with the words "take care of my son." Thus, homosexuality becomes established, or at least accepted.

**Woubi chéri (1998)**

In *Woubi chéri*, sexual identities are much more open and fully assumed. This documentary was directed by Philip Brooks (1953–2003; Australian) and Laurent Bocahut (1964–; French), who decided to investigate the subject of homosexuality in Africa. The documentary follows a cast of homosexuals (*woubis* and *yossis*) and *travestis*, but notably Barbara, a well-known *travesti* who is a central figure in LGBT movements in Côte d'Ivoire. Barbara is the president of the Ivory Coast Transvestites Association.

*Woubi chéri* is probably the most famous and also the earliest documentary on LGBT rights in francophone Africa. It shows how “gay life” in Côte d'Ivoire—and specifically in Abidjan, the nation’s largest city—is perceived in the popular imagination. It opens by discussing the issue of hiding and compares *woubis* to bats (*chauve-souris*). Like bats, *woubis* live in hiding but always find a way to connect with one another and, eventually, take over an entire tree. The implication here is that of loneliness that gives space to a new solidarity of shared experience in a safe place.

In discussing this film, to use the term *gay* would not be very useful, because sexual minorities have a specific sociolect: *woubis* (passive male partners; men who are the “wives”; often transvestites); *yossis* (active male partners who sleep with *woubis*; sometimes bisexuals); and *toussous bakaris* (lesbians). According to Barbara, *woubis* are effeminate boys, sometimes transvestites, who play the roles of “women.” The *yossis* are the “husbands” and can be married to women. In the film, Vincent is a *woubi* and a migrant from Burkina Faso who is adopted by Bibiche after his own mother dies. Bibiche is a *travesti* (a transvestite who is an effeminate, homosexual man) working as a prostitute with male customers. Jean-Jacques is a *yossi* who has an illuminating conversation with his lover, Laurent, about sexual identities and the shame he would bring on his family if he took Laurent back to his village. Jean-Jacques knows his relationship must remain hidden, although Laurent wishes he could go to his lover’s village and wear a wedding ring. Yet, Laurent also understands Jean-Jacques’s need to have a wife and children and says about JeanJacques, his *yossi*, that “he goes out with women because he needs to have a family for the future. And maybe, I’ll be able to live a family life through him.”

**KARMEN GEÜ (2001; JOSEPH GAÏ RAMAKA)**

*Karmen Geï* (2001) retells and reinvents the story of Carmen, the charismatic “bohemian” central figure made famous by the dassic opera by Georges Bizet (1838–1875), by transforming Carmen into Karmen, a bisexual Senegalese woman in modern-day Dakar. With a generous budget supported by the governments of France and
Quebec, and with higher production values than most African films of the period, *Karmen Geï* is the first feature film of Senegalese filmmaker Joseph Gaï Ramaka (1952–). Prior to *Karmen Geï*, Ramaka had made several documentaries, in addition to promoting Senegalese cinema through his distribution company, Les ateliers de l’Arche, which he founded in 1997 in Dakar. In reinventing Karmen as a bisexual free woman, Ramaka intended *Karmen Geï* to question the notion of freedom and explore the concepts of love, morality, and sexuality.

In Ramaka’s retelling, Karmen (played by Djeînaba Diop Gaï) seduces authority figures both as a celebration of her sexual freedom and as a tool for subverting established social and political structures. The only one of her conquests to actually move her heart is Angélique (played by Stephanie Biddle), a warden at the female prison where Karmen is an inmate at the beginning of the film. Despite having used Angélique to effect her escape from the prison, Karmen continues to pine for her and grieve over Angélique’s subsequent suicide. Ultimately, the movie ends tragically when Karmen is murdered by a former lover, Lamine Diop (played by Magaye Niang).

Throughout the film, Karmen uses her sexual power to overcome external obstacles, as she refuses to conform herself to the rules imposed by society. With her lesbian sexual affair with Angélique, she affirms her critiques against the patriarchal system that has repressed women’s freedom in Senegal. Karmen uses the power of the erotic as a motivational and creative force to dismantle the structures of power that suppress her body. Nevertheless, she refuses to lose herself, either in the sad love of Angélique or in the possessive love of the police officer Lamine.

Categorized as a musical, the film replaced Bizet’s operatic score with jazz, rhythmic African percussion, pop music, and rap, featuring the penetrating voice of the famous Senegalese singer Yandé Codou Sène (1932–2010) and the melodious rhythms of the American jazz saxophonist David Murray (1955–). In a 2011 interview with the author, Ramaka spoke of being influenced by previous versions of *Carmen*, especially those by Bizet, Otto Preminger (1905–1986), and Peter Brook (1925–). Ramaka referred to these previous adaptations in constructing his story, incorporating into his film elements from other media, including music and dance. These connections led to a confrontation among and the superposition of different languages, cultures, and histories. The production promoted an artistic syncretism, building bridges between different artistic practices and cultural traditions. The film was shot in Dakar, developed in France, and post-produced in Canada, and it features both professional and nonprofessional actors of various nationalities. Considering these characteristics, many scholars have underlined the deeply transnational dimension of Ramaka’s project. Another salient feature of *Karmen Geï* is the way Ramaka depicts sexuality. The movie is one of the first African films to show an explicit erotic sex scene between two women. By so doing, Ramaka challenged the traditional representation of African
women and African women's sexuality.

Upon release, *Karmen Geï* received mixed reviews. In Senegal, it generated a storm of controversy after religious activists prevented the film’s premiere, scheduled for June 2001, from going ahead. Ramaka was denounced for having used a religious song written by Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba (1853–1927), founder of the influential Mouride brotherhood, during the funeral scene of Angélique. In September 2001 *Karmen Geï* was banned in Senegal. Despite the film’s lack of popularity in Senegal, in the West it generated an overwhelming response. It was screened at many film festivals, including at Cannes, and garnered much attention as well as accolades.

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As in *Dakan*, homosexuality is an essentially urban practice in *Woubi chéri*. Protagonists are followed and described in their various networks: at work, in the streets, at the market, in their respective families, and so on. Homosexuality in Abidjan is an exceptionally private circle, with specific codes. More importantly, all the protagonists interviewed claim to be part of what may be called a global gay network that goes beyond urban or national boundaries. Ferdinand puts it perfectly well: “Woubis have great radar. They know exactly where to find each other. Whether in Europe, America … or here in Adjamé [a district in Abidjan]. Ghettos or not, woubis always manage to have their hideouts.” It must be noted that intolerance for alternative sexualities causes LGBT characters to experience hostility and solitude as they often do not dare come out. Identifying the location of various partners is the result of a life “in hiding” full of discrimination and loneliness. For example, Avelido, Laurent’s *yossi*, cannot find a job. Overall, *Woubi chéri* is distinct in its openness. LGBT identities are fully articulated, without any remorse, fear, or disguise. The French and Australian directors, whose work and trajectories focus on marginality in culture, society,
and politics, use this documentary to explore one of the last taboos in African sexuality.

Common Themes between *Dakan* and *Woubi chéri*

*Dakan* and *Woubi chéri* reproduce gender roles and identities in interesting and paradoxical ways. Both films feature biologically male characters who identify and perform as feminine. Manga, for example, laments God’s “unfairness” that he is unable to bear a child for his lover, who suggests they can adopt a child. Laurent, a pastry shop owner, comfortably cooks for his family when asked to, a role traditionally assigned to women. Thus, the dissident and subversive sexual identities systematically reproduce the norms and gender categories of the society they claim to subvert.

Finally, both films set LGBT identities and desires in divided spaces and discursive configurations: urban versus rural, Western versus African, light versus darkness, reason versus madness, local versus global. Clearly, homosexuality is an urban “madness” that parents try to cure in the village. Although Sory hopes that his village would be a sanctuary that could save them from the intolerable social aggression in the city, it is in a rural bush that Manga is sent to be “cured” from his homosexual “disease.”

Sortir du nkuta (2009)

The city as the preferred space for homosexual desires is also featured in *Sortir du nkuta* (2009), a documentary by another French director, Céline Metzger. After working for television, she went to Afghanistan where she filmed *Sous la loi des Talibans* (2001) before starting *Sortir du nkuta*; both first aired on French television. In Cameroon pidgin English, *nkuta* is a rough bag used to transport various agricultural products such as coffee or yams. Figuratively, *sortir du nkuta* means “coming out.” Very early in the film, Metzger notes that her camera and gear were taken from her by Cameroonian police, and she was asked to pay 1,500 euros (which she did) in order to get them back. At that time, she was with two same-sex–desiring women and was worried that if she did not pay that they would have been taken into custody. Metzger claims that charges of homosexuality are also used to blackmail individuals just as much as they are used by the tabloid press to take down politicians (*Tcheuyap 2014*). Like *Woubi chéri*, this documentary can be labeled as an advocacy film. It features Alice Nkom, a vocal and wellknown lawyer who is challenging the legality of antigay legislation and defending clients continually harassed because of their sexual identity.

The film follows Nkom as she tries to defend several men being held awaiting trial on charges of homosexuality. One key moment in the documentary is a heated exchange with a school administrator who expelled several female students from school for reported “lesbianism.” Interestingly, the school administrator admits to Nkom on camera that no adults actually witnessed the girls engaging in sexual acts. The lawyer challenges the
administrator for his assertions, threatening legal action against the school on the grounds that the girls cannot be charged with homosexuality if no one witnessed homosexual behavior.

The documentary follows several brave same-sex-desiring men and women. One man interviewed who had been imprisoned for homosexuality notes the atrocities that he endured while in prison, including having his food drugged and later finding himself in another man's bed, sexually abused. There is also a man who had been imprisoned under charges of homosexuality who later moved in with his male partner and began working for an LGBT rights group in Cameroon. The film follows the lives of same-sex-desiring women as well, including a “lesbian” who runs her own bar and is involved in HIV-prevention work and a same-sex-desiring female couple. The mother of one half of this same-sex couple is also interviewed, although she says that she does not want to talk about homosexuality. She claims that it goes against the Bible but that she loves her daughter so she will continue to maintain a relationship with her. Sortir du nkuta positions itself in the same legal and social discourse with Woubi chéri. Clearly, LGBT identities remain threatened in all these narratives.

**Challenged and Resisted Locally, Acclaimed and Accepted Abroad**

As can be seen above, Dakan, Woubi chéri, and Sortir du nkuta illustrate in many respects the challenges of LGBT identities in francophone Africa, which are equally highlighted in Karmen Geï and Born This Way. These challenges are rooted in political and social as well as religious structures. In the case of Karmen Geï, for example, after its release, the film was not banned by Senegalese authorities but by a Mouride spiritual leader. The reason was that Joseph Gaï Ramaka (1952–), the film’s director, had used the sacred lyrics and music of Cheikh Ahmadou Bamba (1853–1927), the founder of the Mouride brotherhood, in the section of the film showing the death of a lesbian prison warden. Ramaka eventually deleted some other “problematic scenes” before the release of the version that was acclaimed at many Western film festivals. He was also booed when the film was screened at the 2002 edition of the Écran Noirs film festival in Yaoundé, Cameroon. All that further illustrates what is widely known: LGBT identities, and any representation of them, are not exactly a cultural success on the continent, although they receive more favorable receptions abroad. While African spectatorship and nations are often extremely hostile, almost all these films about LGBT identities have won awards at various festivals in the West. In 2010 alone, Sortir du nkuta won awards at three film festivals in France: the Festival International du Film Lesbien et Féministe de Paris, the Festival de Films LGBT de Toulouse, and the Escales Documentaires festival (La Rochelle). After its release in 2013, Born This Way won at least eight awards. Hostile manifestations during the shooting of Dakan, the verbal attacks against Ramaka, and the social and political censorship of Karmen
*Geï* provide ample evidence that LGBT films are far from being a tolerated, let alone accepted, cultural production on the continent.

Such “cultural resistance” is rooted in specific perceptions of sexuality, cinema, and society, which do not always meet those of “Western” societies. As Thérèse Migraine-George once suggested, “Homosexuality inscribes itself in the lives of people who inherit their traditional socio-cultural heritage in a globalizing world. In other words ... same-sex feelings, desires and experiences are intricately part of their everyday lives at the junction of local and global structures and ideologies” (2003, 46). While it is obvious that the “local” is rooted in repression and intolerance, the “global” seems to be an important force in the expression of nonnormative sexual identities in African urban societies. The “globalness” of the representation of LGBT identities in francophone Africa also stems from the fact that several of the films have been widely acclaimed and aggressively marketed abroad not often for their aesthetic features but because they are advocacy narratives: they are used by human rights organizations and LGBT lobbying groups to illustrate the many discriminations against sexual minorities. If one adds to all that the fact that most of these narratives were either directed by foreign nationals (*Woubi chéri, Born This Way, Sortir du nkuta*) or coproduced by a foreign country *Dakan* (France and Guinea), it becomes clear that the debate on the “Africanness” of nonnormative sexualities is not very relevant, as Africa is part of a global system with shifting, challenging, and, often, controversial values.

**SEE ALSO** Cinema, African (Anglophone); Literature, African (Anglophone); Literature, African (Francophone)

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Cinema, Latin American (Early Twentieth Century)

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The influence of the Latin American film industry and film spectatorship on identity formation through the mid-twentieth century.

As posited by such film scholars as Jean-Louis Comolli, the history of cinema has been in large part the history of the twentieth century. This is particularly true in Latin America, where it has been associated with national projects of modernization following the establishment of independent republics throughout the nineteenth century. Due to the high costs of producing and distributing films, especially in the first half of the twentieth century, the trajectory of cinema in Latin America has been significantly influenced by shifting economic dynamics between the region’s larger nations and the increasingly dominant US film industry. While Paulo Antonio Paranaguá and others have described the region’s role during the early period of cinema as primarily limited to spectatorship of “imported production” (Paranaguá 2003, 33; translated by Charles St-Georges), by the mid-twentieth century, countries such as Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil had become influential producers of cinema in their own right, eventually accounting “for more than 80 percent of the region’s narrative film production” (Schroeder Rodríguez 2016, 2). Just as (as John D’Emilio has commented) the emergence of new sexual identities was a consequence of the urbanization and reorganization of space and interpersonal relationships under postindustrial capitalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, increased access to cinema and the development of national, regional, and international film industries played important roles in regulating and negotiating sexuality in Latin America.

Cinematic projection first arrived in Latin America in 1896 via Europe with Auguste Lumière’s visit to Mexico, where then-president Porfirio Díaz (in office 1877–1880 and 1884–1911) was eager to incorporate the new technology into his vision for national modernization. Films from primarily France and secondarily Italy dominated cinema houses in Latin America until World War I (1914–1918). The war interrupted those nations’ ability to make and export movies, and films from the United States quickly filled the commercial void. When describing this early period in Chile, Wolfgang Bongers, María José Torrealba, and Ximena Vergara note that cinema arrived “practically hand-in-hand with censorship,” as cinematic representations of modernity from other cultures and societies included elements that were deemed too controversial for local audiences at the time, particularly where portrayals of the liberated female body were concerned (2011, 57;
translated by Charles St-Georges). Images of women driving cars, playing tennis, smoking, and dancing in flapper dresses provoked moral panic among conservative spectators, as well as from social and religious organizations. In this regard, cinema was feared as a foreign source of social contamination because it allowed spectators to imagine other ways of being in the world in terms of gender roles. In addition, its arrival sparked the creation of a new, democratizing mass culture that no longer distinguished between high and low art, causing some within the wealthy elite to describe it as a “prostituted” form of art (Bongers et al. 2011, 23; translated by Charles St-Georges).

It was precisely because of cinema's wide appeal, however, that the political class soon took notice of this new medium's potential for didactic and even propagandistic uses, especially when the invention of films with sound made it possible to convey messages to a general public that was, by 1920 in the case of Chile, still 50 percent illiterate (Bongers et al. 2011).

The rise of cinema in Latin America runs parallel to the rise of consumerism and its role in defining an incipient urban middle class, wherein demographic groups such as immigrants, the working class, and women could negotiate new identities through recently gained access to the burgeoning consumerist economy. Beatriz Sarlo defines the cultural spirit of this era in Argentina as “a desire for the city” due to the shared, rapidly expanding urban space within which consumer-driven capitalism and cinema as a consumer practice converged (1993, 165). Maite Conde observes that the same spirit existed in historically agrarian, colonial Brazil, and that in Rio de Janeiro, women were “crucial in the development of a consumer identity” and were “encouraged to consume [cinematic] images and indulge in the freedoms of pleasure, desire, and visuality.” They constituted “a majority of filmgoers at the start of the twentieth century” to the point that “possibilities for female spectatorship were central to the medium's success” (2012, 15–16). It is no coincidence that many of the themes mentioned in this and the previous paragraph—prostitution, women, and cinema for purposes of national pedagogy—all come together to form a recurring thematic axis within Latin America's first cinematic movements.

**Gender and Sexuality in Early Latin American Cinema**

By 1926, Argentina, whose culture is renowned as the most cinema-going among Latin American societies, "was the second largest US market outside Europe" and the biggest player among Latin American countries in terms of producing cinema (King 2000, 11). The self-taught director José Agustín “El Negro” Ferreyra (1889–1943) notably directed several films about prostitutes with hearts of gold, some starring famed actress of Argentine and Mexican cinema Libertad Lamarque (1908–2000). As John King notes, “Buenos Aires was a notorious centre of prostitution in the early part of the twentieth century, and it was clearly geared to the latest technology. Argentine cinema at the time rose-tinted the sordid reality” (2000, 13). Ferreyra’s films were part of a general narrative formula, prevalent throughout Latin America at the time, that explored “sexual problems faced by defenseless women in a
There were, however, important exceptions to this generally reactionary take on gender and sexuality. Aside from Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's unfinished avant-garde film ¡Que viva México! (1931), Brazilian director Mário Peixoto's Limite (1929) is “the only Latin American silent film that radically critiques what Eisenstein called patriarchal exploitation, in this case through oblique representation of three pillars of patriarchal liberalism: marriage, capitalism, and heteronormativity,” wherein a woman is portrayed as shackled in handcuffs by marriage and “the homoerotic double entendres of” an encounter between two men “crystallize into an image of Man 1 as imprisoned by his acceptance of society’s heteronormativity” (Schroeder Rodríguez 2016, 62–63). In the same period, the stereotyped, effeminate Pocholo character began to appear on Argentine screens for mainstream audiences as comic relief, a subject of scorn and mockery. Despite never being named or legitimated as a man who desires other men, Pocholo's mere appearance constituted a public acknowledgment of the existence of such men. In Los tres berretines (1933; The three amateurs), he is portrayed as an avid cinephile who finds solidarity with middle-class housewives in a movie theater, where they can escape patriarchal impositions and imagine other worlds (Modarelli 2008). Recent scholarship has underscored the movie theater as a potentially queer space in this regard, in an era where films both reinscribed and subverted traditional notions of gender and sexuality.

**Asserting and Contesting Gender in the Golden Age**

This dual dynamic continued to present itself in Mexican cinema after Mexico replaced Argentina as Latin America's primary film producer in the early 1940s. In an attempt to undo some of the diplomatic damage caused by a series of violent and unpopular military and economic interventions in Central America and the Caribbean, US president Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882–1945) announced the Good Neighbor Policy in 1933. “Moving pictures were part of the Roosevelt government’s successful ... economic penetration of Latin America.... They did excellent business—and could form consumer tastes,” as well as advance a cultural and diplomatic agenda of goodwill and hemispheric cooperation (King 2000, 32). This initiative took on new urgency when the United States entered World War II at the end of 1941 and needed political and material support from Latin America to fuel its new military campaigns. Mexico was rewarded for its cooperation and was granted funding and access to celluloid and other source materials to stimulate its national film industry. By comparison, Argentina was denied access to film stock due to its stubborn policy of neutrality, thus causing a decline in national cinema production. Mexican filmmakers were eager to contest their country’s representation in Hollywood films up to that point, and Mexican politicians were keen to prescribe a unifying national identity through film in the aftermath of the highly divisive Mexican Revolution (1910–1920). According to Carlos Monsiváis (1976), Mexican audiences went to the movies during the
Golden Age to learn how to be Mexican.

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**Mexican Actress María Félix, 1955.** Following the end of the Mexican Revolution in 1920, Mexican filmmaking validated the projection of Mexico as a virile nation by focusing on heteromasculine and hyperfeminine characters. Félix most famously embodied the latter in her various roles.

This new national identity was decidedly hetero-masculine, as heroes of the revolution such as Pancho Villa (1878–1923) were portrayed as unflinchingly macho. “The push to claim Mexico as a virile nation gained momentum in the 1920s as a strategy to counteract the alleged effeminacy of the Contemporáneos group, avant-garde poets, artists, and intellectuals, many of whom held jobs in the civil service and some of whom were homosexual” (Mora 2006, 2). In the buddy movies of stars like Germán Valdés (1915–1973; known as “Tin Tan”) and Pedro Infante (1917–1957), male friendships were triangulated through a single female love interest, thus validating heteromasculinity as inwardly competitive and outwardly objectifying, while simultaneously acknowledging the dynamics of intimacy in homosocial relationships. Several queer readings of these classics—widely consumed throughout Latin America—have been published in recent scholarship, such as Sergio de la Mora’s *Cinemachismo* (2006).

As for the representation of women, María Félix (1914–2002) most famously embodied hyperfemininity in her various roles. Mexican Golden Age cinema continued to reinscribe the virgin/whore dichotomy by setting female characters in brothels and dance halls (a genre known as *cabareteras*), in many cases redeeming them, but ultimately punishing
them. An important exception is *Aventurera* (1950, starring Cuban-born bombshell Ninón Sevilla [1929–2015]), in which the protagonist, after being duped into a life of prostitution, “exacts revenge on all of those who have hurt her” and becomes sexually and economically independent (*Schroeder Rodríguez 2016, 120*). Another classical figure is the actress Sara García (1895–1980), whose uniquely memorable roles as family matriarch sealed her status as the national grandmother of Mexico despite her same-sex relationship with her lifelong companion, Rosario González (*Baeza Lope 2018*). As affirmed by Andrés Lima-Hincapié and Debra A. Castillo, “with the always ambiguous (but denied) sexuality of the macho/machorra (tomboy) dominating commercial cinema, Latin American film history was always a bit queer” (*2015, 3*).

**Pornographic Films and Cinema Houses**

Cinema in the region has also always shared a history with pornography, as argued by Andrea Cuarterolo in a 2015 article, wherein she observes that the first Edison camera to arrive in Brazil in the 1890s was promptly put to pornographic use, and that the oldest erotic film still in archived existence, *El satario*, was most likely recorded in Argentina in 1907. The genre flourished early on in Cuba, where sexual tourism from the adjacent United States provided ample demand. By 1917, pornography was already being produced and screened at a national level on 16- and 35-millimeter film in Mexico, with portrayals of same-sex intimacy being recorded and consumed over the first half of the twentieth century (*Salinas Hernández 2011*). Such films were screened clandestinely at brothels, at certain Mexico City hotels, and at bookstores and cinema houses such as La Tajeta and Cinema Venecia. The intensely homosocial nature of these viewing spaces would often facilitate homoerotic encounters, a dynamic at work in cinema houses such as Santo Domingo’s Cine Lido, which was transformed in 1972 from a mainstream theater into a space in which explicitly pornographic films were screened and anonymous, sexually diverse cruising occurred. In cities throughout Latin America, certain movie theaters acquired similar dimensions in terms of creating a space that was publicly accessible, yet sufficiently private for the convergence of cinema consumption and community formation for traditionally marginalized sexualities.

Throughout the middle of the century, erotic subject matter would evolve within regional cinematic genres, such as the transformation of Brazil's *chanchadas*—burlesque musical comedies of the 1930s and 1940s— into *pornochanchadas*. These low-cost, commercially lucrative films saturated national cinema markets in the 1970s to fill the void created by the 1964–1985 military dictatorship, whose censorship office had kept left-leaning Brazilian filmmakers out of business. *Pornochanchadas* served as escape valves for a culture of heterosexist authoritarianism, where humorous sexual (mis)adventures were framed as frivolous transgressions on the path to a person’s eventual adherence to prescribed notions of marriage and family (*Filho 1995*). In 1950s Argentina, “the extremely
successful light pornographic team of Armando Bo and his favorite actress Isabel Sarli—known as the most hygienic actress in cinema since she was always taking her clothes off for a bath—took advantage” (King 2000, 101) of favorable economic conditions in Paraguay for filming and producing their films.

In the international trajectory of Argentine director Emilio Vieyra (1920–2010), horror films slowly became sexploitation films, as did the work of the godfather of Brazilian horror, José Mojica Marins (1936--; known by his character name of Zé do Caixão, or “Coffin Joe”). Marins had several confrontations with the censorship office of the 1964–1985 military dictatorship, even in its penultimate year, when *A quinta dimensão do sexo* (The fifth dimension of sex) was censored for a homoerotic scene between two men (Barcinski and Finotti 1998). After the return to democracy in countries throughout the continent in the 1980s (but especially in Argentina, as noted by David William Foster [2003]), visibility for previously persecuted sexual minorities in both pornographic and mainstream cinema became more of a sociopolitical imperative. Conserving knowledge and documentation of films produced in Latin America in the early and mid-twentieth century—as well as the films themselves—has proven to be a challenging endeavor, as discussed by Javier Villa-Flores in his 2015 article on the fire that destroyed Mexico’s Cineteca Nacional in 1982. Similar national film archives can be found in places like Montevideo’s Cinemateca Uruguaya, Bogotá’s Cinemateca Distrital, and Lima’s Cinemateca Peruana. Despite the precarious nature of films from this period and the particular challenge they can pose in terms of the (in)visibility of sexual diversity, queer scholarship on early Latin American cinema is far from impossible, as evidenced by a growing body of research.

SEE ALSO *Cabaret Theater in Latin America and the Caribbean; Cinema, Latin American (Late Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries)*

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Cinema, Latin American (Late Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries)

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Six films from the late twentieth century and twenty-first century that illustrate the trajectory of LGBTQ themes and characters in Latin American cinema.

The presence of LGBTQ characters and issues in Latin American cinema, as in the region’s literature, has been slow to take shape. Given, however, the strong connection between literary production and commercial cinema in Latin America, it comes as no surprise that some of the most watched and discussed films are adaptations of bestselling novels. Included in this category are works by canonical writers such as José Donoso (El lugar sin límites, Chile, 1966) and Manuel Puig (El beso de la mujer araña, Argentina, 1976); well-known authors such as Senel Paz (El lobo, el bosque y el hombre nuevo, adapted as Fresa y chocolate, Cuba, 1993) and Reinaldo Arenas (Antes que anochezca, Cuba, 1992); and even more contemporary novelists such as Jaime Bayly (No se lo digas a nadie, Peru, 1994; La mujer de mi hermano, Peru, 2002), and Fernando Vallejo (La virgen de los sicarios, Colombia, 1994). All these films have made important advances in the visibility of LGBTQ persons in cultural and political life, in addition to increasing the visibility of Latin American cinema to a global audience.

The majority of LGBTQ-related commercial films have unsurprisingly been produced in the three major markets—Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico—although critically important movies have also been produced in Colombia, Cuba, Peru, Venezuela, and Uruguay. That being said, however, there is also a rich tradition of grassroots (films that highlight important social issues aimed at a particular constituency, often made on a low budget and with amateur actors), shorts, documentaries, and pornography featuring LGBTQ characters and issues. Although production of commercial films was relatively sparse in the second half of the twentieth century—especially when compared to US and European cinema, though perhaps more prominent than South and East Asian cinemas—the first two decades of the twenty-first century have seen a tremendous rise in the production and circulation of LGBTQ films from all over Latin America, as noted by scholars such as Jorge Ruffinelli (2010). Several of these films have gone on to win important international prizes at the Sundance, Miami, and Berlin festivals, as well as Goya Awards (Spain’s main film awards).

The differences between twentieth- and twenty-first-century productions are remarkable.
Whereas twentieth-century films tended to focus solely on gay male characters, more recent cinema is opening up to lesbian, trans, bisexual, intersex, and queer issues. This may be the result of several factors, including the broader transnational nature of contemporary cinema and the influence of global LGBTQ movements and politics. Earlier films were set in recognizable urban cities, whereas new films tend to explore sex, sexuality, and gender across a wide gamut of lived space. Most importantly, the more recent cinema from Latin America demonstrates an awareness of global LGBTQ discussions and debates, such as trans rights and gay marriage, and actively inserts itself into these conversations. While this entry largely focuses on Spanish America, it bears noting that Brazilian cinema has been at the vanguard of sexual and gender pluralities, given a history of more relaxed moral censorship and the proliferation of pornochanchadas (explicit sexploitation films) in the 1970s and 1980s. Two Brazilian films released in 2014, Futuro Beach and Hoje eu quero voltar sozinho (The way he looks), won multiple awards and received rave reviews. An understanding of current trends requires an overview of the trajectory of films to date.

**El lugar sin límites (Mexico; 1978)**

Arturo Ripstein's *El lugar sin límites* (The place without limits) is considered one of the very first Latin American LGBTQ films. The film is based on the eponymous novel by the Chilean José Donoso, an important figure both in the Latin American literary boom of the 1960s and 1970s, composed of renowned authors such as Gabriel García Márquez, Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, and Carlos Fuentes, and in the post-boom that was spearheaded by writers such as Isabel Allende, Elena Poniatowska, Luisa Valenzuela, and Rosario Ferré. Unlike his contemporaries, however, Donoso's novel and its protagonist, La Manuela, explicitly address LGBTQ issues in Latin American culture. The universality of Donoso's text is evidenced in the fact that Ripstein's adaptation is produced and takes place in Mexico and not Santiago. The director is known for working closely with several authors of the boom in his films, although *El lugar sin límites*, his fifth film, is perhaps his best known.

The plot of the movie is divided into three parts that largely follow the novel. The story chronicles the slow fall of a fictional town, El Olivo, during a period of stark economic change. El Olivo, like many other towns all over Latin America, suffers from caciquismo, or being controlled by a local cacique (local landowning politico). This character, Don Alejo, controls the local politics and economy, slowly starving the town and its inhabitants while enriching his own pockets. A large part of the film is set in the local brothel and revolves around La Manuela — a loca, or trans character, who co-owns the locale —and the violent sexual relationship maintained with Pancho, the son of a local peon who returns to El Olivo after squandering an investment by Don Alejo. There are several other details that are pertinent to this triangle of characters: it is insinuated that Pancho is Don Alejo’s illegitimate son, and the local cacique owns almost every part of the town with the exception of the brothel. Part one details the return of Pancho, the introduction of the
major characters and the relationships between them, and the presentation of issues such as homo and transphobia and sexual violence. In the middle section, the plot details La Manuela's past in El Olivo and the conception of her daughter, La Japonesita, with a prostitute (La Japonesa). In the final segment, the film reaches its climax as Pancho and La Manuela are embroiled in a game of seduction that ultimately leads to the latter’s murder at the hand of Pancho and his brother-in-law, Octavio.

Starring Roberto Cobo in what will be a signature role as La Manuela, *El lugar sin límites* is a foundational film that brings to light important issues, such as the violence facing the LGBTQ community in both Latin America and abroad. Ripstein ends the film with La Manuela's tragic death in a climactic scene that asks the audience to pause and reflect on the very real consequences of machismo and homophobia. The death goes unresolved, an open ending, thus inviting an ethical intervention on the part of the viewer. Perhaps most importantly, Ripstein’s *El lugar sin límites* portrays La Manuela as a complex character with a history, feelings, emotions, and depth, in a stark departure from the vacuous and frivolous representations of LGBTQ characters previously seen in commercial Latin American cinema. That being said, *El lugar sin límites* is not a true queer film but “a touchstone for later films, such as *Doña Herlinda y su hijo* and others that, in time, will follow” (Schuessler 2005, 140).

**Doña Herlinda y su hijo (Mexico; 1985)**

Directed by Jaime Humberto Hermosillo, *Doña Herlinda y su hijo* (Dona Herlinda and her son) is an essential film in the lineage of LGBTQ cinema in Latin America. A contemporary of Ripstein and others such as Jorge Fons, Hermosillo is best known as “the first Mexican director to not treat male homosexuality as a problem” (de la Mora 2006, 191). As is the case with many other films of the genre, Hermosillo bases the plot on an eponymous text—in this case, by Jorge López Páez. In certain regards, *Doña Herlinda* may be viewed as an evolution of the director’s exploration of homoeroticism in previous films, such as *Matinée* (1976) and *Las apariencias engañan* (1978; Looks can be deceiving). Though produced and filmed in 1985, it was not until 1987 that the film was first commercially shown in Mexico after having enjoyed a successful run abroad in international festivals in London, New York, and Paris.
Rodolfo (left) and Ramón in Doña Herlinda y Su Hijo (1985). This Mexican film by Jaime Humberto Hermosillo is an important film in that it normalized homoeroticism as a parallel to the heterosexual relationship by means of a triangle between the characters of Rodolfo, Ramón, and Rodolfo’s fiancée Olga.

The plot is based around four principal characters in Guadalajara, Mexico, a city known at the time for its provincialism and conservative social order. Interestingly, the director includes certain well-known persons of the local blossoming LGBTQ community in the film, as well as spaces such as Los Panchos, which is a principal gay bar in urban Guadalajara. Doña Herlinda, like later films, such as Contracorriente (2009) and No se lo digas a nadie (1998), involves a love triangle among two men and a woman. Rodolfo, an upper-class man, is to marry Olga, an educated member of the same class, who also has aspirations of being more than a housewife. Rodolfo’s physique and dress reminds the audience of Mexican actor, singer, and heartthrob Jorge Negrete (1911–1953). Rodolfo is also in a relationship with Ramón, a younger and poorer university student studying music. The majority of the film thus revolves around Rodolfo’s negotiation of both of these relationships, which change as the narrative progresses.

Hermosillo’s film adds layers of complexity to this simple triangle. It is insinuated, though never clearly stated, that Olga may be lesbian, as she starts dressing very much like a man, mirroring Ramón’s sartorial choices. It is also explicitly shown that Ramón is not the pasivo,
or "bottom" (i.e., the penetrated partner in anal sex), that the first sequences of the film would have us believe. In the one sex scene between Ramón and Rodolfo, it is clear that Ramón is the activo, or "top." In other words, Hermosillo breaks with the traditional representations of activos and pasivos in Mexican culture, showing the top as being more effeminate and the bottom as resembling Negrete.

The triangle is supervised by the matronly figure of Rodolfo's mother, Doña Herlinda, who is seemingly impervious to the amorous relationship between her son and his friend Ramón. She treats Ramón with kindness, welcoming him into her house. She also arranges for Rodolfo’s marriage to Olga, as he is of marrying age. After their nuptials, Doña Herlinda decides to remodel her house to include an extension for the young family and a room for Ramón, suggesting that she is aware of the triangle and wishes to maintain it behind closed doors. It comes as no surprise, then, that the film is titled after the matron, as it is her implicit complicity that allows for Rodolfo and Ramón to maintain their love.

*Doña Herlinda y su hijo* is an important film in the genealogy of Latin American cinema because it distinctively outs LGBTQ bodies and relationships from the brothel and other sordid, dark spaces that served as the setting in such films as *El lugar sin límites*. In a visible way, the film normalizes homoeroticism as a parallel to the heterosexual relationship by means of the Ramón-Rodolfo-Olga triangle. It should be noted, however, that *Doña Herlinda* is not a particularly queer film, as Hermosillo hesitates in fully opening up the gay relationship and does not out Olga explicitly; the three characters are allowed, by Doña Herlinda, to coexist within the house she plans to renovate.

**No se lo digas a nadie** (Peru; 1998)

Francisco Lombardi’s *No se lo digas a nadie* (1998; Don't tell anyone) also involves a love triangle between two gay men and a girlfriend/wife. The film is an adaptation of a semiautobiographical novel published in 1994 by the Peruvian writer, journalist, and television personality Jaime Bayly. Presented as a sort of bildungsroman of the upper social class of Lima, Peru, the film narrates Joaquín Camino’s (Santiago Magill) sexual maturity, from his early signs of homoerotic curiosity while attending a summer camp, to his fleeing to Miami and freedom from the social rules of home, and finally to his return to the life his parents wanted for him as a newly graduated lawyer with a fiancée who also comes from money. Like *Doña Herlinda y su hijo*, Lombardi’s film deals explicitly with an upper social and economic echelon that has access to material wealth and international travel.

Joaquín, much to the chagrin of his macho father, does not enjoy alcohol, prostitutes, hunting, or boxing—all traits that seemingly define masculinity. As a teenager, he begins to date Alejandra but also maintains a sexual relationship with Gonzalo, another childhood friend who is also in a heterosexual relationship. When this situation sours, he escapes to Miami, leaving behind the social norms that punished him for not being straight. Important
in this film is the use of the United States—and particularly Miami—as a symbolic space that is pro-LGBTQ lives and rights. This is also seen in later films, such as Gonzalo Justiniano’s *Lokas* (Chile, 2008; *Krazies*), where the United States is shown as a place of acceptance, freedom, and safety. This portrayal of queer lives, however, is also an idealistic one, given the long and turbulent histories of queer people of color in the United States. In Miami, Joaquín reconnects with Alejandra, precipitating his return to Lima and their subsequent nuptials. Joaquín, as Bayly has noted in interviews, is bisexual and not gay, which allows for him to genuinely marry his teenage sweetheart. The film, however, does not end with the protagonist returning to heteronormative acceptability; in the final scene, Gonzalo attends Joaquín’s graduation party and rekindles their relationship.

While the novel established Bayly's reputation as the enfant terrible of the Peruvian mass media, Lombardi’s film catapulted its gay theme into the mainstream's collective conversation. While Ripstein and Hermosillo made LGBTQ-inflected cinema that was marketed first to an international audience and then through a limited local release, Lombardi’s film galvanized, amid controversy, the Peruvian capital. While the film met resistance from the moral police and conservative quarters, it successfully created a public discussion on LGBTQ issues in a society where sexual difference is very much still taboo.

**XXY (Argentina; 2007)**

*XXY* is perhaps the most important Latin American queer film of the twenty-first century. While the title is a clear reference to Klinefelter syndrome (in which a person is born with two X and one Y chromosomes), Lucía Puenzo’s award-winning film is concerned with intersex and gay issues. Upon closer examination of the title credit, the audience will note that the title is XX and a broken X. Like *No se lo digas a nadie*, *XXY* is a coming-of-age story. It is also, furthermore, a coming-of-gender story for the protagonist, Alex, the fifteen-year-old intersexed child of Néstor and Suli Kraken, an Argentine couple who reside in a quiet fishing town on the Uruguayan coast. Néstor is a marine biologist who takes his family away from Buenos Aires to escape the judgment, gossip, and harassment that Alex would face growing up.

Like many LGBTQ films made in the twenty-first century, *XXY* takes place in the rural countryside away from the city, where the presence of the aquatic takes center stage in the visual and sensory imagery of the film. In the case of *XXY*, Puenzo foregrounds the sea as a reference for the image; its sounds and textures provoke a multisensorial relationship between the viewer and the film. This is a defining characteristic of many of the more recent LGBTQ films made in Latin America. The aquatic becomes a key narrative device in which directors locate their queer bodies.

This is clear from the very beginning of *XXY*, as the opening credits include an underwater background.
XXV begins and ends with the visit of a surgeon (Ramiro), his wife (Erika), and their son (Álvaro) to the Krakens’ property at the invitation of Suli, who, unbeknownst to her husband, invites the doctor to visit with Alex. She wants him to evaluate Alex for possible sex reassignment surgery, to thereby allow for the character to live as a man or woman, but not as both, the idea being that an intersexed body must be surgically reconfigured to a binary idea of sex. This desire poses problems, however, as Néstor and Alex resist medical intervention.

The plot begins with Alex’s decision to stop taking the hormones that stunted her masculine traits. Raised as a female, the unmedicated body now goes through a second puberty where maleness emerges in direct opposition to Alex’s nurtured and natured femaleness. To add to this, Alex and Álvaro begin a teenage relationship that is rife with the normal travails of young love. They laugh, they quarrel, they make up; it is in one of these sessions that they engage in sex. Puenzo, however, problematizes this plot point as we see that Alex penetrates Álvaro. Although they both enjoy the tryst, they come away ashamed: Álvaro because he is a bottom; and Alex because Álvaro allowed himself to be penetrated. The latter, in fact, leads to Alex rejecting Álvaro. Puenzo also includes a violent rape scene where Alex is accosted by a group of local teenagers who want to see her genitals. The film concludes with the fallout from this scene as the surgeon and his family leave the Krakens’ household to return to Buenos Aires. The director closes with an open ending: we do not know which gender, if any, Alex will choose in adulthood. XXY thus is not a film solely about intersex issues but a studied meditation on broader LGBTQ topics. As Jeffrey Zamostny notes, “XXY would probably be a less engaging film if its sole aims were to buttress activist discourse and to indulge in a politically correct celebration of the ideals set forth by the intersex movement” (2012, 193); it is instead a complex and layered movie that provokes important discussions about LGBTQ bodies and issues in the Latin American and global context. Questions of individual agency, social prejudice, gendered violence, and fissures within the LGBTQ community are provoked by the film and merit a studied meditation.

*El último verano de la Boyita* (Argentina; 2009)
Julia Solomonoff’s *El último verano de la Boyita* (The last summer of La Boyita), like *XXY*, similarly delves into issues of intersexuality. Told through the perspective of Jorgelina, the film explores the blossoming of sexuality and gender at the onset of puberty. Jorgelina is a young girl who, up until the point of the start of the narrative, shares everything with her older sister, Luciana. The early scenes of the film guide the viewer through the process Jorgelina faces of coming to terms with her sister’s puberty and how this, in turn, may foreshadow her own development and maturity. Another radical shift takes place in her household as her parents divorce and Luciana and her mother decide to spend the summer at the beach. Crestfallen because she is now excluded from “big girl” activities, such as trying on bras, Jorgelina decides instead to spend her summer with her father in their country farmhouse away from their main home in Rosario. There she reconnects with Mario, the young and introverted son of the farm’s caretakers, who, like Luciana, is also going through puberty. Like Luciana, he is also beginning to menstruate; the viewer learns that Mario was born with an enlarged clitoris, and as a result raised as male. He further identifies as male, adding complexity to his sex and gender constitution. The plot thus revolves around Mario coming to terms with his difference and with the relationship he develops with Jorgelina.
Whereas in \textit{XXY} Puenzo separated the intersexed body and its issues from the social milieu of Buenos Aires where Alex grew up, Solomonoff instead situates the plot within the specific setting Mario was brought up in. It is a small farming community in the Pampas, inhabited by a mostly German-immigrant community that is steeped in gaucho culture. Gender codes are therefore strongly influenced by occupational and behavioral traits. While women are expected to work the fruit orchards and tend to the house and children, men are entrusted with maintaining the fields, horses, and herds of cattle. Masculinity, in other words, is largely defined by one’s ability to control animals—an observation that is substantiated by the very first scene of the film, as well as by Mario’s participation in a horserace. The race is a coming-of-age rite for males in the community, as by winning it, Mario would demonstrate dominance over the horse and the other riders. When his father discovers that he menstruates, the first thing that is taken from him is his horse. In locating intersex issues within this cultural substrate, the film provokes a questioning of all gender codes, asking the audience to reflect on how systems of integration affect real lived experiences.

Coproduced by Agustín and Pedro Almodóvar’s film production company, El Deseo, the film follows \textit{XXY} in dealing with intersexuality as a topic left largely unexplored in Latin American film. Like that of Puenzo’s film, \textit{El último verano de la Boyita}’s approach is measured and contemplative, provoking multifaceted conversations and points of view that escape reductionism. It comes as no surprise that Deborah Martin calls \textit{El último verano de la Boyita} a “quite unprecedented intervention on the part of Argentine cinema into international debates on intersexuality, as well as into global queer filmmaking” (2013, 35).

\textbf{Contracorriente (Peru; 2009)}

\textit{Contracorriente} (Undertow), Javier Fuentes-León’s directorial debut, recounts the love triangle of a gay man (Santiago), a closeted man (Miguel), and an unsuspecting wife (Mariela) in a quiet fishing village somewhere in Latin America. Santiago and Miguel are childhood friends who meet on the outskirts of the village. The former is an artist from the big city, whereas the latter is strongly entrenched in the local social network through his work, marriage, and affiliation with a church. When Mariela becomes pregnant with their first child, tensions flare between the two men. After one of these arguments, Santiago gets caught in the undertow, his body stuck amid rocks in the ocean floor. He comes back as a spirit, instructing Miguel to save him from purgatory by finding his body and then offering it to the sea. The film delves into issues of religion, the closet, and homophobia, all within a magical ghost story. Herein is perhaps the greatest innovation seen in \textit{Contracorriente}, as Fuentes-León successfully uses for the first time in a LGBTQ film narrative modes—magical realism and the spectral—so connected to the literature of Latin America.

Starring Colombian heartthrob Manolo Cardona as Santiago, Bolivian Cristian Mercado as Miguel, and Peruvian actress Tatiana Astengo as his wife, Mariela, the film gathers an
international cast in a setting that is not easily identified. The lack of specificity regarding the location is somewhat unusual, as the great majority of LGBTQ films in Latin America have clear local markers of place. Instead, Fuentes-León crafts a sort of archetypal space that is easily translated across national borders, creating an idea of a “Latin American” space inhabited by Latin American characters and issues. It comes as no surprise that the director chooses magical realism, given its quintessential ties to a Latin American imaginary. That the plot takes place in a fishing village in close proximity to the sea is a characteristic shared with *XXY* and *El último verano de la Boyita*, where the aquatic—as substance, narrative device, and texture—becomes a sort of metaphor for queer bodies and desires (see Venkatesh 2016 for a detailed explanation of this phenomenon).

The film also explores the gendered spatiality of everyday life, demonstrating how archetypal spaces such as the home, the church, and the cantina (tavern) are both gendered and gendering. This thesis is especially furthered in the scenes wherein the ghostly Santiago interacts with Miguel. The liminality of death allows the director to clearly outline how these ubiquitous spaces influence the lived experiences of LGBTQ persons. *Contracorriente* lacks some of the more provocative imagery and narrative points seen in Latin American LGBTQ cinema, but the film is an important touchstone given its exploration of specific pan–Latin American issues and its use of magical realism to deconstruct dominant narratives of gender, desire, and sexual identity.

While the history of LGBTQ issues and persons in Latin American cinema may be seen as relatively limited in comparison to US and European traditions, there are several important films, directors, and movements that demonstrate how issues of sex, gender, and sexuality are at the very core of Latin American cultural production. This has been made even clearer in the early twenty-first century, as an increasing number of queer films are being produced in big and small markets fueled, in part, by the rise in independent and LGBTQ film festivals throughout the world, coupled with the possibilities of broader production mechanisms. Many of these films have won important local and international awards, demonstrating how dynamic and important LGBTQ films are within a wider Latin American cinema. Lorenzo Vigas’s *Desde allá* (*Venezuela, 2015; From afar*), for example, won the Golden Lion at the Venice Film Festival, in addition to several other prizes. Some directors (such as Solomonoff) have made one-off LGBTQ films, whereas others, such as the Argentine Marco Berger or the Mexican Julián Hernández, are developing as veritable auteurs in a series of films that have achieved critical and commercial success.

That being said, perhaps the biggest criticism one may have of films produced in Latin America is their relative lack of an engagement with queer issues; in other words, these films tend to explore difference without necessarily questioning heteronormative institutions such as marriage. Another critique may be the scarcity of representations of lesbianism, although more recent works, such as *El niño pez* (*2009; The fish child*) and *Todo el mundo tiene a alguien menos yo* (*2012; Everybody’s got somebody but me*), have made
great strides in portraying lesbian bodies, issues, and desires. In these films, lesbian issues are directly addressed, as opposed to being alluded to or insinuated, which has tended to be the case in Hispanic cinema and literature. Instead, these films position lesbian love and desire at the center of their plots. With an increasingly favorable social and juridical climate, new circulation models that benefit from internet streaming services catering to local and global audiences, and the winning of several significant international awards, the sky is the limit for queer Latin American cinema moving forward. For the viewer and researcher, the field of LGBTQ Latin American cinema is booming and encourages wide participation.

SEE ALSO Antes que Anochezca (1992; Reinaldo Arenas); El Beso de la Mujer Araña (1976; Manuel Puig); Cinema, Latin American (Early Twentieth Century); Madame Satã (1900–1976)

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Cisgender, or cis, is a term used to describe people who are non-transgender. That is, cis people are people whose gender identity and gendered sense of self is congruent with the sex/gender assigned to them at birth. This definition, however, has been critiqued by some who feel it imposes and/or maintains a rigid understanding of sex and gender. Similar to race, ability, class, and sexuality, cis indicates an unmarked state that is often perceived as the assumed default marker and, thus, natural. In addition, its deployment is meant to address the often used, yet problematic, language of referring to non-trans people as “real,” “biological,” or “bio” (e.g., “a real man” or “a bio woman”). The rhetoric of “real” implies that trans men and women are not real men or women and assumes the sexed body as the location of reality and truth regarding sex/gender. It is possible to recognize the assumption that the sexed body is the location of reality/truth because of the frequent use of expressions such as “really a man” or “discovered to be female,” or even the media’s use of “born a man” or “born female,” all of which are linked to genital status (Henningsen 2016; Bettcher 2007). As such, cis “de-centralize[s] the dominant group, exposing it as merely one possible alternative rather than the ‘norm’ against which trans people are defined” (Koyama 2002). In addition, cis has some global circulation and has been translated into a number of languages, including Arabic (mutawāfiq al-jins), Catalan (cigènere), Estonian (cissoolisus), Esperanto (cisgenrulo), Korean (siseujendeo), and Spanish (cisgénero), to name only a few. In order to fully understand cis, one should consider both the history of the term cis and its political deployments, as well as its more recent circulation in a global context.

History

The prefix cis is a Latin preposition meaning “on the same side as.” It appears as an English prefix, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), as early as the seventeenth century and was often used to indicate location or relationality (e.g., cis-Atlantic, meaning “on this side of the Atlantic,” as opposed to transatlantic, “across the Atlantic”). Toward the end of the nineteenth century, the cis/trans distinction had been established in the sciences, most notably in chemistry and molecular biology. For instance, in chemistry a cis-compound is a
compound in which “two atoms or groups are situated on the same side of some plane of symmetry passing through the compound” (OED). In addition, compounds that do not change state when they come in contact with other media are also considered cis (Enke 2012).

The term cisgender as it is known and understood today has taken many forms over its linguistic history, yet its meaning has remained relatively consistent and mirrors the linguistic evolution of the term transgender. For instance, in the late nineteenth century sexologists used the concept of “inversion” to describe cross-gender identification, which was also associated at that time with homosexuality. Indeed, the German sexologist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895), in his collection of essays on “man-manly love” ([1898] 1975), used the now classic, albeit problematic, inversion formulation anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa—a female psyche confined in a male body. By the early twentieth century (1910), however, the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) and the British sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859–1939) used “transvestitism” (as well as “eonism,” after Chevalier d’Éon [1728–1810] who was known to wear women’s clothes) as a separate category from inversion to describe both cross-gender identification and cross-dressing. It was not until the mid-twentieth century when transsexualism, defined in part by the desire for gender-affirming surgery, appeared in medical discourse, introduced by David O. Cauldwell and Harry Benjamin, who coined the English term transsexual (Meyerowitz 2002). By the 1970s, such transsexual people as Christine Jorgensen (1926–1989), began using the term transgender (or transgendered) to talk about cross-gender identity, as well as to make a distinction between sex and gender (Meyerowitz 2002). Indeed, the shift in terminology from transsexual to transgender occurred in part because of a newly articulated differentiation between sex and gender in the mid-twentieth century (Meyerowitz 2002). That is, by the mid-twentieth century, sex was, and still is, generally based on biological concepts such as chromosomes, gonads, and/or genitals, and gender is considered socially constructed and the accumulation of actions, behaviors, and roles attached to and expected of certain sexed bodies within a given culture (Henningsen 2016). This differentiation between sex and gender is in part the result of work done by the sexologist John Money (1921–2006) at Johns Hopkins University, who, in 1955, used the phrase “gender roles” as part of his research on intersex individuals, and the psychologist Robert Stoller (1924–1992) at the University of California, Los Angeles, Medical School and Gender Identity Clinic, who coined the phrase “gender identity” in 1964 (Meyerowitz 2002).

The understanding of cis has followed a similar trajectory as trans (from -vestism to -sex to -gender), although not entirely on the same time line. The cis/trans distinction as it relates specifically to sex/gender appears in the early twentieth century and is credited to the German sexologist Ernst Burchard (1876–1920). Burchard coined the term cisvestitismus (cisvestism) in contrast to transves-titismus (transvestism) in his 1914 encyclopedia of sexuality titled Lexikon des gesamten Sexuallebens (Encyclopedia of the entire sexual life)
four years after Hirschfeld and Ellis put transvestite/transvestism into public circulation. Burchard writes:

*Cisvestism: the inclination to wear the clothing of another age group, ethnicity [nation], or profession [lit., working class or vocational class] of the same sex/gender for the purposes of sexual release [lit., easing of sexual tension]. Related to Transvestism (cf. “clothing drive”).

(32; EMPHASIS ADDED; TRANSLATION BY DAVID J. SELLINGER)*

What is notable about Burchard’s definition of cisvestism is the specification of sex/gender. The implication of his definition is that cisvestites derive pleasure from age-, ethnic-, or class-based cross-dressing, but not gendered cross-dressing. That is, cisvestism allows for cross-dressing in terms of age, ethnicity, or class so long as the clothing is congruent with one’s sex/gender assigned at birth. Furthermore, although cisvestism is explicitly defined as “for the purposes of sexual release,” or sexual pleasure, its relation to transvestism’s double meaning of cross-dressing for sexual pleasure and cross-gender identification paves the way for extending cisvestism’s meaning to include same-gender identification. That is, the term cisvestism could also mean identifying with the sex/gender assigned at birth, thus laying important ground work for the contemporary understanding of cis, or cisgender.

How much Burchard’s neologism circulated within sexology, and by extension psychoanalysis, remains unclear. A new variation of cis-, however, appeared in scholarship seventy-seven years later, in 1991, when Volkmar Sigusch used the term zissexuelle (cissexual), noting that zissexuelle was not a familiar term to earlier sexologists such as Hirschfeld and Burchard who used transvestitismus and cisvestitismus. Entering academic discourse almost thirty-five years after the introduction of the term transsexual by Cauldwell and Benjamin, Sigusch explains zissexuelle (cissexual) as follows:

*The Latin cis- as a prefix means “on this side of.” Thus, “zisalpin” [cissionalpine] means: (from the point of view of Rome) on this side of the Alps. The Latin trans- as a prefix means “through, across/straight through, across/over, on the other side of, beyond.” Thus, “transkutan” [transcutaneous] means: through the skin, and “transatlantic” means: transoceanic (from one’s own point of view), on the other side of the Atlantic. Cissexuals experience and define themselves (in terms of bodily sex) “on this side,” transsexuals “on the other side.”

(338, N. 7; TRANSLATION BY DAVID J. SELLINGER)
Unlike Burchard, Sigusch provides a rationale for the term by linking it to earlier uses of cis- to describe locationality, as in zisalpin. Furthermore, Sigusch's definition is the first time cis- is explicitly linked to embodiment and identity. It is important to note here that, although zissexuelle entered academic discourse in 1991, linking the origin of zissexuelle to Sigusch has been contested. For instance, an anonymous commentator on Whipping Girl, a blog maintained by the trans activist and gender theorist Julia Serano, claimed that the term had already been circulating within trans and intersex communities in Germany since the 1980s, although the commentator did not offer evidence (Serano 2014).

By the mid-1990s cisgender began circulating in online communities. For instance, in 1994 the biologist Dana Leland Defosse used the word cisgendered with no accompanying definition in a research inquiry on an online forum. Defosse does, however, discuss with A. Finn Enke why cis is an appropriate complement to trans-, rooting her rationale for cis in molecular biology and organic chemistry (Enke 2012). Independently of Defosse, the Dutch trans man Carl Buijs coined the term cis in 1995 in another online forum for trans and intersex people, writing in 1996 about how he came up with the term: “As for the origin; I just made it up. I just kept running into the problem of what to call non-T* people in various discussions, and one day it just hit me: non-trans = cis. Therefore, cisgendered.” Although Buijs does not offer an explicit definition of cisgender, other members of the forum do, using language similar to Sigusch's definition and rationale of cissexual.
In the first decade of the twenty-first century, both *cisgender* and *cissexual* began circulating more widely after Serano popularized the terms in her 2007 book *Whipping Girl: A Transsexual Woman on Sexism and the Scapegoating of Femininity*. Serano also notes on her online blog (2011) that she came across the term on another website by the trans activist Emi Koyama. Although the concept of cis as it relates to sex/gender has been around since the beginning of the twentieth century, Serano (2014) contends that its popularity proliferated within predominantly trans activist communities. By December 2015 *cis, cisgender, cisgendered, cissexual, cisexist*, and *cissexism* were all added to the third edition of the *OED*, according to each of the entries’ publisher notes. In April 2016 Merriam-Webster announced via Twitter that *cisgender* had been added to its unabridged dictionary, along with *Mx.* (a gender-neutral option for Miss/Mrs./Mr. popularized by the trans-genre artist Mx. Justin Vivian Bond) and *genderqueer*. The addition of *cis* (and its correlates) to both the *OED* and Merriam-Webster can, in part, be linked to its use and circulation on social media, and thus to a broader audience. More specifically, cis got widespread media attention in February 2014 when Facebook added fifty-six options for gender, which at the time of their addition were available only to US users (Dewey 2014). The widespread attention cis received from the media helps proliferate discussions about cis privilege,
cisnормativity, and the problems and politics of its deployment.

**Cis Privilege and Cisnornativity**

As cis has become more widely used publicly, the stakes of cis have become more apparent. Most notably, because cis is deployed in order to highlight an often-unmarked state, it is possible to see how cis privilege and cisnornativity operate in society and how both contribute to anti-trans rhetoric, policies, and violence.

Cis privilege refers to the assumed and invisible advantages one receives because of being, or more accurately *perceived* as being, cis (Henningsen 2016). Like other forms of privilege, cis privilege is often invisible and, therefore, taken for granted. According to the online blog *Taking Up Too Much Space*, some of the privileges that cis people have, but are perhaps unaware of, include (but are not limited to):

- Having government-issued ID that accurately represents who you are (especially regarding name and sex/gender marker)
- Expecting your private medical information to remain private in non-health-care-related interactions
- Having access to health care and expecting that you will not be denied access because of your gender
- Expecting the privacy of your body to be respected; for instance, you are not asked about your genitals and/or body, or whether you have had gender-affirming surgeries (i.e., a “sex change”)
- Expecting access to and fair treatment within sex-segregated facilities such as bathrooms, gyms and locker rooms, homeless shelters, domestic violence shelters, drug rehabilitation programs, prisons, hostels, and juvenile justice systems
- Having your name and pronouns respected (Cedar 2008)
LGBTQ Activists Protest Heteronormativity in Majorca, Spain. Heteronormativity, or the assumption that people should desire those of the opposite sex, is closely linked to cisnormativity, or the assumption that people should identify and present with their gender assigned at birth.

Through everyday actions and experiences such as those just mentioned, cis-privilege, then, creates a double standard wherein trans is both distinct from and less legitimate than cis (Serano 2014). Moreover, one of the privileges of cis is that it “performs as the arbiter of real, true, or natural gender,” and thus, cis by definition “is rarely required to but can always legally and socially prove itself: as such, it serves to judge the realness or legitimacy of all people’s sex/gender” (Enke 2012, 66). Thus, cis privilege is the result of cisnormativity.

Cisnormativity is the assumption that all people are cis and meet (or should meet) normative expectations of masculinity and femininity based on the sexed body (Henningsen 2016). Akin to Adrienne Rich’s articulation of “compulsory heterosexuality” in her 1980 essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence,” cisnormativity is compulsory in that it mandates that cis is the assumed default position, as well as always political and imbued with power. Furthermore, although Rich does not explicitly make a claim about cis in her essay, her articulation of compulsory heterosexuality assumes cisnormativity as a given, because cisnormativity requires that someone who is assigned female at birth, for instance, must identify and present as a woman, where it is also understood that being a woman, according to the logic of compulsory heterosexuality, means desiring men. Put another way, compulsory heteronormativity, or what Judith Butler calls “the heterosexual matrix”—the “grid of intelligibility through which bodies, gender, and desires are naturalized”—is always already cisnormative because it “assumes
that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through stable gender ... that is oppositionally and hierarchically defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality” (1990, 1999, 194, n. 6). Compulsory cisnormativity can be seen being played out in early trans history where trans people were (and in some places still are) required to desire the “opposite gender.” For instance, according to Afsaneh Najmabadi in Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran (2014), Iranian legal and medical authorities sanction “sex change” surgeries to “correct” homosexuality, although this has not yet become official state policy. In addition, in the mid-twentieth century in the United States, trans women were not considered to be legitimately women by the medical industry unless they desired men. That is, trans women could not be lesbianidentified because cisnormativity requires oppositional desire (i.e., heteronormativity). In this way, medical treatments of trans people have historically reinforced both cisnormativity and heteronormativity.

Furthermore, medical intervention, or medical transition, continues to perpetuate cisnormativity even if the medical establishment no longer requires oppositional desire of trans people. To be clear, the point is not to invalidate the experiences or desires of trans people who medically transition. Instead, it calls attention to the ways in which medical transition supports cisnormativity and thus expands cis privilege to trans people who are perceived to be cis, or “passed” as cis. For instance, using myself by way of example: because of medical transition which included hormones and gender-affirming surgeries, I am perceived by people to be not just a man but more specifically a cis man. As a result, I am afforded some privileges that come with being perceived as cis, such as access to men’s bathrooms and changing facilities (in addition to all the other privileges I receive because I am male, white, and able bodied). Even if I personally do not feel safe in those spaces, I am not considered to be “out of place,” because I am perceived by others as meeting culturally specific definitions of masculinity through such things as facial hair, a lower voice, flat chest, clothing, and so on. In this way, some trans people, like myself, benefit from cis privilege because cis privilege is not necessarily about cis or trans status or identity per se, but about how others perceive them in approximation to cisnormativity. As a result, those who do not meet cisnormative ideals of femininity and masculinity are often verbally and physically attacked. Like other forms of passing (racial, class, ability, etc.), which call attention to the instability of categories, being perceived or passed as cis destabilizes cis. That is, trans people who are passed as cis, as well as genderqueer and gender-nonconforming people who are passed as cis, call attention to the false assumption that cis “stay[s] put” (Enke 2012, 61). As a result, the use of cis has recently received considerable pushack because of the presumption that cis stays put within normatively defined gender parameters (Enke 2012).

Critiques
There are two dominant modes of critique that cis has received from both trans and cis people in the twenty-first century. The first critique of cis addresses the very instability of cis. As previously mentioned, Enke (2012) points out that despite an assumption that cis “stay[s] put,” it actually fails to do so. In order to address some of the instability of cis, some activists such as Serano (2011) and Helen Boyd (2009) have tried to make a distinction between cissexual and cisgender. Boyd specifically argues that, for instance, a butch lesbian can be cissexual, but because her gender performance is nonnormative she might not be, or might not identify as, cisgender. To that end, a femme lesbian might also be cissexual but to some degree not cisgender, because her gender is nonconforming according to cisnormativity’s (which is always already heteronormative) mandate of oppositional desire (Cole and Cate 2008). That does not, however, obscure the ways in which femme lesbians experience cis privilege or obscure the reality that many trans women also identify as lesbians. Furthermore, Serano (2016) has gone so far as to imply that a trans person who has not medically transitioned may be cissexual while also being transgender.

The cissexual/cisgender debate, however, may be unhelpful in part because cisnormativity, as mentioned previously, is not so much about cis (or trans) status or identity per se but more accurately about whether someone is perceived to be cis based on cisnormative ideologies about femininity and masculinity. Furthermore, the terminology of cissexual perpetuates a false assumption that there are two, and only two, sexes: male and female. The existence of intersex people and the prevalence of intersex conditions—one in 100 births according to the Intersex Society of North America—calls into question the very stability of cissexuality and a sex binary. Thus, if the distinction between cissexual and cisgender is unhelpful, it may be more useful to think about cis and trans as being on a field of relationality. Unlike the Kinsey scale, which positions sexuality along a spectrum that maintains a hierarchical binary and ignores relations of power, a field of relationality can account for a range of gender expressions that fall outside of a spectrum logic, such as agender, nonbinary, and, for some, genderqueer.

The second critique comes primarily from the circulation of cis within the university classroom. In their 2012 article “The Education of Little Cis,” for instance, Enke argues that while cis is useful for marking an unnamed position, especially with students just beginning to learn about trans and trans experience, in the end it ultimately reifies otherness, or positions trans as Other by setting up yet another binary in which cis is positioned as the norm. This is a problem, in part, because binaries are never horizontal and equal, but always vertical and hierarchical. As such, the deployment of cis, even in the classroom as an attempt to indicate one’s ally status, ends up not only reinforcing trans as Other but also reinforcing a hierarchical power dynamic that continues to privilege cis. Binaries are also problematic because they are confrontational and oppositional in that one needs the other to exist. A cis/trans spectrum, however, complicates a topdown power dynamic because it shows how power is always relational and always in motion.
Cis in a Global Perspective

Cis has been translated into a number of languages, and global LGBTQ communities have begun to use cis. For instance, the Chinese LGBTQ organization Tongyu (Common Language) published one of the first pamphlets translating common LGBT terminology from English to Chinese. Tongyu's translation of cis (shùn) means “confirming, or following,” according to Di Wang (2017), an activist involved with the translation and publication of Tongyu's pamphlet. That is, gender confirms or follows the sex assigned at birth. In addition, Tongyu's full explanation of cis indicates that gender presentation and expression align with normatively defined expectations of sex/gender in addition to “confirming” or “following” sex assigned at birth (Tongyu 2014). Similarly, in 2016 Argentina's Ministry of Health released a guide to sexual diversity (“Guía básica sobre diversidad sexual”) that includes císgénero and cisgenérica. In Turkey, trans activists have started using natrans (not trans) to talk about cis, or non-trans people. According to the anthropologist Dilara Çalışkan (2017), natrans began being used in the Turkish LGBT community around 2010, years before its first appearances in academic scholarship. In India, however, cis is rarely used, although it occasionally appears in academic contexts, according to Mridu Markan (2017), who has done extensive public health work with India’s hijra (third gender) communities. Markan does go on to indicate that despite its rarity, cis, when defined within an Indian context, indicates that the cis person is “straight identifying” in addition to experiencing their gender as congruent with sex/gender assigned at birth. In this way, at least in India, cis status is always heterosexual. That is, gay men and lesbians in India would not necessarily be identified as cis. Like scholars in India who use the term, cis is also being used in transnational scholarship. For instance, social psychologist Zoe Samudzi, and health economics scholar Jenevieve Mannell collaborated on a 2016 article for Culture, Health, and Sexuality about cisgender male and transgender female sex workers in South Africa.

In addition to the translation of cis into a number of languages, the term continues to circulate globally, aided in part by Western media coverage of queer and trans issues in other parts of the world. For instance, Julia Felsenthal uses the term in a 2016 Vogue magazine article about Jamaica’s “Gully Queens” (a group of gay and trans people of color, predominantly trans women, who often find shelter in Kingston’s sewer systems in the most impoverished areas of the city). Cis also circulates globally through popular and social media, as evidenced by the inclusion of cis as one of the gender options for Facebook. Although the fifty-six gender options were available only in the United States at the time of their addition, many international news sources reported on the gender options, including the Times of India. Moreover, the distribution of such popular movies about trans characters as The Danish Girl (2015) helps circulate cis on the global scale through ongoing debates about whether non-trans actors such as Eddie Redmayne (who played the Danish trans woman Lili Elbe) should play trans characters. As cis continues to circulate globally
through social and popular media, it is important to keep in mind that cis is a concept that was developed in and proliferated predominantly within a Western context. As the term continues to circulate, one should be careful not to map or project cis onto other epistemologies of sex/gender outside of a Western/US context. One should resist projecting the cis/trans binary onto other modes of knowledge, in part because compulsory cisnormativity already assumes whiteness. That is, because cis operates alongside other unmarked states of race, ability, class, gender, and sexuality, the universal body is assumed to be not only cis but also white, male, able bodied, wealthy, and straight. Therefore, when talking about cis in a global context, one must “grapple with the racial and geopolitical economies and forms of governmentality that instill whiteness as the given” of both cis and trans subjects (Aizura et al. 2014, 309). Put another way, it is important to be cognizant of the ways in which mapping or projecting cis onto other epistemologies of sex/gender participates in imperialist projects that ultimately serve the interests of the Global North and West, especially the United States.

SEE ALSO Anti-gender Movement in Europe; Asexuality; Chevalier d’Éon or Mademoiselle Beaumont (1728–1810); Cross-Dressing in the West; Institut für Sexualwissenschaft; Kinsey Scale

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For at least a millennium, the study of Greek and Roman culture has provided educated people the opportunity to discuss and analyze same-sex desire. According to Greek myth, the god Zeus fell in love with the divine hero Ganymede, as did the god Apollo with the divine hero Hyacinth, while the seer Tiresias changed sexes, experiencing the sexual act both as a male and as a female. Greek and Roman leaders, including Alexander the Great (356–323 BCE) and the emperor Hadrian (76–138 CE), reputedly had male beloveds. The love poetry of Sappho (c. 610–c. 570 BCE) delicately describes the erotic feelings women have for each other. The *Symposium* of the philosopher Plato (c. 428–c. 348 BCE) intricately dissects men’s love for other men. The poems of Catullus (c. 84–c. 54 BCE) salaciously depict sexual behavior between men, while in the *Aeneid* Virgil (70–19 BCE) gives a touching account of the love between the war heroes Nisus and Euryalus. These are just a few examples that show that it was virtually impossible to avoid same-sex and even queer desire in the study of the classics, for which reason the discipline became a safe venue for the discussion of erotic love between members of the same sex. In the field of classical studies, one could have a respectable, dignified, and even celebratory discussion of same-sex desire, despite the severe stigmatization that accompanied such desire elsewhere in society. The focus of these discussions tended to change with the needs of the times: in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, they centered on the morality of the desire; in the Enlightenment, on the dignity of this desire and the “rights of man”; in the late nineteenth century, they were concerned with patriarchy and masculinity; and in the late twentieth century, with questions concerning the essential or constructed nature of gay identity.
**The Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Ganymede**

In the period from 1050 to 1150, “what might be called a gay subculture” took shape; it relied in part on classical motifs such as the story of Ganymede to communicate its ideals (Boswell 1980, 243). Ganymede continued to be a vehicle for the understanding of male-male desire, particularly in the Renaissance. Numerous well-known artists took for granted the widespread knowledge of the classics among the educated classes to discuss male-male desire in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries: Michelangelo (1475–1564) gave a drawing of Ganymede as a testament of his love to the young nobleman Tommaso de' Cavalieri (1509–1587), while Benvenuto Cellini’s (1500–1571) *Ganymede* clearly reflects the artist’s experience with same-sex desire. Knowledge fueled by a rebirth of classical studies helped artists articulate a “homoeroticism *all'antica*” (in the manner of the ancients) (Saslow 1986, 142). The phrase *all'antica* circulated in the Renaissance in the art world, indicating an effort to emulate the ancients; James Saslow suggests that the comprehension and appreciation of same-sex desire could also fall under the category of celebrating antiquity.

Despite the resurgence of ancient culture, Roman Catholic values remained strong in this era, and there is every indication that men who had sex with men struggled with the morality of their desires. For them, the classical tradition, with its tale of Ganymede, provided an opportunity for a discussion of the uplifting quality of their desire. Neoplatonic...
interpretations stressed the edifying aspects of the relationship: Zeus’s desire allowed Ganymede to ascend into the heavens and consort with the divine. Knowledge of the classical tradition allowed men in the Renaissance to contest rigid Christian condemnations of their relationships.

**The Enlightenment: Classical Sexuality and the Rights of Man**

In the Enlightenment, classical studies returned and served a new purpose for men who had sex with men, placing same-sex desire in the context of the freedom and the dignity that constituted *les droits de l’homme* (the rights of man). A leader in this development was the German art historian Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717–1768), a man whose sexual interests were quite openly directed toward other men and who revitalized interest in the classics and the classical ideal. In his youth, the study of the classics had fallen into such disregard that Greek was scarcely taught in the universities of his native Germany anymore (*Leppmann 1970*). Winckelmann not only immersed himself in the study of antiquity but heralded the beginning of the neoclassical era with his 1755 monograph *Gedanken über die Nachahmung der griechischen Werke in der Malerei und Bildhauerkunst* (Reflections on the imitation of Greek works in painting and sculpture).

In the *Gedanken*, Winckelmann outlines a variety of factors that contributed to the beauty of Greek men, including the warm Mediterranean climate, the absence of disfiguring diseases such as smallpox and syphilis, the athleticism of the men, and the close relationship of the arts to athletics. While he does not specifically address same-sex desire in his art history texts, his audience knew that his erotic interest in other men informed his art criticism. In his 1805 essay on Winckelmann, the German writer Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749–1832) made clear to his readers that the classical ideal was the product of a homosexual man who developed it precisely because of his sexuality (*Derks 1990*).

The French philosopher Voltaire (1694–1778) expounded on Winckelmann’s ideas in his essay on “amour socratique” (Socratic love) that appeared in his *Dictionnaire philosophique* (1764; *A Philosophical Dictionary* [1932]) in an effort to explain the prevalence of male-male desire in ancient Greek culture, focusing heavily on the practice of exercising naked in the gym. The German philosopher Christoph Meiners (1747–1810) addressed many of the same concerns in his 1775 essay titled “Betrachtungen über die Männerliebe der Griechen” (Reflections on the male love of the Greeks); the essay was one of the first German-language scholarly discussions of male-male desire in ancient Greece. These same themes turn up in the multivolume treatise *Venus Urania* (1798), by the German art critic Friedrich Wilhelm Basilius von Ramdohr (1757–1822), which used the classics to present a strong defense of the love that could arise between two men or two women.

Enlightenment thinkers associated the classical world not only with same-sex love but also
with freedom, democracy, individual rights, justice, and tolerance. Winckelmann stressed
the importance of freedom for ancient Greek culture, especially in his 1764 magnum opus
Die Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums (The history of the art of antiquity). The connection
between same-sex desire in antiquity and the classical ideal of freedom shows up in other
writings inspired by the Enlightenment. In the 1830s the Swiss writer Heinrich Hössli
(1784–1864) published a two-volume treatise on same-sex desire among men in antiquity,
Eros: Die Männerliebe der Griechen (Eros: The male love of the Greeks). Basing his analysis
on the era’s research on the classics, Hössli couched his pleas for the acceptance of male-
male love in terms of Enlightenment freedom: the separation of church and state, the
triumph of rationality, and the dignity of the individual.

Similar arguments arose in England. The philosopher Jeremy Bentham’s (1748–1832)
essay “Offences against One’s Self: Paederasty” (written around 1785 but not published
until the twentieth century) used classical examples and evidence to make an
Enlightenment case for the decriminalization of sexual relations between men. The
Romantic poet Lord Byron (1788–1824) combined a personal interest in Greek love with a
fervent devotion to the ideals of liberty and freedom in his support for the Greek
Revolution of 1821 (Crompton 1985).

Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries:
Masculinity, Patriarchy, and Empire

While in the Enlightenment the classical world stood for a rational, liberal, humanistic
outlook, by the end of the nineteenth century classical culture came to represent a tragic,
illiberal, imperial worldview (Tobin 2015). No one did more to initiate and disseminate this
change of attitudes than the German philosopher and classics professor Friedrich Nietzsche
(1844–1900), whose Geburt der Tragödie (Birth of tragedy), which appeared in 1872 and
was later (1886) reissued with the subtitle Griechentum und Pessimismus (Hellenism and
pessimism), ushered in a darker view of the classical era. This change had an effect on the
use of classical studies for discussions within the homosexual community.

By the late nineteenth century, thinkers interested in both classical studies and same-sex
desire began to focus more heavily on the differences between modern ideas of
homosexuality and the love between men observed in the ancient world. Mainstream
homosexual emancipation activists such as the German physician and sexologist Magnus
Hirschfeld (1868–1935) continued to make reference to the classical tradition for its
prestige, but they no longer relied on extensive analysis from the period, in part because it
became clear from their studies that the ideal of same-sex love had changed between
antiquity and modernity. In contrast, however, a group of men known as the “masculinists”
(for their devotion to what they called “male culture”) used their knowledge of the classics
to promote an alternative vision of male-male desire.
To begin with, the masculinists observed that in the classical world fixed sexual identities seemed unimportant. Whereas the modern world increasingly emphasized the difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals, men such as Benedict Friedlaender (1866–1908), author of the 1904 study *Die Renaissance des Eros Uranios* (The renaissance of Eros Uranios), lauded antiquity for its presumption that men would have erotic interests in both women and young men (*Tobin 2015*).

In addition, whereas homosexual rights activists had made a conscious effort to distinguish between pedophiles and homosexuals, the masculinists celebrated the intergenerational nature of the classical lover/beloved relationship. They relied on the scholarship of classicists such as Erich Bethe (1863–1940), whose 1907 essay *Die dorische Knabenliebe* (Dorian Pederasty) clearly described and vigorously defended the institution of classical pederasty. The masculinists saw male-male desire in the classical era as a generalized erotic principle that brought together all men, gay or straight, young or old. For them it was evidence that erotic male bonding could create a thriving, beautiful, and powerful society.

Whereas the mainstream homosexual rights activists were generally politically liberal or leftist and sought out alliances with women and minority groups such as the Jews, these Grecophilic masculinists tended to be conservative or reactionary and often indulged in misogyny and anti-Semitism. The example of ancient Greece, with its erotic male-male bonding, suggested for these men “an alternative to ‘Jewish,’ ‘liberal’ democracy” (*Hewitt 1996, 129*). While the masculinists were most organized in the German-speaking world, similar developments took place elsewhere in the West. The English writers John Addington Symonds (1840–1893) and Walter Pater (1839–1894) also promoted the cultivation of Socratic love as part of ensuring the greatness of the British Empire (*Dowling 1994*).

**Contemporary Debates: Essentialism versus Constructivism**

In more recent times, classical studies has been the scene of debates about the nature of sexual identity itself—about whether there is a gay “essence” that is transhistorical and transcultural or whether sexuality is a construct. Going back at least to the Enlightenment, many in classical studies have argued that the evidence of male-male erotic desire and behavior in ancient Greece suggested that homosexuality was a constant. These “essentialists” stress that there have always been gay people, as indicated by the subtitle of John Boswell’s groundbreaking 1980 book *Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*. However, others in classical studies have focused on the differences between the depiction of same-sex interactions in ancient times and modern ideals: the apparent indifference of the ancient Greeks and Romans to the sex of a person’s sexual
partner; the fact that many upper-class men seem to have had sexual relations with wives, mistresses, and younger men without regard to fixed categories of sexual identities; and the emphasis on intergenerational relationships founded on a strict dichotomy between the erastes (the older lover) and the eromenos (the younger beloved). These scholars in classical studies claim that these differences show how much of sexuality is a social construct, with a historical and cultural specificity and distinctiveness (Halperin 1990). The subtlety and thoroughness of these debates demonstrates the ongoing importance of classical studies.

**Beyond the Gay Male: Lesbian and Transgender Uses of Classical Studies**

Because universities were exclusively male domains for many centuries, much of the conversation about same-sex desire that took place in classical studies focused on erotic relationships between men. Many of the classic texts focused on male-male relations as well. Although Sappho’s love poetry was addressed to women, it was often reinterpreted in a heterosexual light (Prins 1999).

Nonetheless, the classical tradition ensured that terms such as sapphic remained signifiers of female-female erotic desire for centuries. Eighteenth-century physicians such as Samuel-Auguste Tissot and Johann Valentin Müller referred to this classical tradition when they denounced “tribades” and “lesbians,” declaring that the vice went back to Sappho and the poems she wrote (Tobin 2000).

While the medical community appropriated the classical tradition’s representation of female-female erotic love in order to denounce lesbians, many women found support in the ancient literature. “Searching for their own roots,” the vibrant expatriate community of lesbians in Paris in the 1920s turned to “Sappho and Hellenism” (Rubin 2011, 92). Sue Schneider’s 1970 poem “Thinking Back Lesbian” concluded with the line “Sappho, you must have been a ‘Right On’ woman,” which inspired the title of the 1972 lesbian manifesto *Sappho Was a Right-On Woman* (Abbott and Love 1972, 7). The 1976 compendium *Brouillon pour un dictionnaire des amantes* (by Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig; published in English in 1979 as *Lesbian Peoples: Material for a Dictionary*) famously underscored the inadequacy of scholarly attention to female-female desire with the entry for Sappho, which consisted of a single blank page. Others have argued, however, that enough is known about Sappho to understand that her lyrics show a “double consciousness” of a patriarchal heroic heterosexual Homeric worldview and a private matriarchal homosexual resistance (Winkler 1993). In her aptly titled 2009 study *Sapphistries: A Global History of Love between Women*, Leila J. Rupp returns repeatedly to Sappho and her poetry, focusing on both the historical Sappho and the role of her image in subsequent lesbian culture.

Classical studies have also been a source of inspiration for the analysis of intersexuality and
transsexuality. Although Winckelmann’s classical aesthetics might seem to endorse normative gender categories, in fact he favored androgynous figures such as Bacchus (MacLeod 1998). The figure of Tiresias, who transformed from man to woman and experienced sex from both perspectives, provided the structure for works by such modernist authors as T. S. Eliot (1888–1965) and Djuna Barnes (1892–1982) (Madden 2008). The transgender activist Kate Bornstein (1948–) has found Tiresias to be an important exemplar of transgender history (Bell 1994). Despite the heavy emphasis in classical studies on male-male desire, the examples of Sappho and Tiresias show that the lesbian and transgender communities have been able to rely on the classics for their purposes as well.

SEE ALSO Homoerotic Poetry of Abū Nuwās; Literary Discourses in the Ottoman Middle East (1500–1900); Sappho, Nineteenth-Century Rediscovery of

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The medical and cultural view of this female sexual organ, its role in sexual pleasure, the ways it can be modified, and its relation to intersex and trans bodies.

While it is undoubtedly safe to assume females have long known about the existence of their own clitoris, the origin of the word itself is unclear, though some claim it first appeared in ancient Greece (Cohen 1978). The Italian anatomist Realdo Colombo (c. 1516–1559) credited himself with the discovery of the clitoris in the fifteenth century; however, recorded anatomic descriptions of the organ had existed for centuries (Lowry 1978). The Greek physician Galen (129–c. 199 CE) wrote about the organ, as did the first-century physician Rufus of Ephesus and the second-century physician Soranus of Ephesus. The eleventh-century Persian physician Avicenna (Ibn Sina) used Galen’s ideas when he wrote about the organ, and Renaissance-era physicians also described the organ (Blackledge 2004).

The visible external glans is what is most often referred to as the clitoris. The glans is positioned above the vaginal opening and connects to the labia minora. The clitoris, however, is mostly an internal organ. Thinking of a wishbone, the externally visible part (the glans) would be the joining part of the wishbone at the curve. The internal body of the
clitoris then extends up from the glans (like the top single point of the wishbone) and then extends down, with the sides of the wishbone (representing the crus of the clitoris) existing beneath the vulva. On the inner sides of the crus are the bulbs (Pauls 2015). In his 1672 drawings, the Dutch physician Regnier de Graaf presented this internal, wishbone structure of the organ (Blackledge 2004). The anatomist Georg Ludwig Kobelt in the mid-nineteenth century is often credited with providing the most detailed views of the external and internal structure of the clitoris up to that time; he also noted that the glans of the clitoris contains an extensive amount of dorsal nerves—perhaps three to four times as many as those in the penis (Kobelt 1978). In their 2005 work challenging the often overly simplistic descriptions of the clitoris found in many textbooks and subsequently calling for more details of the full internal structure of the organ, the urologists Helen E. O'Connell, Kalavampara V. Sanjeevan, and John M. Hutson credited the work of Kobelt and de Graaf as being richly descriptive.

**Sexual Function**

Just as anatomical descriptions of the organ have existed for centuries, so have physiological understandings of its role in sexual arousal for women. The Renaissance-era physician Pietro d’Abano noted that rubbing it brought about female orgasm, and de Graaf stated that the purpose of the clitoris was sexual sensitivity (Blackledge 2004). Colombo in 1559 similarly described the sexual purpose of the organ: it should, he wrote, “be called the love or sweetness of Venus” (quoted in Stringer and Becker 2010, 131). Western physicians fairly consistently recognized the organ as “the seat of pleasure during coition,” as William Harris did in 1839 (314). Over a century later, in their 1966 book *Human Sexual Response*, William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson called the clitoris unique, its only purpose sexual. The findings of Masters and Johnson—based on their watching and measuring as women masturbated and/or had penetrative, vaginal intercourse with men—provided physiological evidence to support the long-held contention that the clitoris was central to female sexual response. Masters and Johnson focused on women’s responses during heterosexual, vaginal sex, but in their research Alfred C. Kinsey (1894–1956) in the 1950s and Shere Hite (1942–) in the 1970s found that while the organ was exquisitely sexually sensitive, many women in their studies needed direct stimulation of the clitoris to reach orgasm—something women often did not receive from heterosexual penetrative sex alone (Lloyd 2005).

**Clitoral Size and Hypersexuality**

The clitoris and the penis have the same embryonic origins, and this is reflected in the clitoris often being described in anatomy texts as a smaller version of the penis (Pauls 2015; Rodriguez 2014). Physicians started recording the actual size of the glans in the twentieth century. In 1925 the physicians Robert Latou Dickinson and Henry H. Pierson
found the average size of the glans clitoris to be 4.4 millimeters (0.17 inches) in traverse
diameter, a measurement confirmed by another study in 1992 (Verkauf, Von Thron, and
O’Brien 1992). Dickinson, a gynecologist, measured and drew the genitals of hundreds of
his patients and wrote in his 1949 book Human Sex Anatomy that the clitoris varied
considerably in size, with perhaps 20 percent of women having what he described as a
large clitoris. Masters and Johnson in 1966 noted variation in the anatomic structure of the
clitoris, stating that the glans typically measured 2 to 3 millimeters (0.08 to 0.12 inches) in
traverse diameter, but that a clitoris measuring 1 centimeter (0.39 inches) would still be
“within normal anatomic limits” (47).

The externally visible glans of the organ can vary in size, with some more prominently
visible than others. Size, however, has been seen as important because the size of the organ
has been tied to ideas about sexual behavior; physicians for a long time regarded an
“enlarged” clitoris as indicating the woman either masturbated or had sex with other
women. Both masturbation and homosexuality were seen as forms of hypersexual, and
thus masculine, behavior. Some physicians speculated whether the enlarged clitoris was a
sign of or caused the hypersexual behavior. Regardless, though, some physicians expected
women of color and lesbians to have clitorises that were enlarged because these women
were thought to be inherently hypersexual—and with this hypersexuality inscribed on
their bodies by the size of their clitoris (Rodriguez 2014). Such racialization similarly
occurred regarding black men and penis size during this time. Some clinicians, then, sought
to characterize the bodies of women of color and lesbian women’s bodies (regardless of
color) as different and, importantly, less developed (physically and morally) than white,
heterosexual women’s bodies (Somerville 1994). This was the basis of a study conducted in
the 1930s in the United States that attempted to confirm whether there were any
measurable physical differences between heterosexuals and homosexuals—physical
differences that included measuring the external genitals of both men and women, in
particular between women, and in particular the size of the clitoris (Terry 1999).

Regarding lesbians, the idea (and, for some, fear) was that women would use a larger-than-
typical clitoris for penetrative vaginal sex with another woman—essentially using it as a
penis. The French anatomist Pierre Dionis (1643–1718) described the clitoris as
sometimes becoming “as big and long as a Man’s Yard,” and when this occurred, women
with the “big and long” clitoris “may abuse it, and pollute themselves with other Women”
(quoted in Rogers 1973, 25, 26). The idea that a woman would use an enlarged clitoris to
have intercourse with another woman continued into the twentieth century, as suggested
by the American physician Frank S. Caprio, who wrote in his 1954 book on female
homosexuality, “Some lesbians with an unusually elongated clitoris have been known to
insert the end of the clitoris into the vagina[s] of their partner” (20). Such beliefs reinforced
the narrow idea of sex as only heterosexual and only penetrative, as well as the idea that
two women engaged in sex would seek to replicate such behavior.
Clitoral Size and Ambiguous Sex

Although an “enlarged” clitoris was sometimes regarded as a sign of sexual behavior, in the nineteenth century, the “abnormal enlargement” of the clitoris could also be regarded as "congenital rather than acquired”—meaning the enlargement was not brought on by either masturbation or homosexual sex but instead was a condition of birth.

Regardless, concerns still arose about a woman’s glans becoming large enough "to resemble a penis,” as the physician Robert Barnes wrote in 1874 (761). When Barnes wrote this, he and many of his peers in North America and Europe sometimes labeled people with genitals that seemed not to align with their gender as hermaphrodites—the female patient with the clitoris resembling a penis, per the concern of Barnes. This labeling was followed in the early twentieth century by the concept of intersex, a term intended to describe individuals with sex characteristics—be they chromosomal, gonadal, and/or anatomic—seen as discordant with their social sex (Dreger 1998; Fausto-Sterling 2000; Reis 2005). Physicians sometimes removed a clitoris that was seen as overly large—and thus more like a penis—to align a patient's genital appearance with their feminine social sex.

The protocol for when to perform clitoral removal surgeries for babies with congenitally acquired enlarged clitorises originated at Johns Hopkins University in the 1930s. Justification for the surgeries was soon supported by the belief that babies were gender neutral for the first year and a half of their lives, and that, if genitalia were made to reflect the given gender assignment, the child would develop as that gender and be attracted as an adult to a sexual partner of the opposite gender (Eder 2010; Minto et al. 2003). This surgical protocol—the removal of both the corpora and the glans—was the standard protocol through at least the 1980s, conducted in support of this theory of gender (Minto et al. 2003).

By the 1990s, however, these surgeries, and the concept of gender neutrality at birth, began to be challenged, in particular by those who had undergone the surgery as children (Angier 1997). In 1993 the Intersex Society of North America was founded, and this organization, as well as concerned others, began to challenge the surgical standard of care that removed sensitive tissue and organs (Matthews 2000; Feder and Dreger 2016). Though initially dismissed by some practitioners as unreasonable, the push to end these elective surgeries on children grew over the following decades, assisted by questions about there being little long-term evidence to support the necessity, safety, or efficacy of the procedures (Feder and Dreger 2016). Indeed, one study published in 2003 focusing on individuals who had undergone the standard surgery because of a congenitally large clitoris found that they were more likely, compared to those who had not undergone the surgery, to have difficulty in achieving orgasm (Minto et al. 2003).
Removing All or Part of the Clitoris

In 2018 the World Health Organization (WHO) estimated that more than 200 million living women and girls had undergone the removal of all or part of their external genitals. The WHO defines such practices as female genital mutilation (FGM). FGM includes removing the prepuce/foreskin of the glans (female circumcision) or all of the glans of the clitoris (clitoridectomy). The WHO in 2018 listed the practices as most commonly performed in parts of Africa (concentrated in the eastern, western, and northeastern areas), as well as in parts of the Middle East and Asia. The organization also stressed, however, that the practice is a concern beyond these boundaries, as sometimes immigrants from these areas take the practice with them. The WHO stressed the lack of medical benefit or need and the potential health complications of the procedures, including, potentially, sexual ones. Although there had been international efforts earlier, in 1997 the WHO, the United Nations Children’s Fund, and the United Nations Population Fund issued a joint statement condemning the practices. As of early 2018, the practice was illegal in over forty countries, including in Guinea since 1965, Sweden since 1982, the United Kingdom since 1985, Burkina Faso and the United States since 1996, Senegal since 1999, South Africa since 2000, and Denmark since 2003 (United Nations Population Fund 2018).

Although European physicians who traveled to parts of Africa and elsewhere in the world where all or parts of the female genitals were removed as part of initiation rites knew about these practices, it was not until the 1970s that the popular press in Europe and the United States began discussing them. The North American activist Fran Hosken (1920–2006) is often credited with bringing the practices to public attention in Europe and North America, as well as encouraging a change in calling all the practices (which can also include the removal of parts of the labia) “female genital mutilation” rather than “female circumcision.” The former term, while still used by the WHO, is charged, and some—both those who argue for respecting the cultural right to the practices and those who argue the practices should not be tolerated—question its use. Instead of female genital mutilation, some use the term female genital cutting, and others have called for the use of the term female genital surgeries (Johnsdotter and Essén 2010; Public Policy Advisory Network 2012).

Some physicians in the United States as well as in Europe used clitoridectomy as a medical therapy for treating masturbation from the nineteenth through at least the middle of the twentieth century. American physicians also used female circumcision to stop a woman or girl from masturbating, often at the request of the woman herself or of the girl’s parents. In addition to removing a clitoral hood to stop masturbation, some physicians in the United States beginning in the late nineteenth century also used female circumcision to enable a woman to better respond sexually during vaginal penetrative intercourse. The idea behind each surgery was that the clitoris needed correction; masturbation or an inability to
respond sexually was tied to the state of the clitoris—a state that female circumcision could surgically correct (Rodriguez 2014).

Removing the foreskin of the glans clitoris to enable orgasm during penetrative sex continues to be performed in the early twenty-first century, although the procedure is more often called clitoral unhooding rather than female circumcision (Rodriguez 2014). There is little evidence to support the contention that this surgery can help enable orgasm during vaginal sex; indeed, it appears to conflict with established ideas about how the clitoris reacts during sexual response, per the work of Masters and Johnson (1966), who noted that the glans of the clitoris retracts under the hood just prior to orgasm, since the organ is particularly sensitive at that moment. In addition, some have challenged the seeming acceptance of clitoral unhooding (as well as other elective surgeries on the vulva labeled female genital cosmetic surgeries) in Western countries as legal and ethical, whereas in those same countries female genital mutilation/female genital cutting is illegal and considered unethical to perform (Johnsdotter and Essén 2010).

Creating a Clitoris

Surgeries have been developed to reconstruct the anatomy and sexual function of the clitoris when it has been removed through clitoridectomy by using the residual internal clitoral shaft (Foldes 2006). Surgeries were also developed over the course of the twentieth century to create a clitoris as part of the surgical transition from male to female. When male-to-female transition surgeries began to be sought and developed in the 1940s and 1950s, the focus was on creating a neo-vagina. As techniques advanced, however, both patients and physicians sought to create a functional and aesthetic neo-clitoris. Although this surgery has proven to be challenging, by the early twenty-first century most surgeons who perform clitoroplasty create a clitoris from the glans of the penis (Ettner 2016).

The Politics of the Clitoris and Female Sexuality

Despite a long recognition of the clitoris as the principal organ of sexual response for women, this has not been without controversy. Because the organ is so tied to female sexuality, some have tried to play down its importance to female sexual response. Most famously, the Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and some of his followers in the first half of the twentieth century argued that healthy and mature women had vaginal, not clitoral, orgasms, thus reinforcing the ideal of heterosexual, penetrative, and, potentially, reproductive sex and labeling women who failed to so perform as unhealthy and immature. Kinsey in the 1950s disparaged the vaginal orgasm as a “biological impossibility” (Kinsey et al. 1953, 584), though it remained a popular idea. In their work published in the following decade, Masters and Johnson similarly considered that physiological evidence did not support the idea of there being a vaginal orgasm as distinct from a clitoral one. Indeed, in their 1966 book Human Sexual Response, Masters and
Johnson devoted a whole chapter to the clitoris and, based on their research, wrote that “the human female now has an undeniable opportunity to develop realistically her own sexual response levels” because of knowledge gained about the importance of the clitoris to female sexual response and about how the clitoris responds during orgasm (138).

In many ways, the work of Masters and Johnson solidified centuries-old physiological ideas about the clitoris as the central sexual organ for women, and, in their work, they encouraged masturbation as a means to develop sexual self-knowledge. However, because Masters and Johnson were primarily concerned with assisting heterosexual couples having difficulties regarding intercourse, sex for them remained heterosexual and existing within long-term, married relationships (Robinson 1976).

Notwithstanding Masters and Johnson's narrow view of sex, their work on the clitoris inspired and supported ideas about the potential of female sexual response and behavior both within and outside of married, heterosexual, penetrative sex. Anne Koedt's 1968 article “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm” became a foundational text for North American feminists as they considered what sexual pleasure meant for women in a patriarchal society, as well as what it could potentially mean if not contained within the boundaries of motherhood and heterosexuality. The clitoris became, for many women in the 1970s, an organ of political and sexual revolution (Gerhard 2001). In an effort to better comprehend their sexual bodies, some North American women came together and looked at their own and each other's vulvas, seeking to understand their external and internal genitals, including the clitoris (Murphy 2004).

This popular embracing of the sexual potential of the clitoris—and the perceived need to educate about not just its sexual potential, but even its location and internal anatomical structure—continued through the late twentieth century and into the twenty-first in such books as Rebecca Chalker's The Clitoral Truth (2010), in such projects as Cliteracy, and in the life-size, free model of a clitoris, designed in 2016 by French engineer and sociologist Odile Fillod, that one can download to print on a three-dimensional printer (Russo 2017).

SEE ALSO Orgasm and Orgasmology; Penis

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The development of the concept of this term for homosexuals who have not publicly identified with their sexuality and its application in various cultures.

The closet, briefly defined, is a condition produced by discourses that create a normative set of social rules that identify and render certain nonnormative genders and sexualities unspeakable, a secret, and a source of shame. The concept of being in or out of “the closet” is contingent on the recognition of “the homosexual” as a discrete type of person—a distinction European sexologists began to draw as early as the mid-nineteenth century. Yet this concept did not become widespread in North America and Western Europe until the middle of the twentieth century and has spread unevenly across the globe since World War II (1939–1945).

In his 1978 book *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, the French philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984) outlined the deep history of the expert theorizing reaching back to the Enlightenment that helped produce the stigmatization and closeting of forms of nonnormative gender and sexual expression and identity in many modern, Western societies. Experts, such as psychiatrists, educators, and doctors, became increasingly interested in studying the issue of sex and in classifying individuals as “good” or “bad” on the basis of their sexual desire and expression.

Although it does not actually mention the term explicitly, Foucault’s discussion in *The History of Sexuality* about the issue of silence provides an early conceptual framework for understanding what “the closet” is. Once homosexuality became what Oscar Wilde’s lover Lord Alfred Douglas called “the love that dare not speak its name” in his 1894 poem “Two Loves,” it set the preconditions for the interplay of secrecy and disclosure that characterizes the closet. With Foucault, it is also evident that the closet is not just an individual-level phenomenon, but also a political one. Foucault elucidates the intrusion of the state into the personal and sexual lives of the individual (what he termed “biopower”). Through expert discourses and social norms, biopower works to define differences between “good” and “bad” sexuality, and to consign the sexuality on the “bad side” to silence and censorship. “Silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element
that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies” (Foucault 1978, 27).

Along these same lines, the queer theorist Michael Warner argues that the closet is not just an individual-level experience of shame and secrecy, but the product of norms governing sexuality that are enacted through social interactions. According to Warner, “Queers understand, at some level, that the closet was built around them, willynilly, by dominant assumptions about what goes without saying, what can be said without a breach of decorum, who shares the onus of disclosure, and who will bear the consequences of speech and silence” (1999, 180). The sociologist Erving Goffman describes what this looks like at the interactional level through his concept of the “careful work of disattention”—all the anxious activity and effort that closeted people put into passing and concealing their queerness in keeping with the strictures mandated by “normal” society (1963, 41).

At the same time, the closet’s injunction to silence can afford opportunities for queer social life that enjoy a certain amount of protection because they are not being subjected to public scrutiny. The case of the Middle East illustrates this point. In his 2005 study of homosexuality in Arab-Islamic culture between 1500 and 1800, Khaled El-Rouayheb examined the textual strategies that writers used to discuss homosexual desire “under the radar,” without drawing the ire of official prohibitions on homoeroticism. El-Rouayheb finds that there was a profusion of writings about male homosexuality on the part of Ottoman urban elites during this period. Their literary milieu concentrated especially on “pederastic” relationships between adult men and feminized male youths. Some authors wrote negatively and dismissively of such relationships through the use of the phrase “he inclines to boys.” But others, El-Rouayheb argues, “resorted to a different vocabulary, a different way of speaking” to give expression to homoerotic desire by using coded or circumspect language that evaded such stigma (2005, 51).

The notion of the closet has a specific logic and conceptual foundation, or what the queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick calls the “epistemology of the closet” in her 1990 book of the same name. Sedgwick argues that most Western discourses about homosexuality have been characterized by a particular formation of knowledge that conceptualizes homosexuality in a bipolar fashion. On the one hand, homosexuality is thought to be unremarkable, quotidian, something in which potentially anyone might engage, and not definitive of a distinct type of deviant subject. She calls this the “universalizing view” (1990, 1). On the other hand, homosexuality is thought to be a characteristic shared by a discrete, small, and contained minority of individuals. Sedgwick calls this the “minoritizing view”: the understanding of homosexuality as a discrete identity and kind of person, providing the conceptual foundation on which individuals could go “in the closet” in the first place (1).

Valerie Traub translates Sedgwick’s framework into historical terms to describe what might be called the epistemology of the lesbian closet in seventeenth-century England. At
the beginning of that period, she finds, female-female eroticism—“the sharing of beds, kissing and caressing, and exclusive friendships”—was “considered chaste” and “represented as unexceptional” (2002, 19). Over the course of the seventeenth century, however, “the intertextual circulation of anatomy books, midwiferies, travel narratives, obscenity, and other imaginative literature led to increasing suspicion about those forms of female intimacy,” which began “to be construed as immoral, irrational, a threat to other women as well as to men” (Traub 2002, 19). In other words, by the end of the seventeenth century, there emerged a minoritizing concept of “the lesbian” as a discrete type of person who could now be identified, stigmatized, marginalized, or closeted.

The Invention of the Modern Closet

From the 1850s onward, industrialization and the expansion of cities around the globe gave many people a newfound anonymity that allowed them to live at least part of their lives as openly queer for the first time. As the historian John D’Emilio has argued, gay men and lesbians living in urban areas “began to invent ways of meeting each other and sustaining a group life” (1983, 105). Between about 1890 and 1930, George Chauncey echoes, New York City was home to a “highly visible, remarkably complex, and continually changing gay male world” (1994, 1). In 1896 in Berlin, the editor Adolf Brand (1874–1945) began publishing the first-ever gay political journal, Der Eigene (“a marvelous word suggesting ‘self,’ ‘same’ [sex], and ‘different’” [Steakley 1975, 23]), while the Jewish physician and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) helped found the world’s first gay rights organization, the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee) the following year. In Paris, a “growing commercial world that catered to homosexual men comprising bathhouses, bars, and restaurants had emerged by the early 1900s” (Sibalis 1999, 25). Similarly, London was “the site of a vibrant, extensive, and diverse queer urban culture. Overlapping social worlds took hold in parks, streets, and urinals; in pubs, restaurants, and dancehalls; in Turkish baths; in furnished rooms and lodging houses” (Houlbrook 2005, 3).

Working through notions of secrecy and disclosure, the closet often depends on the idea that there is a discrete minority of queer subjects who inhabit their own “closeted” world, hidden from the mainstream public. Although such secrecy and disclosure can work to protect queer spaces and sexual expression, they can simultaneously be used to motivate moral panic, repression, and the suppression of queer identities by the state and other actors. Thus, in early twentieth-century Japan, as the historian Gregory M. Pflugfelder argues, journalists depicted urban gay subcultures as a secret that they needed to expose through their writing. “Popular writings construed the male-male erotic subculture of the contemporary cityscape as a shadowy and secret world, the existence of which was barely known to or even suspected by outsiders” (1999, 320).

Similarly, the visibility of queer subcultures in Europe and the United States led to a series of antihomosexual campaigns between the 1920s and the 1950s. These new forms of state
surveillance and regulation of same-sex identities and environments helped codify the notion of “the closet.” The early homosexual emancipation movement in Germany was brought to a violent and premature end by the rise of the Nazi Party in the 1920s and 1930s. In the United States, Chauncey argues, “the state built a closet in the 1930s and forced gay people to hide in it” through new sex offender legislation that targeted homosexuals, the vigorous enforcement of that legislation, and new regulations punishing and suppressing queer bars (1994, 9). In the 1950s, the US federal government expelled hundreds of employees from the civil service in what the historian David K. Johnson (2004) calls the “Lavender Scare,” a corollary of the parallel “Red Scare,” or crackdown on suspected communists.

On the other end of the spectrum, such single-sex environments as prisons—where so-called situational homosexuality occurs—have produced forms of queering that do not always reflect the minoritizing notion of the closet. Instead, they typify the coexistent universalizing mode in which same-sex intimacy is common, unremarkable, and widespread. As the historian Regina Kunzel finds, “Marked by the participation of putatively ‘normal’ or otherwise heterosexual people in same-sex sex, prison sexual life failed to synchronize with dominant notions of sexuality—tracked by historians as emerging in the nineteenth century and solidifying in the twentieth—which held sexual acts and desires to be expressions of sexual identity” (2008, 1–2). In his 2017 work on the “forging [of] Gulag sexualities” in early twentieth-century Russia, Dan Healey similarly reveals how prison produced its own distinct mode of gay subjectivity, sexual practice, and culture.

The military is another institution where forms of repression and expression/identity-formation went hand in hand. As the historian Allan Bérubé finds, World War II produced a collective “coming out under fire” by mobilizing huge swaths of people in same-sex environments.

Once they left the constraints of family life and watchful neighbors, many recruits were surprised to find that military service gave them opportunities to begin a “coming-out” process.... Gathered together in military camps, they often came to terms with their sexual desires, fell in love, made friends with other gay people, and began to name and talk about who they were.

(1990, 6)

In the postwar period, however, the US military created a special category of “blue” discharge for servicepeople dismissed for homosexuality, giving them a mark of disgrace
that followed many of them for the rest of their lives (Bérubé 1990). The historian Margot Canaday agrees in *The Straight State* (2009) that a crackdown on lesbians in the military early in the Cold War led many women to come out for the first time—both to others and to themselves: “State repression was productive of identity in complicated ways—women's attempts to manage the antilesbian apparatus within the military frequently led them to articulate a lesbian identity in much sharper terms” (202).

The culture industry has also played a key role in spreading ideas of the closet. For much of the twentieth century, American film and television censored queer characters and themes in movies, stereotyping such characters as “deviant” and “dangerous,” and using plotlines to kill them off. The gay activist and scholar Vito Russo called this the “celluloid closet” in his 1981 book of the same name. (Celluloid is a type of plastic formerly used to make film.) In the 1920s and early 1930s, it was common for popular films to include explicitly queer content. In 1930, however, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America instituted new guidelines for moral standards in Hollywood films that targeted homosexuality in particular by including the prohibition of explicitly queer characters (Russo 1981).

At the same time, queer writers, artists, and activists responded to this repression by voicing their experiences and contesting their marginalization through the notion of the closet. In 1958, the gay poet Frank O'Hara (1926–1966) published a poem titled “Ode: Salute to the French Negro Poets” that marks the first known instance in which a writer used the metaphor of “the closet” to describe the disqualification and silencing of gay life (Abelove 2015). O'Hara wrote the poem as an homage to Négritude, the Paris-born movement in the 1930s and 1940s of black intellectuals who explored questions of black identity and politics and challenged their marginal place in society. In the process of paying tribute to these intellectuals, “Ode” draws an analogy between the marginalization of people of color and the suppression of gay life in the United States. The poem dreams of a day when

> utter disparagement turns into praise as generations read the message of our hearts in adolescent closets who once shot at us in doorways or kept us from living freely because they were too young then to know what they would ultimately need from a barren and heart-sore life

*(1958, 305)*

The metaphor of the closet gave O'Hara a way to describe the culture of repression and silencing that “traduced” gay love and forced gay people into lives of “reticence.”
In the wake of O'Hara's early use of the term in the “Ode” poem, in the 1960s gay activists worldwide popularized the idea that people should “come out of the closet,” thereby transforming that notion into a political strategy aimed at constructing gays and lesbians (and, later, LGBTQ+ people more broadly) as a discrete and identifiable minority and as a political force. As Barry D. Adam, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and André Krouwel emphasize, the emergence of the modern LGBTQ+ rights movement was global in scope: “Contemporary movements trace their origins to Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Paris, and Los Angeles, where a few brave individuals renewed efforts in the 1950s to carve out small gay-friendly spaces in the chilly climate of post-war reconstruction” (1999, 1). The gay rights organizations of the 1950s were relatively circumspect in the context of the culture of antigay repression in which they were operating, but in the 1960s a new cohort of gay “liberation” activists ushered in a new era of the movement by popularizing the ethos of gay visibility and coming out. A flyer advertising a protest in the early 1970s organized by the Los Angeles chapter of the Gay Liberation Front described how “Lonely men, young and old, have come from Los Angeles, from Bakersfield and Jacksonville, from Chicago and Berlin [to come] out of the closets and into the streets” (“Come Out” flyer).

With the growth of queer audiences, the “comingout” narrative also developed into a crucial genre for LGBTQ+ literature in the West, enveloping works as diverse as Rita Mae Brown's 1973 novel Rubyfruit Jungle, Jan Morris's 1974 trans autobiography Conundrum, Edmund White's 1982 novel A Boy's Own Story, and John Fox's 1984 young adult tale The Boys on the Rock. The AIDS crisis that began in the 1980s also gave rise to a kind of double closet and new kinds of coming-out chronicles, such as Oscar Moore's A Matter of Life and Sex (1991) and Colm Tóibín's Story of the Night (1996).

Gay liberation activists’ strategy of calling for queer people to come out of the closet combined the newer metaphor of “the closet” with an older notion of “coming out” that was already in widespread use. In the early twentieth century, gay men drew on the cultural tradition of a young woman “coming out” at a debutante ball, which signified her newfound eligibility for courtship and marriage, adapting it into a way of revealing themselves as queer to their peers at drag balls in places ranging from the historically black Harlem neighborhood of New York City to the dance hall at the Magic-City amusement park in Paris (Chauncey 1994; Sibalis 2002). As Henry Abelove (2015) argues, gay liberation activists “transformed the meaning of coming out” by extending it beyond the context of the gay balls to “the shedding of life-denying reticence in the face of the public at large.” This activism also led to the proclamation of the first National Coming Out Day (NCOD) in the United States on 11 October 1988, on the anniversary of the second National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights a year earlier. NCOD is now sponsored by the LGBTQ+ rights organization Human Rights Campaign. The LGBTQ+ charity Stonewall sponsors NCOD in Britain.

Yet it would be a mistake to view the closet as always or necessarily liberating because
even if a person does come out, they might still be punished for “lying”—for not disclosing earlier that they were queer. “As Sedgwick points out in *Epistemology of the Closet*, the subject can be faulted for not disclosing enough rather than disclosing too much about her or his sexuality. This disclosure is ‘at once compulsory and forbidden’” (quoted in de Villiers 2012, 3). In a court case originating in Maryland in 1973, an eighth-grade earth science teacher named Joseph Acanfora was transferred to a position that did not involve teaching after the school district in Montgomery County learned that he was gay. When Acanfora went public with his homosexuality by appearing on such news programs as *60 Minutes* to discuss his case, the district refused to grant him a new contract at all. Ultimately, the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled in favor of the school district, arguing that Acanfora, when he applied for the teaching position in the first place, should have disclosed the fact that he had been an officer of a student homophile organization in college (*Acanfora v. Board of Education of Montgomery County* 1973). As Sedgwick finds in her analysis of the case, “The rationale for keeping Acanfora out of his classroom was thus no longer that he had disclosed too much about his homosexuality, but quite the opposite, that he had not disclosed enough” (*1990*, 69). In the *Acanfora* case, the closet’s logical incoherence—he was damned if he did come out, and damned if he did not—provided an institution (the school district) with a flexible device with which to stigmatize and marginalize a queer person. As David M. Halperin has argued, “Homophobic discourses operate strategically by means of logical contradictions” (*1995*, 34).

As the *Acanfora* case suggests, making one’s gay identity public could have far-reaching personal consequences; the same thing was true at the level of politics through “outing,” or the practice of taking down a political opponent by outing them as gay. Nowhere is this more evident than in the so-called Eulenburg affair in the German Reichstag. As James D. Steakley explained in his work on the affair, “From 1907 to 1909, imperial Germany was by turns amused and mortified by a series of journalistic exposés, libel trials, and Reichstag speeches, all of which turned upon the alleged homosexuality of the chancellor and of two distinguished members of the entourage of Kaiser Wilhelm II” (*1983*, 20). In a kind of “reverse McCarthyism” (*New York Times*, quoted in Sedgwick *1990*, 243), Hirschfeld testified against one of the entourage members by outing him, in his scientific opinion, as a homosexual. Reflecting on the affair in 1933, Hirschfeld wrote that the outcome was “no more and no less than a victory for the tendency that ultimately issued in the events of the World War” by ousting Kaiser Wilhelm and supplanting his government with a militaristic and pugilistic regime (quoted in Steakley *1983*, 21). As Sedgwick argues, the Eulenburg affair demonstrates how powerful and virulent the minoritizing view of “the homosexual” can be when wielded as a weapon in the sphere of politics: “It is by the homosexual question, which has never so far been emptied of its homophobic impulsions, that the energy of their construction and exploitation continues to be marked” (*1990*, 246).

**Whither the Closet?**
The Polish novelist Michal Witkowski’s *Lubiewo* (2005; *Lovetown* [2010]) also explores the idea that silence, repression, and closeting afforded LGBTQ+ people certain opportunities and personal freedoms in the past that are no longer available. The novel tells the story of two older, swishy gay men or “aunties” named Patricia and Lucretia who reminisce about queer life in the “bad old days” before the fall of communism in 1989, the subsequent Westernization of Poland, and eventually the expansion of LGBT rights. Queer men in precommunist Poland may have lacked official legitimacy and civil rights, but they enjoyed a robust queer subculture in places such as Lovetown, a fictive beach resort on the German border that once served as a vibrant gay male cruising locale. For these bitter old queens, the closet was not simply or only bad: the social and sexual opportunities that such historical spaces afforded for queer sex and social life were actually superior to the ones available to them under the new, ostensibly queer-friendly regime. Like the Ottoman writers described by El-Rouayheb (2005) who created ways to talk about male homoeroticism “under the radar” in the context of official prohibition, in *Lovetown*, repression (both general political repression and repression directed at queer communities in particular) was likewise a productive site that fostered the elaboration of a queer subculture.

The opportunities for flourishing that the closet can afford have led some critics to celebrate its utility, or in some cases even call for queer people to “get back in the closet” (Yiannopoulos 2015). The scholar Francesca Stella conducted research on Soviet and post-Soviet lesbians, many of whom lived a double life involving both lesbian and straight relationships. These women were not focused on being “out,” but rather “on managing one’s identity appropriately across different social contexts, which is associated with rules of propriety and risk-assessment” (Stella 2015, 106). As the historian Healey argues, “For Stella, this necessitates a rethinking of the ‘closet’ in the Western sense of a burden of inauthenticity and oppression for same-sex loving people; the closet, in the lives of her subjects, becomes a place of safety and possibility” (2017, 21).

In sinophone cultures, scholars have debated strategies of “coming out” versus “coming home.” In the late 1990s and the first years of the twenty-first century, the sociologist Wahshan Chou argued that the Western model of coming out of the closet is an imperialist notion that conflicts with Chinese cultural values of “non-conflictual harmonious relationships” and “a healthy personality that is not centered on sex(uality)” (quoted in Liu and Ding 2005, 30). According to Chou, the Chinese family kinship system is the central feature distinguishing “Chinese” from “Western” forms of homosexual identity and sociality. Based on interviews conducted in Hong Kong, he concluded that *tongzhi* (a Chinese term for lesbigay people) rejected what he viewed as the individualist, confrontational politics of Western-style coming out in favor of a strategy of “coming home,” whereby “such *tongzhi* would introduce a same-sex partner into the parental home where she or he would be tacitly integrated into the family circle, without the topic of the couple’s same-sex relationship ever needing to be directly broached” (Martin 2015, 37).
Although this formulation of “coming home” speaks to the specificities of Chinese cultures and grants people agency within their cultural contexts, it has also proved controversial, not least because Chou has repeatedly categorized ancient China as “a world without homo-hetero duality,” unlike the West. As Hongwei Bao notes, “His China/West dichotomy risks essentializing cultural differences in a globalizing world where ‘hybridity’ is the norm” (2018, 75). Such other scholars as Day Kit-mui Wong have argued for “a hybrid array of practices that reconfigure and subvert, at least as much as they reproduce, dominant family values” (Martin 2015, 38). As Jen-peng Liu and Naifei Ding argue, “Paradoxically, [Chou] write[s] of an ‘essentially’ nonhomophobic Chinese culture…. The question we would like to ask is, in what ways might the residual and reconfigured ideology of reticent tolerance actually enable or facilitate the workings of an unfamiliar ‘gentle’ homophobia” (2005, 31–32).

Scholarship on LGBTQ+ politics and culture in the Middle East has similarly produced controversy about the globalization and global applicability of the closet. Joseph A. Massad argues that the closet and the imperative to come out that attends it are oppressive notions being imposed on Egyptian queer men by the globalization of Western LGBTQ+ activism and culture. In 2001, for example, “the Egyptian authorities … crack[ed] down on Cairo locations where Westernized Egyptian gay-identified men and their European and American tourist cohorts congregate” (Massad 2002, 380). Such political repression would not happen, Massad argues, if queer Egyptians were left alone by Westerners and left to their own devices, because Mediterranean men have traditionally avoided homophobic repression by having gay sex “under the radar.” Nevertheless, as Dina Al-Kassim argues, while LGBTQ+ globalization does entail real problems, Massad “reifies cultural difference to such a degree that he winds up arguing for the clarity and distinction of the East/West divide in ways that resonate with the very Orientalism he critiques” (2008, 304).

The closet has implications for the politics of and public health institutions involved in HIV prevention. In northern Nigeria, where homosexuality is strictly forbidden by Islamic religion, culture, and law, gay sexual networks flourish underground in “the carefully concealed culture that surrounds sex among men” called *harka*—a word that carries the in-group meaning of “homosexual” only among Hausa-speaking men who are “in the know” (Tocco 2014, 313). As anthropologist Jack Ume Tocco argues, the “code of silence” governing homosexual relations in northern Nigeria makes it particularly difficult for institutions to intervene with men who have sex with men to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS. “There is no obvious or ready-made path towards addressing the AIDS epidemic among *masu harka* [men who have sex with men], but the best chances for intervention will entail drawing on pre-existing social-sexual networks and on the dexterity *masu harka* have with discretion and euphemism” (2014, 332).

The idea of “coming out” is a stereotype that describes an individual’s transformation from a condition of shame and secrecy to one of self-knowledge and disclosure—which is to say,
a transformation of an individual’s identity. But as the sociologists Héctor Carrillo and Jorge Fontdevila have argued, the coming-out model of sexual-identity formation reveals little about the specific means and processes that make it possible for young people to start having sex in the first place. Carrillo and Fontdevila contend that “sexual initiation is not a topic that figures prominently in the English-language academic literature about sexual minority youth. The focus has been instead on the broader topic of sexual identity formation, which subsumes discussion of youths’ first experiences of same-sex sexual interaction into models of the so-called coming out process” (2011, 1241). Carrillo and Fontdevila find that boys and young men in Mexico become sexually active with other males by means of three distinct modes or “patterns” of sexual interaction. In the first, “gender role sexual initiation,” the young person would play the “bottom,” feminized role in oral or anal sex with another male, usually at least two years his senior, who plays the “active,” insertive, top role (1244). “Homosocial sexual initiation” refers to “sex play” among non-gay-identified boys in the same age group, while “object choice sexual initiation” involves same-sex activities among people who have already formed a gay identity and have “come to believe that what makes a man gay or homosexual is his sexual attraction toward men” (1247–1248). By shifting the lens from sexual-identity formation to sexual initiation—from identity to sex—Carrillo and Fontdevila show that these understudied cultures of gay sex play a key role in the coming-out process.

Forms of new media, especially the internet, have created new opportunities for adolescents and even older people to come out of the closet and thereby fashion themselves as agentic sexual and queer subjects. Video technology and such sites as YouTube and TEDx have enabled young people to come out publicly and to family members online, across geographic distances, and in parts of the world or environments where nonnormative sexualities are still stigmatized and/or illegal. Websites such as the It Gets Better Project and Not Only Voices provide users with models for being agentic sexual and queer subjects and facilitate access to support services. New media have also greatly widened access to information about coming out for people who identify as trans, gender nonbinary, genderqueer, gender fluid, intersex, and asexual.

For young people in particular, the internet is not without risks, but as the science and technology scholar Danah Boyd comments, instead of trying to enforce “digital celibacy,” parents should allow their teenage children to construct their own private lives in online social spaces and platforms. She notes that “many teens are developing innovative solutions to achieve privacy in public” (2014, 59). In her 2009 book Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America, Microsoft researcher Mary L. Gray argues that the internet is changing the meaning of coming out of the closet by giving adolescents a space in which they can not only make themselves visible as queer, but also fashion and elaborate queer lives. In one memorable example, Joe, one of her teenaged research subjects, “tossed out the idea of heading over to neighboring Springhaven—20 minutes due south—to do some drag at the Wal-Mart” (Gray 2009, 88).
The closet remains a pervasive feature of social life for many “bad” queer people, ones whose sexual lives or gender presentation place them outside of widely accepted social and legal norms that define “good” or acceptable conduct. The queer theorists Halperin and Traub call this “gay shame,” or sex and gender that mainstream discourses about LGBTQ+ rights find uncomfortable and exclude from their ambit—“those queers whose identities or social markings make them feel out of place in gay pride’s official ceremonies: people with the ‘wrong’ bodies, sadomasochists, sex workers, drag queens, butch dykes, people of color, boy-lovers, bisexuals, immigrants, the poor, the disabled” (2009, 9). For the most stigmatized queer people and practices, the closet continues to enable their flourishing underground while, paradoxically, at the same time marking them with an official stigma of shame and secrecy.

SEE ALSO Blackmail; Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; Cruising and Cruising Grounds; Foucault, Influence of; Homoerotic Poetry of Abū Nuvās; Lavender Scare; Military Law and Policy in the United States; Ottoman and Persian Miniature Paintings; Scandals in Europe; Situational Homosexuality; Treason and Queerness; Urban Queerness

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The Cold War was an era of geopolitical tension that developed between former allies the Soviet Union and the United States following the end of World War II in 1945. The two countries, with their oppositional economic and political ideologies—capitalist and democratic (United States) versus centralized and communist (Soviet Union)—developed a fierce rivalry in their quest for supremacy. While the Cold War never resulted in an actual war between the two superpowers, the conflict affected many of the countries over which the United States and Soviet Union exerted, or desired to exert, influence. Each side hoped to reduce the global influence of its opponent by imposing its political and economic system on developing countries, particularly in Asia and Latin America. Given its geographic proximity to the United States, Latin America became a special focus of US efforts to prevent the spread of communism in the world by propping up virulent anticommunist, authoritarian regimes. While this entry will discuss one such regime (in Brazil); conservative dictatorships backed by the United States emerged across the region, from Nicaragua’s Somoza dynasty (1936–1979) to Augusto Pinochet’s terrifying reign in Chile (1973–1989). This entry’s other focus is the Cuban Revolution, which developed in reaction to that country’s own US-friendly autocrat, Fulgencio Batista (r. 1933–1944, 1952–1959).

The Cold War coincided with, and in part caused, a massive expansion of state apparatuses, notably in the rise of security states on both sides of the global divide. Combined with governments’ and societies’ ongoing interest in gender, sexuality, reproduction, and reproductive labor, this expansion enabled the unprecedented intrusion of states and state prerogatives into the intimate lives of everyday people. Such intrusion occurred across Latin America, making this a period in which sexuality became ever more the province of state surveillance, admonishment, and other attempts at control. In general, states’ and societies’ approaches to sexuality tended to adhere to previously determined iterations of desirability and undesirability. Standards for sexual and gender behavior remained based in the normative prescriptions of traditional heteropatriarchy. Yet as Cold War strategists developed theories of the conflict as “total war,” sexuality and morality took on additional political and cultural weight, as they were presumed to affect and reflect national security.
Sexual Nonconformity as “Subversion”

Sexual deviance, in other words, retained the stigmas of bygone days, but it also came to signify security risk: communist subversion to the anticomunist governments that ruled much of the continent, or bourgeois decadence, when viewed from the Left side of the Cold War. Manifestations of new sexual cultures—for example, liberalized discourses about premarital sex and less restrictive clothing—did emerge throughout the Americas, yet neither side of the global struggle sanctioned these. Sexual unconventionality did not necessarily correlate with the political Left, much of which remained at least as traditionalist in its approaches to sexuality as the Right. Just as “communists and queers” became a persecutory mantra in the United States, so sexual nonconformity became a marker for presumed enmity—toward state and society—across Latin America, from Brazil to Cuba to Mexico. Traditional gender and sex roles, and especially “the” traditional family, took on new conceptual importance as cultural reservoirs and cultural weapons in a monumental war for control of humanity. To quote one Brazilian right-wing pundit, writing in 1971, many perceived the “dismantling of customs, the ascension of pornography, … and the downfall of the family” as Cold War stratagems rather than complex cultural processes (Corção 1971, 2). Furthermore, sexuality in Cold War Latin America became not just a terrain of suspicion and persecution, but a deliberate, state-sponsored tool, weaponized via institutionalized sexual torture.

Perhaps the most acute deployment of sexuality as a lynchpin of Cold War paranoia and strategizing occurred at the crossroads of authoritarianism and anticommunism, in military dictatorships that dominated the region in successive waves throughout the period. Brazil’s dictatorship, lasting from 1964 to 1985, was the longest of the South American cluster that arose across the continent in the 1960s and 1970s. The military administrations that ruled Latin America’s largest country for twenty years exemplified a combination that blanketed the hemisphere, to varying degrees: institutionalized military-authoritarian government, vehement anticommmunism, ongoing state violence, and conceptualization of the “subversive” enemy as all-encompassing and likely most active in the terrain of culture, especially gender and sexuality.

Brazil’s military rulers, from the five high-ranking officers who took over the presidency to the uniformed and civilian ministers of state to the everyday bureaucrats and even the fearsome enforcers of dictatorial security, shared a vision of sexual unconventionality (especially pornography and other perceived insults to moral orthodoxy) as a critical means of communist subversion. Theories of subversion by sexual means were elaborated at the exalted Escola Superior de Guerra (ESG; National War College), the principal think tank of national security and the ideological and institutional home of much of the organizing that led to the 1964 coup. (In)famously technocratic, the ESG sought to rationalize the realms of morality, intimacy, and cultural expression. The “experts” at the...
school included juridical and medical professionals, alongside nabobs from other fields, who together cemented the notion that “fundamental changes” to gender and sexual behavior were occurring in Brazil, that these were undermining the twin goals of national security and development, and that they were doing so at the behest of a shadowy “International Communist Movement.” True to technocratic form, ESG moralists classified their concerns using a set of categories: “the youth problem,” the “global village,” “women’s liberation,” and the “disaggregation of the family.” More importantly, they doctrinalized these categories as canonical theaters of what they called guerra revolucionária (revolutionary war), a theoretical denomination for communist-inspired unconventional warfare based in French counterinsurgency doctrines.

The dictatorship’s planners, henchmen, and adherents, far beyond the ESG, also came to subscribe to these principles. Throughout the institutions of statecraft, policy making, and military training and strategy, experts and functionaries alike reproduced the idea that, in the words of Justice Minister Alfredo Buzaid (1914–1991), “Communism destroys the family by means of wild propaganda of sex, Free Love, and obscenity” (Buzaid 1972, 13; translation by Benjamin A. Cowan). This meant that military journals published articles about the risks to youth of sexual subversion; training manuals in military institutions warned of immorality as the “greatest reason for generalized insecurity” (Escola Superior de Guerra, 231) and ministers of state publicly decried “moral disaggregation” (da Silva Muricy, para. 41) as a conspiracy “to destroy what they call ‘bourgeois morality,’ to prepare the way for the advent of communism” (da Silva Muricy, para. 41)

Even in the dungeons of the regime, this logic ruled: when the state’s shadowiest agents set out to do the work of violence, they did so attuned to the sexual, gender, and moral practice of suspected “internal enemies.” Some went so far as to outline cultural cues for identifying subversives, indicating that nonconformity could justify repression—an ironic and ineffective approach to policing a Left that likewise eschewed sexual and stylistic unconventionality. Thus, one of the regime’s most notorious architects of brutality, Carlos Alberto Brilhante Ustra (1932–2015), listed the aesthetic cues to the female subversive in terms that foregrounded lack of femininity: “a fiery girl,” betrayed by her “unkempt hair,” lack of makeup, and disinterest in manicures and shopping (Ustra 2006, 426; translation by Benjamin A. Cowan). Academics, too, could wander into the crosshairs of such cultural policing; among other archetypes of subversion identified by secret police was the professor who putatively enticed students into Marxism via “impromptu parties … where homosexuality and the ingestion of drugs and hallucinogens occur, and [the professors] seek to demonstrate the absolute naturalness of these things, so as to corroborate what they have said in the classroom and, at the same time, gain the confidence of the students, decisive factors in the success of their work in recruitment” (Centro de Informações da Aeronáutica 1977; translation by Benjamin A. Cowan).

These ideas were shared, too, by critical sectors of civil society. A coalition of conservative
moralists conceived of the authoritarian government as a means to simultaneously remoralize Brazil and rid it of suspected communism. Alarmed at changes—real and perceived—in youth and in popular and family culture, these moralists brought morality to the center of discussions about national security. Everyday citizens also got into the spirit. Well-heeled women from São Paulo, presenting themselves as “concerned mothers,” demanded censorship of public entertainment to protect the nation from a subversive-wrought crisis of immorality. And when neighbor denounced neighbor to the secret police, accusations of sexual misconduct cropped up as “proof” of subversion. Such accusations, as one historian has noted, could be used to “confirm’ the charge of communism” as “sex was always used by intelligence forces to disqualify the ‘enemy’” (Fico 2001, 102; translation by Benjamin A. Cowan).

The Political Policing of Sexuality

The dictatorship’s military and civilian elite resorted to a wide variety of measures to address this perceived threat. Direct policing was perhaps the most obvious and most dire one. This included reading the aesthetic cues previously noted, but also the interpretation of multiform sexual behavior as evidence of involvement with treasonous plotting. Civilian police and intelligence agents in São Paulo, for example, considered possession of pornographic material to be enough reason to arrest a suspected subversive. Female suspects faced particular stigmatization for even the slightest displays of gender or sexual unconventionality, but men and women alike came into the security state’s crosshairs based on imputations of “moral irregularities” that became a staple of police reports. More preventively, the state sought to revamp education to interdict the development and spread of perceived sexual subversion. Students across Brazil in this period found themselves required to take classes in Educação Moral e Cívica (EMC; Moral and Civic Education). Conceived of as a “weapon” in the anticomunist arsenal, EMC explicitly linked communist plotting and individual sexual behavior, and sought to sanitize the latter in the name of national security.

Perhaps the most thoroughgoing means of policing sexuality was censorship, a central pillar of the dictatorship’s repressive apparatus. Introducing comprehensive censorship legislation, the minister of justice assured the public that he meant to ban “obscene publications” expressly to inhibit “the attempts of the agents of international communism to use radio and television to exercise subliminal influence in the bosom of our families” (Buzaid 1971, 34; translation by Benjamin A. Cowan). The bureaucracy of censorship ballooned during the regime, as media, from major journalistic outlets to lavish telenovelas, cinemas, and minor public entertainments, were subjected to cuts, prevented from being published, or prohibited from exhibition. Censors’ evaluation reports objected to all manner of sexual representation in media, from nudity to “free love” to “guys visiting women after 11 pm.”—and kept such material off the air because it would “assault” family
morality and thus “harm ... national dignity or interest” (Divisão de Censura de Diversões Públicas 1975; translation by Benjamin A. Cowan).

The political policing of sexuality, guided by the notion that sexual and gender deviance were markers of subversion, had an even more sinister and directly violent variant in sexual torture. Counterinsurgent warriors combined their mandate to stamp out the “internal enemy” (however insignificant that reality) not just with moralism but with antifeminism and sexual sadism. The dungeons and torture centers of this regime, like those across the region, routinely engaged in sexual abuse of prisoners—from the psychological to the brutally physical, including rape and the mutilation of genital organs and other erogenous areas of the body. Institutionalized violence of this species might have been seen as instrumentalist, given widespread counterinsurgent misconceptions that torture could extract reliable information, but it also reflected the conservative gender and sexual politics of these regimes and their enforcers, who sought to subjugate male and female prisoners via sexual abasement and humiliation. Perhaps more often and more systematically, atrocity perpetrators thought to return women detainees to their proper “place” and restore the patriarchal parameters ruptured by such women’s alleged public and political agency.

**Left-Wing Social Moralism**

Ironically, left-wing forces in Brazil adhered to patriarchy and traditional sexual and moral regimes just as strictly as their rightist, anticommunist antagonists. Socialist moralism, or at the very least chauvinism, remained the rule among even the most radical opponents of the dictatorship. A wide variety of cultural and sexual behaviors, newly available via mass media and consumption, inspired infinite combinations of individual attitudes toward the hot-button political, social, and aesthetic issues of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Yet it is clear that among those who dreamed of revolution and who took up arms against the state, sexual nonconformity seemed a “distraction” from the “real” problems of class struggle. Brazil’s most ardent revolutionaries were willing to sacrifice safety, security, and even life itself for the proletariat—but ignored or disdained liberationist sexual agendas.

Indeed, a core of leftist activists drew a distinction between those who fought for the cause and those who engaged in various modes of sexual and cultural experimentation. For though its extent is difficult to measure, innovation in the arts, in fashion, in gender roles, and in individual sexual and moral choices did emerge in this period in Brazil, as elsewhere in the region, and most notably among the burgeoning ranks of middle-class young people. Rightists looked on with disproportionate alarm at the rise of rock music, miniskirts, and hippies—alarm that perceived these and other phenomena as much more widespread than they likely were. Left-wing purists, meanwhile, referred to the broad array of new practices and attitudes as desbunde or even esquerda festiva (the “party Left”), terms that dismissed such behaviors as unimportant and irresponsible. These terms also, however, reflected the
emergence of a new sensibility focused around all-encompassing and (at the time) radical individualism, a rejection of systems past that could be as much, or more, sexual and moral as political. This was particularly true of desbunde, a pejorative that has no direct translation but indicated challenges to traditional art forms, religious orthodoxy, heterosexuality, patriarchy, and even masculinity itself.

Such rejection may not have extended beyond a relatively small and privileged coterie of middle- and upper-class young people in Brazil and elsewhere; yet popular culture and conservative moral panic vis-à-vis new attitudes and practices brought it to the attention of mass audiences. Thus, even if there were very few hippies, and even if the sexual revolution remained limited, for most, to lurid curiosity or timid imaginings, people across the Americas grew acquainted with the idea of these phenomena as meaningful realities. Unfamiliar modes of artistic, sexual, and gender expression drew attention, interest, adherence, and condemnation from Argentina (where parents and religious officials fretted about longhaired rockers) to Chile (where new-age spirituality questioned traditional approaches to religion and the self) and to Mexico (where unconventional behavior encompassed rock music, hippies domestic and foreign, and experimentation with psychedelic experiences).

In each of these places, conservative forces mobilized to oppose such changes, however demographically insignificant. In each case, unconventionality was associated with subversion and the greatest fears of anticommunist state and society—a cultural “assault” on the West. Ironically, however, the left-wing orthodoxy outlined above reflected the realities on the other side of the so-called Iron Curtain, even as it extended beyond Eastern Europe and into the Caribbean. The Soviet establishment, famously moralistic for most of its history, may or may not have set the tone for worldwide “socialist morality.” Certainly, however, sexual moralism was reflected not only among those doomed rebels who struggled against Latin America’s right-wing dictatorships; it also found a home in the pulsing heart of the region’s revolutionary fears and dreams, in Cuba.

The Sexual Culture of the Cuban Revolution

Much ink has been spilled analyzing the Cuban Revolution, the focus of left-wing admiration, right-wing paranoia, and scholarly fascination since its inception in 1953. The sexual culture of the revolution has drawn attention in part because it permits easily accessible criticisms of the regime, particularly in terms of the revolution’s notable homophobia and certain failures of its gender and sexual policies. That said, the Cuban government both (1) set lofty goals and achieved some measure of success in terms of gender equalization, and (2) persecuted deviant sexualities, promoted traditional families, and especially demonized homosexuality in ways and for reasons that mirrored those of the security states on the opposite side of the Cold War. If, as at least one preeminent scholar of the revolution has noted, gender and sexual policy reflected not just
traditionalism but the state’s desire to consolidate power, build the economy, and reinforce essentialist ideas about responsible/productive citizenship (Guerra, 2010, 271), Cuban approaches were quite of a piece with those of anticommunist states. All retained the normativities of bygone decades and pre–Cold War societal prescriptions, and yet did so in ways that conformed to the new exigencies of national security as a paramount concern.

This was nowhere more evident than in the poignant irony of emigration and immigration policies that sought to exclude homosexual (or even just homosexual “seeming”) men not only from Cuba but from its great antagonist, the United States. When, in 1980, homosexuals were allowed and even encouraged to leave Cuba as “counterrevolutionaries,” they faced exclusion from the fabled land of refuge for Cuban émigrés, based on the long-standing idea—spanning not only the 90-mile strait between Florida and Cuba, but apparently the hemisphere—that sexual deviants were undesirable and a security risk. Those suspected of homosexuality eventually faced detention in Georgia—an ironic twist for those whose sexual presentation had gained them detention in the Cuban Revolution’s forced work camps known as the Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción (UMAPs; Military Units to Aid Production). In Cuba, such camps were populated by those arrested for such offenses as “looking gay” and “having foreign friends” (Ocasio 2002, 81). Perhaps the most famous victim of these policies was the novelist Reinaldo Arenas (1943–1990), whose persecution, flight from Cuba, and death in New York were chronicled in his autobiography, *Antes que anochezca* (1992; *Before Night Falls* [1993]) and its subsequent film adaptation.

In Cuba, as throughout the hemisphere, the quotidian realities of sexual behavior and custom are much more difficult to measure than the reactions of conservatives and moralists. In some ways, the aphorism “se dice nada, se hace todo” (nothing is said, but everything is done) illustrates a disconnect that transcended Cuba and even Latin America itself—a contradiction between, on the one hand, the strict policing of sexuality based on Cold War prerogatives and, on the other, the florescence of sexual practices that represented both continuity with older modes of unconventionality and innovation in the kinds of radical individualism that informed sexual behavior. The marshalling of hearts, minds, and bodies for productive and reproductive service to state and society, a paramount goal of all the states in the region, was seen to be threatened by the emergence of increased autonomy, increased desire, increased creativity, and more pluralistic sexuality, especially in the fabled and ubiquitously invoked realm of “the nation’s youth.” Yet such autonomy did exist, in practice, in public consciousness, and in right- and left-wing mythmaking and demonization. Sexual revolution may not have taken Latin America by storm in the 1960s and 1970s, but there, as elsewhere, its emergence into public and political consciousness during the Cold War made it a critical battleground, imbuing the developing culture wars with the gravity, and the obsessive mania, of national security debates.
SEE ALSO Antes que Anochezca (1992; Reinaldo Arenas); Central American Solidarity Movement; Communism and Queers in Europe; The Cuban Revolution and Homosexuality; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; The Nicaraguan Revolution

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The exact meaning of “colonialism” is disputed in Africa and among scholars of Africa. For some, it began with the Spanish and Portuguese conquest of the islands off the Atlantic coast in the fifteenth century, followed over the sixteenth century by the forts and forays that launched the transatlantic slave trade. To Cheikh Anta Diop (1960), it really began with the violent intrusion of “European” power deep into the continent: the Moroccan conquest of the Songhai Empire in western Africa in 1591. Others mark the extension of white settlement from Cape Town in present-day South Africa into the near interior in the late seventeenth century. Yet the vast majority of the continent remained outside of colonial rule until the end of the nineteenth century, and even then colonialism took a wide variety of forms with distinctive political, economic, social, and demographic footprints, including “overseas provinces,” settler colonies, communes, protectorates, mandates, crown colonies, “free states,” a condominium, and concessionaires, not to mention an African American republic under direct US financial management.

It is also debated when colonialism ended. Formal colonial rule began to unravel with the granting of independence to Sudan in 1956, then proceeded apace through the 1960s. The transition to democracy in South Africa in 1994 is commonly held to be the end of the decolonization process. But how significant were these transitions when Europeans and increasingly Americans maintained or even strengthened control through neocolonial means? Indeed, some take colonialism to include all forms of Western domination up to the present, including cultural domination through the influence of donors, corporations, academics, immigration bureaucracies, media, nongovernmental organizations, and solidarity groups.

“Homocolonialism,” for example, a term used by Momin Rahman (2014), applies the concept to the export or imposition of Western norms of homosexual identity and politics to contemporary Africa—an ongoing concern among sexual rights and health activists on the continent.

For the purposes of this entry, colonialism is defined conservatively by its main distinguishing feature: territorial rule by Europeans or settlers of European descent. By
that definition colonialism is relatively recent and was of short duration for most of the continent. Brief and complicated as it was, however, the colonial period so defined set the stage for the emergence of many of today’s most pressing problems. Conflicts over sexuality and gender identities and expressions are unquestionably among those problems, much discussed in the broader scholarship on women’s rights and HIV/AIDS (McClintock 1995; Arnfred 2004; Kalipeni et al. 2004; Tamale 2011). Meticulous historical research on same-sex sexuality in the colonial period has yet to be done for most the continent, but the existing research suggests strong links between colonialism, hostile public attitudes, and state repression against sexual minorities. What follows is an assessment of some of the bigger claims in circulation in the historiography and in popular discourse.

**Same-Sex Relations between European and African Men**

The discussion begins with one of the most inflammatory accusations. It must be acknowledged that colonial conquest likely involved instances of male-male rape and the sexual exploitation of African men and boys by powerful European men. This claim has been made in general terms to politicize homophobia as patriotic African nationalism. Diop (1960), notably, claimed that the Moroccans (and their many Spanish soldiers) corrupted black African morality and in particular introduced sodomy to Africa in their brutal sacking of Songhai. In another case, attested by an Egyptian general in Sudan in the 1880s, one of the reasons for the success of the Mahdist jihad was that it tapped into popular anger at the pederastic practices of Sudan’s Egyptian and Turkish rulers (Jacob 2005). Others have identified an erotic element in white men’s power over black men (Fanon 1967; Lane 1995), or in isolated cases of white homosexual men abusing or exploiting Africans for sex. Stephanie Newell (2006), for example, speculates on a self-described English “Uranist” living with young African boys in 1930s Nigeria, Heike I. Schmidt (2008) describes a male brothel in German colonial Dar es Salaam, and Richard Phillips (2006) records Krio protests against British immorality in Sierra Leone. Numerous fictional accounts depict white men as a homosexually corrupting influence in Africa (Maddy 1973; Everett 2018).

It needs to be stressed, however, that the evidence does not sustain the claim that this was a systemic feature of colonialism. On the contrary, the main era of colonial conquest coincided with an era when homosexuality was being pathologized in science, culture, and ideologies of national or racial fitness. European settlers and missionaries in the colonies, thus, brought intense intolerance of homosexuality with them. Not only was such intolerance important to the performance of their personal respectability, it was also often directly linked to the cause of nation and empire building. Homosexuality was equated with effeminacy and weakness in men, whereas a virile masculinity was needed to confront the enemies of the nation/empire. The dangers of lesbianism were also implicit in the belief that European women were needed as mothers to raise the next generation of imperial patriots and to settle the wild African frontier. Penalties enacted by colonial courts, and
ostracism imposed by colonial society, on European men caught in sexual relations with African men could be extreme, and certainly out of proportion to penalties enacted on African men caught with other African men (about whom the state was mostly ambivalent; see, e.g., Lorway 2015). The merest accusation of interracial homosexual desire when laid against political enemies could create enormous scandal (see, e.g., Southey 1997 on 1860s Orange Free State and Schmidt 2008 on pre-1914 German East Africa). As Daniel J. Walther concludes in his analysis of the deportation of accused white homosexuals from German colonies, white male desire for black men was a “crime not only against the state but against whiteness” (2008, 24).

That noted, there is no doubt that European travelers, missionaries, and settlers were often fascinated by African sexual and gender mores, and it is these figures who are responsible for the bulk of documented evidence testifying to historical African sexualities. This included some cases of traditional same-sex relationships and rituals (cf., e.g., Evans-Pritchard 1970). Yet these exceptions aside, much of that documentation was imbued with a racist ideology that tended to construct Africans as “primitive” and primordially heterosexual. The Orientalist gaze that eroticized “the Arab” as homosexually desirable and available, and in the dying decades of French colonialism gave rise to a kind of homosexual tourism in North Africa (Aldrich 2003), did not extend to the peoples south of the Sahara. Instead, that Orientalism tended to support the proposition that Africans needed protection from concupiscent Arabs, south Asians, Chinese, or other workers imported to fill gaps in the emerging local economies (see, e.g., Harries 1990, 1994 on the Chinese laborers in the South African gold mines; see also Epprecht 2014). Virile northern Europeans would also protect Africans from the morally corrupting influences of southern Europeans, such as the Portuguese or itinerant Greek traders.

**Same-Sex Practices in the Male Migrant Labor System**

Much more impactful on gender and sexuality in Africa than homosexually lusty white men or other immigrants were the many dramatic changes introduced by colonial regimes in the political economy, legal systems, and culture. In the first instance, the core question was how to profitably exploit a colony’s natural resources when the investments needed to do so were so great: the rapid construction of infrastructure across vast spaces and technically challenging terrain; the clearance of forests, swamps, and wild animals to make room for commercial crops, cattle, and white settlement; and the cost-efficient extraction of mineral or other wealth from the land. By the end of the nineteenth century slave labor could no longer be countenanced, so other means to attract or coerce Africans to do these tasks had to be organized. Indentured labor was one way (long-term contracts, wages payable on completion); alcohol as a recruiting tool was another. However, the requirement for Africans to pay taxes in cash was probably the most effective incentive to get African men to sign up for wage labor. Thus was put in motion large-scale male migrant labor and the
structured dismantling of African family norms. The male migrant labor system required keeping women and children in the rural areas where they could feed themselves at their own expense while the men were away. An added savings was that the use of male migrant labor meant that the colonial regime could avoid having to provide a normal urban infrastructure with family homes, schools, and hospitals in the industrial or commercial centers.

The male migrant labor system did indeed prove effective in getting capitalism to work for colonial interests. Yet it also very quickly gave rise to a sexual economy that engendered new costs. In the labor camps and growing urban centers, a modern architecture of control was erected, including police, askaris (African mercenaries), and "boss boys" who acted as intermediaries between white managers and black workers. In addition to maintaining discipline among the men and boys who came to work on colonial projects, African police were essential to the task of keeping African women out of town altogether. In the settler colonies of eastern, central, and southern Africa, the colonialists were especially successful in that endeavor, achieving cities where 80 percent or even 90 percent of the population was male. The few women who were there commonly survived by selling beer and sex in negotiated relationships. So-called loose women, or femmes libres, and their many partners in turn gave rise to an epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases, the most feared of which was syphilis. With no effective treatment available until the 1950s, infection condemned people to infertility, social disgrace, and death—not unlike HIV in the 1980s and 1990s.

Colonial regimes tried different strategies to address these moral and public health concerns. The French allowed their African conscripts (tirailleurs sénégalais) to bring wives and children along on military campaigns, for example, while the Belgians invested in "stabilizing" an African urban labor force, providing model homes, recreation facilities, social welfare, and a complex bureaucracy that allowed a small percentage of the African population to settle with family in town. Prisons, closed industrial compounds, juvenile workhouses, and psychiatric hospitals (which scarcely differed from each other in the early days) also provided new institutions for the containment of the social and heterosexual unruliness that urbanization fomented. But the new instruments and strategies of control also gave rise to new disapproved and disruptive behaviors, such as through criminal gangs. Young men’s ability to earn cash wages freed them from a sense of obligation to parents and community and threatened the fraught social compact. One response to this was the formation of new forms of male-male sexual relationships, the best documented of which were the so-called mine marriages between men and boys in the industrial compounds of Johannesburg (Harries 1990, 1994; Moodie and Ndatshe 1994).

The mine marriage (or inkotshane) phenomenon was already entrenched in the migrant labor compounds by the early 1900s and was thought to have remained pervasive, if not dominant, until the 1970s. Migrant men away from their families for months, or even years, at a time, who were afraid to engage in relations with unattached women in town, took
younger men or boys as servants and “wives” for the duration of their contracts so that they could return home healthy and unencumbered by the expenses of a town family. The younger partner gained a patron in a dangerous place and would, once he had acquired his own financial independence and urban savvy, graduate from the wife to a husband role. The sex was between the thighs and nonreciprocal; hence, there was no danger of sexually transmitted infection or gendered social hierarchies. An irony not entirely lost on colonial officials and corporate managers was that such homosexual (and often borderline pedophilic) relations were disdained in the ideology of the civilizing mission but appreciated for keeping labor costs lower and stabilizing heterosexual marriages.

Impact of Laws and Governance on Same-Sex Practices

New laws were imported to the colonies and refined to catch the new offenses that arose with racial capitalism. The Portuguese were the first to criminalize “the nefarious sin,” as they called it in the sixteenth century, followed by the Dutch at the Cape in the seventeenth century.

Penalties could be harsh; an African male “transvestite” transported as a slave to Mexico was burnt at the stake in 1585 (Sweet 1996, 186), while torture and execution were typical fates of those convicted of sodomy in Cape Town (Newton-King 2002). It was the British, however, who emerged as the most zealous lawmakers in this regard. In Zimbabwe, for example, they extended the old Roman-Dutch law from the Cape to cover new offenses as the frontier moved northward; in Uganda they simply copied a law developed in another of their colonial possessions (India) that criminalized an act of penetration “against the order of nature” (Lennox and Waites 2013; see also Schmidt 2008 on German law). Over the decades they added new terms such as “indecent assault,” “gross indecency,” “soliciting,” and “crimen injuria” in order to extend the reach of the law to catch consenting, private, and nonpenetrateable acts that the state disapproved of.

It should be stressed that these laws were not aggressively applied to Africans during the colonial era; there were more pressing policing matters to attend to (and female-female relations were never criminalized). For one thing, Africa remained overwhelmingly rural, and most Africans overwhelmingly fell under some form of codified customary (or “Native”) law, largely invisible to the colonial state. Where the new laws were applied it seems to have been more for political demonstration purposes than a determined campaign to repress male-male sexual relations. Robert Lorway (2015) argues, for example, that there were virtually no cases of male-male sexual crime under German rule in what became Namibia, but that Boer-controlled South Africa introduced and enforced antisodomy laws in the period between 1917 and 1930. This was part of South Africa’s campaign to discredit German colonialism (German settlers being the principal target) and to manage public relations around the migrant labor system. Ironically, the courts provided a venue for African men to articulate their disgust with colonialism by performing an
idealized heteronormative traditional culture in opposition. That element of anticolonial resistance may explain why the number of cases fell again in the 1930s, as indeed also appears to have happened in colonial Zimbabwe (Epprecht 2014). The laws remained on the books, however, to be inherited by independent national governments. In some cases these laws were actually modernized, postcolonialism, to become more repressive (for example, by finally criminalizing lesbianism). As such, they have been a major negative legacy of British and South African colonial rule.

The impact of colonialism and racial capitalism on female-female sexuality is less well documented and understood. There were no laws specifically prohibiting female-female sex acts, for example, probably because the colonial officials were unaware, unconcerned, and unbelieving that African women were capable of such things. With important exceptions, discussed below, prevailing attitudes among officials and missionaries held that African girls and women were entirely subordinated by the patriarchal kinship structures that demanded fecundity and submission to male desire. There was simply no room for nonheterosexual behavior, if Europeans even allowed that African women had the imagination for that. But if African women's preternaturally heterosexual concupiscence was held in check by customary controls, then colonialism, capitalism, and Christianity had a tendency to unleash it, especially in the growing urban centers. Colonial states, missionaries, and many Africans across the continent were deeply concerned about the health effects of African women's growing sexual "looseness," evident in the rise of women selling sex to men on a short-term basis, high rates of sexually transmitted infections, and low birth rates. That lesbian-like relations might emerge in this context was scarcely imagined or, if noted in (for example) girls' boarding schools (Blacking 1959), was denied as being sexual. They were, instead, thought to be romantic in nongenital ways that would quickly fade as the girls matured to their heterosexual vocation. Judith Gay's 1986 study of Basotho girls and young women was groundbreaking in that respect. The "mummy-baby" relationships she described were also mostly transient in nature and understood as a way to safely practice modern forms of courtship with boys and young men. They could be genital, however, and they were evidently connected to the absence of so many men from the rural areas on account of male migrant labor, possibly extending back to the colonial era.

The exceptions mentioned above primarily involved elite Muslim women in purdah (isolation with the other wives and female servants) and royal princesses within grand polygynous households such as those found among the Azande (Evans-Pritchard 1970). In those societies, the culture of masculine honor was such that a woman risked death for committing heterosexual adultery regardless of how neglected or abused she was by her husband. Yet it was understood that the women still had needs to satisfy beyond waiting patiently for their turn with the lord of the household, and that sexual relations between women might occur with no harm done, provided no one spoke of it. The impact of colonialism on these types of relationships was primarily felt through the ideological
sphere, whereby they acquired the stigma of being primitive. Modern women aspired instead to monogamous, heterosexual, companionate marriage, so that female-female sexual relations among the elite tended to wither away (see Gadelrab 2016 for this process in colonial-era Egypt).

Colonial modes of governance had other indirect and unintended consequences for sexuality and gender in Africa, often highly contingent on African agency or collaboration. Indeed, even after Europeans militarily crushed African resistance and divided the continent up into vast empires suiting their own convenience, they crucially depended on Africans to keep the system afloat. The British (in hindsight) called this system “indirect rule,” but the other powers had similar techniques for using Africans to do much of the dirty work of colonialism: gathering taxes, enforcing labor recruitment, policing, and carrying out the many other unpleasant tasks needed to shore up foreign powers to the profit of foreign corporations. This is not to detract from the crimes of European colonialists and their looting business practices. It is just to say that one needs to consider the ways that Europeans incorporated African elites into the system, inventing “traditions” first, if need be, to provide a veneer of legitimacy. These had several long-term consequences for attitudes and practices around same-sex sexuality.

First, rulers in Africa had traditionally had checks and balances against abuse of power. In many cases there had been no chiefs at all but government by consensus of the elders, the latter including postmenopausal women. Consensus was achieved through long debate, but also by close consultation with ancestral and other spirits through mediums adept at the art of selling compromise. Women could sometimes assert power in this way, notably when possessed by the spirit of a venerated male ancestor. Such a woman could hardly marry a man, and might instead take a younger woman as her wife. Under colonial rule, instances of female leadership or genderbending tended to be suppressed in favor of clearly enunciated masculine authority. Many traditional constraints on local power were removed. Co-opted (or created) male chiefs (or commandants de cercle) were given extensive new powers as local enforcers or bureaucrats with little need or interest in abiding by the secondhand opinions of the ancestors. The “native administration” was also given positive incentives from the colonial authority to squeeze their people for personal gain (for example, by “tax farming”—the more taxes you collect, the more you get to keep personally). Along with cooperative imams, emirs, and other Muslim leaders, locally empowered chiefs were freer than before to indulge themselves without regard to old standards of consensus, morality, or restraint. Such was the case in Belgian-ruled Rwanda in 1931 when King Musinga, its central instrument in the native administration, was removed from office after his flagrant moral breaches brought the church and Belgian colonial rule into disrepute in the eyes of its enemies (Germany, especially, from whom the Belgians had recently taken Rwanda). Musinga’s moral breaches included his alleged sexual affairs with young men and boys at the royal court (Des Forges 2011).
Second, the new colonial masters needed to keep subjugated peoples from becoming politicized or forming a common front to oppose the system. Divide and rule by ethnicity was one favored tactic. In addition, the colonialists sought to minimize unrest by “scientifically” managing existing social relations, religious beliefs, and the practice of law. Customs and practices that were offensive to European sensibilities (witchcraft and child marriage, notably) were banned outright, and the most serious crimes were referred to European courts. But otherwise, Africans who remained in the rural areas were basically allowed to keep their old ways. The problem was how to know what the “real customs” were in order to write them down with scientific confidence. Who were the real custodians of knowledge about these matters? And how could the new chiefs be squared with the old, or, to put it another way, how could colonial authorities find and promote traditions that were useful to justifying a bureaucratized local authority or other expedient adaptations? This was where anthropology came in—a new scholarly discipline that flowered in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Impact of Anthropology and Ethnopsychiatry

Once famously referred to as the “handmaiden of colonialism,” anthropology supplied the information needed to legitimize a patriarchal tribal authority that served the new system while continuing to provide a cultural buffer for people against the stresses created by an increasingly cash-based economy and the related breakdown of the moral economy of honor (Vaughan 1991; Schumaker 2001; Lyons and Lyons 2004). For the first few decades, the anthropology (and ethnopsychiatry, another new and closely related “science”) was not very sophisticated. Find the man who looked like the chief, or who said that he was the chief, and ask him (through an interpreter) what the customs of his people were. Sometimes the nearest missionary might have to suffice. When it came to matters of sexuality—inherently difficult to research, but all the more so in societies that value discretion on such matters—salacious rumor, second- or third-hand translation, speculation, and self-interested opinions often had to fill in the knowledge gaps. These were then written down as the law to be referred to in all future cases applying to all the people in the area who seemed to speak roughly the same language, or who the chief said belonged to him. This was then used to block African-controlled innovations that might disturb colonialist prerogatives.

From those crude beginnings, and with slow-improving sophistication, a body of expertise was built up to define exactly who each tribe was, who and what they prayed to, and how they married, raised their children, and buried their dead, among other day-to-day concerns, including how they had sex. The research was so convincing that by the 1950s it was not uncommon for European experts to lecture African chiefs on what their “real customs” were. In the process, however, flexible, negotiable traditions were codified as inflexible customary or “native” law. Ambiguities in African cultures around gender and
sexuality were sorted into more easily managed either/or categories. Subtleties in the language were given explicit names and definitions, while meaningful silences became proof of nonexistence or noncomprehension.

The Role of African Educated Elites in Colonialism

A third big change brought by the colonial system is that it stimulated the rise of a small class of mixed race and/or culturally assimilated, literate Africans sometimes called (including by themselves) progressives, modernizers, educated elites, tea drinkers, and ama-respectables. In the case of the French, African assimilés could become French citizens with the right to vote and even to sit in the French parliament. Educated elites everywhere played an important role in the developing colonial bureaucracy, school systems, and urban social welfare systems. For the most part, however, they were largely frozen out of the power structure. Their ability to establish themselves as an economic bourgeoisie was meanwhile undercut by legal restrictions on property ownership, by discriminatory pricing for agricultural products and low salaries, and by structures that favored non-African minorities' stranglehold on capitalist trade. Perhaps even more frustrating, educated Africans were commonly subjected to humiliation at the hands of racist and/or paternalist whites, often tarred with the brush of Africans' supposedly unbridled or primitive heterosexuality (as proven by the biased ethnography). Small wonder that men and women from this class grew restive, and indeed very angry in some cases, at the restrictions, injustices, and slanders ranged against them. They became the core of the African nationalist movement for independence from colonialism.

Yet at the same time, educated Africans were deeply influenced by the colonial ideology of modernization and respectability. The generation that emerged as political leaders in the 1930s to the 1950s was often the second or third to be educated in the mission school system. European, Christian, middle-class values were part of their family upbringing and something they often very profoundly admired. This was especially so when those values were set against either the retrograde and thuggish chiefs promoted under native authority, or the culture of alcohol and freewheeling sexuality among the working class in the cities. African progressives may have been furious at the racism and hypocrisy of European individuals in Africa. But the ideology of respectability as a marker of modernity and progress remained powerfully attractive to those Africans hoping to rise above both the crumbling traditional moral economy on the one side and rampant urban indiscipline on the other. Similarly, colonialist homophobia clearly had white supremacy close to its heart. As an ideology, however, it otherwise fit very well with African middle-class aspirations to assume leadership of the colonial state. In the Rwandan scandal noted previously, for example, the Belgians were said to have been secretly informed of Musinga's behavior by African Christians who were his rivals in the court.
The Struggle for Liberation

The appeal of the colonial ideology is also evident in its continuity from “tea drinkers” to radicals in the emerging African nationalist movement. Some of the most influential voices from the 1930s made precisely that point: homosexuality was a threat not just to the survival of the African family, but to African dignity against the affronts of colonial racism. To the extent that it existed among blacks at all, they argued, homosexuality was introduced to Africa by whites—one more reason to reject European rule and culture. Jomo Kenyatta ([1938] 1961) was the first African intellectual to explicitly express this view, holding up his people’s “normal” sexuality (heterosexual missionary position only) as a source of pride when set beside confused and perverse Europeans. Even more influentially, Frantz Fanon argued in the 1950s that a revolutionary movement in Africa needed black men to stand up against European men’s hatred of blacks arising from their (not always) “repressed homosexual” desires. In the Cold War era, hardline Marxist-Leninists and Maoists joined in the refrain, characterizing homosexuality as a symptom of Western, capitalist, bourgeois decadence, and a betrayal of Africa’s toiling masses. The alleged homosexuality of the last French governor of Cameroon, and his alleged affair with the first president of the independent nation, became a metaphor for continuities between colonial and neocolonial exploitation and humiliation (Nyeck 2013).

Homosexuality was never a major or explicit theme in the liberation struggle. Instead, it was more like a footnote, a few scattered letters to the editor, or a subtle subtext in pro-independence politics. Rudolf Pell Gaudio (2009), for example, found denunciations of the same-sex practicing 'yan daudu, as well as denunciations of lewd dances and prostitution, in letters in newspapers from the 1950s. These practices were linked to criticism of the emir (a British puppet) for not defending northern Nigeria’s good Muslims against corrupting colonial and southern influences. From retrospective comments by a wide range of nationalist leaders from that generation, the deep roots of politicized homophobia can also be inferred in the nationalist project. That includes the obvious, explicitly homophobic denunciations by such leaders as the Tanzanian anticolonialist Julius Nyerere (Dunton 2008). But it was also subsumed within the culture of womanizing, or “warrior” masculinity, performed by leaders such as Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Idi Amin of Uganda, and Nelson Mandela of South Africa. The theme crops up as well in a genre of African nationalist fiction from the era, wherein heroic male African characters consume women sexually, and white women in particular, as if in rebuke to white men’s condescension. It was a masculinity that allowed no room for doubt about African heterosexuality lest such doubt feed into the colonial propaganda of African indiscipline and immaturity (Dunton 1989).

As it happened, outside of southern Africa formal colonial rule collapsed much faster than almost anyone had expected. In the euphoria of independence, and amid all the frustrations
and calamities that so often followed quickly afterward, anxieties about the theoretical
dangers of homosexuality to the body politic took a backseat to other, more immediately
obvious and pressing concerns. By numerous accounts, this enabled a small flowering of
gay or gayish urban scenes in the early postcolonial period—a short-lived “heaven” in the
case of Namibia in the early 1990s, according to one LGBTI activist (Currier 2012, 45; see
also Le Pape and Vidal 1984 on the Abidjan milieu in the 1960s and 1970s). But for the
majority population, disappointment with the fruits of independence under neocolonial
conditions and conditionalities was quick to settle in. Frustration with the economic and
political malaise in the 1980s and 1990s fueled a hunger for easy answers that might be
found in fundamentalist religion and political demagoguery, including through the creation
of scapegoats. Tribal or ethnic violence has been a frequent, tragic result. The legacy of
colonialism in fomenting homophobia also weighs heavily in that respect.

SEE ALSO Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara; Cape Town: Ethnopsychiatry;
Imperialism and Colonialism; Language in Africa; Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa:
Neoliberalism in Africa; Offences Against the Person Act (1861); Section 377 and Section
377A; Sex Work/Sex Tourism/Sex Trafficking in Africa

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The Combahee River Collective was an organization of black lesbian feminists created in 1974 out of the Boston, Massachusetts, chapter of the National Black Feminist Organization. Its founding members were Demita Frazier, Beverly Smith, and Barbara Smith, among other African American feminists. The name of the collective refers to an 1863 Civil War campaign during which former slave and Union spy Harriet Tubman (c. 1820–1913) helped free 750 slaves near the Combahee River in South Carolina (Breines 2002). The Combahee River Collective was the only black lesbian feminist organization in the Boston area at the time of its founding and was thus at the forefront of establishing the parameters of a new politics of black feminism (Springer 1999).

In 1977 the organization released the Combahee River Collective Statement, one of the most influential documents of radical black feminism (Breines 2002). The statement articulates a strong opposition to sexism in black liberation movements and to racism in white feminist movements in the United States. It calls for the dismantling of interlocking sociopolitical and economic systems of oppression, such as capitalism, patriarchy, and racism: “We believe that sexual politics under the patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously.”

The statement argues that all forms of oppression are linked and cannot be separated or prioritized. It declares an active commitment to the fight against racial, sexual, heterosexual, and class oppression and to “the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking.” It states that the amalgam of these oppressions creates the conditions of black women and black lesbians. The statement articulates how marginalized women are impacted by multiple forms of oppression and how black feminism is the sole logical political movement for African American women to combat the multiple and simultaneous oppressions—whether due to race, class, gender, or sexuality—that women of color face. The Combahee River Collective Statement represents an attempt at consciousness-raising and political engagement in the effort to liberate all oppressed people. It is a call for intersectional...
organizing across race, gender, class, and sexuality.

Oppression experienced by black women, and black lesbians in particular, is centered in the statement, which pledges to confront homophobia. Barbara Smith noted in 2017 that “we cannot underestimate the impact of homophobia, specifically anti-lesbian homophobia on the history of our organizing. We were not just dismissed because we were black feminists. We were dismissed because we were traitors to the race” (Gosztola 2017). The Combahee River Collective was a socialist, nonsectarian organization that embraced internationalism. Its members considered themselves “third world women” who are “internally colonized” (as they claim an attachment to third world nations and immigrants of color in the United States) and, as such, organized in solidarity and in struggle with all third world people (Gosztola 2017). The collective was built on a nonhierarchal distribution of power within the group, which reflects the women’s vision for a revolutionary society.

**Black Feminists and the Mainstream Women's Movement**

As one of the most influential black feminist organizations of its time, the Combahee River Collective articulated a black lesbian, socialist, feminist politics. Some primarily white socialist feminist organizations and issue groups, such as the Committee to End Sterilization Abuse, worked alongside Combahee (Breines 2002). Frazier spoke of one of the reasons behind the lack of unity among feminists at the time as a matter of conflict in ideals and priorities: “Many of us were refugees from other political movements—civil rights, the antiwar movement, the labor movement—where we found ourselves in conflict with the lack of a feminist analysis and, in many cases, we were left feeling divided against ourselves” (Frazier 1995, 12). She explains that in some of their allied feminist political groups, they were branded as “troublemakers, brainwashed by the ‘man-hating white feminists’” (12). As for the reason black women felt alienated in primarily white feminist movements, she explains that white feminist analysis did not address with enough depth issues of race and class, which created tension and frustration among African American feminists.

Black feminists viewed the axes of gender and race as inseparable from their experiences as black women in an inherently capitalist, sexist, and racist American society. At the founding of the National Black Feminist Organization in 1973, feminist, editor, and civil rights activist Margaret Sloan (1947–2004) noted that black feminist activists “will remind the Black liberation movement that there can’t be liberation for half of a race” (quoted in Campbell 1973). And, as later articulated in the Combahee River Collective Statement, it was their “experience and disillusionment within these liberation movements” as black feminists and black lesbians, “as well as experience on the periphery of the white male left,” that led to the establishment of the Combahee River Collective out of their need for a new anti-racist and anti-sexist politics that addressed the needs and realities of African
American women at the time.

During the 1970s, Boston was going through a busing crisis, during which black students were transported by bus to white schools and white students to black schools under court order in an effort to redress segregated education. Racial tension was high, and the African American population found itself in a threatening and frightening environment (Breines 2002). The members of the Combahee River Collective, who founded a local battered women’s shelter, among other efforts to aid African American women and children during that fraught period, found it difficult to lead and organize black feminist and lesbian initiatives when they had no black female role models (Guy-Sheftall 1995). That period soon saw the publication of works by iconic black women, such as Toni Cade Bambara, Toni Morrison, Audre Lorde, and Shirley Chisholm, which initiated a literary awakening of sorts among African American women and signaled “the beginning of a clearly defined black women’s liberation movement that would have priorities different from those of white feminists, and generate considerable debate, even hostility, within the black community” (Guy-Sheftall 1995, 14–15). Although the Combahee River Collective built on The Black Woman (1970), an anthology edited by Bambara, and the works of other radical black women writers, such as Ella Baker, Fannie Lou Hamer, Lorraine Hansberry, and Pauli Murray, they nonetheless remained self-conscious of their unique position and their aloneness as they engaged in a new kind of politics.

Barbara Smith, One of the Founders of the Combahee River Collective, in 2018. Smith was inspired by the first regional meeting of the National Black Feminist Organization, which she attended in 1973 in New York City, and soon after met with her twin sister Beverly Smith and Demita Frazier to form the Combahee River Collective. The three of them later wrote the statement that was widely circulated as an assertion of black women’s rights to participate in political struggle and their rights for sexual visibility.

**Founding Members**
Although the Combahee River Collective included many members, three African American feminists were responsible for founding the group: Frazier, Beverly Smith, and Barbara Smith. Barbara Smith was inspired by the first regional meeting of the National Black Feminist Organization, which she attended in 1973 in New York City, and she soon after met with her twin sister Beverly Smith and Frazier to form the Combahee River Collective. The three women later wrote the statement that became widely circulated as an assertion of black women’s right to participate in political struggle and their rights for sexual visibility.

Frazier is a feminist, writer, teacher, and activist who maintains that black women are still not free, which is why it is important for black feminists in the United States today to continue to remember and learn from the Combahee River Collective (Taylor 2017). Beverly Smith is a health advocate, writer, academic, and activist. She is an instructor of women’s health at the University of Massachusetts in Boston, and her writings on racism, feminism, identity politics, and women’s health, such as “Face-to-Face, Day-to-Day: Racism Consciousness Raising” (1982) and “The Wedding” (1983), have been extensively published and taught in universities across the United States. Barbara Smith was involved in the Black Panther movement before forming the Combahee River Collective and remains an essential voice in feminism today. Smith has been credited by many for playing a significant role in building and sustaining black feminism in the United States (see Gosztola 2017; Taylor 2017). Since the early 1970s, she has been active as a lecturer, author, scholar, and publisher of black feminist thought and has taught at numerous colleges and universities. She wrote and edited many works, including several anthologies and essays with her sister, such as “Across the Kitchen Table: A Sister-to-Sister Dialogue” (1981). Her other writings include The Truth That Never Hurts: Writings on Race, Gender, and Freedom (1998) and Yours in Struggle: Three Feminist Perspectives on Anti-Semitism and Racism (1984, written with Minnie Bruce Pratt and Elly Bulkin).

While there were also bisexual and straight women in the organization, the majority of the founders of the Combahee River Collective were lesbians or in the process of coming out (Breines 2002). This was because “in that era, many heterosexual black women did not want to work with open lesbians,” seeing how they had already risked the contempt and the marginalization of their community by coming out as feminists (Mansbridge and Smith 2000, 32). During that era of nationalism when the black community and heterosexual values were idealized, black lesbian feminists were excluded and marginalized by many groups.

**Intersectional Identity Politics**

The Combahee River Collective was one of the first political groups to address intersectional identity politics within their statement. Their focus on African American women’s oppression is embodied in the concept of identity politics, and they assert in their
statement that the “most profound and potentially the most radical politics come directly out of our identity.” They also declared racial solidarity with progressive black men and did not advocate the fractionalization that their white feminist counterparts demanded. The women of the collective believed that their situation as African Americans necessitated a solidarity around race, which white feminists did not need to have with white men, “unless it is their negative solidarity as racial oppressors.” They thus claimed solidarity with black men against racism while they struggled with black men about sexism. The Combahee members felt alienated by, and were thus critical of, the lack of effort among white feminist organizations to understand racism in the mainstream feminist movement and fight against it. As they argue in their statement, “Black, other Third World, and working women have been involved in the feminist movement from its start, but both outside reactionary forces and racism and elitism within the movement itself have served to obscure our participation.”

**Mistrust of White Feminists and Black Nationalists**

Racism within the white women’s liberation movement led to the development of black feminism, by both black and white feminists alike. According to E. Frances White, black feminists entered alliances with white feminists assuming that a raised consciousness of women’s oppression would eventually lead to a constructive awareness of other forms of subordinating oppressions (2001, 47). They eventually felt betrayal and disappointment when many white feminists remained blind to class and racial differences affecting women of color: “Racism abounds in the writings of white feminists, reinforcing white supremacy and negating the possibility that women will bond politically across ethnic and racial boundaries” (hooks 2000, 3). Women of color, and especially lesbian women of color, were excluded from mainstream feminist analyses and practice. Thus, black feminists began to question notions of sisterhood, in which “the sister” seemed to always be white and middle class. As a result, early black feminists simply rejected the notion of forming coalitions with white feminists (E. F. White 2001).

Black feminists were also mistrustful of mainstream feminism’s and white socialist feminists’ employment of Black Power as a model for their own autonomy. Women liberationists, for instance, attributed their inspiration for political activity to the Black Power movement, which enabled them to argue for the validity of women organizing around their own oppression and defining the terms of their struggle (Echols 1989). According to Paula Giddings, black feminists viewed the rise of the mainstream women’s movement, which coincided with the deterioration of the black movement, as capitalizing on the accomplishments of the black movement: “It appeared that the predominantly White women’s movement was going to reap the benefits that the Black movement had sown…. Comparing the status of women to that of Blacks was particularly upsetting” (1984, 308). Women’s liberation was thus viewed by many black feminists, activists, and scholars as not
only attaching itself to the black movement but also as doing so “with only marginal concern for Black women and Black liberation” (Giddings 1984, 308). Thus, the Combahee and other black feminists became wary of the women’s liberation movement for what they considered as the exploitation of Black Power.

Therefore, during the establishment of the Combahee River Collective, African American feminists found themselves alienated and silenced: “Those years from 1966 to 1970 during which Black Power and Women’s Liberation flowered were also the years in which the political and philosophical weight of the black woman was either erased or divided between black men and white women, who then proceeded to go their separate ways pulling her apart in the process” (Wallace 1990, 170–171). The exclusion of black feminists from the two liberationist discourses of the period—the black nationalism and the women’s liberation movements—is conveyed in the book All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, but Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women’s Studies (Hull, Bell Scott, and Smith 1982). Cowritten and coedited by one of the founding members of the Combahee River Collective, Barbara Smith, the book states that whether black women had gone their separate ways or whether they were excluded from the two liberation movements, black feminists saw no other resort but to work independently to create a safe space to develop black feminist politics. Feeling alienated by white feminists and the black nationalism movement and being deeply influenced by the Black Power movement but still being marginalized by its hypermasculinity, the Combahee River Collective developed a feminism of their own.

**Enduring Influence**

The collective has influenced many organizations, including, more recently, the Black Lives Matter movement, which was mostly impacted by “the way [the collective] talked about the importance of not just looking at gender in a vacuum” (Hobson and Jolna 2017, 50). Alicia Garza, one of the founders of Black Lives Matter, explains the persistent need for the black feminism of the Combahee River Collective in the United States today: “When we talk about what’s happening in low-income communities, often we find that it’s women—black women, women of color, and immigrant women—who are concentrated in poverty, who [are] disproportionately impacted by environmental racism or housing issues” (Hobson and Jolna 2017, 50). The Combahee River Collective also focused on coalition-building, where feminist activists and academics of different races and sexual orientation work more comfortably with each other in the recognition of their differences and the strength of collective power.

SEE ALSO Anti-racist Activism in Europe; Black Freedom Movement and Sexuality; Daughters of Bilitis; Dyketactics!; Human Rights Campaign; Lavender Menace

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Many theorists have addressed the fallout of the employment of the Western concept of “coming out” within postcolonial societies. Queer pride, as an epistemological stance, has dominated queer history and Western queer discourse and identity. Not subscribing to queer pride is to be left with “the proverbial closet of shame” (Georgis 2013b, 240), which represents a life without freedom or without a future as a queer person. To have queer pride is to dare to live one’s life visibly; pride is, thus, a speech act. As Michel Foucault argues in *The History of Sexuality* (1980), “What characterizes modern sexuality is that it is a truth to be discovered and, once knowable to the self, it becomes incumbent upon the self to confess it to the outside world, even a priest or a doctor” (34). The demand to confess one’s queer sexuality or homosexuality is done both privately and publicly. It does not suffice to come out to one’s self; coming out to your family is what is expected, then coming out to your friends, and gradually to your society. Once you come out to yourself, you are then expected to come out to the world. Queer pride is about sharing with others the part of your identity that has perhaps excluded you from your community and your family; “the ethos of pride has certainly won rights—rights I would not want to lose. But this very ethos is now implicated in a colonial discourse that fails to see that the right to come out and the right for legal changes are not the only strategies for queer becoming” (Georgis 2013b, 240).

The historian George Chauncey (1994) locates the concept of coming out of the closet in the early twentieth century, when young women would be formally introduced into society on reaching the age of maturity. He establishes, however, that the coming-out narrative focuses on the space left behind as opposed to the new world that gay individuals are entering. Chauncey also maintains that gay men in the United States, specifically in New York, “organized cultural events that sustained and enhanced [their] communal ties and group identity” (1994, 15) before the adoption of the pride narrative. The coming-out model, nonetheless, is widely used today by Western LGBT communities in their discussions of queer sexual identities and the legal rights of their counterparts in queer communities around the world. This renders the discourse of LGBT and human rights in the international context very specific and opposing to alternative LGBT discourses, such as
the “coming-in” narrative, which challenges the concept of publicly declaring and expressing one’s identity as critical for the success and advancement of global LGBT rights. “To come in” is to be gay and not “out” to one’s parents and extended conservative families; it is the choice to selectively introduce close people into your private life and to the layers of your identity without being met with shame and expectations from society. In the case of the coming-in narrative, identities are not immediately recognized, and sexual behavior and the adoption of a sexual identity become a personal choice rather than an essential political instrument to building a community as it is rendered by the pride narrative. In the case of many LGBT individuals residing in the Middle East, coming in provides them with an alternative to increased visibility as a formula for combating homophobia, while also rendering them safe from violence and discrimination.

**Pinkwashing and the Gay International**

Israel has strived since the beginning of the twenty-first century to brand itself as a haven for LGBT individuals in the Middle East and a progressive democratic state that is tolerant of LGBT rights. It has adopted Western liberal queer discourses as it shames Arab states for their violent and oppressive behaviors toward their LGBT communities. But while branding Arabs as barbaric and backward and positioning its claims within international human rights discourse, Israel offers no protection for or support to Arab queers (Georgis 2013b). The term *pinkwashing* has thus become synonymous with the State of Israel, as it represents itself as gay friendly in order to play down the negative aspects of its reputation in regard to its occupation of Palestinian land. Israel employs a queer activism organized around visibility and coming out of the closet, and instead of offering protection to Arab queers, the state depends on Western queer narratives to “[marginalize] and cast as ‘premodern’ or ‘unliberated’ queer Palestinians, and explain their supposed inability to come into (Western/Israeli) gayness as a result of the irredeemable pathology of Palestinian (or ‘Arab’) culture” (Ritchie 2010, 560). Jasbir K. Puar (2007) uses the term *homonationalism* to refer to such positioning where a heteronormative nation uses global gay rights to shape the views of Western democracies, turning them against Muslim-majority nations.

Homonationalism has thus subtly encouraged Western states to pursue wars in order to protect and save Middle Eastern LGBT individuals from their repressive cultures and violent states without really providing them with sanctuary. “Liberating” gay people in the Middle East has thus grown to be key in the discourse of neocolonialism (Georgis 2013a), which results in highly damaging consequences for Arab queer communities. In the Palestinian context, for instance, LGBT people are jeopardized on both fronts, from within their own culture and from the Israeli occupation. As on the personal level, the pride narrative imposes coming out on Arab LGBT individuals who are not accustomed to living with LGBT identities (Georgis 2013b).
The spread of global LGBT rights has been critiqued by Arab and Western scholars. Joseph A. Massad (2007) condemns the idea of an openly gay identity in the Arab world, particularly with regard to the promotion of LGBT rights. He establishes that the advancement of global gay rights in the Middle East is but a “missionary project” by Western imperialist nations through which Arabs are forced to subscribe to a heterosexual/homosexual binary (12). These missionary projects and the discourses and organizations that produce and represent them are what Massad calls the “Gay International,” which “heterosexualizes” the Arab man, for, when faced with this binary, he is forced to choose being exclusively heterosexual because homosexuality entails a deviation from the cultural norm (13). Because of the Gay International, Arabs have internalized Western Victorian attitudes toward sexuality that privilege heterosexuality and devalue all nonnormative sexual expression or desire. Thus, while based on a corpus of Orientalist representations of Arab masculinity and sexuality, Western queer ideology is used to “liberate’ Arab and Muslim ‘gays and lesbians’ from the oppression under which they allegedly live by transforming them from practitioners of same-sex contact into subjects who identify as ‘homosexual’ and ‘gay’” (162).

Many scholars and activists have warned against the severe repercussions of the globalization of Western queer identity. Judith Butler, in a speech she made declining the Civil Courage Award from Berlin Pride in 2010, emphasized the vulnerability of gay politics
and its current employment by the West to serve homophobic ethnonationalist and homonationalist racist agendas. The closet becomes a more subtle, postmodern power technique, and the struggle to come out of it as citizens in a respectable queer society protects the state from liability and frames it as a neutral authority to be called on to amend laws and protect citizens, “rather than ... [being] invested with the power to injure” (Brown 1995, 27). For, while coming out of the closet represents a dream for many queer Israelis to acquire full citizenship and motivates their activism to achieve national belonging, the violent reality of checkpoints and the rejection of citizenship for many queer Palestinians, along with other countless reminders of the impossibility of belonging, shape the nature and discourse of the Israeli state. The logic of the closet as a mechanism thus not only “allows for [a normalized] homosexuality to be included in the national discourse ... [and] reproduces and perpetuates oppressive heteronormative practices” (Ritchie 2010, 562), it also simulates and sustains oppressive racist practices that are indispensable to the nation’s anatomy. Queer pride is limited to the right to come out of the closet into the dominant society as respectable queer citizens, while its potential as a radical tactic of opposition to repressive discourses and practices has been substituted by the vocabulary of visibility, which has become a key term in gender and sexual identity politics. It is not shocking, therefore, that queer Arabs are rejecting certain ideologies and practices of mainstream Western gay activism and seeking to articulate a politics of social change that disrupts the normalization of the queer visibility project (Ritchie 2010).

**Alternative Discourses**

Arab LGBT communities dream of a future not unlike that which has been seen in the West: full citizenship rights, political representation, and public visibility. Their strategies are also similar in that its members are rendering themselves visible, not by coming out to their societies but by coming in to friends and reaching out to LGBT communities around the world by blogging their experiences and taking part in global feminist movements. Such is the case with the Lebanese LGBT community, which collaborates with feminist organizations, such as KAFA (meaning “enough” in Arabic), in their efforts to obtain further rights and recognition. For the time being, however, Arab LGBT people engage in what Hassan El Menyawi (2006) calls “activism from the closet,” by which advocates can push for the strengthening of privacy rights while also attempting to broaden the discussion about sexual identities in the Arab world to include models that are more relevant to the region. The activism from the closet approach does not involve explicitly advocating for LGBT rights, but rather advocating for issues that, while they are not categorically “gay rights” issues, will greatly benefit LGBT people and those who participate in same-sex sexual acts. Thus, this alternative model is a more subtle approach to gay rights advocacy because it attempts to persuade people of issues that indirectly advance LGBT agendas. This model most notably focuses on heightened privacy protections, as it does not directly articulate concepts of gay rights and LGBT identities, which would have received
opposition from mainstream Arab societies. This method of activism presents LGBT people with a safe space as it does not involve being “out.” Thus, rather than becoming a target for the government or other nonstate actors, “the closet, fluid, protean and hidden, becomes a safe locus for collective strategizing—a place from which LGBTQ groups can engage in activism” (El Menyawi 2006, 7).

Another alternative discourse to the Western coming-out narrative involves an activism that aims to create a community based on a “common identification with a radical democratic interpretation of the principles of liberty and equality” (Mouffe [1993] 2005, 70) rather than to organize around a common identification as “gays” and “lesbians.” Such a collective strives to hold the liberal state to its democratic ideals, instead of demanding that it accept and protect its queer citizens (Georgis 2013a). The closet as space, and to be out of the closet, demands entry into a dominant social space, which some Arabs reject as a solution. The goal of such an activism would be not to unite international LGBT communities under an out-of-the-closet narrative that places them into a space recognized and protected by the state, but to create a space outside of the reach of the state and its regulations where bodies could inhabit, regardless of their subscribed identities and sexual desires.

For the time being, Middle Eastern LGBT communities are attempting to broaden the discussion of sexual identities and LGBT discourses to include models that are more relevant to their regions. As framed by Dina Georgis, must the struggle of homophobia in the Middle East “be compromised by the racism of Western liberalism? Can we not instead contextualize present-day homophobia in a history of colonialism that once shamed the Arab world for being ‘too free’ in its sexual promiscuities and now shames it for not being free enough?” (2013b, 238). Gloria Anzaldúa (1987) calls for the reclaiming of the borders that have been set up to divide as transitional spaces where unity can take place. Anzaldúa describes the border as an “[open wound] where the Third World grates against the First and bleeds. And before a scab forms, it hemorrhages again, the lifeblood of two worlds merging to form a third country, a border culture” (3); she envisions transforming the border into a space where transnational feminist and queer coalitions could meet and collaborate. As a lesbian, she unites herself with the struggle of all women and LGBT individuals internationally: “We come from all colors, all classes, all races, all time periods” (84). She highlights the importance of contributions made by minorities in the homosexual community: “Colored homosexuals,” she writes, “have always been at the forefront ... of all liberation struggles ...; have suffered more injustices and have survived them despite all odds” (85). Only by working to document the sexualities and the experiences of LGBT people across borders living with shame and their efforts to understand and define themselves within the global queer discourse, will the discourses produced for collaborating with and supporting the LGBT communities in the Middle East be beneficial and productive for LGBT communities internationally.
SEE ALSO *The Closet; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Pinkwashing*

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Comité d'Urgence Anti-répression Homosexuelle (CUARH)

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An umbrella activist organization of gay and lesbian groups operating in France between 1979 and 1986.

The Comité d’Urgence Anti-répression Homosexuelle (CUARH; Emergency Committee against Homosexual Repression) was founded in Marseille, France, in July 1979. The group was founded as an umbrella organization to coordinate and energize the vestiges of France’s gay liberation movement with the aim of protecting gay men and lesbians against homophobic discrimination.

By the close of the 1970s the French gay liberation movement found itself in a weakened and fragmented state. Many of the Groupes de Libération Homosexuelle (GLHs; Homosexual Liberation Groups) that had appeared all over the nation since 1974 had disbanded, including the largest group, based in Paris. Initiative and innovation were to be found outside the capital. The GLH Marseille organized a “summer university,” bringing together over 300 people involved in activism from France and beyond. There, it was decided that a new organization should be created to ensure a coordinated, national response to homosexual discrimination. The federative CUARH was born, encompassing the remaining liberation groups, alongside existing lesbian groups and gay Christian organizations. Notable driving forces included the activists Jacques Fortin and Mélanie Badaire, the journalists Hervé Liffran and Catherine Gonnard, the poet Geneviève Pastre, and Jan-Paul Pouliquen, who later was a pioneer in the area of gay civil partnership.

Early Years and Initial Successes

The CUARH was distinct from its predecessors in its move away from a focus on sexual liberation achieved through socialist revolution. Since the founding of the Front Homosexuel d’Action Révolutionnaire (FHAR; Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action) in 1971, gay liberation groups had been driven by a utopian, socialist vision of liberation rather than a focus on pragmatic action. The CUARH, however, had more moderate horizons, concentrating on defense and legal reform.

These aims were influenced by the sense that gay men and lesbians were increasingly under threat from discrimination. Well-publicized incidents included a police raid on
Paris’s Le Manhattan bar in 1977 and the removal of a municipal administrator, Marc Croissant, from his job after he complained to the communist newspaper *L’Humanité* about an article equating homosexuality and pedophilia. Incidents such as these, amplified to a national scale by a more confident gay media, suggested the need for self-defense.

As a symbol of legal inequality, the age of consent was the predominant issue in the CUARH’s early years. Since 1945 the penal code had discriminated with regard to “acts against nature,” setting different ages of consent for heterosexual and homosexual activity: twenty-one for homosexual acts and fifteen for heterosexual acts, the former lowered to eighteen in 1974. To encourage reform, and support for a bill that was bouncing between the assembly and senate, delegates from the CUARH met members of the recently installed François Mitterrand administration in 1981. This was an early example of cooperation with state power, to which liberation groups had previously been averse. Public demonstration was also used by the CUARH in aid of equalization. In April 1981 the group staged the largest march of gay men and lesbians that France had yet seen, claiming that over 15,000 had demonstrated in support of “the rights and freedoms of homosexuals” (*Girard 1981, 5*; translation by Dan Callwood). Such actions hastened a process that was already underway and the age of consent was equalized at fifteen in August 1982.

In its attempts to influence government policy, the CUARH began to find its own political voice beyond its existence as an umbrella organization. This voice was most forcefully articulated in its journal *Homophonies*. First published in November 1980 from an initiative within the Parisian CUARH subgroup, the journal’s first issue declared that “through this journal the CUARH wants to bring an original contribution to associations and individuals … and effectively combat repression” (“Editorial” 1980, 1; translation by Dan Callwood). The editorial team wanted to put the journal to practical use, alerting its readers to homophobic action by the police, government, and employers, and advising them on how to defend themselves. By 1982 the journal was distributed through news kiosks nationwide. A media outlet with national reach became the CUARH’s main political tool.

**Division and Decline**

From the outset, the CUARH was unusual in its coalition of gay male and lesbian groups. Despite the group’s initial energy and purpose, the CUARH was divided, however, over the issues of gender and the place of pedophilia in the movement. These fractures, present from the group’s inception, became more pronounced as external pressure from the HIV/AIDS crisis began to bear on the organization. Although gay liberation movements were initially a mixed-gender phenomenon, arguments over sex and cruising and an atmosphere generally hostile toward women had caused lesbians to split off and form their own groups. This separatist form of organizing had persisted throughout the 1970s until the CUARH’s attempt at a mixed-gender movement. In this aim the CUARH had some success, as its federative structure allowed for a more flexible approach that encompassed
different interest groups. But the CUARH soon began to suffer from the older instinct toward separatism. Frequent expressions of misogyny pushed women away from the CUARH and into expending more energy in nonmixed projects, such as the Mouvement d'Information et d'Expression des Lesbiennes (Movement for Lesbian Information and Expression), founded in 1981, and the magazine *Lesbia* (1982).

The issue of pedophilia and the age of consent also divided the CUARH. The struggle over the age of consent had sparked debate over the place of pedophilia in the wider gay liberation movement. Some CUARH members, including Gérard Bach-Ignasse and the Groupe de Recherche pour une Enfance Différente (Research Group for a Different Childhood) advocated the abolition of the age of consent entirely, calling it a “legal fiction.” Others disagreed. At a debate on pedophilia held by the CUARH, women on the panel questioned a child’s ability to consent and the uneven power relations inherent in an intergenerational relationship. Ultimately, claims for the abolition, or further lowering, of the age of consent went nowhere, only serving to reveal continuing divisions in the movement over the limits of sexual liberation.

By the mid-1980s the CUARH was in decline as a political force, with a dwindling number of adherent groups. The field of activism had shifted to confront the threat of the growing HIV/AIDS crisis. Although *Homophonies* often discussed the epidemic, groups combating the virus had grown up outside the structure of the CUARH. The focus of activism had shifted. The group slowly dissolved and eventually disappeared on the release of the final issue of *Homophonies* in February 1987, after an attempt to relaunch the title failed.

Although the CUARH was short lived and is less remembered today than its more radical forebears, the group has an important place in the history of French LGBT organizing. The CUARH’s embrace of coalition politics, its focus on antidiscrimination and legal reform, and its willingness to interface with the state provided a blueprint for later struggles over civil partnership and marriage equality.

SEE ALSO Frente de Liberación Homosexual; Friendship Societies in Europe; Groupe du 6 Novembre; Lesbiennes Issues du Colonialisme, de l’Esclavage et de l’Immigration; Grupo de Trabalho Homossexual and LES; Grupo Gay da Bahia; Human Rights in Europe; Spectra Project; Strange Fruit

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The LGBTQI community has historically had a fraught relationship with communism and the Left more generally. Although communist politics and ideology, with their call to end oppression and inequalities, have long offered queer people and social reformers the promise of change, this rhetoric has not always matched reality. On the one hand, socialist revolutionaries such as the Russian ambassador Aleksandra Kollontay (1872–1952), the German politician August Bebel (1840–1913), the German women's rights activist Clara Zetkin (1857–1933), and the Polish-born German antiwar activist Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919) forged a platform for the inclusion of women's rights and the freedom of sexual expression in socialist politics. Communists in Germany and even the Soviet Union supported the pioneering advocacy of the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935), one of the earliest advocates for gay rights in Europe. The revolution of 1917 even brought the decriminalization of homosexuality in Russia. On the other hand, however, European communist regimes and politicians have used homophobia to vilify and violently punish individuals. During the Cold War, gay men in both the West and East were targeted and surveilled as potential subversives. Communist movements have also upheld heteronormative and patriarchal binaries, seeing gender nonconformity as a threat and challenge to ideals of citizenship, loyalty, and belonging. Examining the treatment of queers under communism and by communists reveals how anxieties surrounding sexual dissent are often more concerned with upholding and enforcing norms of gender performance than with sexual practice.

Queers and Communism before World War II

In the late nineteenth century, communism was gaining increasing traction as a political movement in Europe. At this time, whereas France, Italy, and the Netherlands had decriminalized sodomy, sex between men was illegal in Great Britain, Portugal, Germany, and the Austro-Hungarian and Russian empires. Despite this mixed legal environment, the predominant view, espoused by the medical and legal profession in Europe, was that homosexuality was unnatural. The Austro-German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902) espoused the prevailing view of sexologists of his day when he argued in his
landmark work *Psychopathia sexualis* ([1886] 1892; Sexual psychopathy) that biological sex imbued men and women with specific traits, including heterosexuality. Accordingly, signs of gender nonconformity, such as same-sex desiring or male effeminacy, were defined by medical experts as abnormal and as indicators of social and moral decay.

Against this trend, however, was the work of a Berlin-based sexologist and committed socialist, Hirschfeld. In 1897 Hirschfeld and two colleagues formed the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee) to lobby the Reichstag to amend Paragraph 175 of the German criminal code, the provision that criminalized sex between men. In 1919 Hirschfeld cofounded the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Science), a private research center and medical clinic that continued advocating for the decriminalization of homosexuality alongside providing information on contraception and sexually transmitted diseases and treating the latter. The center also called for women’s emancipation and for the acceptance of transgender people, even performing the world’s first sex reassignment surgery. In spite of this important work, Hirschfeld’s understanding of homosexuality is markedly different from contemporary ones. Hirschfeld believed that homosexuals constitute a “third sex,” biologically different from heterosexual men and women. He argued that because homosexuals were born with this physiological difference they should not be persecuted.

At this same time, leftist and social democratic circles in Europe were discussing the possibilities of life under socialism, including the role of sexuality in the future socialist society. Historian Dan Healey (2001) has shown that two dominant schools of thought developed on this subject. While some subscribed to a libertarian view and believed that sexual life should be free of the influence of church, state, and bourgeois morals, others believed that sexuality needed to be harnessed for socialism. Although the Russian communist leader Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924) belonged to this latter group, seeing sex and reproduction as a social issue that needed regulation, German socialists supported Hirschfeld’s work and the decriminalization of sex between men. August Bebel, the leader of the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD; Social Democratic Party of Germany), was even one of the first signatories of Hirschfeld's petition for decriminalization. Bebel also amended his treatise *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* ([1879]; *Woman under Socialism* [1904]) to reflect Hirschfeld’s views that homosexuality was a biological condition (Healey 2001).

Hirschfeld’s work and *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* found receptive audiences in revolutionary Russia. Hirschfeld’s institute was even visited by Soviet representatives, including the Soviet health commissioner, Nikolai Semashko (1874–1949), in 1923. The delegation was particularly interested in Hirschfeld’s work on the educative film *Anders als die Andern* ([1919]; *Different from the others*), which centered on the persecution and blackmail that homosexual men were subject to in Weimar Germany (the interwar period in Germany, between 1918 and 1933, named after the city in which the new republic’s
constitution was signed). Hirschfeld himself was a supporter of the Russian Revolution of 1917 and a “fierce enthusiast” (Mancini 2010, 118) of the Bolsheviks, who seized control after the revolution and established the Soviet Union. (Bolsheviks was the name for members of a faction within the Russian Social Democratic Workers’ Party, established during a party split in 1903; that faction later became the Russian Communist Party.) This was not only because of the Soviet stance on women’s rights but also because sex between adult men over the age of sixteen had been decriminalized in the Soviet Union through the new criminal code introduced in 1922. Sodomy also remained decriminalized in the revised criminal code of 1926. Significantly, these new codes were also gender neutral.

However, in spite of the law reform and the praise that Russian advancements found in international socialist and sex reform circles, the belief that sexuality is a force to be channeled for the betterment of socialism was gathering support inside Russia. In particular, following the introduction of the first five-year plan in 1928, efforts to remake Russia and build communism intensified, and everyone was harnessed to the task. This meant that the ability to discuss and research queer sexuality and gender identity was limited, as doctors who had previously examined the biological causes of sexuality were encouraged by the regime to pursue work of more immediate importance. Throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s, as the drive to meet the goals of the plan increased, people identified as unproductive social outsiders, such as prostitutes, beggars, and the homeless, were targeted for social intervention through work camps and reeducative efforts. In 1933 homosexual men were included in these social cleansing efforts because of the fear that homosexual cliques acted as spies, working to reduce the morale of the workers.

The question of homosexuality and communism was also becoming more prominent at this time because of the rise of fascism and the tension between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany. On both sides, allegations of homosexuality were used to challenge the honor and strength of the other system. For example, in Germany, Ernst Röhm (1887–1934), the leader of the Nazi paramilitary group Sturmabteilung (Storm detachment), was homosexual, a fact that the SPD exploited. Even the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (Communist Party of Germany), despite supporting Hirschfeld’s decriminalization campaign, eventually supported these attacks on Röhm, using the allegations to bring the Nazis into disrepute.

However, following the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, communism and homosexuality in Germany were violently repressed. Paragraph 175 was radically strengthened, and Hirschfeld’s institute was destroyed and its materials burned. A year later, in 1934, the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) recriminalized sex between men in the Soviet Union, seeing homosexuality—and the related issue of male effeminacy—as a symbol of Western capitalist degeneracy. Subsequently, queer men in the Soviet Union were arrested, imprisoned, sent to the gulag (a system of labor camps), and even executed. The fact that this law did not address lesbians or gendernonconforming women did not mean that queer
women’s sexuality was unproblematized. Instead, these women were typically dealt with by the medical system, where they were diagnosed with “sluggishly manifesting schizophrenia” and given treatments that included drugs, supervision and confinement, sex reassignment surgery, and even shock therapy (Essig 1999, 28).

While the 1930s and 1940s were a dark period in the history of queer life in Europe, historian Dagmar Herzog (2011) has also highlighted the opportunities that World War II (1939–1945) presented for homosexual experimentation, with soldiers stationed for long periods in homosocial environments. It is estimated that between 10 and 20 percent of returning soldiers had experimented with homosexuality during the war (Evans 2010). Similarly, women’s same-sex desiring remained largely hidden during the war, often seen as the result of the lack of available men on the home front.

The end of the war in 1945 brought significant changes for both queers and communism. Not only did the boundaries of communism in Europe grow and become more fixed, but a rise in sexual conservatism across the West and East had significant consequences for queer-identifying people.

**Queers and the Cold War**

In the aftermath of World War II, anxieties surrounding the corruption of male youth, already endangered through the war, politicized homosexuality once again, with various European countries upholding consent laws that differentiated between same-sex and heterosexual sex. In France, reforms implemented by the French government based in Vichy during the German occupation that increased the age of consent for homosexual sex to twenty-one (the age of consent for heterosexual sex being eighteen) were maintained following liberation. Similarly, while the Netherlands removed the Nazi-era laws on homosexuality, the age of consent for male same-sex sex remained twenty-one. Indeed, in the postwar era homosexuality in the Netherlands was closely policed, with castration and imprisonment common punishments. In Germany, despite removing other Nazi laws, the Allied occupation forces (Great Britain, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union) retained the 1935 revision of Paragraph 175. Indeed, the Nazi version of Paragraph 175 remained on the books in West Germany after the Cold War division of the country in 1949. In the socialist East Germany, however, the pre-1935 version of Paragraph 175 was restored following a 1950 Court of Appeals decision. As Jennifer Evans (2010) has shown, throughout the 1950s, not only did a Ministry of Justice commission recommend homosexuality be decriminalized, but prosecution under Paragraph 175 became less common. Moreover, Hirschfeld’s work was taken up by the East German psychiatrist Rudolf Klimmer (1905–1977), who called for decriminalization on the basis of privacy and sexual choice.

At the same time, Nazi provisions surrounding male prostitution and a higher age of
consent for homosexual sex (Paragraph 175a) were maintained in East Germany. In particular, following the workers’ uprising of 1953 and the subsequent consolidation of socialism, Paragraph 175a was increasingly used to “criminalize all acts of homosexual incitement and desire involving minors” (Evans 2010, 557). Homophobic rhetoric surrounded the purging of the ruling Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany), as heteropatriarchal sexual conservatism was implemented as a way of legitimizing and solidifying socialist rule at a time of political turmoil.

The year 1953 also brought the death of Stalin and the ascension of Nikita Khrushchev (1894–1971) as leader of the Soviet Union. Following Khrushchev’s “secret speech” in 1956, in which he denounced Stalinist repression, a slow process of liberalization began in the Communist bloc. Alongside increasing access to the oral contraceptive pill and abortion, by the late 1960s and 1970s homosexuality in European communist regimes was largely decriminalized. In Hungary, homosexuality was decriminalized in 1961; in Czechoslovakia, decriminalization came in 1962; East Germany revoked Paragraph 175 in 1968; and finally, Bulgaria legalized homosexual sex in 1968. However, male same-sex intercourse remained criminalized in the Soviet Union and Romania.

However, this legal reform did not necessarily equate with social acceptance. Across the communist bloc, homosexuality continued to be seen as a medical condition, with ongoing policing of gay men. In Hungary, the age of consent for homosexual sex was twenty, whereas it was fourteen for heterosexual sex. This would be equalized only in 2002. Furthermore, despite criminalization, Hungarian police continued to surveille homosexual men, keeping registries of their names. For many Hungarians, homosexuality remained a “medical aberration,” and gay men were particularly stigmatized for perceived effeminacy (Kurimay and Takács 2017, 589). In East Germany, while some social organization was tolerated (such as the Homosexuelle Interessengemeinschaft Berlin [Homosexual Interest Group Berlin], which was officially recognized in the mid-1980s), gay men received death threats into the 1980s. One group of lesbians and gay men was subjected to group therapy, during which they were weighed and measured and had samples taken as doctors attempted to find a biological cause for their homosexuality. In the Soviet Union, meanwhile, many gay men and lesbians continued to be subjected to extreme medical measures that masqueraded as therapy. Electroconvulsive, or shock, therapy, sedation, hypnosis, and hard labor continued to be used to “treat” queer-identifying people. Similar therapies to “cure” homosexuality were also used in Czechoslovakia prior to decriminalization. Indeed, the failure of these methods to convert queer men to heterosexuality is one of the reasons Czechoslovak sexologists called for the decriminalization of homosexuality in the 1950s.

As in the 1930s, homophobic rhetoric and homosexual persecution took on greater political significance in the context of Cold War tensions. In both communist and Western countries, homosexuality and male effeminacy were taken as signs of potential subversion and a
threat to national security. In the United States and Canada, harsh and often
pseudoscientific measures were taken against gay and lesbian public servants. From the
1950s to the 1970s, gays and lesbians were deemed unfit for public service because of
perceived links between homosexuality and communism, in particular the fear that
homosexuals were more susceptible to blackmail and therefore easy targets for communist
spies. Gay men and lesbians were systematically fired, with an estimated 600 federal
employees dismissed, or simply denied employment to begin with (Johnson 2004). In
Canada, a homosexual screening program was introduced in the federal public service in
1959. The Canadian government also funded research on the construction of a machine
designed to accurately detect queer people. Meanwhile, the East German secret police both
demonized gay men and lesbians as threats to socialism and saw them as ideal informants,
able to gain the trust of both men and women.

In spite of this persecution, queer people across communist Europe were able to find each
other. Gay rights organizing was active well before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.
Indeed, throughout the 1970s and 1980s there were more and more opportunities for
queer men and women to come together and lobby socialist regimes for the recognition
and acceptance of their existence. Since the collapse of communism in Europe gay rights
have largely continued to be recognized in law, thanks not only to ongoing activism but also
to the work of the European Union in entrenching legal norms. However, the legacy of
communism, particularly the connections made between heterosexuality, gender
conformity, and ideas of health, morality, normalcy, stability, and security, has continued to
affect queer life in Europe. Throughout eastern Europe the transition from communism to
democracy often went hand in hand with a revival of conservative heteropatriarchal values.
This meant both a loss of the rights awarded to women under socialism and a solidification
of gender and sexual conformity, resulting in a rise in virulent homophobia in many
postcommunist countries—in particular, Russia.

SEE ALSO Blackmail; Chechnya, Detention Camps in; Cold War and Sexuality in Latin America;
Human Rights in Europe; Lavender Scare; Nationalism and Sexuality in Europe; Scandals in
Europe; Treason and Queerness

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New York's 1969 Stonewall riots hold a central, yet heavily mythologized, status as the beginning of the modern LGBT rights movement. Stonewall, however “did not start everything” (D'Emilio 2002, 148). A different form of mythology, the “myth of isolation” (Chauncey 1994, 3), has obscured much of the history of pre-Stonewall life. According to the myth, entrenched societal hostility toward gays blocked formation of any substantive gay culture, either social or political. Yet some gays and lesbians did actively seek structural change. They did so, however, by attempting to seem nonthreatening and by working within established social and political systems. Nevertheless, several key instances of militant collective resistance predate, and have been overshadowed by, the Stonewall riots.

In 1965 discriminatory treatment against gay and transgender patrons led to a series of sit-ins at Dewey’s Lunch Counter in Philadelphia (Hall 2008; Stein 2000). A New Year's Eve 1966 raid on the Black Cat, a gay bar in Los Angeles, led to protests and court challenges to state authority (Los Angeles Advocate 1968b; Faderman and Timmons 2006). On New Year's Day 1965, San Francisco police terrorized a ball organized by the Council on Religion and the Homosexual that was held at California Hall. With photographing the attendees being a key goal, “police clearly intended to intimidate the crowd rather than regulate lawful behavior” (Boyd 2003, 233–234). The anger that the police actions triggered within the community has led some to refer to that event as “San Francisco's Stonewall” (Carter 2004; Hughes 1989).

Most prominent, however, among the pre-Stonewall examples of collective community resistance that historians have rediscovered is a different San Francisco event. In the summer of 1966, transsexual women, drag queens, and gays collectively and violently responded to police harassment at Compton’s Cafeteria in the city’s Tenderloin area (Stryker 2008b). Occurring at the intersection of civil rights movements based on gender, sexuality, race, and economic disempowerment, the Compton's riot stands apart as not only being the product of organized activism but also itself producing change that benefited the societally disfavored residents of the Tenderloin who participated (Stryker 2008a).
A Confluence of Disfavored Sexualities and Economies

In the early 1960s there was an increase in gay political activity in San Francisco. Aided by a favorable court ruling, owners of gay bars successfully challenged a policerun protection racket. On the heels of this success, drag queen José Sarria ran for a seat on the city’s Board of Supervisors, albeit unsuccessfully. However, the gay political activity in general spurred other forms of harassment by the police. This included forcing evidence of gay life, including a well-established drag scene, from the waterfront to areas whose inhabitants already were at the edge of acceptable culture. One of these was the Tenderloin, which was already regarded as a “human dump heap” teeming with “social outcasts” (Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society 1998, 350, 351). Indeed, for most of the twentieth century the Tenderloin was a district synonymous with sex work (Stryker 2008a).

In the 1960s business elites and city planners also engaged in much broader efforts to reshape San Francisco. Gone would be an economy that revolved around the city’s port, one that had been on the decline since the end of World War II (1939–1945). Replacing it would be an economy focused on culture, technology, and tourism. A significant physical manifestation of this urban vision involved the destruction of many black and working-class neighborhoods, as well as the relocation of the residents of other neighborhoods. Beyond its connection with sex work and other societally undesirable activity, the Tenderloin was more generally “the last remaining enclave of affordable housing in downtown San Francisco” (Stryker 2008a, 69; Silverman and Stryker 2005).

The incoming displaced residents themselves displaced many of the Tenderloin’s transgender sex workers. However, the effect of the population shifts on the neighborhood went beyond its sexual minorities. In 1965 residents sought to take advantage of economic
opportunities available under the Lyndon B. Johnson administration’s War on Poverty. This mobilization within the Tenderloin also led to the formation of Vanguard, the earliest-known youth-oriented queer organization in the United States (Stryker 2008a). A “haven for radicalism in central San Francisco” (Meyerowitz 2002, 229) with atypical ministries and outreach, the Glide Memorial United Methodist Church sponsored the organization (Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society 1998). Its magazine, also named Vanguard, “served as an important instrument in creating and shaping the new political consciousness that both gave rise to and coalesced around the riot” that would transpire in the Tenderloin (Worley 2011, 52). The organization itself spoke to a constituency that saw its “civil liberties imperiled by a hostile social order in which all difference from the usual in behavior is attacked” (Stryker and Van Buskirk 1996, 49).

Vanguard held its meetings at Compton’s Cafeteria, at the corner of Turk and Taylor in the Tenderloin (Stryker 2008a). Compton’s was known for having affordable food, and the night manager was a gay man who did not mind if the queer street youth hung out at the cafeteria. When that manager died, however, his replacement was far less friendly to that clientele (Worley 2011). To offset any lack of purchases by those who would gather, management established a “service charge” during the summer of 1966 and applied it discriminatorily. More importantly, enforcement of this new policy came via private security guards and calls to the police (Stryker 2008a; Worley 2011).

The eventual response to the maltreatment was a picket against Compton’s by a combination of Vanguard members, Glide ministers, and members of the city’s homophile organizations (Stryker 2008a). This 18 July 1966, action resulted in no satisfactory resolution of Vanguard’s grievances against Compton’s. However, it “seem[ed] to have consolidated the youths’ sense of collective injury” (Worley 2011, 48). Elliott Blackstone (1924–2006), a San Francisco Police Department sergeant, attempted to ease the tensions between management and the queer youth that had arisen from the “service charge” implementation. His efforts were unsuccessful, setting the stage for the riot that occurred at the cafeteria approximately a month later (Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society 1998).

In part because the event escaped mainstream media coverage, the exact date of the riot is not known (Luther Hillman 2011; Stryker 2008a; Hughes 1989). Even a 1972 description of it having occurred on a “hot August night” does not correspond to contemporaneous weather reports (quoted in Kost 2016). It is known, however, that on one night in August 1966 a call by Compton’s management to the police to remove one table full of gender-nonconforming youths resulted in an officer grabbing one of them in an effort to drag her away.

Not unlike the New York police who arrived at Stonewall three years later, San Francisco’s police were used to being able to treat sexual minorities violently without resistance.
The queen whom the officer was attempting to drag out threw her coffee in his face, triggering a barrage of eating utensils aimed at the police. In turn, this led to a larger-scale disturbance in and immediately outside the cafeteria. Customers turned over tables, smashed the cafeteria’s plate-glass windows, and then took their anti-police furor into the streets. The police called for reinforcements, but the queens fought back with weaponized deployment of purses and heels. Eventually, the violence led to the vandalizing of a police car and the burning of a newsstand (Stryker 2008a).

Progress Away from the Street Fighting

Following the Compton’s riot, the availability of critical services to trans women and other Tenderloin sexual minorities increased. In addition, relations with the police eased somewhat. While these changes did occur in the wake of the riot, Susan Stryker cautions that it is impossible to determine conclusively that the riot sparked these developments (Kost 2016).

Much of the change that did occur emanated from the office of the Central City Anti-Poverty Program, which opened a few months after the riot. An accomplishment unto itself, as it was the product of organizing across lines of both race and sexuality, the program led to greater positive interaction between the police and trans people. Blackstone was assigned to be the program’s community relations officer (Stryker 2008a). In this capacity he was able to interact with the trans inhabitants of the Tenderloin on much friendlier terms than the swarms of police who engaged in the hated practice of “sweeping” the streets of sexual minorities (Worley 2011; Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society 1998). Perhaps most importantly, when presented with the opportunity to educate himself on the subject of transsexuality he readily did so (Stryker 2008a). By 1968 San Francisco was perceived in Los Angeles as being devoid of police harassment, with the difference between the two being as stark as between Amsterdam and Moscow (Los Angeles Advocate 1968a).

Blackstone became familiar with the recently published book The Transsexual Phenomenon (1966) and met with its author, the German-born American endocrinologist and sexologist Harry Benjamin (1885–1986), who maintained part of his practice in San Francisco. Many Tenderloin trans women were his patients (Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society 1998; Silverman and Stryker 2005). Funding from wealthy trans man Reed Erickson (1917–1992) via his Erickson Educational Foundation aided Benjamin while he wrote the book. The Transsexual Phenomenon in turn not only enhanced Benjamin’s credibility but also provided a substantive rationale for moving transition-related health care out of the legal shadows and for universities to establish genderidentity programs. Johns Hopkins University established the first such formal program in 1966, soon followed by the University of Minnesota and Stanford University (Luther Hillman 2011; Meyerowitz 2002).
Concurrently, some trans activists began working with the Center for Special Problems (CSP), a division of the city’s Department of Public Health, while others met at Glide, eventually forming Conversion Our Goal, possibly the nation’s first trans peer-support group. Less influential was the California Advancement for Transsexuals Society. Together, however, the groups and the individuals therein “formed an interlocking network of transgender activists, allies, and services” (Stryker 2008a, 75). The CSP even provided gender-appropriate identification cards for transsexuals, greatly aiding the goal of many to find employment outside of the sex industry (Stryker 2008a; Members of the Gay and Lesbian Historical Society 1998).

The city-connected elements of the trans-related services continue to exist, but the grassroots organizations eventually fell apart as a result of differences in style, the personalities of the key players, and their visions for trans life. Aided by the Erickson Educational Foundation, the National Transsexual Counseling Unit (NTCU) was more successful. The NTCU was able to have two fulltime peer counselors, although it funneled most of its clients on to the CSP. On par with Erickson’s financial backing was the NTCU’s relationship with the ultimate symbol of establishmentarian authority: the police. In an unusual administrative arrangement connected to his liaison position, Blackstone actually managed the NTCU’s office. There was a limit to what any one individual or organization could accomplish, but the tapestry created by civic, community, and outside financial forces had made San Francisco “the unquestioned hub of the transgender movement in the United States” (Stryker 2008a, 81).

A Recovered Moment in LGBTQ History

After 1966 the Compton’s Cafeteria riot quickly became all but invisible to critical historical analysis. A lack of mainstream coverage severely limited the opportunities for reflective engagement with the event. When it finally did receive mention, it came only from an aside in a 1972 column commemorating not the riot but Compton’s Cafeteria itself when it shut its doors for good (Kost 2016). Martin Duberman noted the existence of the riot as a potential alternative to Stonewall as ground zero for modern activism but surmised that why Stonewall prevailed “will always be a mystery” (1994, 4).

Three decades after the riot, Stryker began the historical recovery of the event when she encountered a recollection thereof in a 1972 gay pride program. She was unsure whether the recollection was even of an event that actually had occurred. The account did contain some inaccuracies, but it was the starting point from which she was “able to connect the location and timing of the riot to social, political, geographical, and historical circumstances in San Francisco in ways that the Stonewall story had never connected gay liberation discourse to similar circumstances in New York” (Stryker 2008b, 152). Stryker sufficiently succeeded in her goal to make the Compton’s Cafeteria riot “enter historical memory” (quoted in Kost 2016) that, when marking pride month in 2016, President Barack Obama
mentioned it in the same breath as, and placed it on equal footing with, Stonewall.

SEE ALSO Stonewall Riots, International Effects of

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Confessional Manuals in Colonial Latin America

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Confessional manuals as religious guides used by priests to teach indigenous peoples the meaning of “sin” in relation to bodily desires and lustful thoughts.

Among Catholics, confession is meant to be one of the most private, intimate, and potent aspects of religious life. Yet, the question of how to administer the sacrament of confession to indigenous peoples in the Spanish colonial Americas, many of whom had been only recently converted to Catholicism and spoke neither Spanish nor Latin, as well as to newly arrived, largely unacculturated slaves from Africa, gave rise to many practical problems in terms of translation and mutual comprehension. Indeed, how to translate the fundamental concepts of heaven, hell, sin, redemption, and, at times, even God, in ways that indigenous peoples could understand was a far greater challenge than several early missionaries initially imagined. In this context, confessional manuals or confessionarios—essentially, how-to guides for priests to properly administer the sacrament of confession to their parishioners in their own vernacular languages—came to be viewed as important tools in the conversion of indigenous peoples. In early modern Spain and Portugal, confessional manuals were typically penned in Latin, Spanish, or Portuguese, and occasionally included translations in local languages, such as Catalan, Galician, or Basque. In colonial Latin America, however, these manuals were most commonly bilingual, penned in both Spanish (or Latin) and some American indigenous language (Nahuatl, Zapotec, Mixtec, Purépecha, Mixe, or Maya in New Spain, Quechua or Aymara in the Andes, or Tupi and Guaraní in and around colonial Brazil), often with one column written in Spanish and the other in the native language.

Throughout colonial Latin America, the confessional manuals took on particularly heightened meanings because they were envisioned by the Catholic Church and by religious missionaries as one of the most potent tools for converting native peoples throughout the Americas starting in the early sixteenth century. Confessional manuals are especially interesting to analyze in terms of what they do (and do not do) to shed light on the history of sexuality in colonial Latin America. What is perhaps more interesting about
the genre of bilingual confessional manuals for the history of sexuality are their attempts to identify, name, and codify different types of sin related to sexual desire and to what the Catholic Church in early modern Spain termed *luxuria* (lust), especially in relation to the sixth commandment (“Thou shall not fornicate”). In fact, colonial confessional manuals in their obsessive attempts to typify and subsequently eradicate the sins of lust among native penitents paradoxically might have done just the opposite by spreading an explicitly Western knowledge about bodies and desires in indigenous languages.

This entry first briefly traces the history of confession and confessional manuals in medieval and early modern Europe. It then moves on to colonial Latin America, describing and analyzing a few key confessional manuals from the viceroyalties of New Spain (in what is today largely Mexico, Central America, and the Philippines) and Peru (in what initially encompassed most of South America with the exception of Brazil but after 1718 was made up of what is today largely Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia). It next discusses recent theorizations of confession as well as the current state of research on confessional manuals. Finally, it focuses on points of convergence, mistranslation, and confessional confusion, especially as they relate to questions of sexuality, desire, “homosexuality,” and third-gender subjectivities (such as ritual transvestism in the Andes). These confessional confusions were produced, in part, by the Spanish missionaries’ necessarily imperfect translations of the tenets of Catholicism—and even the very concept of confession, which had some resonance with preexisting indigenous rituals both in New Spain and the Andes—into many of the native languages throughout the Americas.

**Brief History of Confession and Penitential Texts**

Also known as confessionaries or penitential texts, the corpus of texts known as confessional manuals included comprehensively written works with detailed instructions for priests on how to administer the sacrament of confession to their parishioners. They became popular in Europe throughout the Middle Ages as the practice of confession became a rite of the sacrament of reconciliation in the Catholic Church. Its inception was a practical response from Celtic monks in Ireland in the sixth century regarding the need of followers to confess their sins in a nonpublic forum to receive penance and absolution. Their goal was to guide priests in auricular confession, developing a grammar of sin, teaching confessors how to ask questions, and educating the penitent to articulate their sins to the parish priest. This ideal dialogue between priest and parishioner was complicated greatly by the very colonial context of Spain and Portugal’s overseas possessions in which bilingual confessional manuals were conceived, penned, and, for the most part, printed.

Most penitents in the medieval European world confessed their sins to a priest irregularly, and many never at all. In an attempt to address this, in 1215 Pope Innocent III (1160–1216) convoked an ecumenical council of the Catholic Church, known as the Fourth Lateran
Council, which sought, among other things, to change the interaction between the priest and the congregation by requiring Catholics to confess their sins annually to qualified priests, usually during Lent. Yet, even after the Fourth Lateran Council, evidence suggests that the masses remained largely ignorant of the precept that mandated yearly confession (Haliczer 1996). While the Fourth Lateran Council institutionalized the sacrament of private confession among Catholics, it was not until the Council of Trent (1545–1563)—called to address the challenges posed by the Protestant Reformation—that “people were encouraged to confess frequently, even daily, and then take Communion in an attempt to build up ‘grace’ and shorten time in purgatory” (Harrison 2014, 8).

In the sixteenth century, with the overlapping European projects of colonizing the New World, the use of bilingual confessional manuals came to be viewed by priests and missionaries as an essential tool for converting indigenous populations to the Catholic faith and, working closely with the Crown and subsequent viceroyalties, for fostering the general imperial plans of Spain and Portugal. In theory, their function was to cure souls and to help priests absolve the sins of their penitents, but the confessional manuals also may have symbolically enforced colonial power structures, ultimately seeking to cultivate Christian morality by translating the very tenets of Catholicism into indigenous languages for the purposes of catechizing native populations. The extent to which they were successful is much debated among scholars who research and write on the history of religion of the Iberian Atlantic world. Perhaps most importantly, the manuals were intended not only to define, classify, and codify sin and guide atonement but also to help extirpate beliefs and practices that the Catholic Church deemed superstitious or idolatrous. By examining some of the content of specific texts, we can glean some of the preoccupations of the Catholic Church in its colonial conversion project that attempted, above all, to conquer the souls of the natives (alongside the African, mixed-race, and even European inhabitants of the Americas).

Finally, it is worth noting that as fascinating as the genre of confessional manuals is, as historian Stephen Haliczer notes, “The fundamental problem with all these works is that they deal with confession from the standpoint of theologians, who wrote to instruct confessors how to carry out their responsibilities. By the very nature of their sources ... [they] can tell us little about confessional practice and still less about the relationship between individual confessors and their penitents” (Haliczer 1996, 6). Yet, as opposed to confessional manuals produced in the Iberian Peninsula, the structure of bilingual confessional manuals written in the Americas makes them invaluable sources for researchers because it offers a window into the missionaries’ preoccupations, their tactics for evangelization, and their particular logics of translating particular bodies, acts, and desires as sinful. In the words of Vicente Rafael, writing on the Spanish colonial Philippines, the priest’s “drive to overpower the penitent therefore is inextricably bound up with the desire to know of his most intimate acts and desires” (Rafael 1993, 106).
Bilingual Confessional Manuals in New Spain

The papal bull of Pope Alexander VI (1431–1503), known as the *Inter Caetera* of 1493, declared that “barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself,” thereby not only demarcating the geographic right of the Spanish and Portuguese Crowns over the peoples and territories of the New World, but also entrusting these monarchies with the Christian conversion of the natives (Davenport 1917, 61). The conquest, therefore, came to be legally justified as a salvation that required natives not only to be catechized but also to be confessed *in their own languages*, often by missionaries who had dedicated many years to learning native tongues to such an end. Realistically, however, many priests and missionaries had familiarity with, but were far from fluent in native languages, which made confessional manuals all the more valuable but also inherently problematic due to the sheer number of mistranslations and misunderstandings that could take place between priest and penitent. The royal patronage and papal bulls of the late fifteenth century also gave the Spanish Crown jurisdiction over the land and the right to name bishops in the New World, which concentrated the power of the state over church matters and over the colonies. The Cédula Magna of 1574 and subsequent decrees by King Philip II (1527–1598) emphasized the Spanish Empire’s goal to incorporate indigenous languages in the evangelization of the native peoples of the new continent. These policies required that indigenous parishes be led only by those who fluently spoke the respective indigenous languages, which resulted in the massive proliferation of translations of pastoral texts from Latin and Spanish into native tongues.

The bilingual question-and-answer format of confessional manuals was established during the early colonial era and remained relatively unchanged until the end of the colonial period (Arias González and Vivas Moreno 1993). The question-and-answer structure of the confessional manuals followed European ecclesiastical literature, and the questions themselves touched upon each of the Ten Commandments, sometimes followed by the seven deadly sins. Following the Council of Trent, the Catholic Church in Latin America became a more bureaucratic, structured, and invasive institution. Most importantly, it encouraged the use of vernacular languages in the administration of the sacraments. In the Americas, this ultimately promoted the use of the native languages, and so pastoral literature was translated locally into indigenous languages at a much faster pace than envisioned. This included “unofficial” translations of brief, instructional literature known as *cartillas*. It also included catechisms, dictionaries, grammars, and confessional manuals in sometimes extremely remote indigenous languages, such as the Jesuit Luis de Valdivia’s 1606 *Doctrina cristiana y cathecismo, con un confesionario, arte y vocabulario breves en lengua Allentiac* (Christian doctrine and catechism, with brief confessional, dictionary, and vocabulary in the Allentiac language), which was written in the now-extinct Allentiac language of Patagonia (a region shared by present-day Argentina and Chile). Confessional manuals also serve, to an extent, as a record of indigenous languages that are no longer
extant, as in the case of the Jesuit Pedro Marban's 1702 grammar and catechism in the now-extinct Moxa language of Bolivia, *Arte de la lengua moxa: con su vocabulario, y cathecismo* (Art of the Moxa language: with its vocabulary, and catechism).

The proliferation of these manuals fostered, in more ways than one, a system of irregular, unstructured evangelization, especially in and around the missions where missionaries sought to be comprehensive in their conversion efforts, but never were. At the same time, the sixteenth-century Council of Trent specifically defended the sacrament of penance and highlighted its importance, defining it as a core necessity and establishing forgiveness as a God-given right to confessors, noting “that the power of forgiving and retaining sins was communicated to the apostles and their lawful successors, for the reconciling of the faithful who have fallen after baptism” (Waterworth 1848, 93). The advent of the printing press in the New World also helped produce and spread pastoral literature and allowed it to be more readily available to missionaries in remote locations. However, all in all, the church had an insufficient number of clergy to catechize remote areas and their native inhabitants. As King Ferdinand II of Aragon (1452–1516) emphasized of the *indios* in the Laws of Burgos of 1512–1513, “The principal obstacle in the way of correcting their vices and having them profit by and impressing them with the doctrine is that their dwellings are remote from the settlements of the Spaniard” (Simpson 1960, 12).

As a genre, the confessional manuals from New Spain are a rich set of texts, full of detail and description. Missionaries, who dedicated years or even decades of study to attain fluency in one or more native languages, penned the vast majority of the confessional manuals. They often based these writings on their own experiences catechizing and confessing native peoples in the region. The manuals themselves appear to have seemingly lurid interests lurking behind their structure and content, especially in relation to the sixth commandment, “Thou shall not fornicate.” The confessional manuals seem to indicate that the missionaries’ interest in and focus on the sins of lust increased substantially over a relatively short period. The lengthy anonymous *Confessionario para los curas de indios* (Confessional for the priests of Indians), printed in Seville, Spain, in 1585, listed only twenty-two questions in relation to the sixth commandment. In contrast, Juan Pérez Bocanegra’s *Ritual formulario* (Formulary ritual), printed in Lima, Peru, in 1631, dedicated some 231 queries to the sins of lust (Harrison 2014). The passage of time was not the only factor in the difference; overall, confessional manuals written in Spain and Portugal focused far less on the vast range of the sins of lust than did their American counterparts.

The following examples taken from Mexican and Andean confessional manuals clearly illustrate the Catholic priests’ attempts to name and codify the sins of lust. Yet they also point to the potential for mistranslation that always lurks behind such endeavors. The first, taken from Franciscan friar Juan Baptista’s 1599 *Confessionario en lengua mexicana y castellana* (Confessional in the Mexican and Castilian language), written in both Nahuatl and Spanish, demonstrates the intimate nature of the questions that Nahua male and
female confessants in and around central Mexico were to be asked in relation to the sixth commandment:

> Perhaps you had sex with some married woman, a single woman, a female relative of yours, or a young, unmarried maiden? To what degree [of consanguinity] was the female relative, or that of your wife? Perhaps you have desired, with determination, to join another woman if you could? Perhaps you did something filthy and dirty with yourself, or with another man? Have you fornicated, committed adultery with, or known a consanguineous relative of yours, or of your wife? Perhaps you stole her virginity, corrupting some young, unmarried maiden? Perhaps you have touched yourself with pleasure? Have you dressed yourself or adorned yourself in order to be desired? Did you kiss or hug some woman, touch her breasts, lasciviously play, or force her? Do you live with your wife, or perhaps you left her alone, or by treating her badly you made her flee? The times that the Devil reminds you of your filthy pleasure, perhaps you discard such thoughts with haste, or you delay a long time in doing so, or you give in? Have you experienced pleasure awaking from a dream that you dreamt? Did you deceive yourself and say dishonest words to provoke another to sin [with you]? When you join with your wife, do you guard the natural order, or perhaps you joined with her from behind, or perhaps in that act you had other ways [which are] dishonest and unworthy of being named here? Perhaps you had your wife when she was with her custom [i.e., menstruating]?

Questions for women. Perhaps some man had sex with you, was he married or single, or was he your relative or the relative of your husband? To what degree [of consanguinity] is he related to you, or to your husband? Perhaps you desired some married man, a single man, your relative, or that of your husband, and in what degree, say it. Perhaps you shaved, adorned yourself, or wore makeup so that men would desire you? Perhaps you caressed another, or had yourself caressed? Perhaps you yourself did something on your body to please yourself? Perhaps you committed the nefarious sin with another woman? Perhaps once with anger and wrath you denied your husband the [conjugal] debt, and did not admit him?

*(BAPTISTA 1599, TRANSLATION BY ZEB TORTORICI)*

Mestizo priest Bartolomé de Alva's slightly later 1634 Nahuatl-Spanish *Confessionario mayor, y menor en lengua Mexicana* (Large and small confessional in the Mexican language) goes even further than Baptista's manual, more explicitly phrasing questions to native
parishioners about a litany of lustful sins including sodomy, bestiality, masturbation, incest, witchcraft, rape, prostitution, pimping, and drunkenness. This manual, like most, also focuses on the extirpation of idolatry, warning the natives against it in its admonition and in the detailed questionnaire on the first commandment. With regard to the sixth commandment, Alva—in addition to taxonomizing the sins of lust for Spanish missionaries and Nahua penitents alike—offers priests the following questions to guide their own confessional encounters with Nahuatl-speaking parishioners:

**Have you had concubines?** Have you licentiously enjoyed yourself? Have you given yourself over to earthly sin and lust? Or did you have sexual relations and sin with one [woman] or a few? Married women? Widows? Single women? Or completely virgin maidens? Is one of them your relative or relation or your older sister, your sister-in-law, your niece, or your relative or offspring within the first, second, [or] third degree [of consanguinity]? When you had sexual relations with your relatives, were you drunk or not? Did you repeatedly force her? Did you have sexual relations with her by means of fear and terror? How many times did you have sexual relations with each one of the women you mentioned? How many married women have you had sexual relations with, and how many times? Perhaps when you got drunk and lost your sense you fell into the abominable sin of sodomy, having something to do with another man? Perhaps you were responsible for the frightful sin, unworthy of being done, of having sexual relations with a four-legged animal or a beast? Did you sometimes touch your body thinking of some woman? Did you then spill your semen, you thinking that it was just as if you had really had sexual relations with that person? Did you deceive some woman? And if it is a woman, she will be asked: did you deceive some man, putting something on your body so that he caught some illness when you had sexual relations with him or he had sexual relations with you? When you had sexual relations with your wife or some other woman: was she menstruating? Was she with her monthly periods? Answer. Yes/no.

**Here is what the women will be asked.** Were you menstruating sometime when your husband or some other man had sexual relations with you? Did you repeatedly feel your body, thinking of a man, and wanting him to sin with you? Did you do it to yourself with your hands, bringing to a conclusion your lust? When your husband was drunk: did he have sex with you where you are a woman, or sometimes did he do the disgusting sin to you [i.e., sodomy and likely oral sex]? Did you restrain him? Were you responsible for dirty words with which you provoked and excited women? When you cohabited with some woman: did you show and reveal what was bad in front of those who had not yet seen the sin? Did you ever pimp for someone? On account of you, did they
know themselves through sin, you yourself provoking a woman for whom you had summoned someone? Did you know the failings of your mother or your father, your children and your relatives, your household dependents, that they were cohabiting, and you did not restrain them? When they were drunk and intoxicated in your home, there committing before you sins unworthy of doing: didn’t you restrain them? Did you just look at them?

(ALVA 1999, 105–109)

While Baptista says that his indigenous penitents must “guard the natural order,” and that acts falling outside of that order include male-female anal sex as well as other acts that are “dishonest and unworthy of being named here,” Baptista’s questions for men oddly assume a female partner in sodomy, whereas his questions directed to women broach the “nefarious sin” between two females. Alva assumes that a lack of judgment and a loss of the senses—here caused by drunkenness—is a precondition for two men to engage in the “abominable sin of sodomy.” Alva, in contrast to Baptista, asks women about their husbands having sex “where you are a woman” and about their having “cohabited with some woman.” Alva also frames the “frightful sin” of bestiality as the worst, for it is “unworthy of being done.” These examples, taken from a handful of Mexican bilingual confessional manuals, should not be seen as guides to what individual Nahua penitents were doing in their private lives, but rather as a record of the Catholic Church’s concerns embedded in the personal and theological interests, as well as the anxieties, of each individual author.

Recent and forthcoming research on the colonial confessional manuals and on the administration of the sacraments sheds much light on how confession was carried out both in practice and in theory (Alva 1999; Burkhart 1989; Christensen 2014; Gruzinski 1989; Klor de Alva 1991; Pardo 2004; Rafael 1993; Sigal 2005, 2007). This is shown especially in the 2017 scholarly forum on (and original translation of) the late eighteenth-century Mexican Advertencias para los nuevos confesores (Advice and warnings for new confessors), written by a disicalced Carmelite friar and priest (see Melvin and Sellers-García 2017, 185–256). Recent studies on the crime of priestly solicitation of sexual favors during confession in early modern Spain (Haliczer 1996) and in colonial Mexico do some of this work as well (Chuchiak 2007; González Marmolejo 2002; Tortorici 2018; Lavrin 2008). While much research has already been conducted on the confessional manuals from the vast reaches of New Spain—from Guatemala to California, from the Philippines to the Yucatán Peninsula—much more still needs to be done in many other indigenous languages.

Bilingual Confessional Manuals in the Andes
In the Andes, as in New Spain, the practice of confession also served partly as a means of collecting information about the indigenous peoples and their so-called superstitious practices and beliefs. Most Christian missionaries were convinced that prior to the Incas, Andeans had been monotheistic and had practiced confession with ychuris (native confessors); this was reported in the instruction section, penned by Polo de Ondegardo, of one of the earliest confession manuals in the Andes, in 1585. As a result of one of the most important ecclesiastical province councils, the 1583 Concilio Provincial Limense (Provincial Council of Lima), summoned by Archbishop Toribio de Mongrovejo, pastoral materials including confessional manuals were to be created in Spanish and then translated into the two general languages of the indigenous Quechua and Aymara. The council subsequently published a confessional manual titled *Confesionario para los curas de Indios*—*con la instrucción contra sus ritos y exhortacion para ayudar a bien morir y suma de los privilegios y forma de impedimentos del matrimonio* (Confessional for priests of Indians—with instruction against their rites and exhortation to assist the good death and the sum of privileges and the nature of impediments to marriage). This confessional manual focused primarily on a more organized evangelization of the natives that encouraged the extirpation of idolatries and the collection of information regarding Andean religious rituals and beliefs. In 1603 Franciscan friar Luis Bolaños translated the text into the Guarani language in colonial Paraguay. In its introduction, the confession manual of the third ecclesiastical council known as the Concilio Limense demonstrated a more than superficial understanding of Andean religious beliefs, expressing concerns about the degree of conversion of indigenous peoples and how to use confessions to gauge this and ultimately to extirpate these idolatries. There is also special attention to the hechiceros (spell-casters or witches) and Andean priests and the continuing influence they seemed to have in Andean society at the time. In the resulting Quechua text, translators had to adapt Andean concepts of religion and morality to fit their narratives, but as they did so, as Regina Harrison has posited, these texts “retained traces of Andean modes of thought despite the repetitious didactic lessons in Quechua preached from the pulpits and in the plazas” (2014, 18). There are several other texts from the Andes and even the Southern Cone, including Andres Febrés’s mid-eighteenth-century *Arte de la lengua general del reyno de Chile* (Art of the general language of the kingdom of Chile).

As in New Spain, in the Andes controlling sexuality was a major concern of the discourse of confessional manuals, with strongly worded condemnations of fornication and all types of other sexual transgressions, often referred to as “nefarious sins,” including trial marriages, adultery, bestiality, and sodomy. The questions regarding the sixth commandment in the 1585 *Confesionario para los curas de indios* are extensive. While the Spanish-language column refers to male “voluntary pollution” (i.e., masturbation), the Quechua-language column is more forthcoming: “Do you cause your sperm to arrive? Touching your shameful part [pencai] do you enjoy it?” (quoted in Harrison 2014, 138). Pérez Bocanegra’s 1631 *Ritual formulario* is even more explicit, guiding its readers with the following Quechua-
language questions to be addressed specifically to women: “Do you touch your genitals with your hand? Item, your hands, how many times do you reach out to your genitals, place your [hand], until you make your sperm [sexual fluid] come?” (quoted in Harrison 2014, 139). He similarly interrogates male penitents: “Have you ejaculated while you were sleeping, because you have seen some women whom you have desired when you were awake or because you ate food that was too hot, which encouraged you to sin because you have eaten it or drunk too much or slept too long?” (quoted in Harrison 2014, 139). The confessional manuals are thus concerned with sinful acts committed as well as thoughts and dreams that rose up around the sins of lust.

The twenty-fourth sermon in the Spanish-, Quechua-, and Aymara-language Tercero cathecismo y exposicion de la doctrina christiana por sermons (1585; Third catechism and exposition of the Christian doctrine by sermons) not only defines fornication and adultery as a mortal sin, but also specifically links them to both sodomy and bestiality as the ultimate sins: “Above all these sins is the sin that we call nefarious, vile, and sodomy, which is to sin man with man, or with a woman in the incorrect orifice, and above all this is sinning with beasts, with sheep and dogs or with mares, which is a grave abomination” (quoted in Harrison 2014, 144). The author of the manual continues, “If there are among you men who commit sodomy sinning with other men, or with boys, or with beasts, know that for this sin fire and brimstone fell from the sky and turned to ash the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah” (quoted in Horswell 2005, 291).

Pérez Bocanegra in his 1631 Ritual formulario presents a series of questions in Quechua for his penitents: “Seeing a dog intertwined, animals one on top of the other, do you see [it] with desire?” (quoted in Harrison 2014, 139); “Have you used the vile sin with someone? Have you committed bestiality with an animal?”; and “Whom do you enter from the rear? With a llama, with anything, do you sin using the rear?” (quoted in Harrison 2014, 145). Pérez Bocanegra also cautions other priests working in the Andes to administer confession in the Quechua language:

In regard to the sins of dishonesty (because they are so frequent) of masturbation [poluciones], sodomy, bestiality, it is very necessary to ask them [Indigenous penitents] the questions listed below: for men as well as for women, whatever their civil status, and age (varying the items a little) because I have found from experience that there are many adults stained with such sins that they have never confessed; some from ignorance, others because of forgetfulness, and other from shame, and other for whatever reason they have never had to confess them. And because their confessors have not asked them in any confession about those sins.
From the nature of these questions in confessional manuals from both New Spain and the Andes, it would seem that nothing—from menstruation, masturbation, love potions, abortion, infanticide, adulterous relationships, and rape to incest, sodomy, and bestiality—was outside of the realm of the confessor’s interest. The invasive and all-encompassing nature of such questions in colonial confessional manuals has led some historians to overemphasize both priestly power and the sexualized aspect of the dialog between confessor and confessant. This sometimes happens under the assumption that the priest almost perfectly transcribed the confessional manual into actual practice.

As Harrison notes in her study of Spanish-Quechua penitential texts in the Andes between 1560 and 1650, “When confronting so many questions asking for explicit sexual detail, we may wonder if in fact the church was not serving to disseminate knowledge of sexual pleasure. Perhaps these acts had never occurred among their newly converted Quechua-speaking parishioners” (2014, 137). Similarly, Rafael in his study of Spanish-Tagalog translation and Christian conversion in the Spanish colonial Philippines emphasizes how “the confessor’s questions tended to take on the twists and turns of the very sins they sought to quell” (Rafael 1993, 104). This leaves us with the central paradox of the confessional manuals: they are invaluable historical sources, but they ultimately tell us far more about the anxieties (and perhaps even desires) of the Catholic priests and missionaries than they ever could about the native peoples they were supposedly about.

Finally, it is important to briefly show how the Quechua- and Aymara-language colonial confessional manuals gesture toward otherwise largely absent traces of Andean notions of gender prior to the arrival of the Spaniards. We see this especially in regard to what some scholars have called “third-gender subjects” in the Andean world. For literary studies scholar Michael Horswell, it was in the colonial era that the church’s mission to regulate indigenous Andeans by controlling their bodies constructed the figure of the “sodomite” out of third-gender subjects through a discourse that became naturalized in Europe during the Enlightenment (Horswell 2005, 236). Horswell traces the liminal third-gender subject rituality in the Andes to the depictions of Moche erotic pottery, colonial chronicles, dictionaries, and the analysis of modern ethnographies. Ultimately, he asserts, colonization resulted in the “transculturation of indigenous gender and sexual norms,” as opposed to a mere imposition and internalization of Christian notions of sin and morality (237). Relying on an excerpt from Pedro Cieza de León’s sixteenth-century chronicle of the conquest of Peru that describes in some detail an Andean religious ritual involving cross-dressing men and “homosexuality” in the Yungas region, Horswell and others cite it as evidence of Andean third-gender subjectivities that do not easily map onto Judeo-Christian conceptions of gender and the body. The ritual describes the cross-dressed guards of the Yungas temples and how they were chosen as boys to dress and perform “as girls” from an early age. Furthermore, during festive days, important men in the community committed sodomy with these guards (Cieza de León 1553, 222). The excerpt also mentions that Cieza de León’s informant, the Jesuit friar Domingo de Santo Tomas, punished two of these cross-
dressed guards for their sins and spoke to them in detail about their acts, which likely occurred during some type of confession with the friar.

Irene Silverblatt in her study on the effects of the Spanish conquest on the place of women in Andean society reveals that, in contrast to the traditionally subordinate role of women in the Catholic Church, Andean women (prior to the Spanish conquest of the Americas) had significant roles as priestesses and, thus, as keepers of Andean religiosity. For that reason, Andean women became one of the primary targets of the campaigns to extirpate indigenous idolatries, which led to a decidedly more constricted and subordinate role for women in colonial society (Silverblatt 1987). Horswell argues that this new subaltern role of women also served to even further diminish and obliterate the role of a third gender in the colonial Andes. In this sense, we cannot view the bilingual confessional manuals in isolation from broader religious, political, and economic goals of the Spanish colonial enterprise. Recent studies on Quechua-Spanish translation and on confessional discourse in the Andes have shed light on the local dynamics of confession—perhaps most interestingly in relation to the traditional knotted-cord system known as the *khipus* as a means of documenting memory and recording sin (Durston 2007; Harrison 2014; Urton 2017; Charles 2007).

**Confused Discourse and Mistranslation**

Historically speaking, the power of confession, and of confessional manuals, as an instrument of control—especially of the conscience—has been overstated by scholars. Historian Henry Charles Lea in his 1867 account of the Inquisition posited that "the power of the confessional, one of the most effective instrumentalities invented by the ingenuity of man for enslaving the human mind, was peculiarly liable to abuse in sexual matters" (Lea 1907, 251). Lea’s language reflects centuries of Protestant propaganda about confession, but his remark does reflect a theme that was later theorized by Michel Foucault in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*: “One does not confess without the presence of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile” ([1978] 1990, 61). Hence, it seems that Foucault’s notion of the “confessing animal” of the West would have been a fundamental instrument in the colonization of the consciousness in the New World (59). This, however, was not necessarily the case.

Several historians of colonial Latin America, too, have perhaps overemphasized the power of confession under Spanish colonialism. Historian Serge Gruzinski, for example, has argued that confession—a “refined tool of ideological subjection and of domination over the individual”—in New Spain “went beyond the spiritual sphere to become a complex enterprise of domination and control over bodies and minds, an enterprise of ‘determinitorialization’ that alienated the individual from his culture and his environment and imposed upon him an explanation of sorrow and sin” (1989, 103). Other scholars make
similar claims, speaking of the “control mechanisms” bound up in the penitential discipline and confession of native peoples in colonial Latin America (Klor de Alva 1991, 3). Yet, these same scholars complicate our understanding by simultaneously analyzing forms of indigenous agency by and through—or even resistance to—confession. Such formulations help us theorize the cultural and religious significance of the sacrament of confession in colonial contexts, but they nonetheless overdetermine confession as the primary site of sexual encounter between colonizers and colonized.

Much to the dismay of disconcerted priests (especially if we are to believe their reports), many indigenous people evaded questions, gave equivocal answers, feigned contrition, and failed to fully grasp some of the intended meanings of confession due to mutual mistranslation. Friar Alva, for one, lamented,

*You natives, even though you are cohabiting for two [or] three years already with a woman and sinning with her every day and every night, when the priest and confessor questions you about how many times you have sinned with her, you just reply: “Two times, three times.” And you all make the same statement, and with this you really damage your confession.*

*(ALVA 1999, 46)*

In his Spanish-Quechua *Sermones de los misterios de nuestra Santa fe catolica, en lengua castellana y la general del Inca* (Sermons of the mysteries of our Holy Catholic Castilian faith and the general [faith] of the Inca), printed in Lima in 1648, Fernando de Avendaño wrote that after a pregnant indigenous woman asserted in confession that she was a virgin, he bemoaned, “When you hear this, how can you explain this? This is why we are saddened, and we priests cry in our hearts, seeing that you are going to hell, because you hide your sins in confession” (quoted in Harrison 1994, 148). Priests also reported that some “Indians” feigned ignorance of the confessor's language, be it Spanish or a local indigenous language, in order to avoid confession.

Ultimately, both confession and the bilingual *confesñonarios* upon which they were based—theologically, conceptually, and linguistically—are marked by profound ambivalence. In addition to the issues outlined above, the notion of Catholic confession resonated with indigenous rituals of expiation that existed well before the arrival of the Spaniards. In central Mexico, the Nahuatl term that the Catholic missionaries chose to signify the church's sacrament of confession was *neyolmelahualiztli*, which literally translates to “straightening one's heart” (Burkhart 1989, 181–182). The Catholic sacrament of confession appears to have presented Nahua indigenous people with a unique opportunity to cure internal
disruptions and all types of ills, both moral and material, in ways that may have differed from what priests and friars had in mind. Similarly, in the Andes, early Catholic missionaries used the Quechua term *hichuni* (or *ichuni/ychucuni*) to mean “to confess” *(Harrison 2014, 71).* The verb, however, was lexically related to the straw grass—the *ychu*—that indigenous shaman-priests used to evaluate ceremonial confessions and prescribe due ritual penalties. For all of these reasons and more, conceptual mistranslations and hybridizations abounded through the confessional manuals.

Confession in colonial Latin America was perhaps less an efficient tool of domination than a “confused discourse in which priests and penitents negotiated meaning through their different interpretations of language and symbols” *(Sigal 2005, 580).* The confessional manuals’ translation of the Catholic tenets into native languages, especially in penitential texts and sermons, required the semantic recodification of indigenous concepts, which was always only partly successful. Writing of the Andean confessional manuals, Harrison tells us that their very “discourse is hampered because of lexical disparities between Quechua and Spanish referents and augmented further because of the distinct sexual codes of each society” *(Harrison 2014, 121).*

Equally important, such conceptual mistranslations persevere well into the present through the terms and categories often used to name particular identities—be they lesbian, gay, homosexual, trans, queer, or something else—that coalesce partly around a politics of desire. But when Baptista asked his Nahuatl-speaking penitents in 1599, “Perhaps you did something filthy and dirty with yourself, or with another man?,” or when Pérez Bocanegra asked his Quechua-speaking parishioners in 1603 “if there are any among you who commit sodomy sinning with other men, or with boys, or with beasts?,” were they speaking about what we call homosexuality and bestiality, or about some other desires that remain partly illegible to us today? Do so-called third-gender subjectivities and ritual ceremonies in Mexico or the Andes that mediated between the masculine and the feminine relate to sodomy, hermaphroditism, cross-dressing, transsexuality, or some variant of transgender? Do the “pollutions” that resulted from “doing something dirty” equate to what we think of as masturbation?

In translating particular acts and desires in the confessional manuals (and during the act of confession itself), the Spaniards translated Judeo-Christian religious concepts into native practices and native moral value systems. In doing so, they attempted to dictate morality partly by reorganizing indigenous concepts regarding what might to us, in retrospect, appear to relate directly to gender, sexuality, and LGBTQ desires. Harrison rightly tells us that “the interrogations of the confessional read like a modern sex manual because of the European obsession with procreation and fulfilling the marital debt within the sacrament of marriage” *(2014, 150).* Yet, the desires of the past also complicate those of the present, calling into question how the sins of lust mentioned in the sixth commandment have been historically defined, named, and moralized. Moreover, these acts of naming are inseparable
from the racializing legacies of colonialism and their attendant representations of indigenous peoples throughout the Americas, both past and present.

**SEE ALSO** *Conquest and Sodomy in Latin America; Florentine Codex and Nahua Sexuality; Moche Pottery; Sins against Nature in Colonial Latin America*

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A letter dated 10 July 1519 purportedly written by the Spanish conquistador Hernán Cortés (1485–1547) and addressed to Emperor Charles V opens by recounting his movements in the royal service from Cuba to Mexico. Cortés describes Mexico as a land of gold like “that from which Solomon is said to have taken the gold for the temple” (1986, 29), but he maintains his distance from the “deformed” people he finds there. He claims they practice self-mutilation and human sacrifice and describes them as being clothed like Moors and living in houses designed “in the Moorish fashion” (30). A summary judgment is offered: “They are all sodomites and practice that abominable sin” (37). This claim was frequently repeated: Tomás Ortiz, in 1525, like explorer Christopher Columbus before him, believed the native population practiced cannibalism; this led him to effortlessly link cannibalism and sodomy as if they were the same thing, writing that they “were sodomites more than any other race” (quoted in Guerra 1971, 53). The charge is reiterated by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (1478–1557) a year later: “The Indians eat human flesh and are sodomites” (quoted in Guerra 1971, 55). Even the Spanish friar Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474–1566), defending the innocence of the native population and condemning the greed and rapacity of the Spaniards, nonetheless acknowledged the practice of both cannibalism and sodomy among the indigenous population, claiming that only a minority of the population indulged in such behavior that would warrant their extinction.

What does “sodomy” mean in these contexts? The tendency today is to think of it as a sexual practice (as anal intercourse performed by men), but these and similarly worded claims by Spaniards in the New World do not describe scenes of sex between men. They are blanket condemnations of the indigenous population, and they follow the model offered by Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament as worthy to be destroyed for sins that are declared but never shown. Indeed, thinking of Mexico as a land like the one Solomon mined for booty, and for the adornment of his temple, suggests this kind of transportation of examples fueled by religious fervor and racial stigma, as does the comparison of natives to Moors. The conquest of the New World, after all, followed upon the conclusion of the Reconquista of the Moors and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492. “Sodomy” does not name a set of sexual practices so much as it sexualizes differences that justify conquest.
and annihilation: people who sacrifice other people (men who sacrifice other men or men who practice self-mutilation) are people who should be sacrificed. “Sodomy” is a discursive category that attempts, through that word, to summarize all the justifications for conquest. As the crime not to be named among Christians, it is not defined by any particular acts, extending to all sexual sins that do not result in marital procreation; as anti-Christian, it extends to acts performed by non-Christians (or to the wrong kind of Christian) that are seen as politically threatening. As Michel Foucault famously wrote, it is an “utterly confused category” (1978, 101).

Projection and the Appearances of Native Men

One primary confusion lies in the uncanny resemblance of the natives to their conquerors. As Peter Hulme (1986) has pointed out, the claim first made by Columbus in 1492 and repeated by others, that the natives who needed to be exterminated (the natives, that is, who resisted conquest) were cannibals, represents them as parodic Christians. (Christianity, after all, is based on human sacrifice and its ritualistic repetition in the Eucharistic eating of Christ’s body and drinking of his blood.) At the very least, the violence of the conquerors is projected onto native violence. Also projected onto the natives is a version of how the male-male order that characterized European society was organized. Cortés vied with his fellow conquistadors in what eventually came to be known as Mexico, but he also attempted to consolidate relations with those above him by sharing a bed with them, as Francisco López de Gómara (c. 1511–c. 1566) reports in his life of Cortés about his master’s experiences in Cuba.

The Spanish conquistador Diego Velázquez (c. 1465–1524), alarmed when Cortés appeared ready to attack him, was assured by Cortés that he wished to be “his friend and servant. So they shook hands and after a long talk lay down together in the same bed” (Gómara 1964, 13). In an important essay published in 1990, Alan Bray argued that the charge of sodomy seized on forms of male-male intimacy that in other contexts were the normative ways in which men consolidated their social standing. Kings had bedfellows.

When Vasco Núñez de Balboa (1475–1519), days before arriving at the Pacific Ocean in 1513, killed the leader of the indigenous people in the Panamanian village of Quarequa along with hundreds of his followers, he chose forty of them to be fed to his dogs to punish their sodomitical behavior. The event is described by Pietro Martire d’Anghiera (1457–1526) in 1516: “[Balboa] found the house of this king infected with most abominable and unnatural lechery. For he found the king’s brother and many other young men in women’s apparel, smooth and effeminately decked, which by the report of such as dwelt about him, he abused with preposterous Venus” ([1555] 1966, 89v; translation modernized by Jonathan Goldberg). In this passage, sodomy is first described as if it were a sexual disease (for it “infected” these and other men). The use of the term abominable picks up on the lexicon of condemnation to be found in biblical and patristic contexts, while unnatural (that
is, *contra natura*, or "against nature") suggests what makes sodomy the worst of sins: it is against God’s command to be fruitful and multiply. Sex that should be procreative is supplanted by acts that are not. The use of the phrase “preposterous Venus” indicates such a reversal of sex as enjoined upon Adam and Eve, substituting the anus for the vagina. Under the aegis of a Venus whose lovemaking is “backward” (the literal meaning of “preposterous”), the men involved in these acts do not seem to be men at all. Yet even here, no eyewitness account of sexual behavior is offered; instead, a rumor of such activity is credited as evidence. If it is true that Balboa heard such reports, it might testify to a division among the natives and suggest that sodomy accusations were not just European inventions.

It is not known what made some native men appear to be less than entirely masculine. Perhaps some were cross-dressed, a prerogative in some native groups, and a sign of their special status, taken as a challenge to assumptions about gender binarism. However, similar practices could be found in some European cultures (and Asian ones as well) where boys, for instance, played women’s roles on stage. (This practice did not occur in the Spanish theater, where only married women were allowed to act; their marital status supposedly guaranteed the sexual purity that might otherwise have been in question by the mere fact of female public performance, or by boys playing women’s parts.)

The gender hierarchies of his age are evident in what Balboa saw: it is specifically young native men who are accused of sodomy—royal siblings and their followers who might threaten Spanish rule. Native “courts” are mirrors of Europe. Unruly young men (like the European conquistadors) are equated with the insubordination of female subordinates. When Balboa fed forty sodomites to the dogs, he was also depending on the association of sodomy with bestiality to justify the punishment. Las Casas insists that “the Spanish fell like ravening wolves upon the fold, or like tigers and savage lions who have not eaten meat for days” (1992, 11). He might have seen the dogs as extensions of Spanish rapacity rather than as cannibalistic creatures devouring cannibalistic sodomites.
Sixteenth-Century Engraving by Theodor de Bry Depicting Cannibalistic Practices of the Indigenous Population of the New World. European participants in the conquest of the New World often depicted those they subjugated as savages engaging in cannibalism in letters and illustrations sent back to Europe. The practice of cannibalism was often linked to the practice of sodomy in the minds of these European observers.

A Mirroring of Conquest and Sodomy

In her groundbreaking essay “Can the Subaltern Speak?” Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak pithily summarizes a justification of colonial conquest that can be applied to the use of “sodomy” as a pretext: “White men are saving brown women from brown men” (1988, 296). The “brown women” in the Balboa episode are the sodomites. (Elsewhere they are men clothed in Moorish robes or men whose bodily piercings break the carapace of the supposedly impenetrable male body.) In Spivak’s succinct formulation the brown men and women supposedly saved by the white men are violated by them; one form of patriarchal domination is replaced by another. Women are pawns in the violent contentions for male power. Brown men are the white men’s rivals. The elimination of “sodomites” in the name of normative sexual relations furthers the subordination of native men and women to colonial rule. The supposedly good conqueror rescues the supposedly evil and corrupted natives who need to be saved from their own culture. Sodomy confuses these distinctions, as is evident when Bernal Díaz (c. 1495–1584), a soldier who participated in the conquest of Mexico and wrote an account of it, describes the relationship of Cortés to Montezuma (1466–1520), the ruler of Tenochtitlán, the future Mexico City; their friendship raised no
suspicious because the Aztec ruler himself “was quite free from sodomy” (1963, 225). Cortés binds himself to Montezuma by giving him his pageboy, exclaiming, “How right I am, Lord Montezuma, to love you as dearly as I love myself” (quoted in Díaz 1963, 250). Such love, with the boy as go-between, is the socially acceptable form of brotherhood that sodomy mirrors. Even when Montezuma died because of the Spaniards he continued to affirm his love for Cortés, or so Gómara (1964) claims. Conquest looks like what the conquistadors called “sodomy.”

Perhaps the most stunning instance of this mirroring is offered in the report that Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca (c. 1490–c. 1560)—who explored what is today Florida, Texas, and the Gulf of Mexico—sent to Charles V, which was published in 1542. Separated from his fellow conquistadors after the failure of the 1527 Narváez expedition to Florida, Cabeza de Vaca wandered the American Southwest, often assuming the shamanistic powers and garb of the natives with whom he traded. By the time he was “rescued” by fellow Spaniards, he had learned to condemn their treatment of natives without ever himself fully “going native.” In his in-between state, Cabeza de Vaca describes himself undertaking roles that sometimes are those of native women, sometimes those of native men. At the same time as he himself played both parts, Cabeza de Vaca condemned the “diabolical practice” of native men who lived with “emasculated” men: “Eunuchs go partly dressed, like women, and perform women's duties, but use the bow and carry very heavy loads. We saw many thus mutilated. They are more muscular and taller than other men and can lift tremendous weight” ([1961] 1983, 100). “Diabolical practice” is as close as Cabeza de Vaca comes to saying “sodomy,” and no wonder, because the men/women he describes occupy his own indeterminate position.

SEE ALSO Confessional Manuals in Colonial Latin America; Florentine Codex and Nahua Sexuality; Sins against Nature in Colonial Latin America

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Conversion Therapy in China

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The use of medical, psychological, and psychiatric treatment to “convert” LGBTQ individuals to heterosexuals in China.

The practice of conversion therapy, otherwise known as reparative therapy (*niuzhuan zhiliao* in Mandarin Chinese), involves the use of medical, psychological, and psychiatric means to change LGBTQ people’s sexuality and has been insufficiently documented in Asia. Most Asian countries do not have state legislation and professional guidelines to protect LGBTQ rights and to regulate the practice of conversion therapy. These inconsistencies in LGBTQ rights and public health regulation among different countries, together with complex social, cultural, and religious factors in each country, provide space for institutions and individuals to practice conversion therapy legally and illegally. In India, for example, homosexuality was still a criminal offense based on Section 377 of the Indian penal code as part of the British colonial legacy until India’s Supreme Court struck it down in September 2018; LGBTQ people suffer from intense stigma and discrimination and are sometimes sent to doctors for conversion therapy (*Patra 2016*).

A few places in Asia have explicitly banned conversion therapy. In 2012 the Hong Kong Psychological Society published the “Position Paper for Psychologists Working with Lesbians, Gays, and Bisexual (LGB) Individuals,” stating that homosexuality and bisexuality are not mental illnesses and that there is no scientifically proven evidence to support the attempts to change one’s sexual orientation, thus making it the first professional body in Asia to explicitly state its position on conversion therapy. In 2016 Taiwan’s Taichung City banned the practice of conversion therapy in the city. The following year, Taiwan’s Ministry of Health and Welfare issued an amendment to the Physicians Act (*Yishi fa*) banning conversion therapy (*Pride Life 2017*).

This entry focuses on the conversion therapy practices and the debates surrounding them in the context of the People's Republic of China, as the topic has received widespread national and international publicity in the twenty-first century (*Channel 4 2015*). In so doing, the entry aims to provide a picture of the challenges and opportunities that LGBTQ people face in Asia in fighting against conversion therapy and for LGBTQ rights.
Members of the Beijing LGBT Centre Protest Conversion Therapy outside the Haidian District Court, 2014. Xiao Tie, executive director of the Beijing LGBT Centre, pretends to inject a patient with a giant mock syringe in front of the courthouse where hearings were being held in a landmark case involving plaintiff Peng Yanhui, who successfully sued the Chongqing Xinyu Piaoxiang Psychotherapy Centre after he received conversion therapy there.

**Overview**

Homosexuality is widely considered to have been depathologized in China. However, such “depathologization” is only partial. The third edition of the *Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders* (*CCMD-3*), published in 2001 and still in effect as of 2017, declassifies homosexuality as a mental disorder but still includes “sexual orientation disorders,” which refer to “psychological disorders such as unwillingness, hesitation, anxiety, depression, and pain” resulting from one’s “sexual development and sexual orientations” (*Beijing LGBT Centre 2014, 30*). Based on this, the *CCMD-3* distinguishes between two types of homosexuality: “egosyntonic,” or “self-congruous” (*ziwo hexie*) homosexuality (i.e., those who feel comfortable with their sexual identity) and “egodystonic” homosexuality (i.e., those who do not). The *CCMD-3* stipulates that egosyntonic homosexuality is considered normal and needs no treatment; however, those who feel “anxious, depressed, conflicted” about their sexual identity and those who “seek change of gender and sexual identity through treatment” still need medical, psychological, and psychiatric intervention (*Zhou 2009, 125*; translation by Hongwei Bao). Although this *CCMD-3* article is designed to address some mental health issues that afflict both gay and straight people, in reality, it has
often been used to provide policy justifications for gay conversion therapy.

The practice of using conversion therapy on LGBT people in China has been widely documented, including by two Queer Comrades webcast documentaries (Wei 2010, 2012), a 2014 report from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the US Agency for International Development (USAID), a Beijing LGBT Centre report (2015), and a British television documentary (Wells 2015). The Beijing LGBT Centre documented the practice of conversion therapy by both private and public hospitals and clinics in ten Chinese cities (Asia Catalyst 2015). In a 2005 book on homosexuality in China, one of the authors, Lu Longguang, a neurologist from Nanjing Medical University, documented case studies of treating homosexuality by injecting gay “patients” with apomorphine, a drug that induces nausea (Liu and Lu 2005; Bao 2012). According to the account, Lu advised 2,534 gay “patients” from 1987 to 1997. Among the 1,000 gay “patients” he treated with his “guided corrective psychotherapy,” 79.8 percent came to him of their own accord, and 20.2 percent were referred by others, including by family members and relatives. Among the 82 gay men he treated and with whom he conducted a one-year follow-up study, 13.5 percent had “overall recovered”; 13.5 percent made “significant progress”; 39 percent made “some progress”; and 34 percent “showed no sign of change” (Liu and Lu 2005, 277). According to a 2015 report published by the Beijing LGBT Centre, 116 people interviewed went through conversion therapy, and none of them reported a change in their sexuality; in some cases, the treatment inflicted pain and harm on participants and had negative and longlasting effects on their physical and psychological health.

Reasons

The medical, psychological, and psychiatric treatment of homosexuality in China results from the deeply rooted belief that homosexuality is an illness or a mental disorder. This idea had its origins in the translation of Western theories of psychology and medical science in the Republican era, the Maoist understanding of homosexuals as “hooligans” (liumang) incompatible with socialist governmentality, and the post-Mao Chinese intellectuals’ obsession with a highly selective body of works in Western psychology, psychiatry, and medical science. The governance of nonheteronormative sexuality is not only an issue of public health, with its agenda of producing modern and healthy citizens, but also a concern for the state to establish a heteronormative, family-oriented, and conservative moral and social order.

The practice of conversion therapy also reflects structural problems in China’s health-care system. China’s ongoing “health-care reform” (yigai), which was launched in the 1980s, is marked by the privatization and deregulation of China’s health-care system. Not every Chinese citizen is entitled to the same medical care in the public health system, and many must resort to private health care for sensitive issues such as gender identity, sexual orientation, and sex change (UNDP and USAID 2014). Increasingly, as a result of shrinking
public funding, public hospitals are required to be financially self-sufficient and even make a profit to support themselves. The provision of psychological counseling is seen by many hospitals and clinics as a move to generate extra income. In a country where health-care resources are unevenly distributed, the health-care sector is poorly regulated, and many health professionals are insufficiently trained, the provision of conversion therapy for LGBTQ people becomes possible. The economic incentive of conversion therapy is alluring: a treatment course costs an average of 20,000 yuan ($3,000), and the cost usually spirals upward as doctors encourage more sessions and repeated courses, but without a firm promise of results (Haas 2016).

The continuing existence of conversion therapy also reflects the worrying situation of LGBTQ psychological and mental health in China. The Beijing LGBT Centre’s 2014 report on the mental health of LGBT people in China found that nearly one-tenth of the 1,600 LGBT respondents had sought conversion therapies previously; their main motivation was “gaining acceptance from parents and relatives,” followed by “conforming to society” and “difficulty of living as an LGBT person” (Beijing LGBT Centre 2014, 41). Most LGBTQ individuals seek conversion therapy voluntarily; some are brought for treatment by their families. There are instances of LGBTQ individuals being sent by force to mental hospitals by their family and relatives (see the Zhumadian case below).

**Methods**

Hospitals and clinics typically offer LGBTQ people treatment programs lasting two to twenty-one weeks; most of these programs involve a combination of psychiatric evaluation, counseling, medication, and physical therapy. Typical methods include “psychoanalysis, self-examination (neiguan) therapy, cognitive insight therapy, problem-solving therapy, aversion therapy, hormonal therapy, medication, hypnosis, and electroconvulsive therapy” (Beijing LGBT Centre 2014, 30). In the case of physical therapy, encouragements and incentives are given in heterosexual scenarios, while discomfort, disgust, or even pain is induced to create negative associations with homoerotic thoughts. Individuals have reported the use of ammonia water as an aversion stimulus, the snapping of a rubber band against the wrist, electroshock (Beijing LGBT Centre 2014; Xinjingbao 2015), and the injection of apomorphine when looking at homoerotic images (Liu and Lu 2005).

Western medical methods are usually used in the treatment. They include prescribing antidepressants, tranquilizers, and sleeping pills; injecting apomorphine or collagen; and giving electroshock. A gay man described his experience of receiving electroshock therapy in the following account:

*There was a TV set in the room. He (the therapist) asked me to sit down on a*
chair with some wires and needles attached. Then he showed me some gay porn videos. He gave me a mild shock when I felt a bit turned on. When I was aroused, he gave me stronger shocks, which made me feel a bit dizzy. At first, I jumped up immediately as I got a shock; I refused to continue and cooperate. He tried to persuade me by saying that this was part of the therapy and I had to accept it or the therapy would fail. “Just think how your life will be a lot easier if you get back to being heterosexual.” He said things like this to get me back into the chair. He added that if I really could not bear this he could use a belt to strap me down. He said that the shock would only last a few seconds but I needed not worry, as there would be no real danger to my life.

(BEIJING LGBT CENTRE 2014, 56)

Traditional Chinese medicine has also been used. A 1994 article published in the Zhongguo xinli weisheng zazhi (Journal of Chinese psychological health) reported the use of two types of assorted herbal medicine, named “secret semen-boosting soup” (mijing tang) and “five-herb posterity-preserving soup” (wuzi yanzong tang) (Fang 1995). The Beijing News reported in 2015 the use of an herbal soup made up of ginger, dates, astragalus, and longan (Xinjingbao 2015). A 2015 Global Times article reported on an exorcism ceremony performed by a Taoist monk:

In a 20-square-meter house located in a traditional hutong [alleyway] in Caishikou, Beijing’s Xicheng district, a man lit incense, prayed to Buddha and whispered some spells. He acted like an exorcist, pushing his hands toward Chen Wei (pseudonym) from a distance or giving him hard slaps on the back. The so-called master claimed that Chen was possessed by evil spirits and that dispelling the evil could rid him of his homosexuality.

None of these methods has proven to be efficacious.

**Legal Cases and Community Activism**

There have been several legal cases surrounding conversion therapy in China, two of which have been well reported nationally and internationally: the 2014 Beijing case and the 2017 Zhumadian case. In both instances, China’s LGBTQ community has lent support to the rights of individuals.

The 2014 Beijing case involved Peng Yanhui, a gay activist who sued the Chongqing Xinyinu
Piaoxiang Counselling Centre after he received conversion therapy there. The Beijing Haidian District People's Court ordered the center to pay the plaintiff 3,500 yuan ($560) in compensation and issue a public apology on its website (Guardian 2014). China's LGBTQ community supported the case strongly from beginning to end, thus bringing China's first court case surrounding conversion therapy to a successful conclusion.

The lack of clarity on LGBTQ issues in Chinese law and the discrepancy in health-care practices in different parts of China meant that the Beijing case would not be the last court case concerning conversion therapy in China. In 2015 Yu Hu, a gay man from Zhumadian, was forced into a mental hospital by his wife and her family when he requested a divorce from her. Yu was involuntarily kept there for nineteen days, strapped to a bed and forcefully medicated. The Zhumadian Yicheng District People's Court ordered the hospital to publicly apologize to Yu and pay 5,000 yuan ($735) in compensation (BBC News 2017). PFLAG China and other LGBTQ nongovernmental organizations rescued Yu from the hospital and took the case to the court.

China's growing LGBTQ community organizations have played a positive role in fighting against conversion therapy. Shenglai tongzhi (Cures that kill), a 2010 documentary on conversion therapy made by the Beijing Gender Health Education Institute, has been widely used for community and public education, as well as in the training of health professionals. The Beijing LGBT Centre has worked with the LGBTQ community and the media to raise public awareness of the harm of conversion therapy and the importance of LGBT mental health (Asia Catalyst 2015).

SEE ALSO Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM); Human Rights in Asia; Medicine, Complementary and Alternative; Psychoanalysis in Argentina; Rape, Corrective, in Africa

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Côte d'Ivoire

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A historical and contemporary look at sexual and gender minorities in this West African nation.

Côte d'Ivoire is considered to be the country most tolerant toward sexual and gender minorities in West and Central Africa and in French-speaking Africa. Established as a French colony at the end of the nineteenth century, it maintained privileged relations with France after the proclamation of its independence in 1960. During the so-called Ivorian miracle in the 1960s and 1970s, the country experienced economic growth linked in particular to the increase in the price of the raw materials it produced (coffee and cocoa). Unlike neighboring countries, it was politically stable, and it became a showcase for postcolonial Franco-African relations.

It was likely this context that gay life in Côte d'Ivoire experienced some development, since it seemed to flourish at the beginning of the 1980s. An article published by two sociologists in 1984, when literature on homosexuality in Africa was practically nonexistent in French, testified to the tranquility enjoyed by Abidjan's gay people who blended into the city: "No specific police repression, no stigmatization by public opinion: the homosexual fact mainly arouses curiosity" (Le Pape and Vidal 1984, 115). According to the authors, there was no commercial establishment attended exclusively by gays, but some places nevertheless were preferred by the "milieu," to use the expression in force at that time and still today. In the next decade, more exclusively gay bars were established.

The two sociologists also witnessed an important and relatively rare mediatization of the gay issue, concerning a drag queen who had imitated a famous Ivorian female singer on television. Originally from Mali, Oscar was a well-known hairdresser and a milieu figure of the time. The press coverage of his homosexuality, if less brutal than a media case a few years earlier that concerned lesbians, signaled the emergence in Côte d'Ivoire of a new regime of truth about sexual orientations (Nguyen 2005).

WOUBI CHÉRI (1998; PHILIP BROOKS, LAURENT BOCAHUT)

Woubi chéri (1998), a French-Ivorian documentary directed and produced by Philip Brooks and Laurent Bocahut, is one of the first films to feature the LGBT community on the African continent. It focuses on the daily lives and struggles experienced by gay,
lesbian, and transgender people in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, an urban and cosmopolitan setting shaped by global dynamics and local traditions. Barbara, one of the main protagonists and the president of an organization called the Ivory Coast Transvestites Association, explains how members of the Ivorian LGBT community both subvert and reproduce traditional gender norms: *woubis* are “effeminate” boys, sometimes transvestites, who play the role of “women” in their relationships with men. Their “husbands” are *yossis*, men who can be bisexual and married. A *toussou bakari* is a lesbian, and *controus* are people who do not accept the nonheterosexual lifestyle. Laurent, who is a woubi, says about his yossi, Jean-Jacques, that “he goes out with women because he needs to have a family for the future.” “And maybe,” says Laurent, “I’ll be able to live a family life through him.” The protagonists claim their place in a global queer community from which they derive a sense of support and belonging while identifying the challenges they face in a postcolonial society ridden with economic problems, social inequalities, and neocolonial power structures. Some cross-dressing men featured in the documentary engage in commercial sex work.

This award-winning documentary has been featured at various film and documentary venues around the world. It paved the way for subsequent films and documentaries, such as *Call Me Kuchu* (2012) and *Born This Way* (2013), that critically address both homophobia and transphobia in various African countries, as well as some African leaders’ contention that homosexuality is “un-African.” However, LGBT organizing on the African continent has facilitated wider representations of same-sex desire in African literatures and cultures. In *Woubi chéri*, Barbara and her friends express their need for acceptance and the importance of carving out new spaces of difference and inclusion in African societies, while celebrating same-sex relationships as legitimate modes of pleasure and commitment. Their quest for identity can also be seen as representative of contemporary African societies’ own quest for self-definition at the junction of indigenous sociocultural heritages and the often dehumanizing impact of Western influences. Tatiana, who is a transvestite, states, “Without the right to be different, Africa is going nowhere.” Barbara declares, “You have to be creative, live life like an artist. You can’t always be down-to-earth. Tradition is fine but you have to be in-between. I think that’s what the third millennium will be all about ... a mix of modern and traditional, different ways of life and sex.” The documentary ends with a *djémé*, a type of traditional feast, in Bingerville, a suburb of Abidjan. Dressed in beautiful boubous, woubis are shown dancing for a varied community of families, couples, and children who have gathered to partake in the festivities: a community made of many differences but also of renewed social interactions.

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*Born This Way*. Directed by Shaun Kadlec and Deb Tullmann. Los Angeles: Good Docs, 2013. DVD.
The bipolarization of sexual identities was then a salient fact in the milieu and in same-sex couples. Among men, the *woubi* are the “feminine” partners, while the *yossi* are the partners who conform to the dominant norms of masculinity.

In Abidjan during the 1990s, and no doubt before, there were many “transvestites” (in French *travestis*, i.e., drag queens), whose leader was Barbara (Brooks and Bocahut 1998). The division between woubi and yossi still exists today, and there is still a significant presence of transvestites, as evidenced, for example, by the regular “Miss Woubi” contest. But while dual-gender identifications among both gay men and lesbians have remained for decades, sexual identities also evolved over time. This has been the case particularly among men since the first decade of the twenty-first century, with the use of internet dating sites and the internationalized categories that these sites popularize referring more to position in the sexual relationship (top/bottom) than to gender role (Broqua 2013).

Another evolution of this period concerned gay politics in a global African context that was becoming increasingly hostile. An organization (not officially registered) of transvestites in Côte d’Ivoire was created in the 1990s, but it was within the framework of the fight against AIDS that gay mobilizations appeared during the first decade of the twenty-first century, even if some gays were already engaged before then. Indeed, one of the main organizations fighting AIDS in Côte d’Ivoire was created in the 1990s by gay men who saw their relatives fall ill or die (Nguyen 2005), as was the case with the early organizations in some North American and European countries. But it was in 2003, a few years after the country entered a cycle of repeated political crises and wars, that the first officially recognized gay organization to fight AIDS, Arc-En-Ciel Plus, was created, although the registered statutes were initially discreet on its gay dimension. It was one of the first of its kind in French-speaking Africa, where the gay movement was almost everywhere initiated as part of the fight against AIDS. Following a split within Arc-En-Ciel Plus, another organization was created in 2010, Alternative Côte d’Ivoire, which enjoyed greater success and developed rapidly while increasing international attention was being paid to “key populations” in the
fight against AIDS in Africa, including men who have sex with men (but do not necessarily identify as gay). Because this mobilization was linked to AIDS, it mainly concerned men, but lesbians also were important in the development of same-sex social forms during the first and second decades of the twentyfirst century, when they played a predominant role in the organization of the system of gay and lesbian bars.

At the same time that gay mobilization was on the upswing, controversies and violence of unprecedented scale broke out during the first half of 2010 (Broqua 2015). There had long been violence against transvestites, particularly prostitutes (Thomann and Corey-Boulet 2017), but beginning in 2013 violence spread to other targets. In the wake of publicity surrounding the French embassy's grant funding to Alternative Côte d'Ivoire and the signing of an agreement between the two, there was an extraordinary public backlash against homosexuality. To counter rumors, President Alassane Ouattara himself had to publicly state that same-sex marriage would not be legalized. In 2014 the controversy redoubled when Alternative Côte d'Ivoire and a gay bar were violently attacked in an incident mingled with anticolonialist sentiment; because France had just legalized same-sex marriage the year before, protesters believed the former colonial power would attempt to impose its sexual norms on Côte d'Ivoire.

During the second half of 2010, as the situation calmed down, there was a proliferation of specialized organizations for lesbians, trans and intersex individuals, gay drug users, and other sexual and gender minorities. There is competition among these organizations over the content of their mobilizations (i.e., their target groups) and funding, which, stemming from the fight against AIDS, is given mainly to senior organizations. One of the main issues the movement faces concerns the link between the fight against AIDS, which draws most of the funding, and the defense of sexual and gender minorities' rights independent of health issues.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Christianity in Africa: Anglican; Christianity in Africa: Roman Catholicism; Cinema, African (Francophone); Internet in Africa; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Islam

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Cross-Dressing in the West

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Cross-dressing is characterized by a gender contemplation and expression not persistent in
time or space. It implies presenting one's own body, and so one's own gender, depending
on social context, especially among those assigned and read as men, mostly identified as
heterosexuals. It reveals the dynamic experience of identities and the flexibility of
categorizing, as well as the complex situations in which one can live regarding gender
identity or expression in modern Western societies.

To place cross-dressing in a contemporary context one must examine the emergence of
discourses on sexuality in legal, religious, and medical circles in northern Europe starting at
the close of the nineteenth century. This trajectory enables one to understand the cultural
and symbolic circumstances relating to the representation of the "cross-dresser" and
shapes a set of relations between homosexuals, transexuals, and, later on, drag queens and
transgenders. These form the basis from which people have created the specificity of cross-
dressing: through not seeing themselves as part of the genealogy of groups that have
become visible and have made a public appeal to the collective experience.

The Transvestiten before World War II

The German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935), in Die Transvestiten (1910),
introduced the transvestiten category. To cross-dress had previously been understood in
two ways, with the first being an activity that includes the interaction between two “same-
sex” persons. The German psychiatrist Carl Friedrich Otto Westphal (1833–1890) coined
the phrase Die konträre Sexualempfindung in his 1869 paper of the same name—a phrase
that is usually translated as “the contrary sexual feeling” (translation by Alba Barbé i Serra)
—and he presented both a male and a female case. Second, it was connected to the idea of a
“fetish,” as illustrated in Psychopathia sexualis (1886; Sexual psychopathy), by the Austro-
German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902). Krafft-Ebing drew on Le fétichisme dans l'amour (1887; Fetishism in love) by the French psychologist Alfred Binet
(1857–1911), building on the relationship between using female clothing and sexual
arousal in heterosexual men.
It is through Havelock Ellis and John Addington Symonds’s *Sexual Inversion* (1897) that the relationship “inverted sexual role = homosexuality” is understood today. They regarded homosexuality as an expression of nature with its roots in instinct (Ellis and Symonds, 186). They spearheaded the debate that had commenced in 1850 in medical circles, where innate sexual traits had been separated from those acquired. If the inverted reversed sexual desire, sexual roles established immutably in nature needed to be reversed too. If the difference was genetic, people could not be punished. This had a great impact in the northern European climate of criminalization of homosexuality.

Hirschfeld considered “monism” (Lombardi-Nash, 18) to be an inherent, perennial presence of both sexes in the individual. Thus, no inversion against nature existed. He propounded his “doctrine of sexual intermediary stages” (Lombardi-Nash, 215). Taking as indicators external genitalia, physical traits, sexual desire, and emotional characteristics, he concluded that there were 43 million possible combinations. In a footnote in the 1915 edition of his *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (1905; *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* [1949]), the Austrian neurologist and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) had sketched his preoedipal notion explaining a feminine component in boys. Freud hypothesized that humans are bisexual, with coexisting masculine and the feminine parts.

Historians date the first use of the word *cross-dressing* as a category to 1911, crediting that use to the English philosopher Edward Carpenter (1844–1929). Literature had used it as a verb yet never as a specific category. Carpenter claimed to be moving away from the theories from the end of the nineteenth century centering on the “third sex” (174) or the uranist. In *The Intermediate Sex* (1921), he pointed to the large number of existing intermediate stages “in which the body may be absolutely feminine while mind and feelings are entirely masculine, or vice versa” (247). This characteristic was useful in different societies. This copresence remained unified in the depths to subsequently bifurcate into male and female. Such a stand was close to that of Hirschfeld. The *transvestiten* moved from a sexual inversion to an inversion in sexual role. It was still being theorized as part of nature, but at the same time cross-dressing was regarded as a cultural phenomenon.

**The Split between Transvestism and Transsexualism**

In his 1966 book *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, the German American endocrinologist Harry Benjamin (1885–1986) popularized the *transsexual-transvestiten* dichotomy. He intended to resolve the confusion around *psychosexual inversion* and solve the *genuine transvestiten* mystery. Benjamin classified three types of *transvestite*. Type 1 involved mostly heterosexual men who dress up as a way of alleviating emotions despite the possibility that discovery could result in the breakups of their marriages. Type 2 involved emotionally affected patients for whom dressing up begins as a sexually exciting act and gradually loses intensity, becoming emotionally gratifying. Type 3 included those who completely identify with the “opposite sex.” Benjamin established transsexualism as a
matter of identity and transvestism as a perversion entailing the seeking of sexual pleasure. Transvestites were placed squarely in the realm of fantasy, neurosis, and compulsiveness, relegating them to the world of paraphilia (intense and persistent sexual interest). More recently, however, the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-5* (2013) differentiates all “paraphilic disorders” (685) as atypical erotic interests, abandoning the umbrella of paraphilias found in previous editions of the manual.

Contemporaneously a great number of “cases” were described that claimed to shed light on the differences. The Welsh psychiatrist John B. Randell (1959) differentiates two groups: transsexuals in the homosexual group and “obsessive-compulsive” (1451) patients in that of transvestites. According to Randell, transvestism is not an inversion but an obsession and is pertinent to “exhibitionism” (1451)—a legacy from the French physician Charles Lasègue (1816–1883). In the *DSM-5*, this mixture remains grouped under the umbrella of paraphilic disorders as “exhibitionistic disorder” (685). In 1960 Vernon W. Grant issued “The Cross-Dresser: A Case Study” in the *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, highlighting again the connection between transvestite and fetishism and insisting on high heels as a phallic symbol, an idea often found in psychoanalysis. His goal remained finding the adequate classification: fetishist or transvestite? Grant suggested that the person was a fetishist *transvestiten*. This set a trend that left its influence on the *DSM-IV* (1994), *DSM-IV-TR* (2000), and *DSM-5* (2013).

The American psychoanalytic theorist Robert Stoller (1971) describes *transvestiten* as heterosexuals, following the zeitgeist. He introduces the awareness of the phallus under the dress as part of the pleasure of cross-dressing. Ethel Person and Lionel Ovesey (1978) explained that transvestites are characterized by their inconstancy, beginning in childhood or adolescence and sometimes persisting as an antidote against anxiety. The conceptualization of anxiety is relevant because of its effects on, among other things, the medicalization of this presumed disorder during that time. For example, John P. Fedoroff, in a 1988 article, reported on the use of buspirone hydrochloride, a relaxant against anxiety, to treat “transvestic fetishism” (408). A patient had visited Fedoroff’s clinic as a result of his wife's insistence that he got sexually aroused only when wearing female clothes. Such exclusiveness remains relevant in differential diagnoses.

The “first” works by cross-dressers appeared in the Anglo-Saxon world. Janet Thompson (1956) wrote about the “transvestite secret.” In the 1960s Virginia Prince, the American founder of the Society for the Second Self for male heterosexual cross-dressers, proclaimed cross-dressers were heterosexual men trying to express the “woman within.” She excluded women from cross-dressing, contending that they could convey a wide range of emotions and dress up free of stigma. Certain researchers had claimed that women cannot be sexually aroused by wearing men's clothes despite the “weird” cases of fetishistic cross-dressing in women reported by the Polish American psychiatrist Emil Gutheil (1930) and
Randell (1959). In 1961 the first cross-dresser organization, Hose&Heels, started up in Los Angeles, becoming shortly after the Foundation for Full Personality Expression (FPE). The American sexologists Vern L. Bullough and Bonnie Bullough (1993) point out that evidence of a “transvestite’s consciousness” (280) did not exist until the FPE’s creation—a statement that must be challenged considering the existence of such works as Memoirs by the French transvestite abbé de Choisy (François Timoléon, 1644–1724), or the poems and novels of Radclyffe Hall (1880–1943), who described himself as a congenital invert. The Beaumont Society (named for the famous eighteenth-century French cross-dresser known as Mademoiselle de Beaumont) was later founded in England in 1966, where urban clubs called Molly Houses had been part of the “same-sex subculture” of the early eighteenth century.

Since the 1970s research has been characterized by a psychologistic bias. The aim seems to be understanding an “incongruous” behavior. Sexological history reveals a weakness in the classification of social practices guided by a positivist basis in which classificatory systems become central. The resulting categories that people identify themselves with are inseparable from the processes that constitute them.

**Contemporary Reads**

Today, from ethnographic studies limited to a single territory to transcultural comparatives, one finds nonnormative gender practices all over the world. Citing what appears to be an “anthropological constant,” the authors justify the lack of consistency of the dichotomous ontological model of Western society. Although, historically, disciplines such as anthropology have certainly borne witness to the diversity of gender identities and expressions and to sexualities in indigenous and tribal societies, it is important to be aware of the arbitrary and deliberate use of the relationships between practices and categories. Some of the studies are based on exotic (often “exoticized”) ethnographic “evidence,” with an intention akin to that of the US sexual liberation movements in the 1960s, putting, according to Ned Katz, “the anti-homo-sexuality of modern Western society in a perspective that is socially and historically relativistic” (quoted in Cardín 1989, 17; translation by Alba Barbé i Serra).

It is tempting to consider temporary gender expressions different from the continuous logic “sex–gender–sexual practice–desire” (Butler 1990, 8–10) as the symptom of a change that is taking place in modern industrial societies. The first reactions, both from academia and the transgender community, go in two directions. First, crossdressing is understood as an integral part of the “transgender” horizon, thus finding a theoretical and political model in which imageries and enticements can be unified yet with a tendency to make the category universal. A large part of the references to this are found in a North American context, including berdaches in Native American culture. References in other cultures include xanith in Oman, hijras in South Asia, and warias in Indonesia and Papua. These
references also do this by watering down the act of cross-dressing to a prerequisite to be under this umbrella for which no consensus exists.

Second, the performance of the gender of those who practice cross-dressing is read as reproducing the heteronormative pairing, according to the dose of stereotyped “femininity” or “masculinity” it seems to contain and which does not pertain to an ideal of “transgression.” The main theoretical influence in the approach to the tension between transgression and reproduction is the discussion contained in two of Judith Butler’s works (1990, 1993). Her critical approach to “performative identities” (1990, 33) is influenced by Esther Newton (1972), who wrote the first ethnography of female impersonators in the United States. Butler emphasizes that the performative reiteration of gender acts produces a process of reasserting oneself that allows going from that which has been established about the gender to that which establishes. That is, the performance or dramatization is transgressive in itself (“subversive discontinuity” [Butler 1990, ix]). After all the criticism she received for her viewpoint on this, Butler explained that this reasserting oneself is not political in itself and specified that the political nature of performativity stems from a commitment to a radical democratic practice (1993). This means Butler needed to understand the role of economic and political systems of oppression in the shaping of persons’ and groups’ identities—a direct heir to the framework of intersectionality. Such a tension, nevertheless, is a key point in all literature on cross-dressing. Two different examples can be found in the work of Marjorie Garber (1992), in which cross-dressing is interpreted as a force that bursts in and subverts, and Annie Woodhouse (1989), who questions cross-dressing’s tendency to fall repeatedly into rigid stereotypes.

Beyond the interpretations that can be made from different disciplines, cross-dressing raises an essential issue: the deeply cultural nature of temporality (the very quality of that which is temporary). Cross-dressing serves as a mediator in differentiating those lives that can be apprehended from those that one cannot apprehend. Thus, the direct impact in modern society of its way of interpreting makes it harder or impossible to inhabit the gender outside of a time rule guided by linearity, unidirectionality, and constant progress.

SEE ALSO Chevalier d’Éon or Mademoiselle Beaumont (1728–1810); Elbe, Lili (1882–1931); Institut für Sexualwissenschaft; Transvestites/Transsexuals

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Cruising for sex has been integral to gay culture since its advent, and in a very real sense existed even before homosexuality emerged in the nineteenth century as an identity that one might claim. At its most simple, cruising is the act of looking for sexual partners in public spaces such as parks, restrooms, shopping malls, or train stations, or in such semipublic spaces as bathhouses and bars. It can be as simple as exchanging glances (i.e., “eye tag,” or what the Brazilians call o jogo dos olhos, “the game of eyes”), or it can incorporate in-group communication cues such as donning red neckties to mark oneself as gay, or bandannas of various colors worn in certain locations to indicate preferences for particular sex acts and positions (i.e., “flagging,” or “the hanky code”). While a complete global history of cruising could fill several volumes, this entry offers a brief survey of examples from different times and places. Today, cruising has been diminished by apps such as Grindr and Scruff, which mimic many cruising behaviors and can fulfill similar functions (e.g., locating sexual partners in the area). Despite the proliferation of apps, there are still online guides for gay male cruising, as well as printed travel guides such as Spartacus International Gay Guide (Bedford 2016), which lists specific streets, bathrooms, and parks in every midsize and major city in the world, along with times of day the activity occurs. It is also important to note that while most of the literature and historical examples refer to gay male culture, cruising has been deeply important for cisgender women and the development of lesbian subcultures, and for transgender and gender-nonconforming people.

France

Cruising is well documented in European history, with some of the more colorful stories coming from the early eighteenth century in Paris. Police archives from 1700 to 1750 make it possible to identify the Tuileries and Palais-Royal gardens and the Champs-Élysées as areas where noblemen, middle-class men, and some students, servants, and craftsmen cruised for sex (Rey 1987). These same groups also used public squares and river embankments. Public spaces (anywhere with a ditch, a thicket, or an alleyway) were actually more private than many homes during this period. In the Luxembourg gardens,
Sundays and holidays (especially in the warmer months) from 10 AM to noon and 7 PM to 9 PM were the most popular times. In very visible public places a man might ask another the time or for a pinch of tobacco, then they would discuss pleasures in general before alighting on more specifically acknowledged homosexual desires. At night and in darker places, one could be more certain why the parties were present. Historian Michel Rey documents that police wrote in detail about the signals involved in these encounters. One policeman noted “[a man] having come up to me, making all the signals to me which these infamous types are accustomed to, in order to speak to me,” “having approached me, staring me in the face several times,” [staring] “with affectation,” and “having pissed ... in front of me several times.” Another policeman wrote that a man cruising him showed him his penis, saying, “I'm sure you prefer that to a pinch of tobacco.” One of the more clever exchanges went as follows: “As I was about to let flow, [he] asked me what time it was according to my cock (vit) and said that according to his it was high noon” (1987, 181).

England

In nineteenth-century London there were several notable cruising grounds: the Markets in the Royal Exchange, Moorfields, Lincoln's Inn, the south side of St. James Park, and the arcades of Covent Garden (Norton 1992). These were areas also known as heterosexual prostitution zones, thieves' haunts, and molly house districts. Mollies were gay men who formed a subculture in the early 1700s that had its own taverns, called molly houses, which often accommodated drag and cross-dressing. Mollies cruised for sex near the molly houses, the most notorious of which, Mother Clap’s, was in Field Lane, Holborn, northwest of St. Paul’s Cathedral, with the actual house now lying underneath present-day Charterhouse Street or the Holborn Viaduct (Norton 1992). The mollies took “maiden names” such as Primrose Mary (a butcher in Butcher’s Row), Aunt May (an upholsterer), Princess Seraphina (another butcher), Kitty Cambric (a coal merchant), and Lady Godiva (a waiter). Court records show that during the Whit Monday holiday in 1732, a person named John Cooper (better known in the area as Princess Seraphina) and one Thomas Gordon (a man of some means) drank three hot pints of beer together, then proceeded to a walk in Chelsea Fields and in a secluded grove of trees Cooper pulled a knife and ran away with Gordon’s clothes (Norton 1992).

In a tract called Hell upon the Earth (1729), a moralist complains that “it would be a pretty Scene to behold them in their Clubs and Cabals, how they assume the Air and affect the Name of Madam or Miss, Betty or Molly,” and quotes one “affected Lady” warning another, “Where have you been you saucy Queen? If I catch you Strouling and Caterwauling, I’ll beat the Milk out of your Breasts I will so; with a great many other Expressions of Buffoonry and ridiculous Affectation.” The author notes that these men
have also their Walks and Appointments, to meet and pick up one another, and their particular Houses of Resort to go to, because they dare not trust themselves in an open Tavern. About twenty of these sort of Houses have been discovered, besides the nocturnal Assemblies of great Numbers of the like vile Persons, what they call the Markets, which are the Royal-Exchange, Lincolns-Inn Bog-Houses, the South-side of St. James’s-Park, the Piazzas of Covent-Garden, St. Clement’s Church-Yard, &c.

(QUOTED IN NORTON 2000; EMPHASES IN ORIGINAL)

This tract points to the important connection between mollies, molly houses, and cruising for public sex in the early 1700s.

Sometimes, homosexual acts may have arisen more out of convenience or necessity, as in the many cases where British Navy sailors (also notorious for cruising) were convicted of buggery. Navy men successfully cruised one another onboard ships despite the fact that was often punished by death, so cruising gone awry could have fatal consequences. One officer reported,

Homosexuality was rife [on the ships], and one could see with his own eyes how it was going on between officers. I have been told that in some services (the Austrian and French, for instance), nobody ever remarks about it, taking such a thing as a natural proceeding.... Sodomy is a regular thing on ships that go on long cruises. In the warships, I would say that the sailor preferred it.

(GILBERT 1976, 133)

The British kept unusually detailed records, including testimony from one young man who found James Bryan’s belly to Martin Billin’s back and for some reason, yanked Bryan’s penis out of Billin. He said to the court, “I cannot tell whether there was any emission but my hand was moist after handling it.... As I laid hold of part of his yard, the other part came out with a spring, as if a cork had been drawn out of a bottle” (Gilbert 1976, 74). It is not clear whether Billin and Bryan and others would have participated in the molly subculture that existed back in London or they were having sex with other men merely as a result of their circumstances. Today there is a growing sense that gay-identified men have moved online to find sex through apps such as Grindr, leaving the public cruising grounds to older
gays, closeted and/or married men, men who are “discreet” or “on the down low,” and men who want sex with men but do not identify as gay, bi, or queer, per se. Yet the historical records show that the complicated question of sexual identity in cruising for casual sexual encounters has been present in public sex scenes for more than 300 years.

United States

New York City’s cruising grounds are equally storied, especially prior to clean-up efforts in the 1990s. Moral reform societies in the 1920s classified homosexual “perversion” as a discrete social problem, identifying Broadway, Riverside Drive, Fifth Avenue, and Central Park West as primary areas of gay male cruising and socializing (Chauncey 1994). The city’s parks were the most popular and secure cruising sites because it rarely aroused suspicion to see a young man ambling about, taking in nature. Cruising for sex was also a primary way for a newcomer to the gay scene to become initiated into the subculture (Chauncey 1994).

The heyday for gay male cruising may have been the 1970s, when the community had been buoyed by the gay liberation movement and not yet been decimated by and made terrified of HIV/AIDS. In perhaps the most famous memoir about what it was like cruising during this time in New York, Samuel R. Delany’s Times Square Red, Times Square Blue (1999) takes readers back to the seedy days of porn theaters, male prostitution, and public sex. Delany argues that rather than a social ill, the thriving sexual culture of Times Square was a rare site where people crossed racial, economic, and sexual boundaries, encouraging complicated and nuanced relationships. Delany’s essays depict a halcyon era of cruising interrupted by HIV, a theme that also appears in the diaries of a young gay black man named Gary Fisher, which the queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick published as Gary in Your Pocket (1996). These diaries follow Fisher from childhood into college as he moves from questioning his sexuality to acting on his desires by cruising in the library restroom at the University of North Carolina and eventually having regular group sex in public parks. Fisher uses cruising and public sex to work through his fantasies about BDSM, race-based fetish play, and master-slave role play, but he also becomes romantically involved with nonconsensually abusive white men. Fisher candidly describes his fear of HIV and then his eventual knowledge that he has contracted the virus, yet he continues to have sex in parks. He chronicles his own decline in poignant detail, writing until the end of his short life.

Perhaps the best-known novel about cruising in the United States is John Rechy’s Numbers (1967), which chronicles the exploits of Johnny Rio, a man aging out of his youthful good looks who wants to reconfirm his desirability by racking up a large number of sexual contacts in a ten-day period. The book is devoted to richly describing the theaters, beaches, and parks of Los Angeles’s gay cruising areas—especially Griffith Park—and the sex that gay men have there. The description of the sexual odyssey is so explicit that it was heavily censored and difficult to publish in foreign countries, but the book is now critically
acclaimed as a landmark in gay literature.

The most famous academic study of gay male cruising is almost certainly sociologist Laud Humphreys’s *Tearoom Trade* (1970), in which Humphreys misrepresented his identity and intentions as he visited public bathrooms where men had sex, posing as a voyeur. Although he made the somewhat progressive argument that men who “tea-room” (cruise in public toilets) came from diverse backgrounds and led otherwise conventional lives, and that about half did not perceive themselves as gay, the book is most famous for its ethical violations: Humphreys did not get consent from his research participants, and he even tracked the men through license plates, ambushng them at home in disguise and interviewing them under false pretenses.

Although the glory days of cruising have passed, there are still telling moments of conflict when straight and gay worlds collide. One notable example is the ongoing controversy over the Magic Hedge at Chicago’s Montrose Beach, a popular site for gay cruising and also bird-watching. As the *Chicago Tribune* reported, “Luis Munoz, an avid bird watcher of 12 years, has seen a remarkable range of rare winged creatures this fall migration season.... He also has come face to face with one species he hopes never to encounter again but knows he will: the Chicago cruiser” (Noel 2007). As Munoz says, “It’s bad, dude, real bad.... I’ve seen a few things happening. Like guys in the middle of some things” (quoted in Noel 2007). Competition between the binocular-bearing birders and the cruisers—who work together to warn each other of encroaching bird lovers—has continued for years, with some moral crusaders pleading for more policing while the city’s only openly gay alderman advocated for leaving the men in peace and focusing on serious and violent crimes.

**Brazil**

Another country with a rich cruising scene is Brazil, where cruising is known as *paquerando* or *fazendo pegação*, or in the case of sex in public restrooms, *banheirão*. Anthropologists have noted that cruising is localized in certain areas, such as Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo and the bohemian district of Lapa in Rio de Janeiro, but is also widely practiced practically everywhere in public in the major cities. As one interviewee in a study said, cruising happens “on the corner, buying groceries at the supermarket, people are always cruising.... Anyone who feels horny ... just has to go down [from the building where they live] to the street to pick someone up” (quoted in Parker 1999, 55). Shopping malls are also an especially important site for *pegação* in many Brazilian cities and towns (Teixeira 2009). Others report that in Aterro de Flamengo in Rio, cruising picks up at dusk when the activity changes from daytime pickups and on-site masturbation to nighttime oral and anal sex in the bushes as men head home after work (Parker 1999). One popular gay folk etymology for the word *viado* (faggot) in Brazil is that it derived in the early twentieth century from *veado* (deer), because that is what men cruising in the parks at night looked like when police startled them and they bolted (Green 1999). In Brazil the social norm is for
young men to live with their parents well into adulthood, sometimes until they marry, and consequently, finding places for sex indoors is difficult and often requires renting an hourly motel room, making public sex more convenient, cheaper, and actually more private.

Lesbian Cruising

While male cruising is far more visibly widespread, cruising has been instrumental to fostering lesbian subcultures, too. In Bangkok, for example, the Mah Boonkrong shopping complex (known more commonly as MBK) emerged in the 1990s as a major site for toms (butch women, from the English “tomboy”) to look for dees (femmes, from the English “lady”) as sexual partners (Wilson 2004). In US-based contexts, scholar Sally Munt has examined the figure of the flâneur, usually a man of means who took to strolling urban areas for leisure (1998). Munt builds on the work of Walter Benjamin (who in turn drew on Charles Baudelaire) to emphasize the importance of flânerie—of strolling to see and be seen, to be a gentleman investigator of the capitalist city. For Munt, there is also a tradition of the “lesbian flâneur,” which she maps onto various characters in literature as a “lesbian vindication of the right to cruise” (41), thus making an important theoretical intervention by connecting flânerie with queer theory. Examining several novels, she describes “butch dandies” strolling through the lesbian bars and spaces of New York in one book, and in another, the “parodic portrait of the bulldagger as Parisian flâneur, complete with Freudian phallus (the cigar)”—a workingclass butch who can pick up women and who has sex next to some deserted train tracks (44).

Women’s sexuality has been heavily policed historically, and this includes cruising and public sex between women. Sarah Lamble documented the court case R. v. Hornick (2002), which resulted from a police raid on a women's bathhouse in Toronto, Canada. In September 2000, five male officers raided a sold-out bathhouse event known as Pussy Palace, investigating liquor license violations and criminal sex acts, and later charged two members of the Toronto Women’s Bathhouse Committee (Lamble 1999). The Bathhouse Committee won the case when the court ruled that the police had violated the women’s security and privacy. Davina Cooper considers the cruising between women in queer feminist bathhouses to be an important part of a feminist ethics of care. However, she notes that some aspects of the bathhouse events hosted in Toronto, such as the emphasis on “sex, the self, stranger relations, and pleasure,” posed challenges for maintaining feminist care ethics (2009, 106). Organizers had looked to gay male bathhouses for inspiration—a fact that some criticized. She also describes the racism and transphobia that can flourish in the highly sexualized environment, which constitutes “crimes against the bathhouse” rather than private harms, and identifies these as an important point for feminist analyses of women’s public sexual practices.

Online Cruising
Gentrification, moral policing, and on-line apps have all taken their tolls on cruising, cruising grounds, bathhouses, and public sex. However, *Spartacus* still listed thousands of cruising grounds in its 2016 global guide. Grindr and similar apps may be seen not as weakening cruising culture but as representing an evolution in cruising. Viewed this way, the apps provide more efficient modes of the same looking, flirting, chatting, sizing others up, and checking out others’ bodies that occurs in Brazilian public restrooms during *banheirão*, in the parks of eighteenth-century Paris, and on the escalators of a Bangkok mall. Thus, Grindr can be read as merely the contemporary part of a much larger queer archive of cruising and its attendant visual and embodied pleasures.

**SEE ALSO** [Blackmail](#); [Military/Navy in the United Kingdom](#); [Molly Houses](#); [Phone Apps](#); [Turkish Baths](#)

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The Cuban Revolution and Homosexuality

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The Castro regime's policy toward and treatment of homosexuals.

Along with the Mexican Revolution (1910–1920), the Cuban Revolution (1953–1959) was one of the most momentous social enterprises to seize international attention in Latin America and the Caribbean during the twentieth century. The revolution helped significantly revamp the political left, as it represented the epitome of anticolonialism and American interventionism, as well as self-determination, self-governance, and social welfare. The period known as the Cuban Revolution is often situated as starting in 1953 with the first insurgent uprising and culminating with the Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista’s (1901–1973) escape from the island on 31 December 1958. As a radical rearrangement of sociopolitical and cultural structures, the social reforms brought about by Fidel Castro’s (1926–2016) revolution did not always positively address issues of gender and sexuality in Cuba. The sexual politics of the Cuban Revolution are at times contradictory, yet historically and culturally contingent. At the very base, any gender or sexual practice, value, or expression that was unaligned with the heterosexual, masculinist nationalism embraced by the Communist regime after 1959 was perceived as an act of counterrevolutionary dissidence that had to be eradicated to contain the growth of “antisocial” sentiments that could hinder the teleology of progress embodied by the Castro regime.

SEXILIO AND MIGRATION

The term sexilio refers to “sexile” (sexual exile)—that is, the migratory experience that LGBT individuals from Latin America and the Caribbean undergo based on sexual orientation, gender expression, and/or sexual practices. This forced displacement occurs as a response to state persecution, social violence, or discrimination owing to their nonadherence to normative sexual identity, practices, and discourses. In the context of Cuba, the apex of the queer diaspora took place between 20 April and 31 October 1980, during what is commonly known as the Mariel boatlift, under Fidel Castro’s socialist regime. Following an incident at the Peruvian embassy in Havana in 1980, in which a bus driver drove a bus full of passengers onto the embassy’s premises in a desperate attempt to seek political asylum, Castro announced that Cubans wishing
to leave the island were permitted to do so through Mariel Harbor, located 40 kilometers (25 miles) west of Havana.

This decision came after a very stringent foreign affairs policy under which Cubans needed special approval to leave or travel abroad. In the midst of tense political relations between Cuba and the United States, social unrest on the island grew rapidly as certain factions of society that strongly supported the regime showed disdain and disgust for those wanting to leave. Castro extended an invitation to Cuban Americans to come with boats to pick up any relatives wishing to flee. However, when the passenger ships arrived, Castro not only allowed relatives to travel but also ordered all social “scum” (escoria)—such as homosexuals, prostitutes, criminals, and the mentally ill, against whom he led a public excoriating campaign—shipped to the United States. In his autobiography, the exiled Cuban writer Reinaldo Arenas describes how

to be able to depart from the Port of Mariel, people had to leave the Peruvian embassy with a safe-conduct issued by State Security, and had to return to their homes and wait until the Castro government gave them the order to leave…. The homes of those waiting for exit permits were surrounded by mobs and stoned; in the Vedado, several people were stoned to death…. Opposite my room someone had put up various posters reading: HOMOSEXUALS, GET OUT; SCUM OF THE EARTH, GET OUT.

(1993, 279–280)

The first Cubans disembarked in Key West, Florida, on 21 April 1980. Overall, approximately 125,000 arrived as part of the Mariel boatlift, which constituted an immigration crisis and created a diplomatic hardship in US-Cuba relations. The influx of queer Cuban immigrants also transformed Miami’s social landscape and shaped a sense of gay cubanidad abroad. The Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966—commonly known as the wet foot, dry foot policy—facilitated the assimilation of Cubans into American society as it stipulated that any Cuban citizen who entered the United States could obtain residency after one year. The US-Cuban thaw of 2014 put an end to this policy, eliminating the possibility of documented Cuban migration into the United States. More recently, the decision announced on 16 June 2017 by the US president Donald Trump to roll back the US-Cuba policies adopted by the previous administration shows a stark intent to revive Cold War trade policies and sanctions on Cuba.

In general, migration crises in Latin America and the Caribbean are considered to be a phenomenon of globalization. In late 2015 approximately 6,000 Cuban citizens en
route to the US-Mexican border were left stranded in Costa Rica as a result of stringent immigration laws that restricted their free passage. This immigration crisis was further complicated by the end of the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966, forcing Cubans, including sexual exiles, to find refuge in different countries throughout Latin America. Although the Cuban government has officially stopped persecuting sexual minorities, these groups continue to face social stigmatization and often choose exile.

“Sexile” and sexual migration from Latin America and the Caribbean should be understood as a complex process of migration in which socioeconomic, class, and racial factors, among others, constitute a tightly woven assemblage. It is undeniable, however, that the waves of LGBT migrants from Latin America and the Caribbean during the second half of the twentieth century have formed enclaves of queer latinidad (Rodríguez 2003) in North American city centers. Although many members of the LGBT community in Latin America and the Caribbean have fled their place of origin because of state persecution, social violence, family rejection, discrimination, and other forms of systemic oppression, others decide to remain in their home countries. “Sexile,” sexual migration, and choosing to stay may all function as viable forms of political resistance.

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The Cuban Revolution was undoubtedly nationalistic from its onset and sought to alleviate and eradicate the social ills left behind by the Cuban republic: social inequality and extreme poverty, economic dependence on the United States, reliance on sugar plantations as the basis of a national economy, and governmental corruption, as well as social immorality (Bejel 2001). The accomplishments of the Cuban Revolution, however abrupt, included radical changes in the agricultural, educational, social welfare, and public health-care sectors. In terms of its gender and sexual politics, the Cuban Revolution embraced a heterosexual masculinist paradigm based on the principles of virility, violence, and patriarchy. To a degree, it inherited a set of presumptions about sexual practices and values that came from the region's historical, sociopolitical, and cultural transformations—mainly,
machismo, the family as the structural base of society, a set class and racial hierarchy, and an obsession with virginity (Hamilton 2012). In other words, homosexuality, gender fluidity, and sexual diversity—terms that are widely used today—along with homophobia, discrimination, and violence, coexisted prior to the advent of the Castro regime but acquired different connotations under the newly Sovietized socialist government.

**The Problem of Homosexuality to the Revolution**

Homosexuality during the onset of the Cuban Revolution was regarded as a moral threat to its masculinist project. The heroic teleology of progress, so avidly represented in the image of the virile guerrilla fighter, eschewed any alternative form of masculinity—let alone femininity. This vision of maleness was paradoxically homosocial and homophobic. As social constructs of a conflicted notion of masculinity, homosexuality and homophobia have been central forces in defining the sociopolitical and cultural characteristics of the Cuban fatherland—a national culture whose imaginary is lubricated by the heroism of icons such as José Martí (1853–1895) and Castro. Official historical accounts have privileged this type of subjectivity as the sole legitimate actor in the fight for liberation and social transformation. Cuban nationalism after 1959 also became a moral enterprise to extirpate all social imperfections from the past: the feminization of men and the masculinization of women (Sierra Madero 2006). The concept of “the new man” skillfully drafted as a new subjectivity by Ernesto “Che” Guevara (1928–1967), the Argentine Marxist revolutionary and Castro’s close associate, in *El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba* (1965; Socialism and man in Cuba) set the new parameters under which Cubans would measure their commitment to the structural and social reforms brought about by the revolution. But the solidification of a new social paradigm regarding gender and sexuality also sought to regulate, patrol, and correct the private practices of intimate everyday life. On the relationship between sexuality and social imagination in Cuba, the critic Emilio Bejel establishes that “this revolutionary Cuban subject ought to be free of the impurities of the bourgeois past, willing to sacrifice for his country, ready to renounce utilitarian values, and eager to possess a great disposition and aptitude for the struggle (a physical struggle, if need be) for nationalist and socialist ideals” (2001, 99).

Homosexuality became more explicitly politicized with the advent of the Cuban Revolution and was perceived as a form of ideological divergence—of political dissidence—that needed to be rehabilitated by socialist values of labor, sacrifice, and struggle for the sake of the nation’s welfare. The American journalist Lee Lockwood captured Castro’s sentiments about homosexuality during a taped interview in 1965. On the role of homosexuals within the new social order of the Cuban Revolution, Castro answered as follows:

*But above all, I do not believe that anybody has a definite answer as to what*
causes homosexuality. I think the problem must be studied very carefully. But I will be frank and say that homosexuals should not be allowed in positions where they are able to exert influence upon young people. In the conditions under which we live, because of the problems which our country is facing, we must inculcate our youth with the spirit of discipline, of struggle, of work.

(QUOTED IN YOUNG 1981, 8)

Castro’s view of homosexuality inspired some decisions to approach the study of sexuality from a pathological lens.

**FRESA Y CHOCOLATE (1993; TOMÁS GUTIÉRREZ ALEA AND JUAN CARLOS TABÍO)**

Before the 1993 film *Fresa y chocolate* (Strawberry and chocolate), representations of gay men in Cuban cinema were few and far between, and they almost always appeared as minor characters who provided comic relief by way of their exaggerated effeminacy. *Fresa y chocolate* changed that with its portrayal of Diego (Jorge Perugorría) as a positive and sympathetic homosexual male protagonist. Since then, representations of gay men and other sexual minorities in Cuban cinema have increased exponentially, although none—with the possible exception of *Santa y Andrés* (2016; directed by Carlos Lechuga)—has explored the intersection of homosexuality and politics under Fidel Castro (r. 1959–2008) or Raúl Castro (r. 2008–2018) as thoroughly as *Fresa y chocolate*.

The film tells the story of David (Vladimir Cruz), a politically and sexually inexperienced university student, and the relationship he develops with Diego, a victim of state persecution of homosexuals. Not coincidentally, the film is set in 1979, at the tail end of the Quinquenio Gris (literally, “Five Gray Years”), when many intellectuals, educators, and artists were persecuted for their unorthodox views on the Cuban Revolution, sexuality, and other matters of concern to the state. The 1971 Primer Congreso Nacional de Educación y Cultura (First National Congress on Education and Culture) is symptomatic in this regard; the declaration that came out of that congress set very strict limits as to what may be considered “revolutionary art” (i.e., art in support of Fidel Castro’s 1959 Cuban Revolution) and who may be considered a revolutionary artist:

*The cultural sectors shall not be used as a means of proliferation for false intellectuals who pretend to transform snobbism, extravagance, homosexuality, and other social aberrations into expressions of*
Against this backdrop, the film’s insistent references to a wide range of heterodox thinkers and artists, many of them homosexual, may be read as Diego’s attempt to recover a lost past of experimentalism and internationalism in the early 1960s, before Marxism-Leninism became the official doctrine of the state and, significantly, before the Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción (UMAPs) forced labor camps were set up between 1965 and 1968 to “reform” conscientious objectors, political dissenters, and homosexuals—all of them considered equally counterrevolutionary at the time.

This political dimension of the film has been at the center of heated debates between those who consider the film state propaganda and those who see it as the work of dissident film directors. Take, for example, David’s characterization of singer-songwriter Pablo Milanés’s internment in the UMAP camps as a “mistake.” Diego responds by asking who will pay for those mistakes, and the matter ends with silence on David’s part. This brief exchange exemplifies a strategy that director Tomás Gutiérrez Alea used to similar effect in his 1968 Memorias del subdesarrollo (Memories of underdevelopment) of presenting viewers with confronting perspectives but leaving the conflict unresolved. For this reason, critics who dismiss the film as state propaganda are as partial as those who celebrate it as dissenting art. In fact, the film’s truth does not lie fully in either of these perspectives but rather in their confrontation, so that, ultimately, the more interesting question is what these different perspectives might reveal about the complex relationship between alternative sexualities and alternative politics in Cuba in the early 1990s, a time of profound political and economic crisis, known as the Special Period, that ushered in intense and critical debates on the future of the revolution. For example, the very production of Fresa y chocolate was facilitated by the Cuban Institute of Cinematographic Art and Industry's success in reversing the state’s censorship of Alicia en el pueblo de maravillas (1991; directed by Daniel Díaz Torres; Alice in Wondertown), a film with much more critical views on the state’s monopoly on knowledge and political expression. In the long term, however, Fresa y chocolate’s most important legacy is having effectively opened the door to LGBTQ-themed films throughout Latin America, by demonstrating that audiences were eager to support engaging films with psychologically complex characters, regardless of their sexuality.

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Despite his intention to understand the causes of homosexuality, his vision sought to identify, contain, analyze, and eradicate a “problem” that opposed the spirit of the revolution. To this end, homophobia was institutionalized.

Medical discourse was also aligned with the revolution’s pathological vision of homosexuality. In the journal Sexología: Divulgación científica y educación sexual (1936–1963; Sexology: Scientific dissemination and sexual education), Ángel Custodio Arce (c. 1963), the top sexologist during the early decades of the revolution, called on society to combat tolerance for homosexuals and prostitutes, while warning against the moral vices of a capitalist society. Moreover, by associating homosexuality with the perceived ideological decay of capitalism, the revolution inevitably framed practices of same-sex desire within the geopolitics of the Cold War. That is, homosexuality was seen as a practice of political dissidence and of capitalist excess. In that sense, acts of social repudiation and homophobia were necessary to combat the public enemies of Cuban socialism.

One of the first public displays of gay cleansing occurred in 1961 when a massive socialist raid against homosexuals took place in Havana. Known as Noche de las Tres Pes (Operation Three P’s)—for pederasts, prostitutes, and pimps—the operation was carried out as a xenophobic act to cleanse the streets of the capital city. These police raids set a precedent for the treatment of sexually diverse subjects under the Communist regime. Today, the fact that some transgender community members face police harassment and discrimination on a daily basis serves as a case in point.

**Creation of the UMAP Camps**

In line with a socialist agenda of bringing change through labor and productivity, Castro
and other military officials created the Unidades Militares de Ayuda a la Producción (UMAPs; Military Units to Aid Production) during the 1960s. These camps were created with the intention of tackling the moral conversion of social deviants, including homosexuals, prostitutes, hippies, rebel youth, religious zealots, intellectuals, priests, drug addicts, and any other outcasts who were seen as a “counterrevolutionary” threat to the Communist regime. The UMAPs were agricultural forced-labor concentration camps run by the Cuban army from November 1965 to July 1968 in the province of Camagüey, located on the east side of the island. Recruitment to the UMAPs came from denouncements by the secret police, neighbors, or Comités de Defensa de la Revolución (Committees for the Defense of the Revolution), whose main scope involved policing and monitoring the proper moral behavior of neighborhood groups according to socialist statutes.

An estimated 35,000 internees are believed to have performed forced labor in sugarcane plantation camps not only as a strategy for sexual reeducation through labor but also to remedy the labor shortage in agriculture, as well as to reduce the labor cost of military soldiers (Ponte 2014). In a 2012 interview, María Elena Solé Arrondo, a psychiatrist whose clinical work focused on the “rehabilitation” of homosexual interns at the UMAPs, suggests that these camps were also centers where psychological studies on the categorization of homosexual behavior were being conducted prior to their closure in July 1968 (Guerra and Sierra Madero 2016). Under the direct command of the Ministerio de las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias (Ministry of the Revolutionary Armed Forces), Solé Arrondo was part of a clinical team in charge of identifying homosexuals based on an A1 to A4 scale, where A1 identified a subject with a very discreet homosexual tendency, and A4 a subject with an exuberant homosexual tendency. The study also sought to identify the causes of homosexuality and devise clinical treatments for their integration into the socialist way of life.

Impact on Culture

The new ideological and moral principles of the Cuban Revolution regarding homosexuality and sexual diversity not only permeated the sociopolitical spheres of the newly transformed society but steadfastly extended to the cultural and aesthetic fields. In a speech delivered to Cuban intellectuals in June 1961 at the Biblioteca Nacional (National Library), Castro also demarcated the margins of what revolutionary culture ought to be and the functions of the Cuban intellectual as a fighter for the revolution. “Esto significa que dentro de la Revolución todo; contra la Revolución, nada” (This means that within the revolution, everything; against the revolution, nothing), Castro infamously asserted, as many of the artists present at the time felt that their freedom to create was being truncated by the new social order. Many of the openly gay intellectuals were among the first ones to experience the discrimination, violence, and ostracism of the revolution. Central cultural figures, such as Virgilio Piñera (1912–1979), whose literary production incorporated issues
of corporeality and sexuality, and Antón Arrufat (1935–), whose theater pieces critiqued the new form of government, were rapidly dismissed from important roles in cultural institutions. José Lezama Lima's (1910–1976) novel Paradiso (1966; Paradise), which treated the topic of homoeroticism extensively in its eighth chapter, infuriated official cultural authorities. Other gay artists and intellectuals also fell prey to immediate internment in the UMAPs.

Post-UMAP Treatment of Homosexuals

The international denouncement of the Castro regime's treatment of intellectuals by prominent Latin American writers such as Mario Vargas Llosa, Julio Cortázar, and Carlos Fuentes, along with international pressures on the treatment of Cuban counterrevolutionaries, led to the subsequent dismantling of these concentration camps. But even after the closure of the UMAPs, discrimination against and persecution and ostracism of homosexuals in Cuba continued. Most notably, the unrelenting persecution of the writer Reinaldo Arenas is an example of the institutionalized homophobia that characterized the Castro regime even after 1968. Many decades later, in 2010, Castro assumed total responsibility for the marginalization of homosexuals in the UMAPs in an interview with the Mexican newspaper La Jornada. However, he never apologized to his constituents in any of his public speeches in Cuba.

It was not until 1979 that homosexuality was legally recognized, and in 2013 discrimination based on sexual orientation was made illegal in Cuba. The Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual (CENESEX; National Center for Sex Education), created in 1990 and now directed by Mariela Castro Espín (1962–; niece of Fidel Castro), celebrates on 17 May of each year La Jornada Cubana contra la Homofobia y la Transfobia (Cuban Day against Homophobia and Transphobia) as an institutional attempt to bring visibility to LGBT rights in Cuba. Although transgender rights constitute an integral part of CENESEX's political agenda, same-sex marriage legislation is nonexistent. The fight for LGBT rights and its implications for daily life in Cuba continue to carry sociopolitical, cultural, and historical contradictions. For instance, the creation of a transgender network, called TransCuba, does not ensure the daily survival of trans women, a very vulnerable population subjected to violence and discrimination based on gender expression, sexual orientation, and/or gender identity. Independent LGBT groups and grassroots organizations in Cuba that demonstrate an unwillingness to collaborate with CENESEX's political agenda are often scrutinized and delegitimized for their perceived dissidence, signaling that any social change can be mediated only through the official institutions of the revolution.

SEE ALSO Antes que Anochezca (1992; Reinaldo Arenas); Cold War and Sexuality in Latin America; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Mexican Revolution and Sexuality

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The first federal court decision in favor of a constitutional claim to a birth certificate sex-designation change in the absence of a statute contemplating such changes.

In 1975 the Stonewall riots (1969) were still a recent memory and the notion of substantive LGBT antidiscrimination law was in its infancy. The modern era of US transgender law, however, was already two decades old—yet it was on a bifurcated trajectory. In 1955 the state of Illinois enacted legislation specifically contemplating the desire and need for a change of sex designation following transition. Arizona, Louisiana, Hawaii, Utah, and North Carolina followed suit (Taylor, Tadlock, and Poggio 2013–2014; Rose 2004; Utah 1975).

These statutes, as well as the treatment options available to those who would seek to use them, are products of an era that all but exclusively contemplated surgery-based transition, a reality reflected in the legal and community language of the time (Stryker 2008). Consequently, the term transsexual is more situationally proper for discussing the early statutes and cases than is the term transgender. Moreover, irrespective of the degree to which they may currently be used by individuals who eschew transsexual in favor of transgender or some other term of choice, the term transsexual birth certificate statute is commonly used to encompass laws that specify a legal procedure by which those who have undergone gender transition can conform their birth certificates to the reality of their post-transition lives (Rose 2009). That term is thus wholly appropriate for the Illinois statute and those enacted during the quarter-century thereafter.

The first six transsexual birth certificate statutes yielded no published decisional law to reinforce their clear textual meanings. In no small part, this was attributable to the very existence of the statutes themselves (Matambanadzo 2005). In the absence of a statute, the threshold question always was whether a court could even hear a request for a legal change of sex; litigation that produced negative answers to that question also produced several
published court opinions. With the existence of a statute mandating a positive answer to that question, the only remaining issue for a court was whether a petitioner met the standard(s) set out under the given state’s statute (e.g., providing acceptable proof of having undergone surgery or other statutorily sufficient medical procedures). Even this issue did not manage to make transsexual birth certificate statutes visible to the majority of legal practitioners. Not until the twenty-first century did an appellate court (in Illinois) address whether the requirements of a state sexchange statute had been met (Fletcher 2006).

The main challenge faced by transsexual persons arose in states that lacked a clear statutory requirement for birth certificate sex-designation changes; there, they faced legal hurdles of whether or not their requests were seen as legally cognizable—that is, whether their requests were even reviewable by courts under accepted legal principles. It is not clear when or where the first such birth certificate sex-change request was made, but during the 1960s some were successful (either administratively or judicially). These also resulted, however, in no published opinions that would establish legal precedent (Tierney and O’Brien 1968). Beginning in 1966, courts in jurisdictions without statutes did begin issuing published opinions on the issue. The most infamous and persuasive of these came from England in 1970 (Rose 1999–2000), although some of the more well-known US decisions came from trial courts in New York. These courts uniformly held against recognition of transition, although some did provide occasional support for name changes (Meyerowitz 2002; Rose 1999–2000).

Later in the decade, a Virginia court appears to have approved of a birth certificate change in the absence of a statute (Gaysweek 1978), but no published opinion accompanied the decision. Perhaps more importantly for trans people born in the state, Virginia did enact a birth certificate statute the following year (Rose 2004). In 1978 a Pennsylvania trial court also issued an opinion memorializing its favorable decision regarding a birth certificate change, but even as a court it could only request such from the petitioner’s state of birth, because the Indiana-born petitioner’s birth certificate was under control of that state’s authorities. In K v. Health Division (1977), however, the Oregon Supreme Court fell in line with the view that a statute was necessary for a request to be accepted. Although that trans-negative reasoning broke no new ground, it was the judgment of a state’s highest court. This was more representative of the legal landscape faced by Diana Darnell when she brought her case in a federal district court in Connecticut.

**Diana Darnell Takes Administrative and Judicial Action**

Diana Darnell underwent gender-confirmation surgery in New York in 1972. A native of New London, Connecticut, her path to transition may not have included the genderidentity clinic in that state’s capital; a Hartford (Connecticut) Courant feature noted that her then-ongoing case had no connection to the clinic (Lang 1975). But her path did cross the office
of Connecticut's commissioner of health, Franklin Foote. Darnell requested that Foote's agency change the sex designation on her birth certificate. Foote held an administrative hearing on the matter. Darnell was represented by counsel and presented evidence in support of her position. Foote denied her request, and Darnell appealed that decision to the New London County’s court of common pleas, a state court. However, she did not do so within the mandated time frame. Based on this procedural failing, the court of common pleas upheld Foote’s decision.

Darnell then looked to the federal court system for a remedy based on constitutional civil rights principles of equal protection. In the interim, Douglas Lloyd had taken over as commissioner of health. He asserted that the combination of Darnell’s administrative action and failed attempt to appeal to the court of common pleas amounted to res judicata, a final, substantive determination of Darnell’s legal rights that precluded any other court from again considering them. M. Joseph Blumenfeld, the federal district judge handling the case, rejected this position out of hand, pointing out that the only thing that established precedent required a plaintiff in Darnell’s position to do was to exhaust her administrative remedies before launching a civil rights action, which was precisely what she had already done.

Thus, the commissioner of health lost on his procedural argument. Still, Darnell was not able to claim a full victory. Blumenfeld expressed disdain for the relatively sparse legal arguments and factual support that each side in the case had brought to him. He characterized Darnell as having used “a ‘shotgun’ approach, predicking the wrongfulness of the Commissioner’s conduct on many different grounds” (Darnell v. Lloyd 1975, 1213). Lloyd’s total response to all the claims consisted of merely two pages, which Blumenfeld derided as “frivolous” (1213). However, Blumenfeld acknowledged that, at a minimum, one of Darnell’s theories constituted a valid legal cause of action and could prove successful if she was able to sufficiently demonstrate that she was female. In Blumenfeld’s view, the commissioner’s policy of granting some birth certificate changes on bases that were not listed under statute but not those that transsexual persons such as Darnell would seek implicated principles of equal protection. In suggesting the merits of Darnell’s equal protection claims, Blumenfeld noted that Darnell’s fundamental marriage rights “at least tangentially” supported her claims regarding her birth certificate sex-change request (1214).

No subsequent published opinion addressed Darnell’s case. In a 2000 case not involving transition, the Connecticut Supreme Court seemed eager to point out that Blumenfeld had found only that Darnell’s complaint had stated a cause of action and that he had not rendered a final judgment in her favor. The implication seems to be that, had a case similar to Darnell’s then been before the Connecticut high court, it might not have ruled in line with Blumenfeld. State statutory law soon thereafter embraced the notion of “gender change,” although the timing seems to have been coincidental (Connecticut 2001).
News reports subsequent to the 1975 ruling do indicate that Darnell did succeed in obtaining a birth certificate with a female sex designation. That process, however, was not simple for her. It was not until August of the following year that she and the state were able to reach a settlement. The state agreed to amend her birth certificate “by crossing out, not obliterating, the ‘male’ designation and writing in ‘female’ followed by asterisks.” The asterisks would lead to a footnote indicating that she had undergone surgical transition (Bridgeport [Connecticut] Telegram 1976, 42). Arguably, this achieved what she had been seeking: a birth certificate that would allow her to obtain a passport and marry a man, although in the modern era, this success would seem partial, at best.

An Era of Inconsistent Judicial Rulings on Trans Law

Victory in court was possible for individual trans persons during the 1970s. Consistency in court victories, however, was elusive—a problem not exclusive to the first post-Stonewall decade (Haider-Markel and Taylor 2016). With the exception of the door to federal Title VII antidiscrimination protections being firmly closed (Holt 1997), until the twenty-first century (Rose 2001), no overarching national rules emerged. A notable victory in one case in one jurisdiction typically would be tempered, or even fully offset, by losses on the same issue in other jurisdictions.

Courts in Minnesota, California, and Iowa ruled in favor of transsexuals seeking government funding for transition-related health care (Doe v. State, Dept. of Public Welfare [1977]; G.B. v. Lackner [1978]; J.D. v. Lackner [1978]; Pinneke v. Preisser [1980]), but a federal court in Georgia ruled contrarily (Witherspoon 1980). The Illinois Supreme Court partially nullified Chicago’s anti-crossdressing ordinance, in no small part because of the existence of the state’s transsexual birth certificate statute (City of Chicago v. Wilson [1978]), and a federal court relied on that decision to partially nullify Houston’s ordinance (Doe v. McConn [1980]), despite the lack of a Texas statute regarding gender changes on birth certificates. But a morass of conflicting decisions in Ohio led to no clear rule on such laws even within that state (City of Cincinnati v. Adams [1974]; City of Columbus v. Zanders [1974]; City of Columbus v. Zanders [1970]), and the US Supreme Court declined to take up the issue when presented with the opportunity to do so (Advocate 1974). In cases not directly implicating birth certificates, a New Jersey court recognized a transsexual woman’s postsurgical sex status for purposes of a marriage to a cis man (M.T. v. J.T. [1976]) but a New York court did not do similarly for a transsexual man’s marriage to a cis woman (B. v. B [1974]).

The birth certificate issue also saw no uniformity even in the realm of administrative interpretive law. In 1975 the attorney general of Massachusetts formally interpreted a non-trans-specific vital statistics framework in favor of transsexuals six years before the state enacted a statute (Bellotti 1975; Rose 2004). The corresponding offices in North Carolina and Florida, however, insisted on the necessity of a transsexual-specific statute (S. Smith
to find grounds for requiring state agencies to make requested gender changes on birth certificates. Though likely a coincidence, North Carolina did enact such a statute mere weeks after Blumenfeld’s *Darnell* opinion. Florida, however, has never enacted such a statute, with its lone published court decision being a hostile rejection of a birth certificate from another state lacking such statutory authority (*Kantaras v. Kantaras* [2004]).

**Minimal Influence of *Darnell v. Lloyd***

At the time of Blumenfeld’s published opinion, six states had transsexual birth certificate statutes. Iowa, California, Michigan, and Virginia (as well as the territory of Guam) had also enacted such statutes by the end of the decade (*Rose* 2004; Guam 1980). The following decade, generally regarded as one of civil rights retrenchment rather than advancement, saw Arkansas; Oregon; Massachusetts; Washington, DC; Georgia; Colorado; New Jersey; Missouri; and Wisconsin offer transsexual people a statutory avenue to transition recognition (*Rose* 2004). These states represent a range that fell outside of traditional geographical and political groupings as to LGBT-friendliness (*Taylor, Tadlock, and Poggione* 2013–2014).

During the last half of the 1970s and on through the 1980s, state recognition of transition grew substantially—via statute. The notable published legal decision of the 1980s came from a probate court judge who misgendered the trans woman petitioner even while offering the seemingly contradictory acknowledgment that he would abide by a transsexual birth certificate statute if his state had one (*In re Ladrach* [1987]). His state was Ohio, however, which did not have a relevant birth certificate gender-change statute.

The *Darnell v. Lloyd* decision stands out as a positive one in an era rife with, at best, inconsistent transgender legal rules. However, as the subsequent activity in *Darnell v. Lloyd* indicates, her victory was but a prelude to a compromise (*Bridgeport [Connecticut] Telegram* 1976; *Hartford [Connecticut] Courant* 1976). It also had very little impact on judicial decision-making in the ensuing four decades. Some commentators have made some effort, albeit not extensive (*Rosky 2013; Weiss 2001; Matambanadzo 2005*), to explore the contours of how transsexuals’ rights are “tangentially” negatively affected by birth certificate restrictions. More frequently one can find commentators, including unapologetically anti-LGBT ones (*Zakaria 2005*), simply pointing to Darnell having been able to avoid having summary judgment granted against her (*Madeira 2002; Brown 2001; Tobin 2006*). Others refer to the decision via what appears to be little more than obligatory or tangential citations (*Markowitz 2008; Barry et al. 2016; Strasser 2003*). Commentators adopting an activist posture criticize the jurists who wrote post-*Darnell* negative birth certificate decisions without even paying heed to Blumenfeld’s decision (*Rose 1999–2000; Frye and Rose 2003*).

Indeed, two of the more ferociously anti-recognition decisions completely ignored *Darnell*
(In re Ladrach [1987]; Littleton v. Prange [1999]). Even the single pro-recognition decision (In re Gardiner [2001]) that properly contextualized Darnell viewed it as being of less importance than the New Jersey decision (M.T. v. J.T.) that emerged in 1976 while Darnell was negotiating her compromise with Connecticut. And that pro-recognition decision was subsequently overruled by an anti-recognition one, an opinion that mentioned Darnell only via quotation of the decision it was overruling (In re Gardiner [2002]).

One is just as likely to see Darnell v. Lloyd deployed, either in judicial decision-making or in commentary, for the purely procedural question that Blumenfeld quickly brushed aside in 1975—namely, whether Darnell's interaction with the administrative arm of the state of Connecticut constituted res judicata, a full and complete determination of her rights. Soon after the Darnell decision was issued, it came into play when a New York attorney was told that a state administrative proceeding did foreclose his federal action (Hammer v. Town of Greenburgh [1977]) and when a Puerto Rican police officer claiming wrongful termination was able to go forward with some of his claims (Jimenez v. Toledo [1978]). Decades later, another police officer was able to do so as well, in part as a result of Blumenfeld having distinguished otherwise-controlling US Supreme Court precedent (United States v. Utah Construction & Mining Co. [1966]) so as to see a distinction between proceedings that are "judicial in nature" and those that are merely advisory (Eaton v. Siemens [2007]) for purposes of subsequent federal civil rights actions.

Understudied Role in Legal Academic Literature

Legal academic commentators have, perhaps, noticed this case more than the actual world of legal practice, although, again, the influence has been relatively less than might be expected for the pioneering aspects of the case. Twenty-one articles have cited the case in general discussions regarding transgender rights, and nine have discussed it with respect to Blumenfeld's statements regarding birth certificate sex changes and marriage rights. The closest Darnell v. Lloyd has come to having any substantive impact, however, has been in the esoteric universe of the interplay between administrative and constitutional law. In the four decades plus since Darnell was able to secure a birth certificate that reflected the reality of her post-transition life, she does appear to be the only transsexual person to have benefited directly from Blumenfeld's opinion.

In the realm of transgender legal history, Darnell v. Lloyd is an overlooked judicial positive during an era in which the courts sent mixed messages that many often misinterpret as a wholly negative reaction to transsexuality by the US legal system. That view discounts the slow, yet steady, stream of states enacting transsexual birth certificate statutes. Moreover, courts began to accept challenges to anti-cross-dressing laws, government unwillingness to fund transition-related health care, and state failure to recognize post-transition marriage. On all fronts there were indeed negative court decisions. However, except for employment discrimination, there also were positive ones. Transsexuals seeking recognition of change
of sex in state courts in the absence of a birth certificate statute triggered many of the negative decisions. However, Darnell’s legal resistance to Connecticut’s administrative law decisions led to a federal court issuing the most positive of the early transsexual birth certificate opinions.

SEE ALSO Argentina’s Gender Identity Law; Transvestites/Transsexuals

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Daughters of Bilitis

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The first women's organization in the United States to directly address issues of female same-sex sexuality and gender.

The four lesbian couples who organized the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) in the mid-twentieth century could not have imagined the variety of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities that would exist in the twenty-first century. Yet the DOB provides a vital link between yesterday and today. Founded in San Francisco in 1955, the Daughters of Bilitis was the first women’s organization in the United States to directly address issues of female same-sex sexuality and gender. It helped develop one of the most significant movements for social change: the gay and lesbian civil rights movement. Through its leadership in the predominantly male homophile (love of same) movement, the DOB provided first social and then political involvement. The group’s magazine (the Ladder), its network of local chapters, and its series of public conventions throughout the 1960s played crucial roles in creating lesbian identity, visibility, institutions, and political strategies. The members of the DOB were part of a tiny network of women and men in the post–World War II period that began to question their lack of basic civil rights because of their choice of sexual and romantic partners. As a result of their efforts, later movements for gender and sexual equality developed in the 1970s and beyond.

The DOB was created by a small and racially diverse group of working- and middle-class women, including Phyllis Lyon (1924–) and Del Martin (1921–2008), who wanted to find a space to socialize with other lesbians in San Francisco. The obscure name they chose for their new group—which referenced a book of lesbian erotica first printed in the late nineteenth century and reprinted in paperback in the early 1950s—reflected the cautiousness of the mid-1950s. This was a time when gay people were just beginning to identify themselves, organize groups, and advocate for civil rights despite severe social and political repression. By the early 1960s there were DOB chapters in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, and chapters were added in more cities in the 1970s. Throughout the organization’s history, DOB members engaged in regular discussions—in print and in person—about sex roles, gender conformity, gay marriage, and raising children, to name some of the issues they took up, issues that are still relevant in the twenty-first century. They used education, research, and lobbying to influence personal attitudes, institutional policies, and social practices regarding female homosexuality.
Phyllis Lyon (left) and Del Martin, Two of the Founders of the Daughters of Bilitis. Lyon, Martin, and other lesbians created the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955 as the first women’s organization in the United States to directly address issues of female same-sex sexuality and gender.

The Daughters often disagreed with one another about the best ways to achieve their goals, but the one thing that they all agreed on was the significance of providing safe spaces for lesbians. Whether they believed in social services or social change as the essence of the group, whether they were educators or organizers, athletes or intellectuals, former Daughters describe the DOB first and foremost as providing a meeting place for women.

They planned parties, picnics, potlucks, discussion groups, and public meetings with psychologists, sociologists, lawyers, and politicians—all nonthreatening ways to reach out to women who might want to join. They welcomed anyone who wanted to learn about “the problem of the female variant,” as they wrote in the statement of purpose printed in every issue of their magazine.

**The Ladder**

The Daughters of Bilitis is renowned for creating the first ongoing monthly magazine by and for lesbians, the *Ladder*, published from 1956 until 1972. It provided a means of communication, debate, and political education for women in the United States and internationally and promoted lesbian writers, artists, and activists. It also inspired the development of similar magazines. Envisioned as a recruitment tool when it began, the *Ladder* in its first few years was written almost entirely by DOB members, typed by
volunteers, and copied in secret at night at someone’s workplace, then assembled and mailed in plain brown envelopes to friends and potential allies. Despite its homemade appearance, it helped attract new members to the DOB. At the same time, it added an important female voice to the small, male-dominated homophile movement of the mid-1950s. During its sixteen years of continuous publication, the *Ladder* became a respected site of debate and analysis for the growing gay and lesbian movement while expanding contemporary attitudes about lesbians. It always reflected strongly pro-woman perspectives.

Working on the *Ladder* also provided a sense of purpose to the organization as a whole. The production and distribution of the magazine was the central activity of the Daughters and drew on the administrative skills of women in the DOB’s hometown of San Francisco, as well as in the group’s larger chapter cities. Starting in the mid-1960s, it also received regular $3,000 checks from a wealthy closeted supporter, which enabled the little magazine to be professionally typeset and printed. During its final years, from 1968 to 1972, the *Ladder* was used to promote the ideas of the emerging feminist movement and lesbian liberation.

The *Ladder* relied on the commitment of the five women editors who guided its development during its sixteen years: Phyllis Lyon (1956–1960), Del Martin (1960–1963), Barbara Gittings (1963–1966), Helen Sandoz (1966–1968), and Barbara Grier (1968–1972). Each one left her particular mark on the publication, expanding its scope and content, but all of them disseminated information, helped the DOB appeal for funds and volunteers, and reported on local and national developments in the lesbian and gay movement.

Today, both the content within its pages and the images on the cover provide researchers with tools to unearth the complexities of women’s organizing in the post–World War II period. The *Ladder* helps today’s readers understand that the 1950s was a complicated time not only of social conformity and political repression but also of nascent civil rights struggles that included gender and sexuality as well as race and economic status. While the dominant media images of white women in the post–World War II era may have emphasized domesticity, the reality of continuing female employment outside the home and the increase in women who were seeking college degrees meant that social norms were shifting toward gender equality. As the African American playwright and civil rights activist Lorraine Hansberry wrote to the *Ladder* in 1957, “I’m glad as heck that you exist…. Women, like other oppressed groups of one kind or another, have particularly had to pay a price for the intellectual impoverishment that the second class status imposed on us for centuries created and sustained. Thus, I feel that *The Ladder* is a fine, elementary step in a rewarding direction” (*Ladder*, May 1957, 26).

**National Conventions**
Starting in 1960 and continuing every two years for the next decade, the DOB organized the first and only large public gatherings of lesbian activists and their allies in the United States in that period. Their national conventions were an impressive feat for a tiny, all-volunteer group. Drawing anywhere from 100 to 300 women and men at each one, the DOB conventions were held twice each in San Francisco and New York, as well as in Los Angeles and Aurora, Colorado, near Denver. Each convention was held in a hotel in a central location and featured speeches, parties, and at least one gala event. Special awards, such as the “S.O.B. awards” (for “Sons of Bilitis”), were given to men who had been helpful to the DOB. National conventions also included a DOB business meeting, during which delegates from the chapters voted on national officers and policy changes. Voting lists of eligible members, proxies, and financial statements and reports were carefully created by the national governing board and the chapters for each gathering. In this way, the DOB consciously implemented democratic structures and practices into its organizational work.

Perhaps most importantly, the national conventions provided unprecedented opportunities to put the Daughters’ faces and voices before the public. As the 1960s progressed, and media interest in homosexuality increased, DOB activists and lesbians in general saw their visibility climb as they were “discovered” by talk-show hosts hungry for provocative and popular topics. To promote their conventions, the Daughters sent press releases and contacted the media in the host cities. Each of the conventions saw an increase in local coverage from the one before. For example, the DOB’s 1962 convention in Los Angeles resulted in television appearances by and numerous interviews with DOB members that were used as the basis for a best-selling 1964 nonfiction book, *The Grapevine*, by Jess Stearn. During the DOB convention in New York City in 1964, the *New York Times* sent a reporter to cover some of the sessions, leading to unprecedented publicity for the organization. Whenever any of the group’s members appeared in the media, the response was immediate, with women contacting them for information about the organization. The Daughters sharpened their abilities to be interviewed by newspaper reporters, radio hosts, and television personalities without being diminished or trivialized.

Their media appearances only increased as the decade went on. Many of the Daughters, such as Gittings, Lyon, and Martin, became regular guests on local, regional, and national talk shows. By then, however, Gittings was putting her considerable writing and speaking skills to work on behalf of the growing gay rights movement, while Lyon and Martin had moved on from the DOB to the National Organization for Women and other new groups promoting feminism. The growing militancy of both the gay and feminist movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s influenced the DOB in many ways, both positive and painful.

“If That’s All There Is …”

The Daughters of Bilitis officially disbanded as a national organization in 1970 after then-*Ladder* editor Barbara Grier and DOB president Rita Laporte took the magazine and its
mailing list away from the DOB and began to publish it independently. They claimed that they did so to devote the *Ladder* and its resources to the growing feminist movement. Many Daughters, including Lyon and Martin, felt that the action to take the magazine from the DOB amounted to a theft. However, among the first articles published in the new *Ladder* was Martin’s essay “If That’s All There Is,” which she used to document her break with the gay rights movement.

In August 1970, on the day of the first national Women’s Strike for Equality, Martin and other DOB members were joined by two new gay women’s groups as they confronted the closing session of the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO). NACHO delegates had passed a resolution in support of women’s liberation but also stated their criticism of women-only groups. Martin was furious that the NACHO “would not address themselves to the underlying reason for the existence of separate women’s organizations—that the female homosexual faces sex discrimination not only in the heterosexual world, but within the homophile community.” In her essay Martin condemned the “male chauvinists of the homophile movement”; the “co-ed organizations” where “women are invisible”; the “defense of washroom sex and pornographic movies”; the “gay bars that discriminate against women”; and the “bastions of male privilege,” including “male evangelists from two disparate worlds” (*Ladder*, December/January 1970–1971, 4–6). Her powerful exposure of sexism within the gay rights movement was an unmistakable call to action for many lesbians.

In the early 1970s some lesbians answered the call and used the DOB and the *Ladder* as sites for organizing lesbian feminist activism. Younger leaders such as Jeanne Córdova in Los Angeles, Nina Kaiser in San Francisco, and Martha Shelley in New York saw the potential that the organization’s resources, including its network of members and its well-regarded magazine, provided, and they used them effectively. In addition, a number of new DOB groups began and thrived for short periods, most of them in large or medium-sized cities. In 1969, which is the same year as the Stonewall riots in New York City that supposedly “started” the gay rights revolution, a DOB chapter was founded in Melbourne as the first openly gay organization in Australia. DOB Boston also was started in 1969 and outlasted all other DOB groups; it remained active until 1995. During a time of personal and political upheavals, the aim of the members of DOB Boston was to provide a safe, social space for lesbians. In this way they brought the Daughters of Bilitis full circle: from its first group to its last, the DOB relied on social and educational events to bring women together.

The vision and commitment of the DOB provided a framework for lesbian organizing and publishing from 1955 on. Through conscious use of media and publicity and strategic collaborations with both gay male allies and heterosexual women and men, the Daughters of Bilitis provided an alternative universe of possibilities for lesbians where none previously had existed.
SEE ALSO  *Boston Marriage and Women’s Romantic Friendships; Combahee River Collective: Dyketactics; Lavender Menace*

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Defense of Marriage Act (1996)

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The passing and overturning of the US federal law essentially banning same-sex marriage.

H.R. 3396, commonly known as the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), was a 1996 bill pertaining to same-sex marriage passed by the 104th US Congress. It was signed into law by President Bill Clinton in the same year. The law was divided into three sections. The first section amended the federal judicial code to provide that no state or territory of the United States that did not permit same-sex marriages would be required to legally acknowledge or enforce same-sex marriages that took place in other parts of the United States that did permit same-sex marriages. The second section of the law established federal definitions of “marriage” as a legal union between one man and one woman as husband and wife and “spouse” as only a person of the opposite sex who is a husband or wife. The third section of the law absolved the federal government of responsibility to recognize any marriages between same-sex partners for the purposes of federal laws or programs, irrespective of the validity of those marriages in the couples' home states. In effect, the Defense of Marriage Act blocked same-sex married couples from federal rights, privileges, and protections afforded by default to all heterosexual married couples.

Origins

In 1996 the executive branch of the US federal government was helmed by President Bill Clinton (in office 1993–2001), a Democrat, while the legislative branch, including the US Congress, was overwhelmingly Republican. The Defense of Marriage Act was initially introduced by Republican representative Bob Barr of Georgia in May 1996. The bill passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 342–67. Republicans in the House supported it by a margin of 224–1, while Democrats backed it by a margin of 118–65. A similar landslide occurred in the Senate, where the 85–14 total vote saw all fifty-three Republicans voting for it and Democrats voting for it by a margin of 32–14. At the time, both houses of Congress were controlled by Republicans, and the majority of “yes” votes was significant enough to override a possible presidential veto. President Clinton signed the bill into law on 21 September 1996.
Republican Representative Bob Barr of Georgia. Barr initially introduced the bill that would become the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996.

From the time of the introduction of the Defense of Marriage Act, its constitutionality has been fiercely debated by legal experts and politicians. Traditionally, marriage and family law in the United States had been the exclusive province of the states. The “full faith and credit” clause of the US Constitution (Article IV, Section 1) was of special interest to both critics and supporters of the law, as the clause requires all states to respect the “public acts, records, and judicial proceedings of every other state,” including for domestic and family-related matters. During the significant civil rights changes of the mid-twentieth century, this clause of the Constitution had not been cited to force states with antimiscegenation laws to recognize interracial marriages, but it was then unclear whether or not the clause would be applied with respect to same-sex marriages.

**Social Context and Legal Precedent**

Discussions about extending civil rights to gay and lesbian Americans long predated the 1990s, when the Defense of Marriage Act was signed. In 1969 the gay rights movement was symbolically “born” when police conducted a routine raid of a gay bar called the Stonewall Inn in New York City. Bar patrons (including Marsha P. Johnson, a trans woman of color
credited with throwing the “first brick”) were frustrated by the persistent harassment and assault they experienced at the hands of law enforcement and so fought back during this raid in what became known as the Stonewall riots. Emboldened by this event and by the national visibility of gay communities that followed, a spate of similar events occurred at gay spaces in other cities nationwide: members of queer communities publicly and proudly pushed back against harassment and violence with demonstrations, protests, and lawsuits, in addition to organizing politically.

The following year, in 1970, Jack Baker and Michael McConnell of Minnesota became the first same-sex couple in the United States to apply for a marriage license. Hennepin County rejected their application, and the couple sued the state in *Baker v. Nelson* (1971), claiming a constitutional right to marriage. The Minnesota Supreme Court ruled that its state law limiting marriage to persons of the opposite sex did not violate the US Constitution. Baker appealed the decision, but the US Supreme Court dismissed the appeal “for want of a substantial federal question,” a rationale generally used to describe a legal challenge that does not impress the justices as sufficiently legally significant to warrant a full review. Because the case was not granted certiorari, and instead came to the US Supreme Court under a mandatory appellate review, its dismissal constituted a decision on the merits and established *Baker* as precedent nationwide. Still, several states, including Maryland, Virginia, and Florida, subsequently passed statutes that specifically excluded same-sex couples from marriage.

A national discussion about same-sex unions in the United States came to the fore in the 1980s, when the AIDS crisis killed tens of thousands of gay men, inviting questions about inheritance and death benefits for unmarried couples. The AIDS crisis is also credited with changing public perceptions of gay Americans, many of whom were galvanized by the crisis into coming out and organizing politically. For example, in September 1989, the influential State Bar Association of California urged recognition of marriages between same-sex couples, citing “fundamental fairness” and recommending a change in the California civil code to define marriage as a “personal relation arising out of a civil contract between two people.” This suggestion was ultimately symbolic, as the state’s conservative Board of Governors did not accept it, and same-sex marriage remained illegal in California through the end of the twentieth century.

The first legally significant victory for same-sex marriage activists came in 1993 in the Hawaii case of *Baehr v. Miike* (1993), when three same-sex couples sued the state of Hawaii after being denied a marriage license on the grounds that they were in same-sex relationships. The Hawaii Supreme Court ruled that the state’s prohibition of same-sex marriage violated the equal protection clause of the Hawaii Constitution because it discriminated on the basis of sex. The court remanded the case to trial, requiring that Hawaii prove a compelling government interest in prohibiting same-sex marriages. The plaintiffs won their case in 1996, when it was determined that Hawaii did not prove
sufficient interest in maintaining the prohibition. Shortly thereafter, the Hawaii legislature enacted a statute that exclusively defined marriage as a union between heterosexual couples; simultaneously, the state created the Commission on Sexual Orientation and the Law to study the issue of granting certain benefits to same-sex couples. In 1997 Hawaii became the first US state to establish a registry for domestic partnerships (called “reciprocal beneficiaries”) that extended some of the same rights of married couples to unmarried couples. However, in 1998, Hawaii voters passed a constitutional amendment barring same-sex couples from the institution of marriage, which overrode the finding in *Baehr*.

*Baehr* was the first occasion on which a state supreme court ruled that same-sex couples may be entitled to marriage rights. Although its original legal determination applied only to the state of Hawaii, across the country the ruling energized people who supported same-sex marriage and discouraged those who opposed it. Both groups wondered if, under the application of the full faith and credit clause of the US Constitution, other states would be forced to recognize same-sex marriages performed in Hawaii, creating a possible snowball effect. Thus, if Hawaii had begun to recognize same-sex marriages as legal, other states might have been forced to follow suit.

**President Clinton and the Defense of Marriage Act**

President Clinton’s response to the Defense of Marriage Act has been the subject of widespread discussion and debate. He signed the bill into law in 1996 after a long day of campaigning for reelection against Republican opponent and then-Senate majority leader Bob Dole. Social conservatives were prone to oppose same-sex marriage and tended to vote for Republican candidates by significant margins, and the Republican platform at that time included vehement opposition to the extension of marriage rights to same-sex couples.

During his first election bid in 1992, Clinton had been more transparent and more aggressive in seeking votes from an increasingly organized gay political caucus than any presidential candidate in history. At that time, Republicans had controlled the White House for twelve years, and significant criticism had been leveled against the administrations of Ronald Reagan (1981–1989) and George H. W. Bush (1989–1993) for their neglect in funding the battle against AIDS, which disproportionately affected gay men. While governor of Arkansas, Clinton spoke at the first major presidential campaign event for gay and lesbian supporters in West Hollywood, California, delivering a stump speech focused heavily on the AIDS crisis and the moral responsibility he saw to address it. “I have a vision and you’re a part of it,” he told the crowd of mostly gay and lesbian attendees. “I believe we’re all a part of the same community and we’d better start behaving as if we are” (quoted in SoCarides 2013). In his second term, Clinton became the first president to officially address the Human Rights Campaign, an organization devoted to equal rights for LGBT Americans, and he also nominated James Hormel as the first openly gay ambassador in US
history.

However, some LGBT activists have argued that President Clinton’s “positive” relationship with gay and lesbian communities was inconsistent. In 1993 President Clinton announced a policy that would tolerate “homosexuals” in the military only if they remained silent about their identities, or “closeted,” and stayed sexually inactive while serving. Commonly referred to as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell,” but originally termed “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell, Don’t Pursue,” the rule was designed to halt the removal of service members from duty based solely on their sexual orientation. While purportedly a measure to stop the indiscriminate firing of gay people from the military, the policy was viewed by many supporters of gay rights as an insufficient Compromise, even as the president was faced with a Congress that was overwhelmingly against affording civil rights to gay people inside or outside the armed forces. Raising further ire, following his signing of the Defense of Marriage Act, Clinton’s reelection campaign broadcast ads on Christian radio stations in fifteen states boasting about it. Following a swift backlash, the radio ad was pulled.

Still, Clinton’s presidency is regarded as theretofore the most supportive of LGBT equality in history. Nevertheless, throughout his reelection campaign in 1996, he repeatedly stated that he defined marriage as a union of one man and one woman. In the year of its signing, White House press secretary Mike McCurry called the Defense of Marriage Act “gay baiting, pure and simple,” and Clinton himself stated that the bill was “unnecessary” and “divisive” (quoted in Socarides 2013). One day before signing the bill into law, President Clinton released a statement:

> Throughout my life I have strenuously opposed discrimination of any kind, including discrimination against gay and lesbian Americans.... I have long opposed governmental recognition of samegender marriages and this legislation is consistent with that position.... I also want to make clear to all that the enactment of this legislation should not, despite the fierce and at times divisive rhetoric surrounding it, be understood to provide an excuse for discrimination, violence or intimidation against any person on the basis of sexual orientation.

*(CLINTON 1996)*

Unlike many other bills President Clinton signed, there were no cameras present for the Defense of Marriage Act’s signing, and no ceremony was conducted.

Thirteen years later, in 2009, President Clinton publicly endorsed same-sex marriage for
the first time. In an interview with CNN's Anderson Cooper, Clinton stated: “I realized that I was over sixty years old, I grew up at a different time, and I was hung up about the word. I had all these gay friends, I had all these gay couple friends, and I was hung up about it. And I decided I was wrong.... I had an untenable position” (quoted in Socarides 2013).

**President George W. Bush and Same-Sex Marriage**

In 2004, consistent with views shared by the majority of elected officials in his party, Republican president George W. Bush (2001–2009) expressed support for a constitutional amendment banning gay marriage in order to “protect” marriage between a man and a woman, which he called “the most fundamental institution of civilization” (quoted in Stout 2004). He urged Congress to act on the amendment quickly, stating that a swift response would preempt action from “activist judges” seeking to redefine marriage in the United States by means of the full faith and credit clause of the Constitution. “Those who want to change the meaning of marriage will claim that this provision requires all states and cities to recognize same-sex marriages performed anywhere in America,” the president said (PBS NewsHour 2004).

In 2003 Massachusetts became the first US state to allow same-sex marriage after its supreme court ruled that the state’s ban violated the constitutional rights of same-sex couples. In 2004, like President Clinton at the time of the Defense of Marriage Act’s signing, Bush was running for reelection. His Democratic opponent, then-senator John Kerry of Massachusetts, publicly opposed gay marriage but also opposed Bush’s proposed amendment to the Constitution. Kerry was also publicly regarded as flexible on issues pertaining to gays and lesbians because his state was the first in the United States to grant marriage rights to same-sex couples.
DOMA Plaintiff Edith "Edie" Windsor in 2013. In 2010 Windsor challenged the US government’s unwillingness to recognize her same-sex marriage under the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) in its taxation of her late wife’s estate. Her lawsuit resulted in the US Supreme Court striking down DOMA in 2013 because it deprived same-sex couples their rights under the Fourteenth Amendment of the US Constitution.

The Legal Challenge to the Defense of Marriage Act

In 2013 the US Supreme Court was finally tasked with determining the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act. Edith “Edie” Windsor and Thea Spyer were a lesbian couple who, after forty years together, were married in Canada in 2007. Two years later, Spyer died from complications associated with multiple sclerosis. Even though their marriage was recognized in the state of New York, where they had residency, Windsor, as the sole executor of her wife’s estate, was taxed on the inheritance by the federal government as if she and Spyer were unmarried at the time of Spyer’s death. Under federal law, a spouse who dies can leave assets to the other spouse without incurring taxes on the estate; because of section three of the Defense of Marriage Act, Windsor and Spyer’s same-sex marriage went unrecognized by the federal government, leaving Windsor with a tax debt of over $363,000.

In 2010 Windsor sued the federal government seeking a refund of the estate tax she was forced to pay. Windsor’s lawsuit made national news and received the enthusiastic support of the American Civil Liberties Union and the New York Civil Liberties Union, two activist organizations that challenge what they characterize as unnecessary government
interference in the lives of citizens. In part, Windsor’s lawsuit alleged that section three of the Defense of Marriage Act violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution which guarantees equal rights to all US citizens. The lawsuit also described “differential treatment” for same-sex couples “compared to other similarly situated couples [as] without justification” (quoted in Reilly 2017).

**Nullification of the Defense of Marriage Act**

In 2011 US attorney general Eric Holder announced that the Department of Justice would not defend the constitutionality of section three of the Defense of Marriage Act. Holder stated that he and President Barack Obama (in office 2009–2017) concluded that classifications based on sexual orientation, like those based on race and gender, warranted strict legal scrutiny to ensure the absence of unfair discrimination, adding that section three of the Defense of Marriage Act was “unconstitutional.” President Obama was running for reelection the following year and, like his two predecessors, his position on gay and lesbian issues became a means of distinguishing himself from his opponent, Republican senator John McCain of Arizona.

Throughout his first campaign and first term in office, Obama had been more clearly and openly supportive of civil rights for LGBT people than any other president. For example, in 2008 Obama pledged to repeal the Defense of Marriage Act. In 2009 he signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Act, which offered the Justice Department jurisdiction over violent crimes in which a victim has been selected because of sexual orientation, among other demographic characteristics. In 2010 he signed a bill repealing the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” policy.

Theretofore, President Obama had repeatedly and publicly stated that he supported civil unions and other nonmarital partnerships for same-sex couples, some of which afforded them similar rights as full-fledged marriage. In 2012, the year of his reelection campaign, he became the first sitting president to express support for same-sex marriage. Obama subsequently won reelection by handy margins.

In 2013, in a reversal described as highly unusual, the former president Clinton penned an editorial in the *Washington Post* in which he publicly called the Defense of Marriage Act “discriminatory” and unconstitutional and urged the US Supreme Court, at that time tasked with determining its constitutionality, to overturn it. He stated:

> We are still a young country, and many of our landmark civil rights decisions are fresh enough that the voices of their champions still echo, even as the world that preceded them becomes less and less familiar. We have yet to celebrate the centennial of the 19th Amendment, but a society that denied women the vote
would seem to us now not unusual or old-fashioned but alien. I believe that in 2013 DOMA and opposition to marriage equality are vestiges of just such an unfamiliar society.

(CLINTON 2013)

In a five–four decision by the US Supreme Court, Edie Windsor won her case against the federal government, and section three of the Defense of Marriage Act was deemed unconstitutional, based on the ruling that it deprived same-sex couples of their rights under the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution. The court also held that states, not the federal government, have the authority to define marital relationships, and that the federal government's interference in marriage defied legislative and historical precedent. The majority opinion in the *Windsor* case was written by Justice Anthony Kennedy, widely regarded as the US Supreme Court's “swing vote,” and was joined by Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor, and Elena Kagan. Along ideological lines, Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Antonin Scalia, Clarence Thomas, and Samuel Alito dissented. From the majority opinion:

*The class to which DOMA directs its restrictions and restraints are those persons who are joined in same-sex marriages made lawful by the State. DOMA singles out a class of persons deemed by a State entitled to recognition and protection to enhance their own liberty. It imposes a disability on the class by refusing to acknowledge a status the State finds to be dignified and proper. DOMA instructs all federal officials, and indeed all persons with whom same-sex couples interact, including their own children, that their marriage is less worthy than the marriages of others. The federal statute is invalid, for no legitimate purpose overcomes the purpose and effect to disparage and to injure those whom the State, by its marriage laws, sought to protect in personhood and dignity.*

(UNITED STATES V. WINDSOR 2013)

**Subsequent Marriage Ruling**

Still, striking down the Defense of Marriage Act did not fully extend marriage rights to same-sex couples across the country. Gay marriage was legalized nationwide two years later in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), when groups of same-sex couples sued their respective state agencies in Michigan, Kentucky, Tennessee, and Ohio and challenged the
constitutionality of their states’ bans on same-sex marriage, or their states’ failure to recognize the legality of same-sex marriages conducted in other states. The plaintiffs claimed that, similar to the charges of Windsor’s lawsuit over the Defense of Marriage Act, their rights under the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution were violated by disparate treatment on the basis of sex.

The US Supreme Court, in another five–four decision, ruled in the plaintiffs’ favor, arguing that the due process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment guarantees same-sex couples the right to marry. Judicial precedent has held that marriage is a fundamental liberty because it pertains to individual autonomy, protects an intimate association between two people, safeguards children and families, and is a cornerstone of social and cultural order. Like Windsor, the majority opinion in Obergefell was written by Justice Kennedy and joined by Justices Ginsburg, Breyer, Sotomayor, and Kagan. Chief Justice Roberts and Justices Scalia, Thomas, and Alito again dissented. From the majority opinion:

**The class to which DOMA directs its restrictions and restraints are those persons who are joined in same-sex marriages made lawful by the State. DOMA singles out a class of persons deemed by a State entitled to recognition and protection to enhance their own liberty. It imposes a disability on the class by refusing to acknowledge a status the State finds to be dignified and proper. DOMA instructs all federal officials, and indeed all persons with whom same-sex couples interact, including their own children, that their marriage is less worthy than the marriages of others. The federal statute is invalid, for no legitimate purpose overcomes the purpose and effect to disparage and to injure those whom the State, by its marriage laws, sought to protect in personhood and dignity.**

*(UNITED STATES V. WINDSOR 2013)*

Since the decisions in Windsor and Obergefell, hundreds of thousands of same-sex marriages have been conducted nationwide.

**SEE ALSO** HIV/AIDS in the United States; Human Rights Campaign; Marches on Washington; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Latin America; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Taiwan; Marriage, Universal, in Europe; Military Law and Policy in the United States

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The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA), presents a classification of recognized mental disorders. It is used in the United States as a diagnostic tool by clinicians and affects the insurance and pharmaceutical industries, because insurance companies will refer to its diagnostic schema when making decisions about which claims for treatment they will cover. Even though the International Classification of Diseases (ICD) is designed for international use, as the name would suggest, while the DSM is primarily intended for domestic US use, the DSM also has considerable global influence (Clark et al. 2017). For example, many parts of the world rely on the DSM to diagnose mental illness and to classify and track “epidemics” of poor mental health (Stein, Lund, and Nesse 2013), even though the deep divergence in acceptable cultural norms of behavior found in different parts of the world renders the idea of a universal psychiatry problematic (Landman 2013). In particular, the inclusion of sexuality- and gender-related conditions as mental disorders in the DSM has been the subject of long-standing controversy, often opposed by some critically minded medical doctors and psychiatrists, such as Charles Moser; by academics working in gender and sexuality studies from humanities and social sciences perspectives; and by LGBTQI+ activists, who see these as matters of identity rather than illness.

The different editions of the DSM (to date, five main editions, two followed by “revised” versions, and spanning more than half a century from 1952 to 2013) have, to some degree, reflected the changing Western social and cultural attitudes toward sexual practice, orientation, and gender identity throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries in their formulations of sexuality and gender-related diagnoses (Perone 2014). Homosexuality was “diagnosed” as a pathology in 1952, but all mentions of it were entirely removed by 1987. The “paraphilias” (the preferred APA term for “perversions” after DSM-II) were depathologized in 2013, such that only “paraphilic disorders,” where the unusual sexual stimulus is a source of “dysphoria” (emotional/psychological discomfort), remained as mental disorders in DSM-5 (Downing 2015). Along similar lines, “transsexualism,” which
appeared in *DSM-III* (1980), was removed in *DSM-5* (2013), such that only “gender dysphoria” remains, although this diagnosis is often a requirement for trans people to access therapies and surgeries in the United States and elsewhere. And, whereas *DSM-IV* included “interpersonal distress” as a proper cause for diagnosing hypoactive sexual desire disorder (i.e., the possibility that a husband who was unhappy with his wife’s lower libido could lead to that wife officially being classified as mentally ill), by the time of the publication of *DSM-5*, only dysphoria felt by the person with the disorder of sexual desire would qualify them for the diagnosis. The pattern that emerges, then, is a move from deviations from the norm—what Gayle S. Rubin terms instances of “benign variation” (1984)—being perceived as a problem for others and for society at large, and concomitantly pathologized, toward these variations falling within the definition of a mental disorder only if they cause distress to the person in question. The case of intersex conditions, however, is perhaps an exception to this broad trend, as many see the renaming of “intersex” as “disorders of sex development” in *DSM-5* as an intensification of the pathologization of intersexed people.

The broad parallel trajectories of destigmatization of a phenomenon in Western society at large and depathologization of it in the history of the *DSM* points up the degree to which political ideology and cultural taste intersect with and influence medical science. It confirms the perspectives of historians such as Ian Hacking, who argue, after the influential French historian and philosopher Michel Foucault (1926–1984), that diagnoses are culturally and historically contingent tools for establishing and policing regulatory norms of behavior and that shifts in diagnostic categories therefore map onto and reveal broader shifts in cultural attitudes (*Hacking 2006*).

**Homosexuality and Its Vicissitudes**

The sexuality diagnoses (homosexuality and “sexual deviations” or “perversions”) in the first (1952) edition of the *DSM* were heavily influenced by American psychoanalysts. However, unlike the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), who argued for the existence of universal primary bisexuality, such that homosexuals were seen to be suffering from “arrested development” but not from mental illness or moral degeneracy, the APA’s version of psychoanalytic thought, influenced by Sandor Rado (1890–1972), a Hungarian émigré to the United States, understood homosexuality as a pathology and more specifically as the “‘phobic’ avoidance of the other sex” (*Drescher 2015, 569*). In *DSM-I*, then, homosexuality appears as a “sociopathic personality disturbance,” whereas, by 1968, with the publication of *DSM-II*, it had been reclassified as one of the “sexual deviations” or perversions. In later years, however, psychiatry would branch off from psychoanalytic concepts and thinking and would move also toward a more nuanced understanding of sexuality. The controversial work of Alfred C. Kinsey (1894–1956) in the 1950s was crucial in contributing a qualitative understanding of the “spectrum” of sexuality and pushing
psychiatrists—however suspicious many of them were of Kinsey’s methods and findings—to reevaluate their understanding of homosexuality (Chiang 2008). This was further underpinned by the pioneering insights of the psychologist Evelyn Hooker (1907–1996), whose work led to the weakening of the assumed link between homosexuality and mental illness. The influence of nonconformist scientists and doctors, alongside activist groups, cannot be overstated in understanding the changes that would occur.

In the early 1970s, with the Stonewall riots having marked the turn of the decade in 1969, psychiatric circles held discussions regarding the appropriateness of continuing to consider homosexuality as a mental disorder at all (Martos, Wilson, and Meyer 2017; Kunzel 2017). Lesbian and gay activists disrupted the APA’s annual meetings in both 1970 and 1971, identifying the continued pathologization of homosexuality as a major contributing factor in negative social attitudes toward lesbians and gay men (Stoller et al. 1973). In 1972 John Fryer, a gay psychiatrist, joined activists at the annual meeting, appearing anonymously to talk about the difficulties of being a homosexual psychiatrist and the stigma and silence of those like him (Drescher 2015). A symposium was held at the 1973 APA annual meeting to debate the question: “Should homosexuality be in the APA nomenclature?” This followed research led by Robert Spitzer, who questioned whether conditions that did not cause distress to those presenting with them should still be considered mental disorders. He concluded that absence of dysphoria was a reasonable criterion for removal of a condition from the DSM and that homosexuality was, for the most part, such a condition. After evaluating the evidence of Spitzer’s group, along with other evidence presented, the APA members voted by a small majority to remove the diagnosis of homosexuality from the DSM.

However, DSM-II would contain a new diagnosis, “sexual orientation disturbance,” which would transform into “ego-dystonic homosexuality” in DSM-III (1980). These diagnoses considered persons to be suffering from a mental illness as a result of their homosexuality only if their orientation caused them significant distress. These caveat diagnoses were entirely dropped from DSM-III-R (1987). This decision was eminently reasonable because many would argue that, although somewhat destigmatized by 1980 in the West, continuing social oppression of, and prejudice against, gay and bisexual people may reasonably account for their feeling unhappy, without their sexuality itself being a factor in causing mental ill health. Yet, despite the APA’s eventual acceptance of the possibility of healthy homosexuality, in the American psychoanalytic community the tendency to pathologize nonheterosexual sexuality did not disappear, and many lamented its removal from the DSM. Writing as late as 1995, the socially conservative psychoanalyst Charles W. Socarides dubbed homosexuality “a freedom too far” in his politically reactionary account of the impact of gay liberation on American society (Socarides 1995).

Transforming the Trans Diagnoses
Understandings of gender identities and sexual orientations are not easily separated from each other in the medicolegal history of sexuality. For Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895), a German lawyer and early gay rights activist whose theory of homosexuality was very influential in the 1840s and 1850s, an “Uning” (the name Ulrichs gave to a homosexual) was a person with the soul of one sex trapped in the body of another, thereby creating a very heterosexual logic for homosexual desire. This also describes one understanding, and one narrative, of “transsexuality” that held sway in the twentieth century—that of the dysphoria experienced by a person “born in the wrong body.” More recent understandings of trans identities among some trans activists and LGBTQI+ communities, however, reject the notion of dysphoria being a necessary factor in trans experience, and the medical establishment has moved gradually in the direction of depathologization. Yet, in certain cultural and historical contexts where homophobia is prevalent, the “trans-ing” of individuals offers an effective way of suppressing homosexuality and enforcing normative gender roles. In Iran in the twenty-first century, homosexuality is prohibited by the theocratic state, but the country hosts more sex reassignment surgeries (i.e., gender confirmation surgery) than any nation besides Thailand (Drescher 2010a). This situation leads some, including trans women and men themselves, to see homosexuality as a “willed deviation” and may encourage gender-nonconforming people to identify as trans (Najmabadi 2014, 250). In the 1950s and 1960s in the United States, medical experts such as the psychiatrist Richard Green (1936–) were concerned that patients presenting with transsexualism were “really” homosexuals. In order to be allowed access to sex reassignment surgery, a trans person was expected to express disgust at the idea of homosexual sex and to declare an entire absence of sexual desire (Valentine 2007). Both homophobia and a lack of respect for trans people and their experience as fully desiring human beings, then, permeate and shape the history of trans diagnoses.

In the case of the DSM, “transsexualism” and “gender identity disorder of childhood” were first included in DSM-III (1980), in large part in response to the influential work of the sexologists and psychiatrists John Money (1921–2006), Harry Benjamin (1885–1986), Robert J. Stoller (1924–1991), and Green, who set up gender clinics in the United States, where, between the 1950s and 1980s, they provided therapeutic and surgical treatment for those presenting with gender-nonconforming behavior, gender dysphoria, and the expressed desire for surgery. The high-profile case of Christine Jorgensen (1926–1989) in the 1950s brought media attention to the subject of transsexualism, partly because Jorgensen was a rare “out” trans person with financial power and social influence and partly as a result of her doctors publishing their account of her treatment (Meyerowitz 2002). The silence on the part of the APA on the subject of trans until 1980 has been explained as being the result of an unwillingness to recognize the efficacy of surgical treatment, in part owing to the psychoanalytically informed perception that gender dysphoria was a neurotic or psychotic delusion that should be “cured” using talking therapy (Drescher 2010a). However, even as early as the 1950s, when Benjamin was first
beginning to crystallize the concept of transsexualism, he would recommend that his patients should consult with mental health experts before undertaking surgical transformations.

Moves to replace “gender identity disorder” with “gender dysphoria” for DSM-5 (2013) were much discussed and debated by the APA in the consultation period prior to publication. Considerations included the perceived danger of stigmatizing an already vulnerable group further by considering their very identity as a mental illness. This was weighed against the concern that depathologization might lead to the withdrawal of medical support by insurers for trans people seeking hormonal and surgical interventions (Drescher 2010a). Lance Wahlert and Sabrina Gill (2017), in fact, point out that the “gender dysphoria” diagnosis in essence means that trans people in the United States may be considered ill enough to be diagnosed with a mental disorder but simultaneously be excluded from protections under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Finally, concerns regarding the treatment of trans youth centered on critiques of clinical practice aimed at attempting to persuade gender-nonconforming children to reject their gender identity and accept instead to live as their natal sex, which was seen as a cruel form of “reparative therapy” by some activists (Drescher 2010a).

Broadly, however, despite the potential disadvantages to some trans people of the partial demedicalization noted previously, the change in the trans diagnosis in the DSM parallels closely trends in trans activism. These include the broadening of the “trans umbrella” to include a spectrum of gender fluidity, as well as agender and nonbinary identifications. The main UK-based LGBTQI+ organization, Stonewall UK (2018), insists on this inclusive definition, and the work of activist-academics such as Alex Iantaffi and Meg-John Barker (2017) has popularized the notions of a gender spectrum and a “gender journey.” Such moves have signaled a break from the binary “crossing” metaphor on which the idea of “trans” was originally founded (Denny 2002). This definitional shift in the direction of activism is also echoed legislatively by a move away from a medical and legal gatekeeping process (that still includes coerced sterilization in many places) and toward a process of self-identification in a number of national contexts. These include, as of 2018, Argentina, Colombia, Denmark, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Portugal, and Canada, with a proposed similar change under discussion in the United Kingdom as well.

**When Absence Equals Illness: The Disorders of Sexual Desire**

The means of pathologizing nonnormative sexuality throughout history has largely been a matter of measuring the distance from a norm in terms of *object* (same-sex desire rather than opposite-sex desire), *act* (some preferred perverse alternative to reproductive heterosexual intercourse), or *quantity* of desire (too much or too little). As Peter Cryle and
Alison Moore (2011) have shown, discourses of “frigidity” in the nineteenth century, habitually ascribed to women, reflected sexist assumptions about the “appropriate” amount of desire women were supposed to feel. The nineteenth-century medical view held that women were naturally endowed with a lower libido than men; were it not so, the Austro-German forensic psychiatrist and father of sexology Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902) argues, “the whole world would become a brothel” (1893, 13). Yet, men also expected their wives to experience a sufficiency of desire and passion for their husbands, to be expressed, self-evidently, only within the confines of the marital bed, such that too much “coldness” was also presented as a problem to be solved (Cott 1978; Jeffreys 1985).

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the misogynistic discourse of frigidity took on different forms, transmogrifying into the actively chosen identity of asexuality—or “ace” in activist community terms—and into “female sexual interest/arousal disorder” in the language of DSM-IV. Unlike the discourse of frigidity it replaced, however, a male counterpart also exists in the APA’s classification: “male hypoactive sexual desire disorder.”

Similar to what has been observed in the cases of same-sex desire and trans identity, the incremental DSM depathologization in the case of the disorders of sexual desire follows the emergence of a branch of identity politics and the advocacy of a pressure group, often spearheaded or supported by sympathetic medical allies. The sex researcher Lori A. Brotto and her team at the University of British Columbia have argued for asexuality having the status of an orientation, rather than that of a paraphilia or disorder (Brotto and Yule 2017). And concomitantly, in DSM-5, unlike in DSM-IV, it is indicated that these diagnoses may not be applied if the person presenting reports never having experienced sexual desire at all, such that the identity of “asexual” becomes a mitigating factor in classification. (Yet, given that some asexual-identified people report experiencing a degree of sexual attraction or desire in certain circumstances, the APA exception appears to be a rather blunt tool, suggesting that only the “approved” type of asexual person is “excused” a diagnosis.) The broader point, however, remains: where the discourse of “identity” gains sufficient traction, the diagnostic imperative of mental illness becomes more flexible.

Intersex or “Disorders of Sex Development”: An Exception to the Trend?

The medical establishment defines intersex conditions as congenital and chromosomal deviations from typical sex characteristics. For some intersex activists, however, these conditions are defined as “variations” in bodily morphology and therefore as not pathological (Inter 2015). Organized intersex activism began in the 1990s, when several national groups were established, including the (now defunct) Intersex Society of North America, founded by the high-profile intersex activist Cheryl Chase/Bo Laurent. Much activism focused in the 1990s, and continues to focus today, on the demedicalization of
these conditions and against the enforcement of sex-determining surgery in infancy. Intersex advocacy has been influential in debates on human rights and bodily autonomy; for example, in 2013, the United Nations’ Committee Against Torture looked into the impact of early genital surgery in Switzerland, China, and Hong Kong (Carpenter 2016). More recently, as in discussions of transgender rights, some intersex activists have argued that intersex individuals should have the option to self-affirm as women, as men, as nonbinary, as another gender identity, or as none at all (Carpenter 2016).

The case of intersex, then, reveals a similar tension between pathologization (intersex understood as deviation) and depathologization (intersex understood as benign variation, accompanied by calls for the move to self-identification) to that which has been seen in the cases of sexual orientation, gender identity, and lack of sexual desire. However, the narrative of a movement toward a gradual and partial depathologization of these phenomena on the part of APA is not echoed neatly in the case of intersex. Indeed, some see the APA, in tandem with other American medical organizations, as having, over time, reinforced and deepened the understanding of intersex as an illness. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, the North American medical establishment, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, renamed “intersex conditions” as “disorders of sex development” (DSD). The APA officially adopted this nomenclature in DSM-5 (2013). Activists such as Cheryl Chase vociferously opposed the introduction of the DSD terminology in endocrinology and psychiatry, because the language of disorder is arguably more pathologizing than the term intersex, as it suggests the need for medical (surgical) intervention and (psychiatric) regulation. The gender studies scholar Cynthia Kraus (2015) considered the move made within DSM-5 unhelpful, as it additionally reframed DSD as a specifier of gender dysphoria. This marked a departure from earlier editions of the DSM, where intersex was, in fact, an exclusion criterion for gender identity disorder. Kraus argues that this conflation detracts from the specific needs and experiences of both trans and intersexed individuals, while further pathologizing intersexed patients by giving them a second diagnosis.

It is also significant to note that the American medical establishment’s naming of DSD is the end point of a normalizing, colonializing process whereby Western understandings of “correct” bodies and binary gender are coercively applied to other cultures that have long recognized “third sexes” or a spectrum of intersex variations without attempting to “normalize” them. Scholars such as Paula Gunn Allen (1986) have pointed out that Eurocentric and medicalized norms have long been imposed on non-Western cultural understandings of sex and gender in this way.

**Some Concluding Remarks**

The APA has largely adapted—sometimes slowly, partially, and reluctantly—to trends toward social liberalization, thanks in large part to the significant influence of LGBTQI+
activism in the United States and the broader Western world. However, the use of the *DSM* globally as a tool for diagnosis and social categorization, as well as its potential to measure regressive attitudes toward LGBTQI+ people in parts of the world that still discriminate against them legally and culturally, should not be overlooked. In their analysis of the challenges of using the *DSM* for global understandings of mental health, Dan J. Stein, Crick Lund, and Randolph M. Nesse suggest that “a global mental health classification” would be preferable to the current *DSM* or ICD, as this “might also highlight societal-level risk and protective factors” (2013, 496). Stein, Lund, and Nesse use the example of depression, which has different cultural manifestations and meanings across the globe. However, the example of the sexuality and gender diagnoses are even more pertinent, as sexual orientation and gender identity are located at the intersection of cultural beliefs and exercises of power, psychological and emotional experience, and public health. There are also serious financial implications in the *DSM*’s homeland of the United States regarding the inclusion or exclusion of sexual and gender diagnoses. The Food and Drug Administration’s approval of the drug flibanserin (sold under the brand name Addyi) for the treatment of female sexual interest/arousal disorder in 2015, for example, makes the continuing existence of that diagnosis a matter of financial interest to the pharmaceutical industry. Such examples as these reveal the extent to which the *DSM* continues to be a locus and tool of political, fiscal, and regulatory power, even as its contents are influenced and shaped by the winds of social change.

**SEE ALSO** Asexuality; Ethnopsychiatry; Psychoanalysis in Argentina

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Diasporas, Queer

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Ways of critically thinking about the queer diaspora and how it is unique from other types of diasporas.

The term *diaspora* came into widespread academic use in addressing the dispersal of populations that reside across multiple state territories but that continue to maintain a durable set of relationships and a common sense of home or homeland. Some of the earliest examples refer to the Jewish, Greek, African, Palestinian, and Armenian diasporas and to the relationships of trauma, suffering, and loss associated with population diffusion. Over time, scholars have expanded what counts as diaspora from a singular association with victimhood to also include labor, imperial, trade, and deterritorialized diasporas (*Cohen 1997*). At the same time, the term has entered widespread popular usage, as journalists and others use it synonymously with the notion of an immigrant group, either in one country or multiple countries, as well as to the identities, living spaces, and forms of belonging of such immigrant communities and to ways of thinking about them. In the introduction to their pioneering edited volume *Queer Diasporas* (*2000*), Benigno Sánchez-Eppler and Cindy Patton argue that the study of queer diasporas is vital in how it brings together the insights on sexual otherness gained through LGBTQ studies and on ethnic and racial otherness brought forth in immigration studies. “Attending to the mobility of sexuality across the globe and body, as a materiality and a discourse … brings new insights into the individual and collective paths of queer escape and reconstitution” (3). This is the promising terrain that queer diasporic studies occupy.

While the term *diaspora* has come more and more into popular and academic usage, Sima Shakhsari warns against the “chic of diaspora” (*2012, 25*), the extent to which diaspora has been a trendy academic buzzword. The problem with this is that such a superficial application of the term assumes ease of movement and oversimplifies the processes of hybrid identity formation for transnational, cosmopolitan subjects. In Shakhsari’s analysis of the ways in which Iranian queers are represented in cyberspace, she concludes that while often differentiated, *diaspora* acts not all that differently from *exile*, in that it similarly “conjures up an idealized image of homeland as fixed and imagines a homogenous heteronormative Iranian community” (32). Thus, any critical perspective on diaspora, thus, needs to go beyond equating it with transnationalism or cosmopolitanism and to pay attention to the fact that diasporas are always complex, conflicted, and differentiating.
Two more recent dynamic conceptualizations of diaspora studies argue against objectifying diaspora as a coherent subject of study and assert its critical dynamism. Rogers Brubaker argues that any usage of the concept of “diaspora” needs to deal with the power relations through which immigrants construct, adhere to, and challenge community structures in a contextualized way that does not assume essential cohesion around immigrant ethnic identity as a category. Instead, “it may be more fruitful, and certainly more precise, to speak of diasporic stances, projects, claims, idioms, practices, and so on,” which creates opportunities for empirically based understanding (Brubaker 2005, 13). Stéphane Dufoix (2008) similarly perceives diasporas as idioms, stances, practices, and arguments rather than a congealed identity. In his categorization of diasporic experiences, Dufoix identifies multiple modes through which diasporas are constructed in relationship with the regime/country of existence, a referent-origin community, and the spatial relationships between individuals, groups, and communities, including but not limited to national state identities and communities.

These arguments have laid the groundwork for conceptualizations of queer diasporas by revealing diasporas to be contingent, contextual, multiple, overlapping, and conflicting in different ways, while also serving to urge scholars to approach them critically, rather than through objectified, neutral categories such as nation, community, and family. For queer Muslim migrants in North America, for example, the spaces that they occupy by way of their sexual, religious, and ethnic/racial identities means belonging to communities that are often in opposition to one another and leads to the need to create new identities and communities that transcend the limitations of the existing ones (Rouhani 2007). In examining queer diasporic contexts, one must always question the categories one holds as objective and neutral.

**Queer Diaspora Studies: Ideas and Practices**

Queer diasporic studies bring together the new insights into diaspora studies with queer theory. Queer theory has brought together an extensive critique of the normativities of life and subject formation, an emphasis on the social and political significance of transgression and liberation, and a refusal to give definitions, allowing queer theory to continually refresh and, in a way, continually queer itself. The development of queer diaspora studies since the late 1990s has helped bring new dynamism to both queer theory and diaspora studies. As Gayatri Gopinath argues, “The concept of a queer diaspora enables a simultaneous critique of heterosexuality and the nation form while exploding the binary oppositions between nation and diaspora, heterosexuality and homosexuality, original and copy” (Gopinath 2005, 11). Just as the queer is positioned as an imitation of the heterosexual, diaspora is seen as inferior to the nation, and bringing the two together unsettles and dislocates assumptions about both.

While centering diaspora studies on queerness helps to complicate understandings of
kinship, nation, and nostalgia, a focus on diaspora helps to bring forth much-needed questions of race, colonization, and globalization to the center of queer studies. This combined perspective thus productively serves as an interpretive framework to trouble assumptions and to make connections. These ideas are effectively brought forth in ethnographic studies of queer diasporas. Examining the ritual Catholic religious space of performance by Filipino gay men in New York, for example, Martin F. Manalansan IV (2000) shows how they occupy a syncretic space that is neither here nor there, local and global and transmigratory in scope, with reflections on mainstream US urban gay culture, Filipino Catholic culture, and Spanish colonialism. While fraught with challenges and complications, their cross-dressing ritual performances also allow them to creatively write their own lives and worlds.

This framing makes it essential to understand and critically interpret the complexities of the relationships between queer diasporic subjects and the mainstream queer host societies in which they live, in relational racial and political terms. As such, queer diasporic studies pay attention to how queer diasporic communities are constructed in relation to mainstream queer communities, most powerfully developed in Jasbir K. Puar’s 2007 work on homonationalism. Puar argues that in the European and North American contexts, homonationalism represents a national, patriotic, mostly white version of homosexuality that asserts its moral superiority by differentiating itself, particularly from Muslim racial and sexual others. As such, queer diasporic identities and communities are constructed in relation and opposition to the existence of such a powerful imposing queer political force.

The significance of this idea of homonationalism for queer migration studies is particularly evident in the experiences of LGBTQ asylum seekers and refugees in Europe and North America. In his analysis of the experiences of sexual orientation and gender identity refugee asylum seekers, volunteers, and lawyers, David A. B. Murray (2016) shows how homonationalism matters in the lives of queer refugees by legally regulating “authentic” and “inauthentic” LGBTQ refugees, based on dominant notions of queer “refugeeness.” While the incorporation of sexuality and gender has disrupted state-sanctioned ideas about who counts as a refugee, it has also been folded into the nation-state’s modes of gatekeeping and identity keeping, with far-reaching consequences on the lives of queer transnational migrants.

David L. Eng constructively argues for the potential in beginning from a queer diasporic approach that “emerges as a concept providing new methods of contesting traditional family and kinship structures—of reorganizing national and transnational communities based not on origin, filiation, and genetics but on destination, affiliation, and the assumption of a common set of social practices or political commitments” (2003, 4). In this sense, a queer diasporic approach can simultaneously challenge the normative, assumed kin and ethnic relations of community and provide the source and inspiration from which to create new senses of affiliation, kinship, and community based on a meaningful,
understood, and agreed-on set of commonalities. Expanding on these ideas in his 2010 book *The Feeling of Kinship*, Eng analyzes films, documentaries, and literature by Asian and Asian American artists in order to reveal how such things as queer Asian migrant labor, transnational adoption from Asia, and the legacies of Japanese internment form the base of narratives of racial forgetting and queer freedom in the present.

Queer diaspora scholars emphasize the importance of developing a methodology that consists of critical reading and interpretation practices. A queer perspective works "as a methodology, an oppositional mode of reading, interpretive strategy, or critical lens through which to question dominant ideologies of gender, sex, and nation" (Parker 2011, 640). Such a methodology works to read and expose taken-for-granted assumptions and normativities wherever they appear, even if they arise from what appears to be a queer source in the first place. For queer migrants, such reading practices are necessary simultaneously in relation to the dominant voices in the host country, the leadership of the immigrant community, and the mainstream gay/queer culture.

While most of the queer diaspora literature concerns queer subjects, a queer methodology can be applied to destabilize other practices of normativity (Wesling 2011; Mack 2017). Mehammed Amadeus Mack (2017), for example, shows how French Arabs and Muslims are queered as inferior, abnormal, and dangerous sexualized subjects within the dominant culture of French whiteness. At the same time they present new and dynamic possibilities for what French culture can be, by creating new opportunities for queer youth and adult masculinities and community as different from mainstream French queerness. As such, they are both queered as deviant from above and are creatively queering Frenchness from below. Being queered and doing the work of queering, in essence, are not the exclusive domain of queer-identified subjects, and a queer diasporic interpretative framework helps to simultaneously reveal the spaces of domination and the opportunities for transgression, liberation, and creativity from below.

**The Geographies of the Queer Diaspora: Home, Desire, Belonging and Unbelonging**

Of particular concern to many queer diaspora scholars is the experience of home and its related associations with homeland, community, nostalgia, family, community, and belonging. While mainstream diasporic conceptions of home and homecoming often present a linear though complex narrative, from the loss of home, through exile, to the recapture of home in the migrant community, queer diaspora scholars approach the home through a perspective that engages with the multiple negotiations with the past, present, and future that queer migrants face (Fortier 2001; Mai and King 2009). From a queer perspective, the home becomes more visible as an unsettled, sometimes violent site beyond the assumptions of cohesion in ethnic-immigrant communities (Wesling 2011). Unlike the
progress narrative of mainstream diasporic narratives, the home is neither a resolution nor a refuge from dominant society but a space that is itself fraught with tension and complexity.

Queer diasporic approaches complicate the idea of a sense of home in a way that shows how it is simultaneously desirable and undesirable, possible and impossible. As Dina S. Georgis compellingly argues, diaspora is less about the space of the home and more about the space of the loss of home. "When repudiated desire, which is to say queer affect, enters the space of the nation, we return to the space of diaspora: to our ambivalence, to our fraught longing, to our aggression and negation of home, and to the Door of No Return" (2006, 13). This complex relationship between diasporic desire and the tensions around longing significantly complicates the notion of diasporic home as any kind of refuge within a larger society. It also points to the complex ways in which desire, yearning, and, in general, affect figure into diasporic experiences in a way that is often otherwise underrepresented in diaspora studies.

While conventional diasporic studies pay much attention to the “homing” instincts and desires through which people construct new, durable communities, queer diasporic scholars unsettle and disturb the often taken-for-granted ideas of attachment as given, inevitable, or desirable. Johanna X. K. Garvey uses the concept of “queer (un)belonging” to identify habitable spaces that “undo belonging while not leading to the destructive behavior of not-belonging” (2011, 757). This notion of queer unbelonging starts with the premise that there is no such thing as a “queer homeland.” While any sense of a diasporic homeland is imbued with mythic, nostalgic attributes, in the context of the formation of a queer diaspora such a point of origin is simply impossible. While a queer diasporic stance disavows belonging in a stable, settled sense, it is impossible also to live in a permanent state of not-belonging. “Queer unbelonging” represents a space that seems impossible but can be made habitable and real. In her analysis, Garvey identifies some of the major elements of queer unbelonging as an embrace of the reality of daily migrant life that does not conform to diasporic nostalgia, the shaping of a different relationship to time and space that does not conform to a linear narrative, and new methods of reading and identifying people that incorporate difference into community in a way that introduces instability, uncertainty, and dynamism into a previously static conception.

What a queer diaspora approach does above all else is to show the constructive potential of residing within the uncomfortable spaces that disorient normative domestic arrangements. This uncomfortable though essential and life-giving relationship with belonging is something that queer diasporic scholars examine particularly in the lives of queer-identified migrants, who have an unsettled relationship with both their immigrant and mainstream gay host communities but also with diasporic subjects who are not sexual or gender minorities. The strength of this framework lies in its simultaneous emphasis on how diasporas are subjugated and how they creatively carve out spaces of liberation. Mack
(2017) provides a compelling account of such a form of queer unbelonging through his discussion of Arab and Muslim ethnic virility cultures in France.

In his 2015 analysis of US Iranian women’s memoirs, Farhang Rouhani examines how a queer diaspora lens supports a vital set of reading practices to counter the conventional Orientalism through which people read into experiences of home, family, gender, and nation. This approach calls into question the normative, linear progress narratives through which people interpret these memoirs, seeks to move beyond debates over what counts as “authentic” in the Iranian diasporic experience, and challenges how ideas of Iranianness and Iranian Americanness are assumed to be coherent, stable, and essential categories. At the same time, Rouhani argues that these memoirs can be queerly read for ways of relating and living differently, constructing an unstable sense of home that lives critically with the past, present, and future in a reimagined, liberatory way. As Gopinath argues, such an approach allows research to critically interpret but also support “the ways in which those who occupy impossible spaces transform them into vibrant, livable spaces of possibility” (2005, 194).

SEE ALSO Homonationalism in Africa; Human Rights; Human Rights and Queer Arab Refugees; Marriage Migration in Asia; Migrant Queer Communities, US; Migration to Europe; Pacific Island and Pacific Island Diaspora Identities; Puerto Ricans in the Diaspora; Refugees and Asylum in Africa

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Digital Cultures in Latin America

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The Latin American LGBTQ community's use of the internet and digital tools to create community, promote dialogue, and advocate for LGBTQ rights.

LGBTQ activists in Latin America organized before the advent of the internet, but the internet and social media in particular have expanded opportunities and brought new complexities to their work for recognition and rights. This entry offers a consideration of the role of online media in such activism through two lenses. The first is a focus on LGBTQ “counterpublics,” or “the places, spaces, or means through which those pushed to societies’ margins develop their identities, construct communities, and formulate strategies for transforming wider publics” (Friedman 2017, 3). This concept is frequently used to understand how internet-based media provides a place for both personal expression and public citizenship in ways that enable resistance to the hetero- and cisnormativity enacted through mainstream media and society (Ciszek 2017; Harp, Bachmann, and Guo 2012; Pullen 2010; Soriano 2014; Warner 2002). In counterpublics, individuals and communities can engage with “public issues that are barred, tabooed, restricted, or subject to regulation offline” (Corrêa et al. 2011, 23) as they seek to develop their own identities and transform society. Given their history of marginalization, such counterpublics have long developed within an alternative media field.

The other lens is one that assumes the entwined nature of social mobilization and media technology, rather than seeing them as static, separable entities. Although the internet is popularly understood as a tool or resource for those seeking social change, both its development and deployment demonstrate a sociomaterial reality. The internet, like all technology, is both “socially constituted and constituting” (Dahlberg 2004), reflecting and refracting social relations of power, values, and the lived experiences of material reality. LGBTQ counterpublics incorporate internet applications in ways that are informed by specific histories and present-day contexts of access and activism.

Role of Online Media in LGBTQ Counterpublics

LGBTQ counterpublics in Latin America were well positioned to take advantage of the early internet. In the decades before the 1990s, they took part in regional resistance to authoritarian repression and, later, attempts to expand democratic openings to include a
wide range of rights. Even as right-wing regimes targeted them, many Left parties and movements, as well as the revolutionary states of Cuba (1959–) and Nicaragua (1979–1990), rejected, if not repressed, gays and lesbians in their promotion of heteronormative social ideals. The advent of democracy brought more political space for civic organizing but no guarantee of acceptance; police and social violence were endemic, especially against those who transgressed gender norms in their self-presentation and actions. However, the HIV/AIDS crisis beginning in the 1980s led to more attention—and resources—for LGBTQ communities, as they strengthened internally and networked across national and international borders. Reacting to being sidelined in gay rights groups and straight-dominated feminist organizations, lesbian feminists founded autonomous groups such as Centro de Investigación y Capacitación de la Mujer (Center for Research and Training for Women) in Mexico and Mujeres Creando (Women Creating) in Bolivia, while also connecting transnationally at the Encuentros Feministas Latinoamericanos y del Caribe (Latin American and Caribbean Feminist Encounters). Trans activism through organizations such as the Asociación de Travestis, Transexuales y Transgéneros de Argentina (Association of Travestis, Transsexuals, and Transgenders of Argentina) also grew in strength and numbers to draw attention to the specific problems trans people faced in social, medical, and legal arenas. LGBTQ groups built coalitions with feminist movements in promoting “sexual citizenship” and made common cause with other counterpublics in an attempt to influence political representatives and policy makers. Thus, in response to dismissal and worse in wider publics, activists built their own organizations, developed alliances, and extended networks across national and regional borders.

**WALTER MERCADO: QUEER DIGITAL ICON**

Walter Mercado (1932–), known since 2010 as Shanti Ananda (which means “peace everlasting” in Sanskrit), is a Puerto Rican astrologer, media personality, and best-selling author. For over thirty years, Mercado has hosted radio, television, and internet-based programs that include horoscopes and astrological predictions that are widely consumed across the hispanophone world, including in the United States among Latinx-identified populations (*Latinx* being a gender-neutral form of the Spanish *Latino/Latina*). He is the author of several books about mysticism and spirituality and has appeared in various other media, including advertisements for retail brands, Spanish-language telenovelas, and films aimed at a Latinx audience. His programming has also spawned a variety of products available for purchase in stores and online, including prayer beads, candles, and other spiritual iconography. Broadly speaking, his work promotes the idea that some gifted people, through intensive study and focus, can access transcendental Orientalist wisdom and achieve a fuller understanding of astrological influences on events of both personal and global significance.
For most of Mercado’s career, his programming has been mainly accessible on television, on radio, or in print. Since the advent of social media, however, his primary means of connecting with his audience has been through Twitter (@waltermercadotv) and similar sites. The digital age has given Mercado the opportunity to expand his audience and his brand, both intentionally and unintentionally. For example, while Mercado has not publicly discussed his sexuality, his flamboyant public persona is widely associated with queerness and a camp aesthetic. In the internet age, he is known as much for his appearance and his wardrobe as for his programming, and he has achieved a status as a queer icon despite his coquettish and evasive responses to questions about his identity status. In public appearances, Mercado regularly wears lavish capes and robes, styles his hair in a bright blond bouffant, appears to have had cosmetic surgery, and wears visible makeup, all of which has invited much speculation about his sexuality. However, Mercado has been willfully ambiguous when asked about this subject by interviewers. For example, in a 2008 online interview with the American Spanish-language television network Univision, Mercado replied to questions about his sexuality by stating that he practices tantra, continuing: “You unite your masculine and feminine forces and achieve a cosmic orgasm…. Some Hindu masters didn’t have physical sex, but cosmic sex” (Hedrick 2013; translation by Austin C. Eklund). References to physical sex that transcends boundaries of gender and corporeal desire come up regularly in Mercado’s work. Scholars note that, ironically, his ambivalence about his own sexuality has done some of the cultural work of queering him as a public figure despite his transparent avoidance of the subject. For example, the cultural historian Diana Taylor remarks that

Walter specializes in the art of reversal, exaggeration, conflation, contradiction, camp, ho cursi, rasquache, and relajo. He endows the drag queen with papal authority…. Instead of acting as the intermediary for God’s love, he offers us his own…. He is a ham, a diva, a comadre, a connoisseur, a businessman, and an hombre culto.

(2003, 125)

Mercado is by no means the only example of New Age mysticism in Latin American culture. For example, El Indio Amazónico is another celebrity Latinx healer and spiritual guide who, in lieu of providing his “services” through the media, offers in-person diagnosis and treatment (e.g., palm and tarot card readings) in New York City, Los Angeles, and his native Colombia. However, Mercado is inarguably the most prominent representative of Latin American queer mysticism. Paradoxically, many queer-identified and gender-nonconforming Latin Americans have struggled to find
acceptance in the region, which remains overwhelmingly Christian. As a result, many queer and gender-nonconforming Latinx people identify as unaffiliated with mainstream religious groups, instead preferring to engage with nondenominational spiritual practices, many of which have Eastern origins. Many consider Mercado the primary ambassador of Orientalist mysticism in the Spanish-speaking world, with scholars noting that such mysticism manages to coexist peacefully even with traditional Catholicism.

Scholars also suggest that Mercado’s access to spiritual capital permits him to hide his queerness in plain sight, as he regularly indicates that his ambiguous sexual and gender presentation is attributable to the form of mysticism he practices and promotes. To some, Mercado’s queer and camp aesthetic is consistent with notions of a Latinx identity, which has historically been characterized by “excessive affect and self-display” and other strategies of “self-fashioning,” including taste, music, food, and other cultural markers. This presentation, a form of queer-specific camp, has kept generations of audiences loyal to Mercado and to the particular Mercado brand of strange, contradictory, and wildly compelling televised spirituality for which he is responsible.

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*Austin C. Eklund*
Extensive networking across the region made these counterpublics ideal spaces for the diffusion of networked technology. Prior to the massification of commercialized access in the early twenty-first century, they benefited from a deliberate expansion of the earliest networks of networked computers outside of the market- and state-based priorities of commercial and governmental providers. The Association for Progressive Communications (APC) connected civically minded internet service providers into a global network through which activists and advocates could communicate nationally and globally (Willetts 2011). Those based in Latin America and Africa understood both the potential and the great need for alternative networks of information and communications, and they lobbied contacts in the Global North to ensure access to the necessary hardware and software. Thus, as they emerged from the authoritarian period of the 1980s, many in Latin America became “early adopters” of the internet through APC members (and some founders) across the region: Alternex in Brazil, Chasque in Uruguay, Nicarao in Nicaragua, Ecuane in Ecuador, La Neta in Mexico, and Wamani in Argentina. APC helped Latin American activists participate in national and global counterpublics a decade before commercial internet spread across the region.

The commercialization of internet access and the rise of social media have transformed connectivity and modalities, and progressive counterpublics have taken advantage of them. In Latin America, activism is now as highly correlated with social media use as it is with political ideology and participation in face-to-face community organizations (Valenzuela, Arriagada, and Scherman 2012; Valenzuela et al. 2016); a reported 65 percent of activists use social media to engage with one another and build networks through profile creation and contacts (Harp, Bachmann, and Guo 2012). A younger generation of activists relies on self-curated information on their Facebook feeds rather than mainstream media (Scherman, Arriagada, and Valenzuela 2015). For them, there is no bright-line distinction between online and offline arenas; instead, physical mobilization is enhanced by online participation. As information circulates across networks, it not only helps to shape protest narratives but also encourages turnout as contacts repost, “like,” comment, and promise to attend meetings and rallies (Salzman 2016). However, traditional sources of inequality, such as class, rurality, race, and gender, continue to affect access (Scherman, Arriagada, and Valenzuela 2015; Valenzuela et al. 2016; Friedman 2017). To take the reality of the region into account, counterpublic communities often deploy “chains of access” strategies, using a combination of online and offline media to connect those with and without easy access (Friedman 2017).

**Private Space, Public Platform**
LGBTQ counterpublic internet practices reflect the larger politics of sexuality and gender in the region: a blurring and reconfiguration of what is considered appropriate for private and public life. Such an approach is prompted by their sociopolitical context. There has been notable progress: the majority of countries have outlawed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and increasingly gender expression or identity; openly LGBTQ people serve in public office; and LGBTQ life has become visible at enormous pride parades, in lively gay neighborhoods, and on the ever-popular telenovelas (soap operas). But many obstacles remain, from constitutional prohibitions on same-sex marriage to frequent violence against transgender people to the ways in which poverty and racial discrimination interact to restrict access to rights protections. Because the region is characterized by hetero- and cisnormative institutions, asserting a nonnormative sexual or gender identity implicitly (if not explicitly) politicizes the putatively private issues of self-definition, love, relationship, family, and the like. LGBTQ individuals and communities continue to experience rejection and, too often, harm, for their challenge to social norms. But as with others who experience social opprobrium, “in the case of developing countries and other semi-authoritarian national contexts … online networks, however constrained by problems of access, can in fact offer real spaces and possibilities for oppressed groups to build new democratic narratives” (Matos 2017, 420). Thus, LGBTQ people have incorporated the internet for the twinned counterpublic goals of finding safe, private spaces for developing identity and finding community and of occupying a public platform from which to challenge marginalization and exclusion. And here they have found a synchronicity of internet affordance (its “inherent” properties) and community norms and needs for networking and even survival.

For those beginning to explore their sexual and gender identities, particularly in contexts where such exploration is difficult or dangerous, the internet can provide a “virtual lifeline” (Stein 2003, 182) of information and interaction instead of isolation. Those who can access it—increasingly through mobile devices but also on home, workplace, and school computers as well as in cybercafés and community centers—can assume their identity before coming out in “real time.” Information on and discussion about identity, as well as rights, health, intimate relationships, sexual pleasure, and more, can be accessed through text (and texts), photos, and videos. The opportunity to engage in self-representation, especially through social media, has both individual benefits and can show others that they are not alone. Although the deeply embedded inequalities of Latin American societies—such as class, race/ethnicity, and geographical location—have mediated LGBTQ access to digital modalities from the beginning, the networked existence of LGBTQ communities has also helped spread digital connections. Before the widespread use of cell phones, for example, organizations dedicated to LGBTQ empowerment and rights often included computer/internet access as part of their services.

Even before the advent of social media, email and websites enabled LGBTQ individuals to discern their identities in relatively safe spaces. The founders of the lesbian magazine
LeSVOZ in Mexico City and the regional lesbian discussion list Safo Piensa reported how often women would reach out to them to ask for resources or express gratitude for the information and connections they provided. Personal contacts were some of the most popular areas of early websites, and a crucial element of community building, giving readers a sense that others like them existed. Discussion lists and other applications directed at and heavily used for exchange, such as the Yahoo groups run by the decades-old Brazilian organization Grupo Gay da Bahia (Gay Group of Bahia), prefigured the social media explosion. Concerns for privacy and safety meant that founders often sought digital protection for the online community building they were undertaking. But these were not spaces divorced from the reality of dissention and debate; difficult topics, such as whether only women-born women could form part of lesbian feminist organizations and communities, were aired, and the resulting discussions could be explosive (Friedman 2017).

Virtual Networks for Activism

Virtual networks enabled LGBTQ people to “transgress the frontier of intimacy,” exchanging information about issues that the wider society would prefer remain hidden in private, thus helping to break with the culture of silence (Hooker Solano 2017, 127; translation by author). As social media advanced across the region, it became an instant arena for LGBTQ “transgressions”; for example, the Orkut social networking platform, which was highly popular in Brazil from its advent in 2004 until overtaken by the Facebook phenomenon, provided space for “dissident sexual selves” (Corrêa et al. 2011, 63). Such transgressions could also lead to an assertion of identity in public, often translated into a
demand for visibility: for example, in Latin America *visibilidad lésbica*, or lesbian visibility, is a frequently heard demand for the recognition of lesbian existence. While resource restrictions make offline space for lesbian, trans, and queer women difficult to maintain, digitally enhanced counterpublics enable activism and other forms of community expression (*Friedman 2017; Ciszek 2017*).

Although hardly unique to this community, the process of “sharing ... common experience serves as an affirmation of belonging” and helps promote mobilization despite physical separation; online exchange “works as the foundation for a social movement among members ‘disembedded’ physically, but ‘embedded’ socially and politically” (*Soriano 2014, 33*). While many movements may benefit from such action at a distance, it takes on particular relevance for those who cannot easily access local sources of support and solidarity, such as children alienated from their families because of their sexual or gender identities. Nevertheless, digital community is no panacea for real-world rejection. It can result in a kind of segregation, enabling users to rely more on virtual support than seek to build it face-to-face in local communities. As inspirational as border-crossing ideas and an imagined international community may be, lack of attention to the specific contexts and lived experiences of local actors can be detrimental to local and national solidarities and activities. Moreover, online means and spaces are hardly free from the dangers and discrimination of offline life. As LGBTQ individuals raise their profiles and offer their views online, aggressive commenters or hackers often pursue them there (*Soriano 2014; Friedman 2017*).

Despite such challenges, a wide range of organizations have brought activist projects online, seeking to nurture and inform local, national, and regional audiences. In doing so, they not only focus on policy change and other political demands, as do other counterpublics; they also continue to address a wide range of topics in LGBTQ culture that, like their struggles for recognition and justice, are often sidelined in society and go unreported in mass media. Portals such as Um *Outro Olhar* (An *Other Look*) from Brazil, *Rompiendo el Silencio* (Breaking the Silence) from Chile, and *SentidoG* (Gay Sense) from Argentina, along with the *OrgulloLGBT* (LGBTPride) blog from Colombia, have provided a range of resources, from international news, to entertainment and leisure, to psychological consultations, chat rooms, and personals. Illustrating the continuing importance of transnational support, the Colombian American Andrés Duque, a prolific blogger and activist, has reached out through Twitter (@noticiasLGBT) to offer updates on Latin American and international LGBT news, sending out well over 100,000 tweets to more than 50,000 followers since 2009.

While some efforts have wholeheartedly embraced the “pink dollar” commercial opportunities for selling lifestyle, merchandise, and tourism, others focus more on individual growth, community development, and activist campaigns. More targeted efforts, such as the now-defunct electronic journal *La Revista Labia* (The Labia Magazine) and the
database of scholarly articles of the Peruvian organization Grupo de Activistas Lesbianas Feministas (Lesbian Feminist Activists Group), or the Mexican lesbian feminist magazine and website LeSVOZ, bring their dedication to specific communities online. Resources continue to be a problem, however, with the frequent disappearance of web-based projects showing that the challenges of sustainability go beyond internet access. LeSVOZ, for its part, adapted to changes in the internet by relying on a cadre of volunteers but found it time-consuming to keep up with the dynamic mediascape. Online, it migrated from a basic website to blog and Facebook, defying the censorship, ignorance, and high cost of mass media outlets by circulating information, connection, and analysis online. But it also kept a print magazine in circulation, enabling readers for whom a cybercafé is too public a venue for personal perusal to read the latest at a time and place of their choosing (Friedman 2017).

One notable example of the public-facing organizing enhanced by internet incorporation are the campaigns for LGBTQ recognition from Argentina. The successful campaigns for same-sex marriage (2010) and genderidentity recognition (2012) benefited from the efficacious deployment of online resources. Esteban Paulón, a prominent leader and prodigious tweeter, explained in a 2012 interview that activists took advantage of the more static and social media of the time—web portals, Facebook, and blogs—and thus “won the technology battle” with the conservative opposition (Paulón 2012). Inspired by the example of the Spanish same-sex marriage law passed in 2005, a younger generation of activists eagerly contributed their skill sets. The graphic designer and journalist Martin Peretti Scioli, based in Rosario, Argentina, set up an information portal known as Actitud Gay (Gay attitude). He and collaborators not only carefully followed developments in Argentina but brought together research about LGBTQ issues across Latin America and other world regions for encouragement and perspective. It became a resource for the region, with traffic from throughout Latin America, as well as Spain. During the heat of the legislative debate, as the portal streamed live congressional debate, it received thousands of views a day.

**Mixed Media**

Online efforts have gone forward in combination with other media. This is a hallmark of internet incorporation in Latin American counterpublics, given the reality of the many inequalities that transect these diverse communities. Even as the reach of the internet expanded through the second decade of the twenty-first century, Vox (Voice), an LGBTQ organization based in Rosario, Argentina, sponsored a radio broadcast over the national public network called Pasa en las mejores familias (It happens in the best families) focusing on a wide range of issues and providing a space for both discussion and denunciation of discrimination and violence. The show producers and hosts were aware that in order to reach older adults, or those in marginal neighborhoods or in more remote or rural areas,
they needed to share the information they got from the internet in a more accessible format. The radio show could be a safe space for engaging with LGBTQ issues where the listeners could remain entirely anonymous—and where young people and their parents could learn together. To represent the show’s wide audience, its producers broadcast questions and comments that came to them from their telephone answering machine and through Facebook and by text message.

Vox is not the only organization that uses a combination of newer and older media to reach its community. The Nicaraguan radio show *Sin máscaras* (Without masks) also rebroadcast news from the internet and provided a forum in which people could ask questions anonymously. In this way the show was also able to reach those living in remote areas where radio is the only accessible media, to seek the information they wanted (Howe 2013). This kind of “dialogic” media-based activism formed a basis for later social media use (Howe 2013). Local activists were well placed to become mediators of information circulating globally ever faster and through ever more applications.

**Blogging for Self- and Social Recognition**

In Latin America, according to Carolina Matos, “blogs have particularly emerged as networks for debate and dialogue, alternative information, democratic self-expression and political criticism” (2017, 420). They are of considerable importance in countries such as Nicaragua, where conservative values and everyday violence can make LGBTQ life difficult. Nicaraguan gay and lesbian bloggers in their twenties have transformed this application to suit their counterpublic needs for “escapes, resistances, and transgressions” (Hooker Solano 2017). Some deploy anonymity or fictitious personas as a form of catharsis when coming out is not an option in “real time.” For the activist Franklin Leonel Hooker Solano, blogging has been a felicitous “escape from offline reality,” enabling empowerment: it “has been my biggest act of autonomy, has strengthened my capacity of agency, my right to be however makes me most happy, my capacity to decide when to write, about which issues, in which formats and how long” (2017, 113; translation by author). Together, blog writers and readers can experience companionship and build community based on shared experiences (Hooker Solano 2017). Lesbian and gay bloggers have also intervened in broader society by making public that which is rendered private, insisting that “there are infinite ways of being-inhabiting our own bodies” (Hooker Solano 2017, 17; translation by author). In doing so they break with dominant narratives, making visible what gay men and lesbians have brought to politics, society, culture, and history.

In Argentina, a similar goal has been the driving force behind the lesbian feminist blog *Potencia Tortillera* (Dyke Power): to insist on making visible both contemporary activism and lesbians’ own history, too often passed over in other venues and unknown to broader publics. The founders reimagined the blog format as a digital archive, including print, photography, video, and audio clips. Its primary intended audience is national, to show the
lesbian counterpublics of Argentina a past they can learn from and build on. The digital archive includes a wide range of generational and political positions and captures the stories of those organizing both inside and outside the powerful capital city of Buenos Aires. As so often happens with such projects, it has been based on volunteer labor, in this case so that there would be no external pressures for a particular politics.

Blogs have also been the application of choice for trans activists in Brazil seeking to denounce the all-too-frequent violence against their communities, including the terrible occurrences of transfeminicide. As with the Nicaraguan bloggers, these bloggers comprise a new generation that engages in both “self-recognition and the struggle for social recognition” through a new form of “political praxis” (de Lima Carvalho and Carrara 2015, 394; translation by author). The ability to post, repost, comment, and recirculate through other media both enables public deliberation and stimulates mobilization. As in Nicaragua, the focus on internet-enabled, particularly blog-focused activism, demonstrates a generational divide in activist approach. In the Brazilian trans community, this divide maps over a larger debate over the linked strategies and goals of activism. On one side, the older generation is concerned that the internet has been “overvalued ... as a space for activism” and argue that offline action is more effective (de Lima Carvalho and Carrara 2015, 396; translation by author). To them, effectiveness is measured in terms of legal change. On the other side, the younger generation insists that online discussions can enable exchange with other counterpublic communities and wider publics. These exchanges, focused on shifting the way people think, are this generation’s central concern.

LGBTQ Latin Americans have integrated the internet into their counterpublics to enhance both their private and public lives, while insisting on defining the borders between them in ways that benefit their community instead of conforming to what wider publics expect or approve. Those who have experienced isolation because of their sexual or gender identity can learn more about themselves and build community. Through a combination of old and new media, activist resources and alternative information are circulated and recirculated in ways that are critical for those sidelined or stereotyped by mass media. Ever eager to communicate their own reality, LGBTQ individuals and activists alike have embraced the shifting landscape of modalities, from mail, websites, and early social networking sites such as Orkut, to later ones including Facebook, Twitter, and blogs, to present their perspectives to each other and the public, as they seek to shift the terms of the debate over the politics and policies of sexualities and genders. As the Argentine lesbian feminist activist and Potencia Tortillera cofounder Fabiana Tron writes of the space of the internet, “The idea is to try to construct another imaginary, in which gay, lesbian, travesti people would not be seen as monsters, but more as other ways of being people” (quoted in Friedman 2017, 182).

SEE ALSO Archives in Latin America; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Lesbian Feminist Encuentros of Latin America and the Caribbean; Travesti and Trans Activism in
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Dissidence in Singapore

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The ways in which queer activists navigate the authoritarian laws of the city-state of Singapore, particularly through performance art.

Dissident sexual minorities in Singapore struggle against a unique form of governmentality that is both authoritarian and paternalistic. Their struggle is compounded by the small size of the country and the vast reach of state power, which leaves little recourse to the shelter of anonymity or protest politics familiar in Western liberal democracies. This entry examines the unique dissidence mounted by sexual minorities in Singapore and how their strategies of survival and resistance fill in the nooks and crevices that form between the omnipotent tentacles of authoritarian state power. Sexual minorities in Singapore exploit loopholes within the government’s own laws to negotiate the terms of their visibility, expression, and identity. The entry begins by examining the way in which these loopholes created the conditions that led to the formation of Singapore’s Chinatown as a gay district. The entry then outlines the theoretical debates around these loopholes—known in Singapore studies as illiberal pragmatics—and finally explores the way in which the government’s illiberal pragmatism becomes the foundation for dissident strategies of resistance emerging from the spatial possibilities of the gay district of Chinatown.

Chinatown: Singapore’s Unofficial Gay District

Located within the heart of Singapore at right angles from the financial district around the spruced-up Marina Bay is Chinatown, one of three pockets of state-designated cultural heritage. Originally designed to serve the practices of ethnic segregation under colonial rule, Chinatown grew rapidly to house nearly one-third of the colony’s municipal population within its limited expanse of two square kilometers (C. K. K. Tan 2015). Singapore’s strategic location as a colonial port, its rapidly growing population, and its position as a hub of the sex trade (Warren 2003), among other factors, affected the character of Chinatown. Anthropologist Chris K. K. Tan notes that it “offered gaudy temples, brothels, gambling houses, and opium dens,” leaving it “queered ... from the very start” (2015, 2208). This character persisted well into independent Singapore, until the Urban Redevelopment Authority embarked on a project to transform the district between the 1970s and the 1990s. It was this transformation that allowed for the formation of what has unofficially become the gay neighborhood in the city-state of Singapore. This neighborhood
exists in contradiction to the Victorian laws and morality of the postcolonial city-state, which still criminalizes homosexuality.

**HONG LIM PARK: A CENTER OF LGBT DISSIDENCE**

Located in Chinatown, Hong Lim Park is Singapore’s first privately owned public garden, with a long history, encompassing even the period of Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945. Responding to the need for liberalization, the government designated the park as Speaker’s Corner in 2000, relaxing rules regarding public assembly and address, thereby creating an official venue for dissent. Yet the park has had a longer history of dissidence. Hong Lim Park was an important cruising ground for gay men who did not fit the cultural demarcations of the Bugis Street and the Orchard Road scenes. The noted Singapore LGBT activist Roy Tan, in a photo essay documenting Singapore’s gay past, says that Hong Lim Park was a cruising ground during “the night-time for more than half a century” (2012, 120). Elderly Chineseeducated gay men and married men were its most frequent users until the 1990s, when the park was gentrified.

Extending its role as a site of LGBT dissent, Singapore’s annual Pink Dot event has been held in Hong Lim Park since 2009. Pink Dot was born from the earlier Pink Picnic at the Singapore Botanic Gardens and the desire for Singapore’s own pride parade. Pink Dot was a reformulation of Singapore being nicknamed casually as the little red dot by the former president of Indonesia, Bacharuddin Jusuf Habibie (1936–), and the nickname soon became adopted as an affectionate moniker for the nation by Singaporean politicians (Chua 1999). Pink was adopted as the color of the event both for its LGBT symbolism and because of its association with the pinkcolored Singaporean citizens’ identity card. Therefore, while spatially and politically bound within the legalities of Singapore, the park has traversed the curtailments imposed on LGBT Singaporeans. Hong Lim Park is a site steeped in Singaporean LGBT history, where the illiberal pragmatics of the law is instrumental in circumventing the sociopolitical proscriptions on dissident sexual minorities.

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*J. Daniel Luther*
Chinatown has been central in the imagining of a gay community in Singapore. Activist Russell Heng (2001) outlines the emergence of Singapore’s gay movement from the 1950s into the 1980s. Heng’s account, along with those of a few others, such as Roy Tan’s (2012), relies on a positivist interpretation of the development of a gay community in the latter half of the twentieth century. In both Heng’s and Tan’s accounts, one of the earliest recollections of what Heng calls a “gay scene” in Singapore was associated with Bugis Street. According to Audrey Yue, Bugis Street was “an area in Chinatown that was an icon of the exotic Far East” (2012, 7; see also Heng 2001, 81), where cross-dressers, or the *ah qua* who worked in the sex trade, could be sought out. On the other side of Chinatown, Hong Lim Park has long served as a landmark in this imagining. Along with other streets around Bugis Street, such as Malabar Street, Malay Street, and Hailam Street, Hong Lim Park was a well-known cruising ground. Tan notes that it was the “first gay meeting place to be listed in the premier international gay tourist reference, the *Spartacus International Gay Guide*” (2012, 120).

Scholars and activists alike have noted Chinatown’s predominance as a veritable gay neighborhood in Singapore. Tan describes it as a “thriving ‘rainbow belt’ of karaoke lounges, nightclubs, restaurants, bars, hair salons, bathhouses and clothing and accessories stores” (2015, 2204). Its kaleidoscope of gay venues extends to mainstream venues and clubs in Chinatown, such as Zouk, which has hosted an annual “Butch Hunt competition” since 2001 (Yue 2007; R. Tan 2012). Many of these venues have hosted community meetings, sponsored advocacy campaigns, and built capacity for the movement. They have played host to monthly Sunday forums resulting in at least two major campaigns against police harassment of gay men in gay venues (L. J. Chua 2014). The Attic, a pub located above the Mox Bar in Chinatown, provided a venue for the Free Community Church, an accepting and inclusive place of worship for gay Christians. Many of the venues in this district continue to host theater and arts events, particularly during IndigNation, Singapore’s annual pride season.

**Singapore's Illiberal Pragmatism and Chinatown**

It is primarily thanks to what is known in Singapore studies as the *illiberal pragmatics* of governance that the contradiction of the rainbow belt in Chinatown exists. The notion of illiberal pragmatism derives from Beng-Huat Chua’s work on pragmatism as an ideological underpinning for Singapore’s model of governance. Herein, pragmatism is seen as an ideology that focuses on economic development emphasizing scientific and technological advances, as well as capitalist and industrial growth, all mediated by a “centralised rational
public administration” (B.-H. Chua 1995, 59; see also Yue and Zubillaga-Pow 2012). Within such a system, illiberal pragmatism is marked by discontinuities in governmental policies that are both “liberal and non-liberal” (Yue 2012, 5). Thus, for example, the Asian Values Campaign in the 1980s bolstered the rhetoric of an imagined community of a conservative Singaporean mainstream that gradually came to be increasingly opposed to later “measures of liberalisation” (Tan and Jin 2007, 186). Here, the earlier policies promoting family values to build a national identity find themselves in opposition to newer policies on cultural liberalization meant to bolster economic development through the creative industries outlined in the government’s 2002 policy blueprint (Yue 2007). Thus, for example, family values became the rallying call of a public sphere against issues around homosexuality, whether over the “homosexuals can change” banner in 2000 (Yue 2007) or the legalization of gambling in Singapore (K. P. Tan 2003).

The restoration of Chinatown and the eventual formation of its rainbow belt is an effect of the illiberal pragmatics of the Singaporean state. On the one hand, responding to the concerns of rapid westernization alongside speedy modernization, Chinatown, along with Little India and Kampong Glam, was to be conserved for its “historical and cultural value … as a physical bulwark against the perceived cultural ‘Westoxification’” (C. K. K. Tan 2015, 2208). On the other hand, the pressures of neoliberal development meant leaving the actual redevelopment of Chinatown to private capital with “a free reign over actual building usage” (2208). As a consequence, Singapore’s gay district emerged within a narrow spatial geography but with a complex symbolic imbrication of national pride, cultural difference, and dissident desire. By 2003 the city-state had become a popular venue for over “ten thousand local gays and lesbians, as well as regional homo tourists” (Yue 2007, 149), who arrived for the successful annual gay and lesbian Nation Party, a protest party held around National Day (1 October). Singapore had begun to be hailed as “Asia’s new gay entertainment capital” (Yue 2007, 149; see also Lim 2005). The protest party, like the gay district, was an expression of these factors.

The dynamics of Chinatown as Singapore’s unofficial gay district, born of the commingling of dissident desire, national pride, and cultural difference, need to be situated within the historical background of the city-state. This background is essential to understanding both the workings of Singapore’s illiberal pragmatism and what has variously been called the queer movement’s strategy of pragmatic resistance (L. J. Chua 2014) or survival (R. Tan 2012).

**Singapore: A Brief Context**

The city-state of Singapore has been variously labeled “non-democratic” (Huntington 1991) and an “illiberal [or non-liberal] democracy” (Bell et al. 1995; B.-H. Chua 1995). This perspective historically situates the context of Singapore’s transformation from a small fishing village into a bustling colonial trading port that gained independence in 1965.
Singapore’s particular geopolitical context as a postcolonial island city-state entailed its inheriting of various colonial apparatuses of governmentality, including antisodomy laws and fierce anticommunist suppression on the Malay Peninsula. Singapore’s ruling party, the People’s Action Party (PAP) (which remained in control of the government as of 2017), was faced with the monumental task of building a city-state with no natural resources, including even a dearth of potable water. In addition to its turbulent engagement with communist and labor parties within the larger geopolitical milieu, Singapore also had to contend with race riots during the 1960s as a nascent multireligious, multiracial, multiethnic city-state. Furthermore, because it was dominated by an ethnic Chinese majority population in a Malay-dominated region, the Singapore government needed to walk a fine line in order to carve out a prosperous economic hub, a cohesive nation, and a peaceful society.

Singaporean Government and Dissent

In negotiating these various divisive forces, the ruling party (still forming the government) adopted many of the repressive tools of the colonial British government in suppressing dissent. One of these tools was the Internal Security Act (ISA), which was used by the colonial British government against communist insurgents at the peak of the Malayan Emergency in the 1950s. Prior to independence, the PAP was one of the voices protesting the ISA. However, soon after independence, and to secure its own power, it deployed the specter of internal security against all forms of dissent. This included communist rivals within its own ranks, Chinese and Malay media organizations affiliated with trade unions and opposition parties, and members of the government accused of receiving foreign funding, as well as social activists, community organizers, and, more recently, organizations with links to terror networks. Besides the ISA, the government strictly monitors public assemblies, stringently issues permits for protests, and has made use of the Sedition Act to curtail public speech that might incite racial or religious tension. Similarly, it controls the media through the Broadcasting Act and the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act. Rather than resorting to physical violence, the government deploys the letter of the law to “suppress and control dissent” (L. J. Chua 2014, 35). This reliance on rule through law becomes the first obstacle to any dissenting tactic in Singapore. It affects the registration and organization of societies or companies, the gathering and meeting of activists, and the championing of rights over and above those sanctioned by the state.

Furthermore, as Jothie Rajah demonstrates, the state reconfigures “the profoundly liberal concept of ‘rule of law’ into an illiberal ‘rule by law’” (2012, 267) by manipulating the three branches of government. Rajah examines how the Vandalism Act, for instance, was passed in 1966 ostensibly to demonstrate the rule of law but in fact corresponded to the curtailment of the already diminished opposition party (then the Barisan Socialis). Similarly, the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act of 1974 was used to curtail the Chinese-
language newspaper *Nanyang Siang Pau*, while the Legal Profession (Amendment) Act curbed the Law Society’s critique of the government. Rajah traces the continuation of this process into the twenty-first century since the 1991 Religious Harmony Act (which prevented religious groups from engaging in social justice activism) and the 2009 Public Order Act were used to further rein in opposition protests on the streets.

It is in this context of the tightly managed nationstate that Singapore’s dissenting gay rights movement needs to be situated. Within such a framework, and as part of a movement formed of citizens who have grown up in such a milieu, Singapore’s LGBT dissenters have been persistent, tenacious, and creative in addressing the state’s colonial hangover, which infects not only its laws but many social norms. Singapore is the only ex-British colony to have repealed the British antisodomy laws (in 2007), which had been reworked into more specific laws targeting gay men. Thus, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code became Section 377A, introduced in 1938 (*Sanders 2009*). While Section 377 of the Penal Code deploys archaic regulations from the ecclesiastical laws of early modern England to criminalize “carnal intercourse against the order of nature,” Section 377A specifies “gross indecency” among men (*L. J. Chua 2014, 38; Tan and Jin 2007, 185*).

In an authoritarian state such as Singapore, where the rule of law is coterminous with the rule by law, how has its dissident gay movement survived and struggled? The final section of this entry looks at the strategy of what Lynette J. Chua has called “pragmatic resistance” in the various campaigns against both the criminalization and the social ostracization of sexual minorities.

**Pragmatic Resistance: Singapore's Gay Movement**

While inconsistencies in government policies stemming from illiberal pragmatics facilitated the creation of Singapore’s unofficial gay district, it was repressive events in 1993 that led to Singapore’s earliest documented dissident retaliation. In May 1993 plainclothes police officers raided the club Rascals, located at the Pan Pacific Hotel. Police detained several gay men who did not carry identification and compelled them to squat outside the Beach Road Police Station (*L. J. Chua 2014*). One of the patrons of Rascals that night, a lawyer, wrote a letter to the police and the Ministry of Home Affairs, citing the relevant statutory provisions challenging the credibility of the detention. His assertions, based on Singaporean law, challenged the authority of the police to detain a person for not carrying their identity card without cause. The letter stated:

> It is particularly disturbing to find Singapore law enforcement officers behaving rudely towards and verbally threatening citizens who have not committed any offences. It would also be in the public interest to clarify the legal powers of
Not only did this letter prompt an unexpected response from the authorities, it signaled a turning point in the strategic resistance mounted by groups of dissident sexual minorities in Singapore. In essence, the letter sought to clarify the law, not directly challenge the police actions. Its wording carefully seeks this information in the “public interest” and under the broader ambit of causing harm to “citizens who have not committed any offences.” Not only does the letter then move to curb the excesses of the police, which as Chua notes include public humiliation and verbal threats, but it does so without mention of discourses external to the context of Singapore in the 1990s. Rather, it seeks to use the letter of the law against the very enforcers of the law.

It is the strategic use of law, with carefully mediated moves and countermoves, that Chua terms pragmatic resistance. She defines this as a context-driven, ground-up struggle against the repressive mechanism and apparatus of an authoritarian state. This dissident strategy, while more broadly aimed at rights and equality, is also chiefly concerned with survival. It emphasizes the need to strategically adapt to the political context, even if it means shying away from tactics that might compromise the survival of the movement. Chua argues that “the tactics of pragmatic resistance aim at immediate gains that change practice and informal policies, not formal laws and regulations” (2014, 17). The letter in the Rascals incident targets social discrimination by state actors outside the purview of the law, and as a nascent first step it was to become exemplary in the dissident strategy in Singapore.

A few other key moments demonstrate the adoption and utilization of this strategy by the gay movement in Singapore. These include the second attempt, on 25 February 2004, at registering People Like Us (PLU) as a society following statements by the prime minister and senior minister on international platforms nodding toward tolerance of gay and lesbian Singaporeans. The second attempt at registration was not made with the hope of success but to expose the government’s hypocrisy and prevent it from using homosexuality to further its neoliberal agenda. Activist Alex Au describes the second attempt as a “‘heads I win, tails you lose’ kind of situation” (L. J. Chua 2014, 91), implying that both the successful registration of PLU and preventing the co-option of homosexuality were desirable outcomes. The events surrounding Josef Ng’s 1993 performance of Brother Cane mark another exemplary instance of pragmatic resistance.
Documentation of Zihan Loo’s Performance Piece Cane (2012). Artist Zihan Loo reenacts performance artist Josef Ng’s Brother Cane (1994) where he strikes bags of red dye resting on top of blocks of tofu with a rattan cane to protest the entrapment and arrest of twelve homosexual men in Singapore. Six of the twelve men pleaded guilty and were given a jail sentence of two to six months and three strokes of the cane each. Ng’s performance led to a ten-year restriction of the licensing and funding of performance art in Singapore.

Josef Ng’s Brother Cane and Zihan Loo's Cane

Strategic dissidence in Singapore has its strongest examples in the sphere of performance art. While performance art in Singapore has been a prominent cultural form receiving the largest share of funding from the government, it has also been subject to severe censorship and repression. In order to bolster Singapore’s status as a financial and economic hub, but also to counter the negative international perception of the city-state as “puritanical” and emblematic of a “philistine modernity” (Wee 2003, 85), the government embarked on a cultural policy to encourage the arts in the 1980s. By this time, there already existed a theater scene that courted state repression for its dissident performances. Kuo Pao Kun (1939–2002), an important figure in Singapore theater, was detained without trial in the late 1970s for his alleged communist activities. Often critically engaging with Singapore’s “top-down disciplinary modernisation” (Wee 2003, 86), theater performers challenged the state’s policies on several fronts, including politics, gender, identity, and ethnicity, thus inviting increasing repression.

In 1993 repression turned its ire on gay dissident protest performance when twenty-one-
year-old performance and visual artist Josef Ng invited severe state backlash against his protest performance titled *Brother Cane*, a rendering of the entrapment, arrest, and caning of twelve homosexual men in Tanjong Rhu ([Peterson 2003](#)). As part of the performance, Ng placed twelve news cuttings of a *Straits Times* article titled “12 Men Nabbed in Anti-gay Operation in Tanjong Rhu” on twelve tiles under twelve blocks of tofu and bags of red dye. He then performed a dance, rhythmically striking the floor with a rattan cane and whipping the tofu blocks and red dye with the cane, causing the tofu and dye to splatter across the stage ([Langenbach 1997](#)). The performance culminated with the scattering of cut pubic hair over the central tile, symbolic of Ng’s “silent protest” (see [Cane 2012](#)). The performative cutting of pubic hair was strategic, done in near darkness, with the performer’s back to the audience. It relied on an inference, and even as the audience attempts to piece together what had happened, the entire mise-en-scène “was plunged into total near darkness” ([Ho 2017](#)). Ng ended the performance by smoking a cigarette borrowed from a member of the audience and declaring “sometimes maybe silent protest is not enough,” stubbing out the cigarette on his arm.

Ng's performance incited a flurry of sensationalized media coverage, while politicians and government functionaries condemned Ng and his work. Ng was protesting the humiliating tactics of the media, as well as the excessive penalty levied on the twelve men, who were subject to caning despite pleading guilty to charges of solicitation and being fined. The National Arts Council (NAC) condemned the performance, calling it “vulgar” and “distasteful,” and withdrew all forms of support. The Ministries of Home Affairs and Information and the Arts issued a joint statement in January 1994 banning Ng and fellow performance artist Shannon Tham from “future public performances” ([Cane 2012](#)) and imposing stringent restrictions on performance art. Ng was charged with committing an obscene act in public.

Although the ensuing clampdown and media furor forced performance art in Singapore to adapt, compromise, and even bend to the rules being laid out by the government, *Brother Cane* had a lasting impact. The performance dramatized state violence and the use of excessive force in the whipping of tofu blocks, and through the subsequent lawsuits, it evoked a public demonstration of the state’s illiberal rule by law. The NAC and the government ministries also realized the inadequacy of the law on which to “draw the line” with regard to performance art ([Cane 2012](#)).

*Brother Cane* demonstrated the failure and limits of Singapore’s rule by law though the evocative use of near darkness to hide the entire scene. “The flash of light piercing the darkness was a newspaper photographer” ([Loo 2017](#)) who captured a barely clothed Ng facing away from the audience, leaning slightly and looking down. A video recording by Ray Langenbach of Ng’s original performance, used in Zihan Loo’s 2012 re-creation of Ng’s work, titled *Cane*, indicates that the mise-en-scène was nearly dark; Ng’s actual actions were not visible. The photographer’s flash, visible in the recording, had illuminated and
captured the scene. The act itself was not designed to be discernible or clearly visible.

Loo's *Cane*, in contrast, is performed under the harsh glare of bright lights. Loo (2017) meant for the performance to be “overexposed,” with the lighting “almost blinding.” Loo explains that the choice of lighting and its total contrast to the pervasive darkness in Ng's performance was intended to extend the moment of the photographer's flash. Loo's re-creation has two notable and powerful deviations from Ng's performance. The first is to deny the media and the law a “‘live’ snipping of pubic hair” (Loo 2012), challenging the law for its eroticization and the media for its sensationalization of a moment they constructed for their own purposes. At the same time, the performer is completely shaven and entirely nude at that point in the performance. He makes direct eye contact with the audience, as though challenging the gaze to locate the obscenity for which the state came down so heavily on Ng and Tham. In a second deviation, Loo cites government regulations about smoking indoors and exits the performance venue to perform the stubbing out of the cigarette. In this moment, the performer encounters the frenzied photography of the lurking press.

Here pragmatic resistance embarks not on challenging the archaic colonial laws that criminalize homosexuality, but on confronting the varied and diverse sociopolitical assemblages of homophobia. These assemblages—the gaze, the construct of obscenity and vulgarity, the sensationalization and eroticization of a sexual minority as spectacle, foreign, and un-Asian—are all simultaneously provoked and challenged. In the process, the performance does not fall afoul of legal requirements and, in fact, cites them for ironic effect.

Finally, Loo claims during the performance that his “main interest in the re-performance of this piece lies in using [his] performing body to recuperate the public memory of *Brother Cane*” (Cane 2012; Loo 2012). In accordance with this recuperation, the performer allowed the audience to record, tweet, and photograph, as well as live telecast and document the performance. In doing so, lifting “the usual rule in cinemas and theatres” (Loo 2012) regarding recording at the beginning of the performance, Loo reclaims the right to public memory from the strictly controlled domain of the media.

**SEE ALSO** The Art of Queering Asian Mythology; People Like Us (PLU); Section 377 and Section 377A; Section 377 in South Asia

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Al-Dizil (1994; Thani al-Suwaidi)

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A transgender Arabic novella.

Al-Dizil (1994; The Diesel [2012]), by the Emirati poet Thani al-Suwaidi, is a rare twentieth-century Arabic language work of fiction with a transgender protagonist. First published in Beirut in 1994, this novella was also republished there and in Baghdad and Cairo. The story’s frank and sympathetic portrayal of a transgender person made it notorious in the Arab world, and for several years it was unavailable in al-Suwaidi’s own country of the United Arab Emirates. Since then it has gradually gained recognition as an important work of Emirati literature based on both its daring approach to a taboo subject in a conservative society and its innovative, poetic language.
SOURCE: ANTIBOOKCLUB

Cover of The Diesel, English Translation of the Arabic Novella al-Dizil. The cover of the English translation of al-Dizil combines a vintage photo of a child of indeterminate gender in front of a Gulfport with an upside-down image of a desert, drawing on the novella's major theme of gender fluidity in an Arab society turned upside down by cultural transition. Noticeably absent is a lurid image of an Arab drag queen, indicating the novella's sympathetic, nuanced portrait of a trans character.

Reflecting the author's background in the poetic medium, al-Dizil is a long prose-poem that relies heavily on folkloric fantasy that at times is divorced from reality, leaving the events narrated by the protagonist, who is known as “the Diesel,” open to multiple interpretations. The narrative has a dreamlike feel that, while not exactly stream-of-consciousness, is “deliberately disjointed to present the contemporary Arab experience in a portrait that reflects a self that is split between an image of the past and an image of the consumer-oriented present” (Nur al-Din 2011; translation by William Maynard Hutchins). In a 2004 interview, al-Suwaidi stated that the theme of the novella is the effect of the petroleum age on a community—in this case, a rural village in the emirate of Ra’s al-Khaymah—at a crossroads between two cultures. As noted by William Maynard Hutchins in the introduction to his 2012 English translation,
The earlier culture was supported by relatively small-scale, artisanal production and embraced a system of values that fit such a culture. The character of the Diesel represents the second culture, which projects the more bohemian demeanor of a modern-day jinni who has emerged not from a fancy flask but from an oil well. The author hoped that the reader would discern the impact of this new culture on a society that was initially unprepared for it and that was therefore shaken to its core by it.

(14–15)

Thus, the Diesel can be viewed as a jinni, and that jinni in turn can also be thought of as oil.

The basic plot describes the Diesel’s dawning awareness of a transgender (male-to-female) identity and the flowering of that identity when the protagonist becomes a singer and dancer in a dance troupe that transforms life in a sleepy Arab/Persian Gulf fishing community. The story is narrated by the Diesel to another character, whose identity is not specified except that he is male and a childhood neighbor of the protagonist. “The Diesel” is the protagonist’s stage name as a singer and dancer with his sister’s otherwise all-woman ensemble. This name is derived from the protagonist’s sinuous dance moves but—as the author explained—also suggests that the protagonist represents petroleum and its jinni-like transformation of the Arab/Persian Gulf from a sleepy, superstitious, closed society to a global powerhouse (al-Suwaidi, 25 October 2011, Hutchins).

**Plot Summary**

The Diesel recounts a series of life experiences that brought him to a realization of his identity both as a performer and as a transgendered person. The Diesel’s first sexual experience occurs as a teenager when he is raped in a mosque by a wayfarer, who then spends a week sharing a room with the Diesel at the invitation of the Diesel’s father. Far from describing the experience in traumatic terms, the Diesel states that “this man was magnanimous and provided me with more paternal affection in a week than my father ever had” (al-Suwaidi 2012b, 42). This experience stands in contrast with a more traumatic later episode in which the Diesel’s father and his father’s friend pressure the Diesel to have sex with an elderly woman “to prove what studs they were by having me screw a seventy-one-year-old woman” (56). When confronted with the woman, the Diesel cannot perform the act, stating, “I wavered, conscious of a need to demonstrate my father’s virility but also of my inability to obey his body’s command” (56). The Diesel returns to his father with the deed undone.

It is in the company of women that the Diesel finds an identity rooted in the feminine. At the age of eighteen, the Diesel begins to associate with the widows and divorcées who are
friends with his sister. He states, "We bonded as if we were family, even though there was a gender difference; their bodies were differently configured, that was all" (43). One woman in particular attracts him sexually: "When I saw her, I felt masculine desire lead my body toward another instinct that reminded me of that wayfarer" (43). This moment of heterosexual arousal leads to his memory of homosexual activity. The Diesel then examines his body and determines to "configure this body in a novel fashion to return the man to his original memory" (43), which, to the Diesel, is the feminine identity: "Woman is our original format" (80).

The following day, the Diesel attends a wedding for one of the widows. Traditionally, Arab men and women celebrate separately at weddings, but at this wedding, the Diesel is invited to sit with the women by his sister. Although this gender transgression is at first greeted with hostility both by the men and the women in attendance, the Diesel's reception is transformed when he is invited to dance by one of the women: "When I looked at that woman I felt my hips twitch, and then I was dancing across the floor.... I felt for the first time that I possessed a woman's body and could no longer be able to resist this feminine force" (44). The rapture of the dancing causes him to experience a vision of his dead mother that convinces him she is still alive. When he tries to convince his father and sister of this, his father forces him to see a Sufi saint to cure his madness. As the holy man begins to read from the Qur’an over the Diesel, the Diesel experiences an awakening as an artist: "I don’t know what came over me after this faith healer recited over my head, but the idea of singing began to dominate my thoughts" (47–48).

The Diesel eventually joins his sister's all-woman troupe, initially serving as the women's escort but then joining them as a singer and dancer: "I began to train my voice for a different type of singing, one the town hadn't heard before" (67). His first performance at a wedding surprises everyone: "The baffled males, with their virile scent, surrounded me, while the women looked at me defenselessly" (67). But as the Diesel continues to perform at other weddings, he becomes a sensation in the town. He sets up a cabaret in his home and quickly becomes the artistic director to a large ensemble of performers.

When the troupe's popularity soars, the Diesel reports that his voice supplanted that of the muezzin in the community: “I was the voice that changed many things in their lives” (69). The members of his troupe “became the town’s kings, who could make it rejoice or weep” (70). The Diesel has challenged a local, repressive version of Islam, not by being trans but by entertaining people with new music.

A recurring nightmare, however, warns him to abandon his career. When the Diesel refuses, he is beaten in the nightmare, which leaves him crippled in his waking life. He is confined to bed for three months before a local ruler prevails on him to sing at his daughter’s wedding, to which the Diesel is carried on a litter. His return sparks even greater devotion that threatens the power of the political rulers.
The Diesel's popularity inspires local rulers to fund their own song-and-dance troupes. When these cannot compete with the Diesel's ensemble, the rulers ban this form of musical entertainment. In response to the ban, a huge protest gathering is organized at an outdoor venue. The Diesel is feted as the guest of honor at the gathering; he is seated on a special chair, and several people pay tribute to the impact his art has made on their lives. The gathering becomes a huge dance party, at the climax of which the people unanimously vote the Diesel as their president. The Diesel feels the weight of such a responsibility, acknowledging that he is “obliged to rescue this nation” (84). Yet his reflections on his new public role lead him to a more personal reflection on the friend who has been listening to his story. In the novella’s most explicit expression of homoeroticism, the Diesel tells his friend, “Then I longed ever so much for your body” (85).

The novella ends, interestingly, with the Diesel once again encountering the wayfarer, who does not speak but instead points the Diesel toward the mosque. The Diesel’s response suggests that, despite the subversive role he has played in the community, he has not abandoned the religion of Islam: the last line of the novella is his directive to his friend to “rise and give the call to prayer” (85).

**The Innovations of *al-Dizil***

*Al-Dizil* is not the first work of modern Arabic fiction to treat an individual’s coming of age as representative of the transformation of an Arab society in the twentieth century (see, e.g., *Return of the Spirit* [2012], by Tawfiq al-Hakim). It is also not unheard for an author to provide a sympathetic portrayal of a queer character (e.g., *Sugar Street* [1992], by Naguib Mahfouz). What is unusual about *Al-Dizil* is that the protagonist is conscious of being transgender without feeling angst. By contrast, as Hanadi Al-Samman (2015, 182) has pointed out, the transgender character Khalil in Hoda Barakat’s novel *The Stone of Laughter* (1995) “discovers there is no space for ambiguous feminized masculinity in this combative society.”

Even if the character of the Diesel represents both a developing artist and the transformative power of petroleum, his disruptive transformation is not demonized in this novella. As the Diesel finds his voice as an artist, he becomes the popularly elected president of his people. And although he has drawn the townspeople away from the mosque, at the close of the novella his directive to give the call to prayer demonstrates that his rebellion is not against Islam, properly understood.

Equally innovative is *Al-Dizil*’s use of fantastic elements in the telling of the story. Rather than imitating nineteenth-century European novels, al-Suwaidi channels popular Arab storytelling, the best-known example of which is *A Thousand and One Nights*. Al-Suwaidi uses fantasy, based in the oral tradition of fantasy storytelling, to lend a spirit of subversive transformation to the narrative. One example is his blending of human and animal in his
characters so that the line between the two is blurred. At one point in the novella the teenage Diesel is working for a sorceress in an ancient castle and is upset that a black dog keeps drinking from his milking pail; when he brings this to her attention she tells him, “Let him drink as much as he wants ... he’s my husband” (63). This is reminiscent of the story of the two brothers who were turned into dogs in the second old man’s tale on the second night of *A Thousand and One Nights*. He says his two brothers were punished by his wife’s sister for trying to kill him and his wife (*Lyons and Lyons 2008*).

Just as al-Suwaidi blurs the binary line between human and animal, he also uses fantasy to blur the binary line between male and female. For example, a group of thieves steals the Diesel’s father’s catch of squid and is observed by both the Diesel and his sister. The Diesel’s sister identifies the thieves as “spiders in human form,” a deliberately ambiguous phrase that is open to interpretation by the reader as to what manner of creature they really are. Not only is their physical form undefined, their gender is equally ambiguous, as the Diesel observes: “They had rejected their masculinity, adopted a feminine argot, and moved their bodies as if responding to deep impulses” (29). These gender-ambiguous creatures start circling the Diesel, who at this point is a child, and they utter a prophecy over him about his gender identity: “They placed their hands on my head, like a man blessing his wife.” They told him, “Since you haven’t been able to defeat your spirit, you must defeat your body” (30).

This prophecy is a reference to the dissonance within the Diesel, who in body is male but in spirit is female. In a reasoned study of interactions between gender, law, and medicine in contemporary Iran, Afsaneh Najmabadi (*2014*) attributes a position on trans status such as that expressed by the Diesel to Hujjat al-Islam Karimi-nia, a transgender-friendly Shi’a cleric. For both the Diesel and this modern Shi’a scholar, the soul is decisive; the body’s configurations are secondary. A transgender person’s experience, then, is related to “the lack of correspondence between gender/sex of soul and body” (*Najmabadi 2014, 178*). For Karimi-nia, then, a transgender person’s efforts to reconcile this dissonance by undergoing surgery to make the body conform to the gender of the soul should be supported, not condemned, provided he does not engage in same-sex sexual activity prior to the transformation. Najmabadi (*2014*) admits being puzzled by the hard line that Kariminia felt compelled to draw between homosexuals and transgender people, with the former being unacceptable and the latter acceptable. At the end of *Al-Dizil*, the expression of longing for the body of his friend shows that the Diesel as a character does not draw a hard line between transgender and homosexual desires. It could be argued that in this novella gender is a fluid rather than a rigid category.

**Reception**

Fatima Ahmad Khalifa, a literature scholar from the United Arab Emirates, wrote that in *Al-Dizil*, al-Suwaidi “personifies place and breathes his spirit into it so that place, time, history,
and the character constitute a single whole” (quoted in Hutchins 2012b, 19). In a profile of al-Suwaidi in Arabic, the critic Muhammad Abu ʿArab wrote that in Al-Dizil “he kneads poetry together with prose” (2013; translation by William Maynard Hutchins)—rather than narrative with folklore. In a 2012 review of the English translation, M. A. Orthofer wrote the following: “Elliptical and poetic, The Diesel is not a straightforward text. It appears to arise out of not simply a different culture but also a different writing-tradition—its orality also emphasized by the fact that much of the text is directly addressed to a neighbor and ‘mute friend’ (i.e., also the reader) as if in conversation.”

In a review of The Diesel for Three Percent, Lili Sarayrah (2017) called it “the shortest and most experimental Arabic text I have ever read.” She concluded her review, saying, “This novella undoubtedly deserves attention for its highly unique execution and relevant subject material, and I would unhesitatingly recommend it to anyone.” Alan Cheuse in his 2012 review for National Public Radio summarized the protagonist as follows: “He/she is a djinn or demon born of the vast oil deposits beneath the Middle Eastern sands and then born into a fisherman’s family on the coast of the Emirates, born as a transgendered child who grows up to become a highly praised musician and performer.” He went on to say that “the story unfolds in a series of vertiginous riffs, on childhood, on village life, on commerce, on government, on the power of music, ... producing a sort of Arab surrealism with a deep foundation in local folklore.” In his summation of the work, Cheuse said that “this little work of fiction, with its wild metaphors and surprising turns, seems as tipsy as a dancer with too many drinks. It celebrates the Dionysian element in Arab culture we’ve seen much too little of these recent decades.”

SEE ALSO A Thousand and One Nights; Transgender Identity in Iranian Cinema; Transgender Muslims; Transgendered Subjectivities in Contemporary Iran

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Drag, Asian

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The various forms of Asian drag, their reception in Asia and elsewhere, and their cultural impact.

Queer and trans Asians on the Asian continent and in the diaspora aestheticize gender for the purpose of entertainment, combining multiple performance traditions and historical references to simultaneously invoke community and perform social criticism. As highly visible figures—visible because of theatrical gender expressions, online circulations, and staged performance at festivals, pageants, nightclubs, and parties—Asian drag artists draw on a variety of cultural references that speak to numerous audiences at once. By employing syncretic aesthetics, their performances work in multiple registers that simultaneously engender familiarity, pleasure, and sociopolitical criticism. The performers examined here under the label of “Asian drag” occupy several gender categories—including gay men, otokoyaku, drag kings, hijra, bakla, kathoey, and trans women—and manipulate their femininity and masculinity through staged performance for a variety of reasons: fund-raising, global citizenship, diva worship, income raising, play, entertainment, pleasure, and self-actualization.

To make sense of Asian drag’s critical possibilities, it is necessary to consider how gender, sexuality, and race have been policed, colonized, and disciplined (by Euro-Western imperialism, intra-Asian colonization, and statesanctioned hegemonies) to name how artists invoke and/or interrupt norms. Asian drag must be studied in context, differentiating kathoey dancers from diasporic South Asian drag queens, from Japanese women performing in masculine roles in all-female revues, and so on, as their identity positions and aesthetic techniques both have and summon different histories.

ASIFA LAHORE

Asifa Lahore, who calls herself the United Kingdom’s first out Muslim Pakistani drag queen, is a performer, internet celebrity, and activist. Her involvement in the queer British Asian community includes working at the sexual health and advocacy organization NAZ; hosting queer Asian parties such as Urban Desi, Club Kali, and Disco Rani; creating a series of music videos released on YouTube; and appearing on various talk shows to speak about her experiences as a gay Muslim. She famously stages her
Muslim and Pakistani identities by performing in a full burka, stripping into a sari, and subsequently revealing a miniskirt. In a Facebook video testimonial uploaded in May 2017, Lahore came out to her online following as a transgender woman.

Navigating the respectability politics of the Pakistani diaspora, the xenophobia of a United Kingdom on the cusp of Brexit, an Islamophobia intensified after the 2005 bombings in London, and long-standing racism and transphobia in the gay community, Lahore uses drag to stage politics and to perform her own resilience. In interviews, she emphasizes the widespread visibility (albeit ambivalent acceptance) of khwaja sirs (a state-recognized identity category in Pakistan that includes intersex and transgender people; Khan 2014) to argue that drag is not foreign to or abject in Asian culture and communities. She reiterates this logic in her own name, Lahore, the capital city of the Pakistani state of Punjab, inscribing herself into the nation of Pakistan, while embodying the postcolonial nation in the metropole. Her transition, her strategic references to transfeminine communities in Pakistan, her visibility as a drag queen, her purposeful costume choices, her use of online platforms, and her involvement in a variety of queer Asian communities demonstrate the ways that Asian drag artists complicate Western gender/sexuality matrices, enact social critiques, and build community for marginalized populations.

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Performing Gender: Between Art, Culture, and Everyday Identities

Many drag artists manipulate normative aesthetics of masculinity and femininity to incite recognition, pleasure, and discomfort in audiences. For a variety of reasons, the gendered aesthetics of Asian drag are rendered illegible because of a variety of historical and political inequities. Euro-colonial constructs of Asian effeminacy render male Asian performers already feminine within transnational contexts. While Asian men often find themselves the least desirable in American gay nightlife spaces that privilege masculine self-presentation, the legibility of their bodies as already feminine allows them to succeed at drag pageants
that reward portrayals of femininity (Han 2015). At the same time, their competitors read them as having a naturalized advantage, thus dismissing their craft.

Furthermore, the legibility of Asian performance styles may not be read as “art.” At the 1998 Diva drag festival in Trinidad, performances by an Indo-Trinidadian couple enacting heterosexual couplings from Hindi and Indo-Trinidadian films did not receive the enthusiastic reception that other performances elicited (Puar 2001). The audience, reading their dances as “just” a performance of their ethnicity, perhaps lacked the intimate cultural knowledge to be moved by the dance’s content, and/or positioned Indianness as perpetually foreign and therefore relegated the performance to everyday Indian “culture” instead of a more sophisticated “interpretation.”

Such hierarchical judgments also play out within Asia. A Malaysian transgender performance troupe visiting India in 2004 during the World Social Forum was invited to perform at a party hosted by the social and activist group Gay Bombay, whereas local hijra dancers were not (Shahani 2008). Although hijras (a feminine gender identity in India referring to people assigned male or intersex at birth and ritually inducted into hijra kinship structures) are often photographed and filmed dancing (at festivals or weddings or in straight bars, for example), few scholars writing about hijras critically discuss the aesthetic or pleasurable quality of their dance (Morcom 2013). The Malaysian troupe’s “foreign” style of drag aligned them with the cosmopolitan aspirations of Gay Bombay (Shahani 2008, 251), evidencing hierarchies within local gender/sexual matrices and between Asian countries, bodies, and genders. This pattern repeats itself in the preference of queer and trans dancers in Bangkok for Korean popular music (K-pop) over Thai songs; one reason for their preference is the illegibility of foreign lyrics that allows dancers to focus on movement instead of words. These feminine Thai dancers draw on K-pop to embody more cosmopolitan visions of Pan-Asian femininity (Käng 2014). And yet, even K-pop celebrities perform femininity in queer ways (Oh and Oh 2017), requiring complex layers of analysis to make sense of inter-Asian appropriations of gender and popular culture.

While some scholars argue for a differentiation between drag queens and localized transfeminine identities (Bakshi 2004), one can see in the Gay Bombay example how some transgenders are welcome to perform as “drag queens” in gay male spaces, whereas others are not. More generally, Asian drag confounds the assumptions of drag as a gender “crossing.” Drag is popularly understood as a crossing of a masculine-feminine gender binary for the purposes of entertainment; indeed, some of the artists described here insist on being understood as men who exaggerate femininity for the stage. However, Asian drag does not always rely on binary crossings, given the varying, evolving, nation- and region-specific matrices of gender and sexuality across Asia (Käng 2012); gender categories such as bakla, beki, kothi, and kathoey invoke a variety of feminine male and transfeminine subjectivities and performances.
Thai drag queen Pangina Heals, a virtuoso of waacking (an athletic dance emerging from black LGBT communities in California) and hilarious emcee, is the alter ego of Pan Pan Narkprasert, who speaks of himself as a gay man. On Sunday nights in Bangkok, Heals hosts a party and drag show at Maggie Choo’s, an underground bar styled as a 1930s Shanghai speakeasy. Heals’s cast features not only drag queens performing for a cosmopolitan gay audience but also transgender women who know how to play into the global gay aesthetics of bawdy humor, camp, and glamour. Heals has also been one of the few drag queens to compete on the Thai reality TV show *T Battle*, which more traditionally invites transgender women to participate (Stein 2017). The recognition of *kathoey* (a Thai gender category typically referring to male-to-female transgender people) by Thai popular media opens up space for a gay queen to perform and become legible, and that queen then opens up spaces for performances by transgender women at the gay club night he hosts.

Asian drag can also include heterosexual men. Hailing from the north Indian city of Jaisalmer, Queen Harish is an exceptionally graceful dancer, carefully combining in his performances the kneeling spins of Rajasthani folk dance, daring Indian circus feats such as dancing on broken glass, and demure *abhinaya* (facial expressions) of Hindi film actresses. Harish has long loved to dance and made a career of it by donning women’s clothing, makeup, and jewelry to perform. Given both his skill and novelty, he was invited to travel with performance troupes outside India where he was received by fellow performers as a “drag queen” and thus acquired the title “Queen Harish” (Roy 2008). In interviews, Harish reminds audiences that he is married to a woman, has children, and regularly goes to the temple, meaning he complies with the Indian state’s heteronormative expectations. Performers such as Harish are no aberration, and he aligns with a long tradition of cross-gender artistry. Indian theater in the early twentieth century included male actors who dressed as women; these men enjoyed popularity on stage even when women could occupy the stage, and they even had their own fan followings (Hansen 2004).

Since Harish’s renaming and embrace of “queen,” he has been booked at gay events in the diaspora such as Desilicious in New York City, and he even refers to his art form as “drag.” Another performer at Desilicious, Bijli, describes herself as having a God-given feminine spirit (Malik 2003). While at the nightclub, she discusses wishing to be desired as a woman, not a gay man or a man in drag. While Desilicious primarily attracts gay men, Queen Harish and Bijli are two performers who might be interpreted by their gay audiences as “drag queens” but occupy quite different identities from each other, as well as from the gay men who constitute their audience. Asian drag thus draws from different gender epistemologies and performance genealogies but also allows for the coexistence, proximity, and overlap of multiple gender identities.

**Conversing with Religion, Race, and Nation**

For Bijli, performing at parties such as Desilicious becomes a way of expressing her
feminine spirit. Her invocation of “spirit” reveals that Islam is one of the lenses through which she interprets her gender and that dancing her gender constitutes a spiritual practice. For other queens, performing their religious identity might take a more politicized tone. In 2017 a drag queen named Tara Ryst started to perform at Desilicious parties. Her name, meant to sound like terrorist, plays with the racist assumptions—exacerbated exponentially after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States—placed on South Asian, Arab, and Muslim people (Rana 2011). Performing as Tara Ryst therefore becomes a way of subversively occupying the sexual and gender aberrance attributed to Middle Eastern and South Asian people that has been used to justify colonial violence (Puar 2007). At the same time, Tara Ryst’s clever song medleys and salacious dance and costume style please her audience with references to contemporary Pakistani mujras (a salon-style seductive performance; S. Khan 2017) and nostalgic Hindi films.

For baklas (a Filipino feminine gender identity referring to people assigned male at birth) living in New York, hosting a drag pageant becomes a means of writing themselves into religious tradition, staging their racial difference, and reframing their positionality to both the United States and the Philippines (Manalansan 2003). Staging the Filipino Catholic ritual of the Santacruzan not as a procession in the Philippines but as a fashion show in New York City in 1992, members of the community health organization Kambal sa Lusog reinvented the various muses traditionally represented in the procession. Instead of carrying the flag of the Philippines, the bakla Queen of the Flag wore a slinky and diaphanous dress in the flag’s colors, sexualizing a symbol usually associated with “virginal and maternal tropes.” Another bakla styled as Judith of Bethulia carried the head of George H. W. Bush, the US president, commenting both on the state of US politics and US imperialism spanning the occupation of the Philippines to the present.

Even within Asia, queer and trans performers employ drag to critique national and colonial politics. The Pink Divas, a group of gay, queer, and trans dancers wearing high heels, skirts, sequin blouses, and other feminine garb, perform annually at the Bangalore Queer Film Festival. Following the Supreme Court of India’s recriminalization of sodomy in 2013, the dance group included a sequence in which a drag queen with angel wings pulled a banana out of the pocket of an actor portraying a Supreme Court judge, then fellated and ate it. Section 377 of the Indian penal code is a relic of Victorian British law that criminalizes acts “against the order of nature”; it remains in the penal codes of several British colonies (Narrain and Gupta 2011). During the Supreme Court of India hearings, the judges were more concerned with debating what counted as acts against the order of nature rather than discussing the dignity and safety of gender and sexual minorities. The simulation of this sexual act by the drag queen ridiculed the conservative Indian judges’ obsession over perverse acts, as well as colonial law, much to the pleasure of the cheering audience. In September 2018 India’s Supreme Court once again struck down the application of Section 377 against acts of sodomy.
Alongside the legacies of Euro-Western imperialisms, intra-Asian colonization shapes the political and performative efficacies of Asian drag. In the case of otokoyaku (women performing male roles in the Japanese, all-female Takarazuka Revue), their debonair personas are determined to be in excess of modest Japanese masculinity. This exaggerated masculinity performed by women couples with caricatured performances of non-Japanese Others in the Takarazuka Revue to secure, via the stage, notions of a naturalized, quotidian, nontheatrical Japanese colonial masculinity (Robertson 1998). Interestingly, Taiwanese artists also use drag to respond to the legacy of Japanese colonization. Fanchuanxiu is a Taiwanese male cross-dressing genre that uses a variety of recorded music for its artists to lip-synch. Employing nostalgic enka tracks (Japanese ballads) alongside other Japanese signifiers, artists invite their audiences to ambivalently engage with the ubiquity of Japanese popular culture in Taiwan (Wu 2017).

**Popular Culture, Circulation, and Virality**

The American reality TV competition RuPaul's Drag Race (2009–) has provided an important international media platform for drag artists in the United States to stage their craft and their politics. Through sartorial choices—such as Kim Chi’s elaborate take on the traditional Korean hanbok dress and Manila Luzon’s Filipino flag dress and her pineapple outfit—the queens reflect their ethnic and national heritage (Zhang 2016). At the same time, Asian queens on Drag Race have turned to racial performances that do not necessarily reflect their own ethnonational heritage: riffing on the Japanese geisha, appropriating the Chinese cheongsam, styling themselves as Latina cholas (part of the Mexican American women’s hip-hop subculture), and modeling “African chic.” These Asian queens’ strange stylings are reminders of how recalcitrant Orientalisms flatten complex differences between Asians and limit the ways that Asian queens can present themselves as racialized subjects.

Beyond RuPaul’s Drag Race, Asian drag artists struggle to find similar global success or even a platform on which to perform. Narrative theater productions function as sites to imagine what Asian drag could look like if it were given room to thrive. The heterogeneity of Asian drag is enacted in plays such as The Gentlemen’s Club (Mumbai, 2015), about intergenerational tensions at a Mumbai drag king cabaret, and Miss Meena and the Masala Queens (London, 2017), about conflicts between South Asian queens in a British nightclub. While drag is associated with nightclubs, in India, middle- and upper-class gay nightlife largely bans “cross-dressing,” excluding both transgender people and drag artists. As such, artists such as Maya the Drag Queen look to the internet—TEDx, Instagram, and Facebook—as a platform to accrue audiences. Many Asian drag queens have “gone viral” online. A 2010 video of a bakla artist lip-synching Whitney Houston’s “I Will Always Love You” as a zombie haunting her lover has garnered millions of views. A 2007 video showing the collective choreography of Filipino inmates at the Cebu Provincial Detention and
Rehabilitation Center dancing to Michael Jackson’s “Thriller” has received over 58 million views and prominently features Wenjiel Resane, a feminine performer in a sea of male zombies (Perillo 2011). The Instagram uploads of Apichet “Madaew” Atirattana, in which he films himself in makeshift haute couture, evidence how online circulation becomes especially useful to young rural Asians who do not have access to the monetary resources expected of drag artists nor the urban nightlife associated with drag cultures.

For Mumbai-raised, Chicago-based drag artist Abhijeet Rane, web-based and live performances are mutually constitutive. The acclaimed Instagram photo series Bad Beti’s features Rane styled as twelve South Asian women and femmes who refuse(d) to conform to gender expectations. Following the popular reception of this photo series, Rane curated a party at Berlin nightclub in Chicago titled Bad Beti’s featuring Asian drag acts (Moran 2017). The performers (South Asian, Korean, Japanese, and mixed race) drew from a range of musical references to stage Asianness in this nightclub: from the Orientalist stylings of Madonna, to Disney’s Aladdin and Mulan, to K-pop, and video-game theme songs. The eclectic musical samplings lip-synched by the performers in Bad Beti’s provide a reminder that Orientalist visions continue to structure the perception and performance of Asian genders, but that Asian drag artists can use these familiar referents, as well as many others, to invite the audience into community and to critique the colonial discourses placed on their bodies.

SEE ALSO Bakla; Cross-Dressing in the West; Hijras; Kathoey; Performance Artists in Latin America; Thai K-Pop; Transgender Identity in Iranian Cinema; Transvestites/Transsexuals

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Dyketactics!

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Dyketactics! is an anarchist, anti-colonial, anti-racism, and anti-capitalist collective of self-identified dykes of all colors, founded in 1975 in Philadelphia. Today, Dyketactics! is most renowned as the first LGBTQI+ group in the United States to take a city to court for engaging in police brutality specifically against LGBTQI+ peoples. However, Dyketactics! engaged in direct-action struggle on many other issues, too (Bacchetta 2009).

The members of Dyketactics! were black, indigenous, Puerto Rican, racially mixed, Filipina, white, Jewish (both white and of color), and Asian and thereby, for such a small group, somewhat reflective of lesbian populations in the United States. The members ranged in age from nineteen to thirty. The majority of Dyketactics! members were raised in working-class families, but the collective also included a few members from middle-class families. During the most active period of the group between 1975 and 1978, Dyketactics! members lived together collectively in two houses in West Philadelphia. Many of them also worked together at Alexandria Books, a collectively run nonprofit feminist and queer bookstore in central Philadelphia. The housemates and other members had met in LGBTQI+ and other social movements. Most members had come out of prior social movement formations that were not LGBTQI+ specific and remained closely aligned with them or simultaneously within them: black liberation, socialist, communist or anarchist, Native American, student, Puerto Rican independence, and more. Dyketactics! was part of the most radically critical wing of LGBTQI+ movements and of many other movements against colonialism and capitalism, including Native American and black liberation movements, the movement for Puerto Rican independence, and the workers movements of the day.

Dyketactics! v. the City of Philadelphia

The major Dyketactics! struggle against police brutality began when Dyketactics! members were brutally beaten by police at a queer labor rights demonstration on 4 December 1975. Dyketactics! had been called on by its communities to participate in a LGBTQI+ demonstration during an official meeting of the city council inside City Hall to demand that Bill 1275, a citywide bill that outlawed antigay discrimination, be passed. The bill had been
brought up for many years in city council and had been dismissed every time without discussion. With the hope of preventing this from reoccurring, many LGBTQI+ organizations came together to watch over the process. The plan was to sit in the public audience section of the city council meeting room with banners indicating a strong LGBTQI+ presence. The night before the session, Dyketactics! members had created two large banners: “You Will Never Have the Comfort of Our Silence Again!” and “Dykes Ignite.” That day, they marched together to City Hall and entered the building and then the council session room, holding the banners.

The council session room was filled with LGBTQI+ activists. It was also heavily attended by journalists. It was guarded” by Philadelphia’s Civil Defense Squad (CDS), a special militarized contingent of “riot police” in Philadelphia that had been created by the then right-wing mayor Frank Rizzo, who was formerly the police chief of Philadelphia. Midway into the meeting, the bill came up. The city council voted once again not to bring it to the floor for discussion. When that decision was announced, demonstrators began chanting “Free Bill 1275,” while Dyketactics! members lifted the group's banners. With the first cries, the CDS moved in, targeted Dyketactics! members one by one, and brutally beat them up. Sometimes it took four or five CDS men to control one Dyketactics! member. Dyketactics! members defended themselves but also fought back. The CDS men violently dragged wounded Dyketactics! members outside the session room, down a long hallway, and threw some of them separately into smaller rooms. Eventually most Dyketactics! members, albeit having sustained significant injuries, found their way into the same part of the hallway. Other Dyketactics! members arrived on the scene and raised a giant witch puppet that belonged to the theater group Bread and Puppets in which Dyketactics! had allies. Dyketactics! members began screaming shrill curses against lesbophobia, the bill, and the CDS, refusing to be stopped by the CDS violence. Soon the CDS members reassembled, formed a circle, moved in on the Dyketactics! members, beat them again, and then dragged them down Philadelphia City Hall’s four flights of stone steps. At that point, the most injured Dyketactics! members were rushed to the hospital.

Within one week, six of the Dyketactics! members who had been most severely beaten filed a lawsuit against the City of Philadelphia for lesbophobic police brutality. They wrote a press release to explain what had happened and why they were bringing charges. This was the first case ever in the history of the United States of LGBTQI+ people taking a city to court for police brutality specifically against queers. The Dyketactics! six plaintiffs were Paola Bacchetta, Sherrie Joyce Cohen, Kathy Hogan, Linda Norwood, Sharon Owens, and Barbara Lipschutz (later Barbara Ruth). The trial for the case known as Dyketactics et al. v. Fencl et al. (Dyketactics! v. the City of Philadelphia) took place in the fall of 1976. It received much press and television coverage. The trial became a spectacle of lesbophobia, as the CDS’s lawyers worked to discredit every Dyketactics! member and to construct the CDS members as heroes. But the trial was also a spectacle of dyke resistance. The “Dyketactics! Six” and other Dyketactics! members arrived together in court each day chanting and
singing songs of resistance. They sat together in solidarity in the courtroom. When it became clear that there was no chance to win the trial (and the lawsuit did end up failing), the Dyketactics! Six began to use the trial’s publicity to do political work for the LGBTQI+ community and communities of color. For instance, in their testimony, as well as in interviews, they included statistics about crimes against LGBTQI+ people and about police brutality against people of color. These points ended up in the media, reaching a large audience.

During and following the trial, as a result of the extensive publicity in the media, members were marked, followed, and persecuted by a whole range of parties. Many were harassed in the streets, on public transportation, and elsewhere in public spaces. Some were framed on false charges and in some cases incarcerated. One, Bacchetta, was pursued on false charges for supporting Assata Shakur, a black liberation movement political prisoner, and eventually ended up forced into political exile in France.

**Other Actions**

Dyketactics!’s political actions are too numerous to list here (for more information, see Ruth 2009; Bacchetta 2009). Across their many actions, Dyketactics! centrally denounced Native American genocide and the ongoing conditions of native peoples; antiblack racism and racist violence, deprivation of queer labor rights, violence against women, the racial politics of sterilization, inaccessibility of abortion and contraception, class inequalities, the capitalist and racist destruction of the environment and all living beings, and racism within the women’s and LGBTQI+ movements. Some examples of Dyketactics! actions include a series of direct-action protests at the 1976 Bicentennial held in Philadelphia, including radical dyke theater and a demonstration to denounce the Bicentennial as a colonial, racist, and misogynistic event; a Philadelphia citywide women workers general strike; solidarity work on behalf of the anti–Vietnam War political prisoner Susan Saxe and Shakur; the liberation and rehousing (back with their mothers) of children of lesbians awarded by the lesbophobic, heteropatriarchal state to fathers; a protest to support a lesbian high school student who was harassed at school; high-profile protests against snuff films in which women actors were abused and killed; support for the struggles of sex workers, including those mobilized by the well-known sex-worker activist Margo St. James; and the organization of an entire neighborhood by Dyketactics! members living in the collective Samson Street (West Philadelphia) to protest horrific housing conditions perpetuated by their common slum landlord.

Dyketactics! also worked creatively to construct dyke music, poetry, theater, and dyke spaces. Some members were part of the Philadelphia theater group Rites of Women. Most members did street theater together as part of Dyketactics! political actions. Indeed, in an early press release, Dyketactics! affirms that the collective was seeking to “ignite the imagination” of the LGBTQI+ community (Ruth 2009). The group’s writings were published
in Philadelphia’s *Hera* and other lesbian and feminist newspapers of the day, including *Lesbian Connection, Majority Report, and Off Our Backs*.

**Political Significance**

Dyketactics! was a path breaker in several areas. Historically, the 1975–1976 Dyketactics! trial marks the first time ever that LGBTQI+ people took the city to court for police brutality specifically against queers. Dyketactics! was against prisons, and therefore did not demand prison sentences for the accused police officers. Instead the group demanded that the city recognize police brutality against lesbians and other queers, and provide financial compensation that Dyketactics! would donate to struggles of the group’s choice.

Beyond the trial, another leading aspect of Dyketactics! was its development of a specifically lesbian- and queer-situated critical analysis of settler colonialism, genocide, slavery, racism, and capitalist exploitation. The group incarnated a heterogeneity of racialized, class, and gendered positionalities and worked toward the inseparability of LGBTQI+ liberation with all the liberation movements of the day. For Dyketactics!, every liberation issue was always already a lesbian and queer issue, and every lesbian and queer issue required an analysis in which colonialism, racism, and capitalism were central factors.

Locally, in Philadelphia, Dyketactics! drew links between relations of power, subaltern conditions and subjects, and the brutalities of police repression. The Dyketactics! trial became a coalitional site that brought together in the same space some of the most radical Philadelphia lesbian and queer activists of the day, including Tommi Avicolli Mecca (Radical Faeries and the Gay Liberation Front) and Cei Bell (black trans struggles).

**Afterlife**

After 1978, under the pressure of repression, Dyketactics! members were forced to disperse, and the group could no longer meet regularly. Many Dyketactics! members remain political activists and *artivists*, in Philadelphia, elsewhere in the United States, and internationally. For example, one Dyketactics! Six member, Owens, a legal assistant and longtime black movement activist, worked on the defense team of surviving members of the black liberation and anti–police brutality group MOVE, after MOVE’s group home was bombed from the air in 1985 by the Philadelphia mayor’s office, killing eleven members including five children. Hogan became a lawyer; she gathered and digitized the constitutions of all native nations in the United States and made them collectively available on the internet so that the nations could learn from each other how to strengthen their individual constitutions to better protect their sovereignty. She also engaged in a large amount of pro bono legal work for people in poverty. Barbara Ruth, a widely published poet, became a leader in the queer disability movement. Cohen, also a lawyer, walked on the Longest Walk organized by the American Indian Movement, remained active in
LGBTQI+ organizing, worked closely with black liberation movements and workers' unions, and twice ran for the Philadelphia city council. Bacchetta, a sociologist and professor in the Department of Gender and Women’s Studies at the University of California, Berkeley, published widely on social movements. She continued as an activist in decolonial queer of color and anti-racism movements in the United States and France.

Beyond the Dyketactics! Six, another member, Monica A. Hand (1952–2016), an accomplished poet and activist, was part of Cave Canem and Black Lives Matter. She was the author of *me and Nina* (2012) and *The DiVida Poems* (2018). Julie Blackwomon is a widely published poet and fiction writer. Some of her short stories appeared in her book *Voyage Out 2* (1990). She also continued to work with prisoners. Chea Villanueva became a fiction writer, publishing *Jessie's Song, and Other Stories* (1995) and the novel *Bulletproof Butches* (1997). Pauline Miriam became founder and owner of Hot Flash, a company that organizes massive parties for lesbians in major cities, thereby building broad community. Many Dyketactics! members continue to communicate almost daily thanks to a (private) Dyketactics! Facebook group. The collective also holds in-person group reunions in Philadelphia every few years.

**SEE ALSO** *Combahee River Collective; Daughters of Bilitis; Lavender Menace*

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Ecology and Environmental Issues and Activism

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The intersection between LGBTQ and environmental activism.

A number of monographs and anthologies published in the first two decades of the twenty-first century attest to growing scholarly interest in bringing together queer and environmental studies (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 2010; Seymour 2013). While gender is increasingly used as an analytic frame in discussions of climate change (see reports from the United Nations Environment Programme and the Sierra Club’s Gender, Equity, and Environment Program for examples), sexuality has less often been addressed in environmental and sustainability studies. For instance, the fourth edition (2011) of Benjamin Kline’s First along the River: A Brief History of the U.S. Environmental Movement makes no mention of lesbian or gay environmentalism in spite of the simultaneous emergence of the environmental movement and the gay rights movement. The first Earth Day was celebrated on 22 April 1970, less than a year after the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City, which inspired annual gay pride parades around the globe. The 1970s and 1980s saw a proliferation of environmental organizations such as Greenpeace (founded in 1971) and gay rights groups such as the International Gay Association (1978; now known as the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association).

Some have attributed this seeming dearth in LGBTQ environmental history and scholarship to denaturalizing tendencies in queer theory, a field steeped in antifoundationalism and wary of biological determinism, the belief that human behavior is innate and rooted in biology (Seymour 2013). When for so long queer people and practices have been characterized as “unnatural,” as is evident in the phrase “crimes against nature” in antisodomy and antibuggery laws, it is unsurprising that queer theorists and LGBTQ-identified people have maintained a healthy suspicion of “the natural.” Early scholarship specifically attuned to queerness and nature focused on how rhetoric of “the natural” has been used against marginalized groups—indigenous peoples, women, people of color, and queers. For example, in “Toward a Queer Ecofeminism” (1997), Greta Gaard examines the social construction of “the natural” in Christianity and colonialist rhetoric. Deploying a queer ecofeminist lens, she elucidates “the ways queers are feminized, animalized, eroticized, and naturalized in a culture that devalues women, animals, nature, and sexuality” (119). Gaard’s observations have served as a touchstone for more recent intersectional queer environmental studies.
Just as feminist theory has experienced renewed interest in the natural sciences, especially pertaining to climate change and the Anthropocene (what some call the current, human-dominated geological period), queer studies has increasingly turned its attention to the ecological. Beyond discursive analyses of “the natural,” interdisciplinary scholarship in queer environmental studies has explored topics ranging from “queer” animals to the “eco-(hetero)-normativity” found in many conventional environmental campaigns, such as antitoxics discourse that doggedly insists on a dyad of sexual difference and traffics in eugenics rhetoric (Di Chiro 2010). Sexual politics and the politics of the natural have also informed one another when it comes to the regulation of natural spaces. For example, in the United States, male homosexuality became associated with urban degeneracy and was one of several factors spurring the national parks movement, which aimed to reignite masculine vigor and restore national character (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson 2010) while also justifying the relocation of indigenous peoples (Taylor 2016). At the same time, urban green spaces such as parks became well-known and heavily policed sites for gay cruising. Although LGBTQ communities are often associated with metropolitan areas, contemporary ethnographies of rural LGBTQ life demonstrate that bars, community centers, and communes have also been sites of queer resistance (Gray 2009; Herring 2010; Gray, Johnson, and Gilley 2016).
LGBTQ Back-to-the-Land Communities

Many women’s land communes in the United States were founded in the 1970s as part of a burgeoning lesbian separatist movement that coincided with growing environmental activism. “Lesbian nation,” one of numerous ideologies circulating at this time, entailed women establishing their own, nonpatriarchal culture, which included alternative economies, such as barter systems and skill sharing, cooperative childcare initiatives, and communes. Some lesbians took this attempt at “nationhood” literally by joining so-called land dyke communities. Ethnographic studies of these groups have centered on southern Oregon (Sandilands 2002); however, primary materials collected in the anthology Lesbian Land (Cheney 1985) confirm that these back-to-the-land communities existed throughout the United States and included temporary inhabitants from outside the United States. Much of what is known about this period in lesbian history comes from reader-written periodicals such as Maize: A Lesbian Country Magazine, WomanSpirit, and Amazon Quarterly, which circulated between these rural communities.

These periodicals are rife with ecological imagery and nature-based spiritual practices. They also shed light on the environmental positions held by many of these groups. For example, in “A Country Lesbian Manifesto,” the authors explain that “a lifestyle in which you must keep yourself warm, fed, and clean without central heating, plumbing, or plentiful jobs becomes a gratifying reinforcement of self-respect and strength. Which is for us a step in learning to live as a positive contributor to the environment around us” (Sankey and Benewicz 1973, 20–21). The yoking of environmental stewardship with self-sufficiency evident here recurs throughout this branch of 1970s lesbian-feminist thought.

One of the more well-known communities, OWL Farm (later known as the Oregon Women’s Land Trust), explicitly outlined its desire to be an “ecologically sound land-based community” in its charter, which documented its commitment “to preserve land and protect it from speculation and over-development, and to foster the recognition of land as a sacred heritage and resource belonging to all” (quoted in Cheney 1985, 158). Most of these back-to-the-land initiatives were short lived because of financial constraints and the challenges of shared governance; however, the development of Lesbian Natural Resources, a nonprofit established in 1991 to support lesbian land projects, as well as the persistence of several of these communities today, attest to the ongoing legacy of “land dyke” culture.

Another queer back-to-the-land group that emerged around this time is the Radical Faeries, an international network of gay and queer-identified beings, chiefly male bodied, for whom nature worship and nature-based ritual are a central part of their amorphous spiritual practice. On Labor Day weekend in 1979, gay activists Harry Hay, Don Kilhefner, and Mitch Walker hosted “A Spiritual Conference for Radical Faeries” at the Sri Ram Ashram, a desert sanctuary near Tucson, Arizona. Although there were proto-Faerie gatherings in the United States and Europe prior to 1979, Hay, a veteran gay rights advocate, is consistently credited
with introducing and popularizing the moniker Radical Faerie. Hay coupled *radical,* meaning “root,” “essence,” and “politically extreme,” with *faerie* (also spelled “fairy” and “fairie”), an insulting epithet hurled at gay men but also a synonym for sprites and nature spirits.

In the face of internalized homophobia and the devastating effects of the AIDS epidemic, Faeries and their allies sought solace in the secluded enclaves of Wolf Creek, Oregon, and Short Mountain, Tennessee. These sanctuaries are still operational today as are Faerie communes in Canada, Great Britain, France, and Australia. Annual Faerie gatherings occur around the world. For example, in August 2017 the Global Gathering of Radical Fairies, Friends, and Allies met at Featherstone Castle in Northumberland, United Kingdom. The event website underscores the group’s commitment to environmental stewardship: “We meet to deepen connections with each other and the earth and to celebrate the emergence of queer people as storytellers, rite preservers, ceremonial leaders, soul healers, community builders and transformation agents for the whole world” (*Radical Faeries of Albion* 2017). Another global Faerie gathering was slated for February 2019 near Phuket, Thailand.

Radical Faeries, lesbian separatists, and ecofeminists (ecofeminism being a branch of feminism that recognizes connections between patriarchy's degradation of the environment and its oppression of women and other marginalized groups) have rightfully been criticized for culturally appropriating indigenous imagery and practices (*Sturgeon* 1997; *Morgensen* 2009). While recognizing the implications of nonnative and predominantly white American men attempting to free “an indigenous gay nature by briefly removing to the rural and natural sites that code as indigenous in a settler society,” Scott Lauria Morgensen’s ethnographic work on the Radical Faeries nonetheless leads him to perceive their culture as “a creative mediation of the racial, national, and colonial conditions of sexuality” (2009, 91). Radical Faerie writings and interviews reveal that some Faeries were aware of the histories of colonization and imperialism (and the role of hegemonic masculinity therein), as well as their liminal position as both products of settler society and its exiles, particularly at the onset of the AIDS epidemic. In fact, exchanges in Faerie periodicals demonstrate that drawing inspiration from indigenous sources was a point of contention in debates surrounding Faerie spirituality, which prompted some Radical Faerie communities to consult and collaborate with Native Americans and two-spirit persons in the 1990s. Nevertheless, queer environmental studies and environmental studies more generally still have much to learn from indigenous climate justice scholarship, which perceives environmental injustice as a consequence of settler colonialism (*Whyte* 2017).

Relatedly, Jia Tan employs the term *queer transversals* as a way to think “through transnational alliances that go beyond the binaries of West/East or white/indigeneity” and to encourage dialogue between indigenous sexuality studies and area studies—in this case,
Asian sexuality studies (2017, 138). Examining the Beijing International Film Festival’s pragmatic deployment of the term ku’er (derived from the English word queer), which unlike tongxinglian (or homosexual) is less likely to raise the alarms of government officials, Tan argues that “both the essentializing of ‘cultural specificity’ and the accusation of ‘westernization’ ignore the complex process of circulation and the importance of strategic appropriation in China” and elsewhere (144). In other words, understanding sexualities in non-Western cultures only through a culturally specific lens of authenticity or, conversely, presuming the passive absorption of Western lexicon risks overlooking the ways that groups actively negotiate these transnational convergences, strategically deploying (or rejecting) certain identificatory categories at certain times to achieve certain ends. These geographical and sociocultural queer transversals mirror the cellular and genetic transversals and confluences that are discussed in more detail below.

**Contemporary LGBTQ Environmentalism**

Just as gender and sexuality historically have not been the primary axes of analysis in environmental studies, environmental justice has not been a chief focus of the mainstream LGBTQ movement, which has more often been preoccupied with civil rights such as marriage equality. However, the emergence of a number of LGBTQ environmental organizations suggests that this is changing. The Queer Ecojustice Project (QEP) was founded in the spring of 2016. The organizers hope that the QEP will be a member-driven organization for queers living in rural areas, those displaced by environmental degradation and/or homophobia, and those working in environmental justice organizations. On its website, the QEP cites the “cisnormative, white supremacist, capitalist, ableist, settler-colonial heteropatriarchy system” as “the root of environmental degradation,” and the group contends that LGBTQ populations around the world are particularly vulnerable to climate change (QEP 2017).

The coalition Queers for the Climate formed ahead of the 2014 People’s Climate March in New York City. The group draws parallels between US government inaction during the AIDS crisis and the failure to address climate change today. Holding tongue-in-cheek signs such as “Save the Straights (and the planet too),” the group participates in both environmental marches and pride parades. Similarly, the nonprofit Out for Sustainability (Out4S), which was founded in 2008 and is based in Seattle, Washington, formed with the aim of bringing together LGBTQ organizations and environmental groups. Committed to service and advocacy, Out4S funds community-based service projects through Earth Gay (a play on Earth Day); Greener Pride, which promotes environmental action and sustainability at pride parades; and a biennial international conference called the Fab Planet Summit.

Another network of activists who incorporate sexuality into their environmental outreach are ecosexuals. This growing global movement eschews earlier environmental models of the earth as a mother and instead imagines the earth as a lover or partner. The term
ecosexual emerged as an identificatory category on green dating sites in the early twenty-first century as a name for someone who finds nature sensual (or even feels more sensual in nature), but the word has evolved into an environmental philosophy and activist strategy. Two of the group’s most ardent practitioners are the performance artists and activists Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens. Sprinkle and Stephens directed the film *Goodbye Gauley Mountain: An Ecosexual Love Story* (2013), which documents the impact of mountaintop removal on rural communities in West Virginia and Sprinkle and Stephens’s efforts to raise awareness about this destructive form of mining through environmental performance art. While not all ecosexuals identify as LGBTQ (Sprinkle and Stephens do), many ecosexuals hope that their unconventional activism can queer and challenge the environmentalist status quo. Presenting itself as a cause for environmental misfits—those who cannot find a home in the mainstream environmental movement—ecosexuality challenges the exclusionary and normative foundations of environmentalism.

Similarly, Laura Houlberg criticizes the environmental group Deep Green Resistance (DGR) for its “transmisogyny,” which she describes as “the confluence of misogyny (the hatred of women) and transphobia,” hate and violence “targeted toward trans women and trans feminine people” (2017, 475). The DGR aligns itself with trans-exclusive radical feminists, second-wave feminists who “[reject] the idea that trans women are women” (475). Houlberg attributes the DGR’s “green transmisogyny” to its “investment in naturalness,” which includes maintaining “the white supremacist, colonialist project of the gender binary” (477). In contrast with the DGR, Houlberg champions Trans and/or Women’s Action Camp, a weeklong trans-inclusive camp where female and genderqueer activists exchange ideas about environmental organizing and direct action.

**“Queer” Animals**

Many indigenous and non-Western cultures recognize gender diversity in nonhuman animals and humans. This is evident both in the presence of multiple genders and in the acceptance, even veneration, of individuals who encompass an amalgamation of masculine and feminine characteristics, such as the *mahu* of the Kanaka Maoli in Hawaii; the *nadleehi* and *dilbaa* of the Navajo, a Native American tribe; the *guevedoche* in the Dominican Republic; *hijras* in South Asia; the *burnesha* in Albania; and the *mashoga* in Kenya and Tanzania (*Independent Lens* 2015). This gender diversity parallels the prevalence of gender bending and shape-shifting in myths around the world: in Norse legends, the god Loki, most often deemed male, is able to transform into a woman; Hindu mythology contains several examples of gender variance among gods, as does Yoruba mythology of West Africa, which includes gods such as Mawu-Lisa, a deity consisting of both male and female elements.

By contrast, in Western cultures scholars and activists have looked to science for the prospect of “queer” animals—those who participate in same-sex acts and child-rearing, as
well as asexual, bisexual, trans, and intersex animals—to counter the supposed unnaturalness of homosexuality and gender nonconformity. Queer science studies offers an interdisciplinary corrective to heteronormative presumptions in animal studies manifested by biologists who dismiss same-sex encounters between nonhuman animals as anomalies. Joan Roughgarden’s *Evolution’s Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People* (2004) critiques the English naturalist Charles Darwin’s (1809–1882) sexual selection theory and illustrates the way heteronormativity colors how scientists interpret the behavior of nonhuman animals, including underreporting same-sex activity and pairings in certain animal populations. Roughgarden extends her illumination of sexual diversity in nonhuman animals to humans as well, challenging dichotomous understandings of sex and gender that underpin the life sciences. Examples of “queer” animals found in both scholarly and mainstream news sources include female-female mounting in Japanese macaques; bisexuality in the early life of male fruit flies; the polyamorous sexual play of bonobos; clownfish who transition from male to female; and co-parenting by male penguins, such as the highly publicized couples Roy and Silo, chinstrap penguins from New York City’s Central Park Zoo, and Stan and Olli, two king penguins and former residents of the Berlin Zoo, who have since moved to a penguin sanctuary in Hamburg. The 2006 *Against Nature?* exhibit at the Naturhistorisk Museum in Oslo, Norway, was the first museum exhibition to showcase animals known for homosexual activity.

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**Gay Penguins at the Bremerhaven Zoo in Germany**. As of 2016, there were three pairs of male homosexual penguins at the Bremerhaven Zoo, including the couple Sechs Punkt (Six Point) and Schraegstrich (Slash), shown here. Not only did these penguins show no interest in the female penguins, one of the pairs even coparented an orphaned chick. Evidence of queer behavior in the animal kingdom stands in contrast to
heteronormative assumptions about the unnaturalness of homosexuality.

While recognition of the diverse sexual practices and pleasures of nonhuman animals has been welcomed by many LGBTQ-identified people, activists, and academics, some scholars have warned against the anthropomorphizing of these complex and species-specific phenomena, fearing that these “queer” creatures are of interest only as justification for human queerness. Instead of taking human constructs such as “homosexual” and “gay” and applying them to animals, whose behaviors are often more complicated and dynamic than these terms imply, queer environmental celebrations of biodiversity could challenge not only how humans understand human behavior but also the many ways humans have underestimated animals and plants as cultural beings. In other words, “environmentalists and queers [and presumably queer environmentalists] can engage with accounts of the sexual diversity of animals, allowing them to complicate, challenge, enrich, and transform our conceptions of nature, culture, sex, gender, and other fundamental categories” versus merely using them as justification for human sexual practices and gender identifications (Alaimo 2010, 59).

Animal and plant life have spurred new feminist and queer inquiries into the ecological. Homages to bacteria, fungi, and a host of symbiotic relations therein are not uncommon in contemporary feminist and queer theory (Hird 2004; Haraway 2008), which looks to these nonhuman phenomena to complicate conceptions of bodies and their boundaries and to provide models of interdependence and coexistence. For example, the human body consists of 100 trillion cells, and approximately 90 percent of those cells are microorganisms such as bacteria. Facts such as this have the potential to queer how people understand their bodies, which may not be entirely their own. Along these lines, some gender and sexuality studies scholars are turning to genetics for models of “queerness.” Phenomena such as mosaicism, when a person’s cells reveal different genetic makeups or genotypes, and chimerism, when a person has two complete sets of DNA or genomes, challenge notions of the autonomous human subject by highlighting nonnormativity and “deviance” at the cellular level (Hird 2004). Dana Luciano and Mel Y. Chen, the guest editors of “Queer Inhumanisms,” a special issue of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, examine how the boundaries between the human and nonhuman “rub on, and against, each other, generating friction and leakage.” They ask, “When the ‘sub-human, in-human, non-human’ queer actively connects with the other-than-human, what might that connection spawn?” (2015, 186). Queer ecologies and LGBTQ environmentalism offer models for reimagining the world and its many inhabitants. In an era of increasing ecological destruction and uncertainty, the need for intersectional and inclusive global environmental justice doubtless becomes more urgent.

SEE ALSO Camping and Cruising Grounds; Lesbian Lands, Women's Lands, and Separatist Communes; Rural Queerness


Mortimer-Sandilands, Catriona, and Bruce Erickson, eds. *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature,

http://queerecoproject.wixsite.com/qollective


The first and only movie made in communist east-central Europe to deal centrally with the topic of lesbianism.

The film Egymásra nézve (Another way) was the first and only movie in communist Hungary and communist east-central Europe in which lesbianism plays a central role. While there have been films that featured lesbian characters, such as the Hungarian film Hangyaboly (1971; Anthill), romantic love between women had, until 1982, never been a main theme in Hungarian cinema or elsewhere behind the Iron Curtain. Egymásra nézve was based on the semiautographical novel Törvényen kívül és belül (1980; Another Love [2007]) by the Hungarian lesbian novelist Erzsébet Galgóczi (1930–1989) and was directed by Károly Makk (1925–2017). It tells a story of a tragic love affair between two women in the repressive state-socialist political system. In doing so, Makk, who was internationally recognized as one of Hungary’s most prominent filmmakers (Ház a sziklák alatt [1958], Szerelem [1971], and Macksajáték [1972]), created a movie that was groundbreaking not only for representing a lesbian love affair but also for challenging official narratives about state socialism. Egymásra nézve reflects Makk’s innovative style in his choices of milieu, humanistic approach to his characters, and orthodox technique that produced firm story lines and appealing characters (Burns 1996).

Plot Overview

Egymásra nézve begins with what is eventually revealed to be the ending of the story: the recovery of the body of Éva Szalánczky, who was shot by border guards at the Austrian-Hungarian border. The next scene shows Livia Horváth in her hospital bed with a bandage around her neck, being told by a doctor that she will never fully recover from the injuries she suffered when her husband shot her. The rest of the film sets out to explain the prelude to the tragic ending, soon to be revealed as a love story. The story takes place in 1958, two years following the Hungarian Revolution that was crushed by Soviet forces. Éva, the charismatic main character, moves from the countryside to Budapest and lands a job as a journalist at a newspaper, where she falls in love with the married Livia. She pursues her, and it is not long before Livia, whose husband is a military officer, also begins to have feelings for Éva. When Livia confesses her love for Éva to her husband, he shoots her.
Éva, played by Polish actress Jadwiga Jankowska-Cieślak (1951–), is a taboo breaker in more than one way. Not only is she explicit about her sexual orientation, but she is also openly critical of state socialism. As a journalist, her desire to tell the truth about the bureaucratic corruption and forced collectivization in a Hungarian town ends her journalistic career. Éva’s defiance in her reference to the 1956 Hungarian uprising as a revolution rather than a counterrevolution (which was the official interpretation until 1989) is a poignant reminder of the limits of personal integrity in a dictatorship. Éva’s unwillingness to compromise her principles was more disturbing to contemporary critics than her openly lesbian identity. Indeed, over the course of the film, Éva’s lesbianism and her ideological commitment to telling the truth and nothing but the truth serve as metaphors for the political and cultural intolerance of state socialism not only during the 1950s but also in the 1980s. Once lesbianism functions as a representation of vulnerability (personal or political), it loses its particular significance as a nonnormative sexual identity (Burns 1996).

The Hungarian Context

Although homosexuality had been decriminalized in Hungary in 1961, lesbians and gay men were barely tolerated by the communist regime and faced entrenched homophobia. Nothing more powerfully demonstrates the depth of homophobia than the fact that neither of the actresses playing the two main characters of the film were Hungarian. That it was too risky for Hungarian actresses to play lesbian roles reveals the extent to which homosexuality (both male and female) was understood by authorities and the public alike as a medical and social pathology. Throughout state socialism there was a collective silence around homosexuality that was as true for state-run public discourse as it was for private discourse with family and friends.

In this context, Egymásra nézve was transformative in providing a platform for talking about homosexuality and, in particular, female homosexuality. In the words of a contemporary lesbian, the film represented “a great breakthrough” in public discourse about gayness (Borgos 2011, 49). Not only was it the first time that same-sex love (male or female) was the subject of a movie, but Egymásra nézve also initiated the first public discussion about lesbianism since the 1920s. To be sure, the discourse about homosexuality and love between women on the radio, on television, and in the printed press reflected the heteronormative and homophobic attitudes of both the larger public and the commentators (all of whom were male) of the state-censored media. People struggled to provide a definition for what most agreed was a nonnormative and unfortunate phenomenon. Yet, there were also some attempts to frame lesbianism not as a moral or medical pathology but rather as a different kind of love that deserved to be tolerated even if it was not entirely understood.
Significance for Hungarian Lesbians

For contemporary Hungarian lesbians, *Egymásra nézve* was an unprecedented milestone. It served as a new foundation for the formation of lesbian identity and subculture. The portrayal of a self-declared lesbian character who had no shame about her sexual orientation was inspirational. In reality, the idea of a proud and out lesbian could have been only a fantasy for most lesbians at the time. By the 1980s, lesbians had a small clandestine network located in Budapest. While known to the authorities, it remained under the radar for most Hungarians and even to many lesbians. According to interviews conducted with lesbians who saw the film, which “everyone watched about thirty times,” *Egymásra nézve* was not simply empowering personally, but it also opened a new avenue to connect lesbians with each other and to expand the community ([Borgos 2011, 187](#)). The use of the phrase “Egymásra nézve” in the personal advertisement sections of the newspapers became an important code for lesbians to find potential love interests and community.

That one of the protagonists was a married woman, moreover, had added potency for contemporaries, many of whom were trapped within the prescribed heteronormative ideas of state socialism: heterosexual marriage and family. That Livia falls in love with Éva and leaves her husband was both validating and encouraging for lesbians who had left their husbands or were considering leaving them. The performance of Polish actress Grażyna Szapołowska (1953–), who plays Livia, was well received not only among Hungarian lesbians. Szapołowska’s portrayal of the transformation of a heterosexual woman living in a conventional marriage into a woman who could desire another woman and contemplate divorce earned her the Best Actress award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1982.

A Stereotypical yet Authentic Portrayal of Lesbian Romance

In many ways, the representation of lesbian romance in the film reflects an age-old stereotype of a butch-femme relationship. Éva has a masculine appearance and acts as the active pursuer of the relationship; Livia’s appearance is unmistakably feminine, and she longs for a kind of personal attention that she could never have gotten from her husband. The ending of the women’s relationship also fits into a long tradition of artistic Western representations of romantic homosexual relationships (e.g., Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* [1928]). Here, too, love ends in tragedy and the death of one of the characters. Livia ultimately rejects Éva and her own homosexual desire, while Éva intentionally lets herself be shot by the border guards. That in the end Livia wants to be with her husband despite being permanently damaged by him is an unmistakable sign of a return to normalcy.

At the same time that the film conforms to a conventional treatment of homosexual themes,
the romantic relationship between the two women is portrayed as authentically as any classical heterosexual love story. The intimate moments between the two women in public spaces, their shy eye contact, touching of hands, and eventual kissing are effective in portraying the spark and fruition of love between them. The same moments also reveal the power of the Hungarian state to encroach on one’s personal life. For instance, when the two women’s kissing on a bench draws the attention of policemen, Livia, as a married woman, is threatened with exposure to her boss and husband. Éva, however, is taken to the police. And as she protests her inhumane treatment, the policemen tell her, “We are not in America.” In these moments, the film is unequivocal in exposing the patriarchal nature of state socialism and its consequences for people whose love falls outside of state-sanctioned heteronormativity. In the sex scene that takes place in the confines of the home, the nakedness of the women and the sexual acts between them are suggestive but not graphically depicted. While the sensual moments between the women are aestheticized, the male-female relationship is portrayed in a much more naturalistic manner (Feldmann 2015).

_Egymásra nézve_’s depiction of lesbians and lesbian romance was an early representative of more positive portrayal of gays and lesbians even within the western European and American context. Considering that mainstream east-central European cinema, with some notable exceptions, has avoided and continues to avoid the subject of homosexuality, the legacy of the film is even more significant. Ongoing and even increased homophobia in Hungary and the former Eastern bloc after 1989 mean that LGBTQ-themed films remain a rarity and are mostly produced as independent films. Most mainstream lesbian films—which tend to be rare even within LGBTQ-themed films, such as _Csókkal és körömmel_ (1994; _Kisses and scratches_) by the Hungarian director György Szomjas or _Diši duboko_ (2004; _Take a deep breath_) by the Serbian director Dragan Marinković—continue to represent lesbians and queer female sexuality as something to be pitied and tolerated at best, and as something to be condemned at worst.

SEE ALSO _Hena Maysara (2007; Khaled Youssef); Mädchen in Uniform (1931; Leontine Sagan)_

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Einayim Pkuhot (2009; Haim Tabakman)

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Since the 1990s, Israeli cinema has shown a growing interest in the life of the Jewish religious communities, especially the Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) strand. The harbingers of this trend often conveyed a stereotypical, demeaning, and even ludicrous depiction of the Haredi community (Peleg 2016). Conversely, the new wave of films made about this and other religious communities in the early twenty-first century—albeit still populated mostly by "outsiders" (secular filmmakers and actors)—renders rich narratives and sensitive characters that the nonreligious viewer is apt to be empathetic toward rather than scorn. Homosexual relationships in the Haredi community may easily lend themselves to a voyeuristic and overdramatized cinematic treatment. However, Haim Tabakman's debut film Einayim Pkuhot (2009; Eyes wide open) delves into a story of homosexual desire not to elicit a titillating effect but, by situating it in the midst of communal engagements and family life, to patiently explore it within the context of a particular socioreligious milieu.

Einayim Pkuhot is set in the Haredi community of Mea Shearim in Jerusalem. After the death of his father, Aharon returns to his family's butcher shop and assumes his father's duties there. A young man, Ezri, appears at the shop's doorstep on the first day Aharon reopens it, and Aharon later offers this odd young vagabond a job as his helper and an available room over his butcher shop. Ezri, the viewer later learns, came to Jerusalem to find a yeshiva young man who used to be his lover but is avoiding him now. Ezri makes advances on Aharon, who initially resists the temptation but then succumbs and finds himself all consumed in this love affair to the point of compromising his reputation in this closely knit community and his place as the head of the family with a wife, Rivka, and four children. Eventually, pressure from the rabbi who urges him to send Ezri away, the growing risk of becoming an outcast within his own community, and the signs of the detrimental effects of his relationship with Ezri on his family prove to be too onerous, and Aharon confesses to his wife that he is ready to resume the life expected of a devoted man in the Haredi community, the way it was before his love entanglement with that young man. The film ends with the return of Aharon to the spring on the outskirts of Jerusalem. As he did before when he accompanied Ezri to that spring, Aharon removes his clothes and submerges in the water; this time, however, he is not seen surfacing.
Body and Impurity

It is a truism in contemporary scholarship that knowledge is inscribed on the body and that, in turn, the body generates knowledge. And yet, in addressing the centrality and the agency of the bodies in *Einayim Pkuhot*, the theologian Stefanie Knauss (2013) employs the term *eigensinn*, which in this context she translates as “stubbornness” and the “will of their own.” It is as if this film proffers a schism between the body and the volition of the mind and eschews the possibility for symbiosis between the two. The body/flesh, with its desires, emotions, pains, and *jouissance* (physical pleasure), defies asceticism, taboos, and conventions, and, ultimately, it upsets the conscious will. In this film, unlike in most narrative films, none of the characters gains raised understanding or consciousness as the result of the narrative junctures and developments. The title, *Einayim Pkuhot* (*Eyes Wide Open*), is therefore deceiving; seemingly it suggests a work that focuses on the ocular or, by extension, with regard to the topic at hand, on cognition, awareness, and acceptance of the homosexual self. And yet, *Einayim Pkuhot* is not a tale of “coming out of the closet.”

The body and flesh/meat (the Hebrew word *basar* stands for both and makes no distinction between the two) are thematically and visually the main motif in *Einayim Pkuhot*. Throughout the film, images of blood (e.g., Aharon cuts his finger as he uses the meat-grinding machine together with Ezri) and the almost tactile presence of meat—slaughtered, cut, sold, eaten—render the film’s color scheme, where the redness or pinkness of the meat/blood/flesh stands in contrast to the otherwise dull, at times almost monochrome, color palette of the mise-en-scène. The film’s first image is of a locked butcher shop (recognized by the Hebrew sign *Itliz*) as Aharon is trying to break into it. A poster on the shop’s front announces the death of Aharon’s father—Menachem Fleischman (the surname meaning, literally, “man of flesh/meat” in Yiddish and German). In a lengthy scene after he breaks into the shop, Aharon throws away rotted meat that he finds in the walk-in freezer. From the outset then, the film thrusts into center stage the flesh/meat/body triad and imbues it with odious connotations.
Jewish traditions, and specifically rabbinic texts referencing the body, do not unequivocally shun the body, and, in contradistinction to various religious doctrines, they do not proffer that the body should, ipso facto, be equated with sin. And yet, the body, and particularly the functioning of its orifices, is engaged in activities that are deemed shameful. In a 2013 article, the philosopher Yakir Englander and the legal scholar Orit Kamir demonstrate that for the Rabbis (Ḥazal) the body, created in the image of God, “is not the abject [serah odef] that one should minimize or even eliminate altogether, rather, it is what constitutes us” (60; translation by author). But then the rabbinical reference to the penis as mevushim, a derivative of the word busha (shame), signifies an intrinsic connection between the male sex organ and shame (Englander and Kamir 2013).

In consideration of shame and modesty, Haredi Jews are required to fully cover their bodies in public. Men in the Haredi communities are black frocked, and only the man’s hands and bearded face are exposed. This is precisely what makes the images of male nudity in the film so striking in the sexual encounters between the two men, as when Ezri and Aharon (and, at the film’s end, Aharon by himself) submerge themselves totally naked in the spring on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

In conventional Jewish texts, homosexuality (defined by the act and not intent or desire) is couched in terms of abomination. Unlike the equivocal treatment of the body in those texts,
the act of sexual relations between men in the Hebrew Bible is categorically a sin and, according to the book of Leviticus (18:22 and 20:13), is punishable by death. The strands of odious meat/flesh/body and of homosexuality converge in the film’s various registers—narrative, visuals, and dialogue. Immediately following the scene where Aharon engages in the act of cleaning/purifying the shop, the good-looking young Ezri appears at the shop’s front door. Thematically then, the removal of the rotted meat concurs with the appearance of a different “nonkosher flesh”—that of the homosexual Ezri. Later in the film, when members of the “modesty guards/patrols” visit the meat shop after rumors of the forbidden relationship spread, their leader tells Aharon that if he does not rid his place of Ezri they will make it public that he “feeds the people with forbidden food.” Toward the film’s end, a Haredi man reads aloud the *pashkevilm* (broadside posters) that, without specifically referencing Aharon and Ezri, warn against the newly revealed abomination in the midst of the community and the risk involved—“Who knows what unholy meat is being prepared in our butcheries?!?” Then, a passerby mutters “trefa”—the Hebrew word for meat that is ritually unfit for eating—toward Ezri and Aharon, who walk behind him. Thus, once again, the film is making explicit the connection between the meat/flesh/body (odious, rotted, nonkosher) and homosexuality.

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Aharon (left) and Ezri Bathe Naked in the Spring in Einayim Pkuhot (2009). The scenes in the spring defy a facile association of water with purification or cleansing.

If water in Judaism, as in various other faiths, is often associated with purification or cleansing (e.g., the *mikveh*—the Jewish ritual bath), in this film water in its various forms—
rain, water pipes, and the spring—is linked to what is associated from the viewpoint of the Haredi community with sinful and repugnant engagements or woeful occurrences. The film opens with a prolonged pattering sound of rain over a dark screen; only later does the viewer see Aharon attempting unsuccessfully to open the old lock of the butcher shop with his key. Aharon's first act even before entering the shop is to unpeel from the shop's front the poster announcing the death of his father, which he then folds carefully, brings inside, unfolds again, and spreads on a chair to let dry. This establishes early on the meeting of death (rather than life and purification) and rain/water. The rain gradually gains an uncanny presence as it accompanies the film almost throughout. Despite the pouring rain when Ezri first appears at the shop's doorstep, strangely, he is well lit by what looks like a sunray. Likewise, it can be gathered from a comment Rivka makes to her husband, saying she is glad they reopened the shop before the High Holidays, that the film is likely situated in late summer (or possibly very early fall) when constant heavy rains are an extreme rarity in Jerusalem. Yet again, this somewhat mythic and unrealistic use of rain is not meant to suggest the cleansing of the soul but to accompany the falling of the film's main character. An outdoor water pipe bursts open when Ezri is attacked by his former gay lover and his yeshiva friends. Likewise, the breaking of the water pipe in the narrow alley is associated with disorder and violence—again, a far cry from the cathartic meaning water usually has in various faiths.

Seemingly though, as suggested by Nir Cohen (2012), the act of Aharon's submersion in the spring outside Jerusalem, once in response to Ezri's urging and then by himself at the end of the film, signifies that Aharon is experiencing a spiritual (rather than strictly religious) purification. A close reading of the filmic text, however, challenges this facile interpretation. This is most patent in the sequencing of the shots that includes an extended close-up of wasps buzzing inside a clear ziplock bag. There is first an establishing shot of Ezri with his back to the camera as he is taking off his underwear before taking a dip in a spring. A cut to a close-up of Aharon sitting away from the spring shows him following Ezri with his eyes and then, possibly out of modesty or embarrassment, moving his head sideways and looking down to realize that next to him is a bag with wasps. If anything, this juxtaposition of images exudes a sense of unease for both Aharon and the viewer rather than a sacred or spiritual state. Likewise, if the erotic encounter with Ezri in the spring is supposed to connote purification, then Aharon's return to the spring by himself in the film's final scene is puzzling because Aharon has just put an end to his relationship with Ezri and expressed his wish to Rivka to resume a normal life. Whether the submersion at the film's end is interpreted as an attempt by Aharon to relive the memories of bathing with Ezri before he commits to the mundane traditional family life and a return to the Haredi community as a dutiful member or, alternatively, because the film’s last shot does not show him resurfacing, as an act of committing suicide, these motivations and acts can hardly be associated with spiritual purification.
When Ezri enters Aharon’s butcher shop immediately following the scene depicting the trashing of the rotted meat, there are two contrasts being made: not only the odious and the abject with this young man’s good looks but also the death of the father with the promise of youth. Indeed, one of the most significant and radical themes in this film is the place Ezri takes as a substitute father. Initially, one would not deem Ezri a possible father-figure role model in the context of the Jewish Haredi community: he is feminine both in looks and comportment, free spirited, not a dedicated avrek (yeshiva student), a vagabond, and without family (although the film reveals various stories from his past, there is no mention of Ezri’s family). Likewise, while Aharon’s father was a respected member of this Haredi community, Ezri is an oddball who manages to unnerve nearly everyone who has an encounter with him, save for Aharon and his wife, Rivka. Yet, considerations of scholarship on the construction of Jewish and Zionist masculinity and of the film’s particular Ezri/Menachem Fleischman pairing offer a radically different view of Ezri’s place in this film.

In his seminal work Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Homosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man (1997), Daniel Boyarin argues that in contradistinction to the Zionist rendering of the new Jew (and in contradistinction to Sigmund Freud’s construction of the male psyche and sexuality) as one who is connected to the land, audacious, and, most importantly, hypermasculine, in the Ashkenazi diasporic tradition the ideal man was appreciated for his genteel comportment, his cerebral aptitude, and his tenderness—and, generally, for what are now often associated with feminine qualities. In Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema (2004), Raz Yosef attends to the highly constructed nature of the idealized/idolized Zionist body. For Knauss (2013), Einayim Pkuhot offers an alternative to this form of venerated masculinity.

Einayim Pkuhot points to a structural displacement/replacement of the father by Ezri. Even before Ezri’s first appearance in the store that coincides with Aharon’s putting the shop in order—clearing the freezer, picking up his father’s chair that is lying sideways on the floor, probably as a result of his father’s unexpected fall, and picking up the tallit (prayer shawl) —Ezri’s arrival is anticipated, as the obituary post for Aharon’s father on the storefront is replaced by the “help wanted” sign. Oddly, when Ezri enters the shop, he touches the drying mourning poster that has the father’s name in bold letters. Taking the shop’s helper job and accepting Aharon’s invitation to stay until he finds a place (which he never does or attempts to do), Ezri makes himself at home in the father’s room upstairs. Aharon points out to Ezri that his father used to rest in this room. To Ezri’s inquiry whether he too rests here sometimes, Aharon responds, “Rest brings about idleness and idleness brings about madness,” thus implicitly putting his father and Ezri (who is in no hurry to join him in the shop downstairs) in one odd category. When Aharon is startled to hear a thumping sound
from Ezri’s/the father’s room and he rushes upstairs, he finds his father’s chair lying sideways on the floor, possibly because of a kick or push by Ezri, exactly as it was shown at the beginning of the film when Aharon first enters the shop. Furthermore, the implied smoking habit of the father (a cigarette box can be seen on the floor when Aharon enters the shop) is also significant in the film’s stratagem of replacement/displacement with regard to Ezri/the father. Other than Ezri, no other person in this film is shown to be smoking, as if to suggest that the ghost image of the father is incarnated in the young helper.

In their bedroom, following Ezri’s departure owing to his condemnation by the community and the urging from Aharon, Rivka asks her husband, “Where do you want to be?” He answers instantly, “I want to be here,” and goes on to explain away the sin as something that was forced on him from the outside: “It’s not mine. It’s not me. It’s the evil urge [yetzer ha-ra]. It’s the evil urge that took over me. I didn’t bring it into our home.” Aharon is appealing at the end of this monologue—“Protect me.” Rivka moves him closer to her, and the composition when Rivka embraces Aharon’s languid body and cradles him in her lap immediately conjures up the image of the pietà (and a play on a previous scene when Aharon holds Ezri, who had just been beaten by his former gay lover and his friends). “Protect me” can be read then as a plea for Rivka to protect him from the “evil urge” but also as a suggestion on Aharon’s part that he already lost the protection of his biological father and now he has just lost the father’s replacement. In Hebrew, ezri literally means “my help” and is often used in the Bible in the context of a supplication before God. To borrow the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan’s (1901–1981) concept of the “name of the father,” the higher and compelling authority of God/father/Ezri are all intermixed in Aharon’s positionality toward this inexorable power.

The unique construction of Ezri as a displacing father figure coincides with the film’s unconventional rendering of gay sexual roles. Aharon seems to be the more masculine and dominant figure in relation to Ezri, who also looks at least half a generation his junior. In all the intimate scenes with the two characters together in bed, it is always Aharon who is atop Ezri. But again, Einayim Pkuhot challenges these facile expectations of “top-bottom” sexual roles. As it turns out, Ezri is the more dominant figure, and there is no doubt he is the film’s protagonist (i.e., the character who motivates the narrative); this tale of homosexual relations unfolds as a result of his arrival in the Haredi community of Mea Shearim and ends owing to his departure. More importantly, in different scenes, the film employs an intriguing composition to render the power imbalance between the two main characters, which results in placing Ezri and not Aharon at the film’s center stage. The first time the viewer witnesses this is in an early conversation between Ezri, with his back to the camera, and Aharon. Because he is facing the front of the shop and the outside, Ezri is well lit and in full focus. Aharon is reflected through the shop-front glass in the dim back of the store, and his image is therefore rather grainy and out of focus. When Aharon joins Ezri on the roof’s terrace (adjacent to Ezri’s/the father’s upstairs room), one finds the same cinematic
scheme—Aharon is in the background, dimly lit and out of focus, while Ezri claims the frame's foreground. The film employs this device a third time in the yeshiva, when Ezri is slumbering in the brightly lit foreground and Aharon is seen in the somewhat ill-defined background behind all the denizens as he is entering the yeshiva.

In her analysis of *Einayim Pkuhot*, Knauss (2013) demonstrates astutely that manhood is rendered in this film in contrast to its construction in both secular Zionism and religious Judaism; the two leading characters clearly do not fit the mold of either Zionism's new Jew or the old diasporic Jew. Yet, notwithstanding the film’s unique tale of a homosexual engagement in the midst of the Haredi community of Jerusalem, it might be argued that the film's most significant feat is to transcend the confines of a gay story and its design to reiterate that one's self can never be reduced to sexuality and sexual orientation. When Rabbi Vaisben visits Aharon in his shop and shows the hooligans of the modesty guards out after they threaten Aharon, a conversation ensues between the two. The rabbi seeks to hear from Aharon why he has not driven Ezri out. Aharon calmly responds, “I feel alive. I need him…. I was dead. Now I’m alive.” Clearly, his desperation for the bond with Ezri is more than sexual. Ezri offers Aharon all that the suffocating Haredi community shuns or cannot offer. Ezri is a free-spirited and independent young man who is more passionate about drawing people's profiles (to an extent, in defiance of the religious prohibition to create figurative illustrations of humans as they are created in the image of God) than about Torah and Talmud study. Ezri brings with him an air of otherness. In an early scene when Ezri is calling his former lover from a public phone, church bells can be heard. In a different scene, when Ezri is alone on the roof, a muezzin’s prayer is heard in the background mixed with Jewish prayers from a synagogue or a yeshiva close by. These are part of Jerusalem’s sound space and definitely so in Mea Shearim, a neighborhood abutting the old city. It is as if the film offers not an eerie homoerotic fantasy that defies reality, but a reality that defies the oppressive boundaries of the self and the place and to which, like Ezri, everyone should be attuned.

**SEE ALSO** Anti-Semitism and Zionism; The Bubble (2006; Eytan Fox); Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Judaism

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Elbe, Lili (1882–1931)

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One of the first people to undergo surgical sexual transition, in 1930 and 1931, and how this example complicates assumptions about the concept of “transgender.”

Lili Elbe was born as Einar Magnus Andreas Wegener on 28 December 1882 in Vejle, Jutland, Denmark. At the turn of the century, Wegener began studying art at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, where he met his future wife, Gerda Marie Frederikke Gottlieb (1886–1940), and where he was well integrated into the artists’ milieu of the city. While he became a successful painter of Danish landscapes, Gerda painted Jugendstil (art nouveau) and art deco portraits. The Wegeners moved to Paris in 1912, becoming part of a bohemian world famous for its unconventional lifestyles. Einar had begun modeling female clothing for Gerda’s portraits, a practice that seemed in retrospect to have been a turning point on the path to establishing a feminine identity. At first only in private but later also in public, Einar began presenting as a woman and being introduced as Einar’s cousin.

Series of Transition Surgeries

The desire to become a woman led to visits to various Paris doctors, most of whom either diagnosed psychopathological illnesses, such as hysteria, or evaluated the wish to transition as a sign of homosexuality, which they viewed as an illness. Appalled by these mischaracterizations, Wegener’s quest to harmonize body and psyche took a dramatic turn after a chance meeting with the Dresden gynecologist Kurt Warnekros (1882–1949). In 1930 Wegener followed Warnekros’s advice and visited Magnus Hirschfeld’s (1868–1935) Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Science) in Berlin for the purposes of physical and psychological evaluation. The first step of this evaluation was a psychobiological questionnaire, which Hirschfeld had been developing since 1899 in order to determine the gender and sexual identities of his patients. Hirschfeld established the
existence of physical and psychological feminine traits, which he confirmed with a blood
test. A series of surgical interventions followed: first surgical castration in Berlin and then,
in Dresden, a penis amputation and other surgeries to create a vagina. The last of these
surgeries, likely an ovarian transplantation, was conducted in 1931 and was fatal,
prompting much press speculation about the cause of death.

Even before her death, news reports about how Einar Wegener had become Lili Elbe were
circulating in the Danish and German press; they implied that she was the first person to
have undergone surgical sexual transition. Yet Elbe’s later role as a key figure in trans
history is complicated by the fact that she never understood herself to be a transvestite—
the word used for all trans people since Hirschfeld coined it in 1910. She insisted that she
had been born as a camouflaged female and believed that she had not changed her sex but
had simply found ways to allow her femininity to express itself. She felt nothing but
revulsion for transvestites, whom she viewed as simply wearing costumes.

The Difficulty of Defining Sexual Transition

Despite Elbe’s self-understanding, both scholarly and popular accounts of her story have
continued to portray her as the first transsexual and a pioneer of a new trans movement.
Her case thus raised the question of how sexual transition should be defined. Does it mean
a life spent living in the social role of the “other” sex? Is it a desire for medical intervention
to alter the body? Or does it entail either the complete removal of the sexual organs of the
original sex or the construction of new genitals? Depending on the answer, many
individuals might be considered to be the first to transition, and several individuals who
underwent surgical procedures between 1910 and 1930 could lay claim to having been the
first to undergo physical transition. In other words, it is important to reject the notion that
only a complete removal of all sexual traits of the original sex and the creation of new
genitals counts as a gender transition, while also taking seriously an individual’s stated
wish to take advantage of any measures available at the time. Even if surgical intervention
is considered necessary to qualify as the first transition, then it was not Elbe who was first
but an anonymous individual treated by the psychiatrist Arthur Kronfeld (1886–1941) and
the surgeon Richard Mühsam (1872–1938) in Berlin in 1920 and 1921. However, despite
having undergone castration, the creation of a vagina, and the implantation of ovaries, this
person has not seemed appropriate as a pioneer or figure of identification because she
returned just a few months later to have reconstructive surgery on the penis and lived
thereafter as a man.

These early trans histories are difficult to investigate because European laws governing
surgery and marriage created incentives to obscure the details of the individuals’ life
stories. Despite the consent forms that Elbe and others seeking genital surgery were asked
to sign, surgeons knew that castration could be classified as illegal bodily injury under
German law and that even performing procedures classified as cosmetic surgery could
open them up to malpractice charges if the patient was unsatisfied. Those involved had every reason to cover their tracks and to be vague about medical details. As Sabine Meyer details in her meticulous 2015 investigation of Elbe’s life, in order to establish a legally plausible justification for the annulment of their marriage, Gerda Wegener had to provide the Danish Ministry of Justice with a medical opinion from Warnekros that Einar’s physical limitations made it unlikely that the marriage between the Wegeners had ever been consummated. Dissolving the marriage was, after all, necessary to allow a legal name change from Einar Wegener to Lili Elvenes—a last-minute change from “Elbe” for which no explanation has been discovered—in November 1930. (The name Elbe has been used in this entry to avoid confusion and because her legal name was never made public.) The surgery itself was possible, because German doctors had been conducting such procedures with the justification that they were the only way to prevent self-mutilation and suicide, a principle that was later enshrined in a 1931 law protecting German surgeons from prosecution.

**Representations and Misrepresentations of Elbe’s Life**

But the most important cause of misunderstanding has been the various ways that representations of Elbe’s life escaped her individual control and became sensationalized or instrumentalized for literary, media, and filmic purposes and even as a side effect of her role as a figure of positive identification for trans individuals. Constructing the story of her transition is certainly complicated by the fact that her medical files were likely destroyed in the Nazi raid on the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft in May 1933 (and subsequent book burnings) and in the bombing of Dresden in February 1945. Yet had they survived, these documents would also have been read through the lens of the complex relationship between Elbe’s subjective desires and their medical interpretation, and they would not change the fact that by the time of her death, Elbe’s story had become a media sensation with its own influence on the history of transsexuality.
In the last year of her life, Elbe sought the help of the Danish journalist, author, and translator Ernst Harthern (1884–1969; also known as Ernst Ludwig Harthern Jacobson) to compile her notes, letters, and reflections into an autobiography. The book was still not quite complete when she died, and Harthern published it in 1931 as a somewhat fictionalized biography under the Danish title Fra mand til kvinde (From man to woman) using the pseudonym Niels Hoyer. Gerda Wegener, Warnekros, and others also contributed to the writing process, making this a book with multiple authors. The later German (1932) and English (1933) versions were not only translations but revised texts. Harthern added new passages and rewrote many others in response to critiques and with the goal of convincingly establishing that Elbe had undergone “the first sex change,” as the 2004 English edition announces in its subtitle. Although Meyer has established that Elbe did authorize the Danish version of the biography and communicated extensively with Harthern about its form right up until the time of her death, changes in the later versions mean that they cannot be considered autobiographical. In sum, Elbe’s legacy cannot be understood without attention to this publication history and to its sensationalizing features.
Despite their obvious sympathy for Elbe as a person, Harthern and his literary agents had every incentive to paint her life story as unprecedented and yet comprehensible to a European public likely to be shocked by any blurring of gender boundaries and any kind of nonconforming sexual activity. *Fra mand til kvinde* thus emphasizes Elbe's desire for children as the reason for her last surgery, and it carefully negotiates the dilemma of Elbe's pre-transition sexuality with statements that adamantly deny preexisting homosexual desire. Even the twenty-first-century filmic depiction of Elbe's life, *The Danish Girl* (2015), starring Eddie Redmayne as Elbe, skirts the issue of sexual desire by failing to include a key scene from the novel on which the film is based. In David Ebershoff's *The Danish Girl: A Novel* (2000), Elbe's Parisian days include regular visits to peep shows, culminating in her seduction by another male patron while they watch a female performer. Although this scene might also be viewed as a fetishization of trans women's bodies, and though it is likely apocryphal, Ebershoff grants Elbe the sexual agency that other accounts deny her in their insistence on describing her transition in strictly binary terms and as a path to motherhood. Both film and novel also entirely ignore Elbe's fame, obscuring how media representations and prevailing gender norms continue to shape her story and influence trans lives. These issues aside, there is little doubt that Elbe has remained a symbol of trans identification to this day because of Harthern's sympathetic portrayal of her quest to become what she knew herself to be.

**SEE ALSO** Institut für Sexualwissenschaft; Transvestites/Transsexuals

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La Monja Alférez (The Lieutenant Nun) was the pseudonym given to Catalina de Erauso (1592–1650), a Basque noblewoman who lived as a man for most of her adult life. At age fifteen, she escaped from the convent in San Sebastián, Spain, where she had lived since the age of four and used the fabric of her novice's habit to sew an outfit appropriate for a young man. Before leaving port for the New World, she adopted the name Francisco de Loyola. Later, she became known as Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán as well as Antonio de Erauso. The dizzying fluctuations of names, languages, professions, garments, and personal conflicts were accompanied by a steady itinerary of geographic relocations in Europe and the New World, ultimately underscoring a fluidity of identities that resist any single fixed designation.
La Monja Alfórez (The Lieutenant Nun). Catalina de Erauso, known as La Monja Alférez, was a seventeenth-century Basque noblewoman who lived as a man and a soldier for most of their adult life.

After nearly two decades laboring in various trades, serving as a soldier for the Spanish Crown in Chile and Peru (achieving the rank of second lieutenant, in part by massacring “hostile” indigenous peoples in the name of the crown), and purportedly engaging in numerous brawls, violent crimes, gambling, and romantic intrigues, Erauso confessed that she was a woman to avoid prosecution for murder. Once Erauso submitted to a physical examination to establish both her sexual anatomy and virginity, she became the overnight sensation known as La Monja Alférez. When it was confirmed that she had not taken final vows to become a nun in San Sebastián, Erauso traveled to Spain to present petitions and testimonies documenting her military service to the Crown. The Spanish monarch Philip IV (1605–1665) subsequently granted her a soldier’s pension, and she purportedly enjoyed dispensation from Pope Urban VIII (1568–1644) to live as a man with the approbation of both church and state. In 1630 Erauso returned to the New World and spent the last twenty years of his life in Mexico working as a trader and mule driver, living as Antonio de Erauso until his death in 1650.

Life Accounts and Historical Documentation

Many different versions of Erauso’s life circulated during the seventeenth century: legal petitions, testimonies, letters, three relaciones (news pamphlets), a potentially apocryphal autobiography, literary and iconographic portraits (such as a painting by Juan van der
Hamen, produced around 1626), a popular play, and an episode from a picaresque novel (Alonso de Castillo Solórzano's Aventuras del Bachiller Trapaza [1637]). These narratives reveal a variety of identities, including rebellious nun, fearless soldier, deviant criminal, exemplary virgin, questionable womanizer, and celebrity spectacle. Despite the historical evidence related to the life of Catalina de Erauso confirming most of the military activities recorded in the memoirs (primarily from official testimonies, certifications, petitions, and letters filed on behalf of the Lieutenant Doña Catalina de Erauso), considerable mystery continues to surround Erauso. Although Erauso's autobiography was recorded as having been submitted to the publisher Bernardino de Guzmán in 1625, no autograph or original copy of this narrative has been found. The poet and author Cándido María Trigueros (c. 1737–c. 1801) owned a copy of the manuscript, which was then transcribed by the historian Juan Bautista Muñoz (1745–1799) in 1784. Muñoz's draft of the autobiography, titled Vida i sucesos de la Monja Alférez, o Alférez Catarina, Doña Catarina de Araujo [sic] doncella, natural de San Sebastián, Provincia de Guipúzcoa. Escrita por ella misma en 18 de Septiembre 1646 [sic], was, in turn, copied by others and later edited by the Basque critic Joaquín María Ferrer (1777–1861) and published for the first time in 1829 under the new title Historia de la Monja Alférez, Doña Catalina de Erauso, escrita por ella misma (Lieutenant Nun: Memoir of a Basque Transvestite in the New World [1996]). After this first publication, the autobiography was altered and translated into other languages, such as French, German, English, and eventually Basque.

There has been much academic speculation about the authorship and veracity of the autobiography. Some scholars believe that the Vida was forged using the 1625 relaciones that describe Erauso's adventures, whereas others have suggested the opposite—that the relaciones were sensationalized adaptations of the original Vida attributed to Erauso. Others have speculated whether Juan Pérez de Montalbán's 1626 play La Monja Alférez was the inspiration for the Vida. Given the absence of a verifiable autograph copy of the original autobiography and the variety of imaginative representations of Erauso produced during the seventeenth century, interpreting her/his life demands a certain degree of conjecture.

**Gender and Sexuality in the Spanish Empire**

Erauso's nontraditional life, which both pushes against and conforms to certain expectations for gender identity and expression, complicates the present-day understanding of gender and sexuality in the early modern Spanish world. Although there is no evidence from seventeenth-century documents that Erauso was believed to possess any irregularities in primary sexual characteristics, some witnesses described certain secondary sexual traits as signaling masculinity. After a private meeting with Erauso, the Italian aristocrat Pietro della Valle (1586–1652) wrote that she admitted to having used a painful yet effective poultice to flatten her chest. Although unsubstantiated, this invasive technique suggests Erauso's firm commitment to live permanently as a man, which is
confirmed by his final years living as Antonio de Erauso. Consequently, Erauso’s successful strategy of verifying her female genitalia (and virginity) to avoid execution and then documenting years of service as a male soldier demonstrate how both male and female gender identities and expression could coexist in colonial Latin America. Seventeenth-century documents predominantly use female gender markers and thereby privilege sex-at-birth, except in some testimonies written by men who knew Erauso only as the soldier Alonso Díaz Ramírez de Guzmán. Nonetheless, despite this privileging of sex-at-birth, that Erauso was able to secure acceptance to live openly as Antonio de Erauso attests to a cultural understanding that the gender binary can be disrupted and made flexible enough to accommodate exceptional cases.

Current studies on Erauso continue to reflect the instability of Erauso’s identity, as scholars and artists are still debating which gender markers and pronouns to use when examining Erauso’s life. Historians and critics in the twenty-first century are divided; some use “she” to reflect early modern treatments of the historical individual, others prefer “he” to respect Erauso’s transgender identity and expression, and others adopt “s/he” or alternate “she” and “he” randomly or according to the context.

Erauso’s sexuality has also been a much debated issue. After Erauso’s shocking revelation, the matrons who examined her body for confirmation of her female anatomy (and her uncorrupted hymen) declared her to be an “intact virgin,” thereby establishing the perception that Erauso refrained from participating in penetrative heterosexual relations, and in doing so retained her feminine sexual purity and “honor.” Many of the accounts of Erauso’s life—the 1617 letter by Agustín de Carvajal, the bishop of Guamanga, to whom Erauso confessed her female identity; the autobiography; Juan Pérez de Montalbán’s play La Monja Alférez, performed in 1626; and two of three news pamphlets (the first of the three, published in 1625 in Madrid and Seville, the last, published in 1653 in Mexico)—depict Erauso as consistently flirting with women in the New World, including direct accounts of her preferences and desire to engage in physical relationships with other women. Surely the tabloid-style anecdotes from these narratives were circulating in the cultural imaginary. The protagonist in the autobiography, for example, describes how “I had my head in the folds of her skirt and she was combing my hair while I ran my hand up and down between her legs” (Erauso 1996, 17). This instance of explicit eroticism is not an isolated case; Erauso frequently expresses a romantic interest in various women in the New World that occasionally results in physical caresses (and unconsummated marriage proposals) but apparently never leads to the discovery of Erauso’s anatomical identity. This pattern persisted well after Erauso’s death, as the third news pamphlet, which recounts the last two decades of Erauso’s life (Última y tercera relación, en que se hace verdadera del resto de la vida de la Monja Alférez, sus memorables virtudes, y exemplar muerte en estos Reynos de la Nueva Fspaña [1653]) is predominantly focused on the open yet unrequited love that Erauso felt for another woman.
Some critics have speculated that Erauso participated in same-sex flirtation only to be convincing as a heterosexual man. Other scholars have commented on how interested parties in the New World manipulated Erauso into romantic attachments and engagements for their own social and economic gain. Of course, these romantic liaisons intersected with issues of race and class, because Erauso—as an educated white Basque aristocrat who enjoyed the privilege and entitlement of her class and ethnicity—was desirable to others, while her/his own preferences (as portrayed in the *Vida*) reveal a racist disdain for racially mixed women in the New World. Regardless of how Erauso’s sexuality is represented (homoerotic, lesbian, trans-male heterosexual, colonialist, virginal, allegorical, and so forth), early modern representations of the Monja Alférez’s erotic desire indicate the perception that s/he was a woman who chose to live as a man who expressed attraction for other women but never for men.

The Monja Alférez in Film, Comics, and Literature

Latin American, Spanish, and North American films, novels, plays, comics, and stories for young adults have manipulated the Lieutenant Nun icon for varying and, at times, opposing ideological purposes. The 1944 Mexican film *La Monja Alférez*, starring María Félix and directed by Emilio Gómez Muriel, for example, portrays Erauso as a heterosexual femme fatale, cross-dressing only to recover her inheritance and win back her fiancé. Forty year later the Basque filmmaker Javier Aguirre interpreted Erauso’s life as an ill-fated lesbian love story in his 1986 film *La Monja Alférez*, while a year later the North American independent director Sheila McLaughlin released the only cinematic version of Erauso’s love life with a happily-ever-after lesbian ending in *She Must Be Seeing Things*. Similarly, the “girl gets the girl” at the conclusion of Odalys Nanin’s 2008 lesbian play *The Adventures of the Lieutenant Nun*.

Given the contradictions inherent in Erauso’s life (as a transgendered individual associated with colonial exploitation, racism, violent crimes, same-sex desire, and seemingly conformist adherence to proscriptions for female chastity), it is not surprising that the Lieutenant Nun can be upheld as the hero or enemy of multiple and conflicting ideologies: Catholic, transgender, lesbian, heterobiased, feminist, misogynist, colonial, racist, classist, and nationalist (Spanish, Basque, or Latin American). In this way, Erauso remains an ambivalent icon—a rebel and conformist, a hero and an outlaw—to be used to represent multiple sides of any controversy, depending on the particular identity assigned to him/her.

SEE ALSO *Conquest and Sodomy in Latin America; Cross-Dressing in the West; Sins against Nature in Colonial Latin America; Transvestites/Transsexuals*

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The history and current status of the LGBTI community in this East African nation.

Ethiopia is the second-largest nation by population in Africa and, outside of Egypt, the oldest with a continuous history of statehood. It is distinctive in Africa in that its present borders arise not from European colonialism but from its own period of empire building, mostly in the nineteenth century. Except for a brief period of Italian rule, it remained independent, first as an empire then as a republic, throughout the twentieth century. About a third of the population professes Islam or traditional African religions, while the majority adhere to Ethiopian Orthodox Christianity. It has often been in the name of these faiths that Ethiopia has produced some extreme expressions of homophobia in the twenty-first century. In a rare show of ecumenism, for example, the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant churches in 2009 joined with Muslim and other religious leaders to demand (unsuccessfully) that the Ethiopian state explicitly prohibit same-sex marriage in the national constitution. The patriarch of the Ethiopian Orthodox church has described homosexuality as “the pinnacle of immorality,” and other spiritual groups equate it with Western perversion, violence against children, and Satanism (Aschalaw 2014).

Same-sex acts are punishable by up to fifteen years' imprisonment. Public opinion registers some of the highest disapprovals of homosexuality in the world (97%; Overs 2015). Whereas local advocates against homosexuality are vocal and enjoy a great deal of support and public platforms, advocates for LGBTI rights are hardly visible except in cyberspace (using pseudonyms), which appears to be the only safe space. The strongest support for the cause of sexual minorities in Ethiopia comes from external actors. The health system is another domain where structural/institutional norms mediate attitudes and the practices of policy makers, patients, and health-care providers. The few studies conducted depict the grave implications for health outcomes, above all by making same-sex sexual practices escape the radar of HIV prevention and control efforts.
Historical Influences and Practices

In one sense this level of homophobia is not surprising. The missionaries who converted the ancient Axumite Empire to Christianity came from Egypt and Nubia, where a strong ascetic tradition defined itself in part as oppositional to the sexual laxness of Egypt’s foreign rulers. The monastic tradition in Ethiopia generated its own sexual tensions that required policing through, for example, prohibitions from as early as the fourth century against bringing boys into monasteries and against any kind of physical touching between monks that might compromise prayerful meditation with carnal thoughts (Greenberg 1988). Over the centuries, its theologians turned increasingly to Old Testament scripture to create a popular, national religion. Those traditions became intimately linked to the power of the “Solomonic” state of Abyssinia, which relied on Orthodox monks to administer the far-flung regions. A male-dominated society with rigidly enforced gender roles was thus not only justified by scripture but very deeply associated with an Ethiopian national identity fighting invaders.

And yet there are also hints of acceptance of sexual and gender diversity within those traditions. The historian Wendy Laura Belcher (2013, 2016), for example, has found documents and artwork from the early Middle Ages that allude to subtle interpretations of Christian doctrine (see also Belcher and Kleiner 2015). Minority cultures within the Ethiopian Empire were subsequently observed to acknowledge same-sex relationships or transgender identities consonant with the ethnography from elsewhere in Africa. Among the Maale of southern Ethiopia, ashtime (which Donald L. Donham [1990] translates both as male “transvestites” and as a third gender) performed domestic labor and ritual functions in the king’s court. The king, it appears, had to be shielded from pollution by female sexuality at key moments in the ritual life of the nation. Men who approached the king at such times thus had to abstain from sex with women or have sex with an ashtime in order to protect the health of the nation. Donham’s informants (in 1975) noted that the numbers and the practice had much declined since the nineteenth century under pressure from the church (Donham 1990). Simon David Messing observed that “transvestites” and “male-female” (wändagäräd) individuals among the Amhara were sometimes insulted but “more often pitied than blamed” and, as such, “tolerated” (1957, 551–552). This reflected an understanding that the condition was innate rather than a choice, as modern homosexuality is generally conceptualized (and condemned) in Ethiopia.

In modern history, Ethiopia holds a special place in Pan-Africanist thought, which characteristically asserts heteronormativity as a defining component of African identity against European cultural colonialism. Ethiopia had successfully withstood conquest during the partition of Africa in the nineteenth century and suffered only five years of Italian misrule starting in 1935. When the emperor returned to power in 1942, he quickly restored the Orthodox church as the state religion and de facto local authority in the rural
areas where the vast majority of the population lived. Any slim hopes of liberalization under US tutelage in the Cold War era were dashed by the revolution of 1974. The new political leadership adopted a crude, repressive form of Marxism-Leninism as state ideology that in many ways was even worse from a human rights perspective, including a pro-natalist policy for its “patriotic” wars against ethnic secessionists. When this regime in its turn fell in 1991, the ostensibly democratic successors replicated much of the old pattern, and at present, the social and political climate makes freedom of speech—let alone freedom of association around sexuality—very difficult.

Clandestinity and Signs of Change

Notwithstanding this harsh climate, a clandestine world of same-sex–attracted people is known to exist in the capital city, Addis Ababa, and likely in others (Tadele 2005, 2010, 2011, 2012; Tekleberhan 2011; Overs 2015). Known to themselves as zegas (citizens) or booshtee (a derogatory term used by the public), they reportedly include many male sex workers in the capital city alone. Clandestinity may avert attention, but in a context of extreme poverty and pervasive homophobia it also contributes to deeply self-harming practices arising from abuse, exploitation, and internalized homophobia. Yet Ethiopia’s size, history of independence, booming economic growth, and strategic importance all contribute to making foreign donors reticent to challenge the Ethiopian government too aggressively on this issue, leaving this hard-to-reach and “most-at-risk” population, along with their wives and girlfriends, almost entirely unserved by HIV/AIDS programming.

There are, nonetheless, signs that change may be happening. Research is being conducted, and websites run from exile are getting word out about the existence of and problems facing the Ethiopian LGBTI community. The government has not responded to pressure from faith groups to increase penalties and more actively police existing law. Indeed, following the state’s cancellation of a planned antigay rally by church groups in 2014, the Associated Press reported that “Redwan Hussein, a government spokesperson, said the anti-gay rally was on certain groups’ agenda, but not the government’s. ‘It [homosexuality] is not a serious crime,’ he said.” There is consequently very cautious optimism that public health arguments and strengthening links with other African activist groups will open new doors for Ethiopia’s sexual minorities.

SEE ALSO Christianity in Africa: Anglican; Christianity in Africa: LGBT Friendly; Christianity in Africa: Pentecostal and Charismatic; Christianity in Africa: Roman Catholicism; Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa

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An interpretation of indigenous intimate activities in which such activities are framed according to Western sexual categories.

In his 1897 study of the indigenous peoples of Queensland, Australia, Walter E. Roth, an anthropologist and colonial administrator, coined the term *ethnopornography* to describe subjects ranging from pregnancy to foul language to defecation and sexual acts. In describing these things as ethnopornographic, Roth separated them out from the rest of his study and said that discussion of such things was "not suitable for perusal by the general lay reader" (1897, 169). In his use of this term, Roth described a sphere of intimate bodily behaviors that he determined to be too delicate, and hence too pornographic, for the eyes of those nonprofessionals who may read his book.

What Roth described is a broader category than what scholars today mean when they describe ethnopornography as a way in which the Western observer (at first primarily conquerors and priests, and later colonial administrators, anthropologists, and travelers) views non-Western intimate activities that the observer determines to be sexual. In doing so, that observer misrepresents intimate indigenous relationships and bodies, placing them within Western sexual categories. Western observers recategorize indigenous intimacy for many reasons, and they develop prurient, scientific, and bureaucratic rationales to excuse their representations. Some describe what is now termed ethnopornography as an Orientalist gaze, in which the Western official redefines non-Western activities.
Engraving by Theodore de Bry Showing the Dogs of Spanish Conquistador Vasco Núñez de Balboa Killing Indians for Sodomy in 1513. Balboa’s misinterpretation of the activities of the indigenous peoples of the New World caused him to frame their behavior in terms of Western concepts of sodomy, resulting in his meting out this terrible punishment.

**Historical Examples**

Of course ethnopornography began long before Roth named it. In 1513 the Spanish conquistador and explorer Vasco Núñez de Balboa (1475–1519) killed a group of indigenous *putos* (faggots) by feeding them to Spanish dogs. One can detect ethnopornography in the descriptions of this incident, including Theodor de Bry’s (1528–1598) illustration of it. The indigenous individuals depicted were killed because of Balboa’s misreading of sodomy. While the men may have engaged in sexual acts that their Spanish conquerors would describe with the sign of sodomy, they had different interpretations of those acts than did Europeans of the time. Thus ethnopornography led to extreme violence.

Another example of ethnopornography comes from a founding figure in professional anthropology, Bronisław Malinowski (1884–1942). In his *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (1927), Malinowski observes Trobriand sexual ceremonies and states that “sexual
acts would be carried out in public on the central place; married people would participate in the orgy, man or wife behaving without restraint, even though within hail of each other” (258). While Malinowski attempts to analyze these ceremonies for the details of their sexual meaning, he relates them to Western concepts of monogamy, promiscuity, and sin, arguing that the indigenous peoples had different visions of these things. In doing so, he promotes the openness of Trobriand sexuality in comparison with that of the West—certainly a move that he would have seen as working toward the liberation of sexuality. In his work Malinowski promotes the exoticism of the Trobriand peoples, and he does so in a manner that combines the pornographic and ethnographic.

In another example, the British scholar and explorer Richard Francis Burton (1821–1890), in the terminal essay to his 1885 translation of *The Arabian Nights*, describes the geography of homosexuality: “Within the Sotadic Zone the Vice is popular and endemic, held at the worst to be a mere peccadillo, whilst the races to the North and South of the limits here defined practise it only sporadically.” By asserting the universal presence of homosexuality in the Sotadic Zone, an area he argued included much of Asia and the Americas, as well as the Mediterranea, Burton argues for a geography of perversion (a term used later by Rudi C. Bleys [1995]).

In other examples, Jacobus X argues in his *Untrodden Fields of Anthropology* ([1898] 1937) that sodomy is unknown among the peoples of Africa south of the Sahara. Furthermore, he suggests that both African men and women had large genitalia—arguing that nature has allowed for the people to have pleasurable, rather than painful, (heterosexual) intercourse. Similarly, Felix Bryk states that “the sense of decency among the blacks, fundamentally normal in their sexual life, is repelled especially by sodomitic acts, which are punished severely” (1964, 231).

Ethnopornography seems to have been endemic to European observations of non-European peoples throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The technological advances of photography, in particular, led to many photographs taken in which the photographer expressed particular sexual desires toward the exotic, often naked, African, Asian, or Latin American individual. These photographs, sold in various markets throughout Europe and the United States, provided a very thin veil of scientific interest, hiding more prurient goals. The launching of *National Geographic* magazine in 1888 led to the further spread of such ethnopornographic photography.

**Contemporary Viewpoints**

Ethnopornography continues to develop in the contemporary period, as can be seen in a more recent controversy regarding Malek Alloula, whose 1986 book *The Colonial Harem* purports to engage in a postcolonial critique of harem photography. (The French sent these photographs home as postcards.) In doing so, Alloula reproduces many photographs of
women in harems, sometimes in clearly exploitative ways. He decontextualizes the images and allows the reader to see them only in an overly simplistic ethnopornographic light. Many scholars (most prominently, Mieke Bal [1991]) have critiqued Alloula, arguing that he furthered ethnopornography in his reproduction of these images. It is often unclear, unless he simply wants to titillate his reader, why Alloula has included particular images. Alloula closes his book with a telling statement that suggests one goal of the ethnopornographer: “Voyeurism turns into an obsessive neurosis. The great erotic dream, ebbing from the sad faces of the wage earners in the poses, lets appear, in the flotsam perpetuated by the postcard, another figure: that of impotence” (122). This suggestion of colonial impotence makes Alloula’s key point: the French male colonist has a fantasy of penetrating Algerian women, a fantasy that he pictures through the postcard, in which he has taken an image and sent it to a friend. One can sense in this Alloula’s challenge to Frenchmen: they are impotent, neurotic, and, from his viewpoint, overly feminized. Alloula looks at the French postcards from an Algerian nationalist perspective and, in some sense, compares his own masculinity to the masculinity of the French. By doing so, he produces an ethnopornography of the women in the harems.

Ethnopornography lives on today in some anthropology departments in which ethnographers may be trained to dissect the sexual habits of the people that they study, often without enough self-reflection as to the goal of the anthropologist. Of course, professional anthropologists over the past generation have become much more self-reflexive, but this does not change the ethnopornography that continues to play a major role in the sexual tourism industry and in many amateur ethnographies. For example, the great desires that both gay and straight men express for youth from Thailand is widely viewed as both exploitative and ethnopornographic.

SEE ALSO Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara; Conquest and Sodomy in Latin America; Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa; Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa

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Ethnopsychiatry

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_The systemic psychological study of “non-Western” peoples, particularly as it relates to Africans and homosexuality._

_Ethnopsychiatry_ is a term used to describe a type of psychological study of “non-Western” peoples that emerged in the early twentieth century through which Western-trained scholars sought to understand “the Other” and determine the extent to which culture plays a role in shaping one’s mental state. Influenced by Freudian psychoanalysis and anthropological studies, ethnopsychiatry was generally a blending of psychiatric, psychological, and anthropological understandings of deviance, mental development, and normality. In the 1950s ethnopsychiatry also became known as transcultural psychiatry or psychology. It is referred to as cross-cultural psychiatry as well. Cross-cultural psychiatry, however, reflects a divergence that occurred in the late 1960s when practitioners argued against a universalist application of Western psychiatric categories. Cross-cultural supporters claimed that the universalist idea that similar mental disorders existed in all societies was problematic. Instead, cross-cultural psychiatrists suggested that culture plays a much larger role in the way that madness manifests itself in different societies. Despite these differences, all three terms are often used interchangeably.

Although ethnopsychiatry can trace its roots to the beginnings of modern psychiatry, it rose as a recognized field when such psychoanalytic theorists as Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), Carl Jung (1875–1961), and Marie Bonaparte (1882–1962) and their followers became interested in applying their concepts to the so-called primitive races. They were particularly concerned with symbols and believed in the universality of mental manifestations. Anthropologists and ethnopsychiatrists interested in Asian, Oceanic, and American societies such as George Devereux (1908–1985), who is often ascribed as the architect of ethnopsychiatry, Emil Kraepelin (1856–1926), Géza Róheim (1891–1953), Bronislaw Malinowski (1884–1942), Margaret Mead (1901–1978), and H. B. M. Murphy (1915–1987), adapted ethnopsychiatric practices and debated the viability of a universalist approach to psychopathology. Psychoanalytical ideas were also adopted and adapted by practitioners in Africa such as R. Cunyngham Brown (1867–1945), Antoine Porot (1876–1965), Wulf Sachs (1893–1949), B. J. F. Laubscher (1897–1984), Octave Mannoni (c. 1899–1989), Henri Aubin (1903–1987), J. C. Carothers (1903–1989), Henri Collomb (1913–1979) and Frantz Fanon (1925–1961). Today, ethnopsychiatry continues to be practiced,
although most recognize its problematic history.

**Ethnopsychiatry and Colonialism**

Ethnopsychiatry emerged in conjunction with the colonization of Africa, and the two are intrinsically connected. While there were only a few practicing psychotherapists on the continent, with only a small number of those interested in their African patients, the theories of ethnopsychiatry were often invoked when attempting to define notions of mental difference. Because of its claim to apparent scientific and apolitical research, it became a field in which theories of race and mentality became ensconced (McCulloch 1993). Ethnopsychiatrists were concerned about defining racial, ethnic, and cultural difference not only to juxtapose these against European or Western superiority but also to help shape a nationalist discourse that was so integral to the colonial process. Most argued that there were innate psychological differences between Europeans and those whom they deemed “backward.” Africans were, according to their theories, predisposed to a more “explosive nature” and closer to a “primitive” mentality (Aubin 1939, 13, 17; translation by Tiffany Fawn Jones). The cause of this primitive mindset, however, was up for debate.

Porot, who founded Algeria’s first psychiatric hospital, for example, argued that the Algerian brain was intrinsically primitive and had a propensity for violence caused by a different evolutionary path (McCulloch 1993). Similarly, H. L. Gordon (1934) suggested that, because of physiological differences caused either by genetic or environmental factors, the African brain never developed past the stage of puberty. In contrast, J. F. Ritchie (1943), who worked as a teacher in Northern Rhodesia (present-day Zambia) but wrote extensively about the psychopathology of Africans, argued that it was African culture, not biological difference, that caused African preponderance for failed intellectual development (McCulloch 1993). Influenced by Ritchie, and later to become one of the most prominent ethnopsychiatrists in Africa, J. C. Carothers, who was the superintendent at Mathari Mental Hospital in Nairobi, Kenya, and was commissioned by the British government and later the World Health Organization to write about the psychology of Africans, also believed that African mentality was mainly shaped by cultural and environmental factors. Carothers (1953) proclaimed that modern society negatively affected the African psyche. Asserting that their regional-specific studies could be applied to all Africans, these ethnopsychiatrists reinforced the colonial idea that patriarchal approaches and indirect rule were best for Africans. Thus, they generally claimed that African affairs were best left to “traditional” institutions, albeit with considerable colonial oversight, as Africans were not mentally equipped to adjust to “civilized” or “modern” society.

There was no massive undertaking by colonial governments to build mental hospitals for Africans (Vaughan 1991). Even in those few cases, such as in Algeria, Tunisia, and Morocco, where hospitals were built for Africans, the colonialists used these institutions as a means to define the mad Other and bolster their discipline in the metropole (Keller 2007).
A key component of these psychoanalytical discussions involved concepts of sexual difference. In the early twentieth century, such adoptees of cultural psychology as Adolphe Louis Cureau (1864–1913), a French colonial administrator who wrote *Savage Man in Central Africa* (1915), and Thomas Duncan Greenlees (1859–1929), a superintendent at the Grahamstown Lunatic Asylum in South Africa, argued that modernity caused a breakdown in traditional African sexual norms (Epprecht 2008). When Freudian psychoanalysis became even more popular in the 1930s and 1940s, their views were further elaborated. Freud argued that all individuals were innately bisexual and that experiences with parents and others could lead to an arrested stage of development in which one remained what he called “sexually inverted.” The Oedipal complex was one of his most controversial theories, yet it was commonly invoked when discussing African sexuality. Freud asserted that during the phallic stage of development that occurred between the ages of three and five, a child developed sexual feelings for a parent and jealousy of the same-sex parent. Part of the resolution for these feelings was the manifestation of the superego, an inner moral aptitude that was learned from parents and society. Those who had not progressed beyond this stage could exhibit homosexual tendencies.

Although not all ethnopsychiatrists fully ascribed to Freud’s theories, his ideas did lead to debates about their applicability in non-Western societies. Ritchie (1943) and Carothers (1953) argued, for example, that abrupt childhood weaning and unrestricted “sex play” in childhood among Africans was common. They also believed that, although experimentation was a normal part of development, Africans never progressed past childhood in their mental development. This did not necessarily mean, however, that Africans remained sexually inverted. Instead, Carothers argued that the traditional initiation ceremonies that took place during puberty generally put an end to these uninhibited sexual practices. Ceremonies, therefore, played an important part in the subscription of heterosexual desires and sexual rules, and in turn, “sex perversions, apart from juvenile experiments, seem[ed] to be uniformly rare” (Carothers 1953, 49).

Similarly, Laubscher, who was the head of psychiatry at the Queenstown Mental Hospital in the Eastern Cape and the author of *Sex, Custom, and Psychopathology* (1937), argued that homosexuality was infrequent among Africans in rural areas, especially among men. Although Laubscher acknowledged that “forms of overt homosexual behavior between women” existed, among men it was “entirely unknown” ([1937] 1938, 31). But even those women who exhibited what he perceived as “perverse homosexual activities,” he deemed mentally unstable, claiming that the mythical symbolic creatures that they invoked in their dreams were caused by “penis envy” or “defective libido development,” which occurred at “a time of dissolution of the Oedipus complex” (33). And in cases where homosexual acts among men existed, it was usually because they were “segregated from women” (258), or
as a manifestation of a preexisting psychological disorder. Thus, he was not surprised to find these tendencies in the mental hospital in which he worked (Laubscher [1937] 1938; Epprecht 2008).

Even those African practitioners, such as Fanon, who disagreed with the idea that the African mind was inferior to that of the European and wanted to promote the worth of African culture, argued that homosexuality did not exist among Africans. In his discussion of Martinicans, he argued that although he saw “men dressed like women,” they portrayed all other regular masculine tendencies, and he was “convinced that they lead normal sex lives.” Fanon argued that the Oedipus complex never existed among them and that those Martinicans who exhibited homosexual behavior in Europe did so purely for “livelihood” reasons (1967, 139). Thus, ethnopsychiatrists often explained the etiology of any sexual deviations from the supposed heterosexual norm displayed among Africans as the advent of modern pressures that disrupted traditional practices. For some, this meant a stronger need for the preservation of traditional society. For others, such as Sachs, who had studied under Freud and applied his theories to a study of a Manyika traditional healer (1947), whom he gave the pseudonym John Chavafambira, it meant changing the harsh practices of colonial authorities. Sachs argued that the move to urban areas was a key component of the healer’s neurosis and sexual dysfunction and ascribed the neurosis not merely to modern pressures but to the state’s brutal treatment of those moving into urban areas.

For most of these practitioners, their discussion about sexual difference was meant to ascribe a systemic explanation for homosexuality, albeit often through conjecture and limited evidence. Indeed, the generality and absurdity of their statements was often outrageous. For example, Carothers claimed that Africans’ psychological peculiarity is evident at a glance. He stated the following:

*If one scans the faces of passers-by in any town in western Europe it is clear that most of the people observed are impelled by some continuing inner purpose and yet are also alert to the events around them. If one leaves the ship for a moment at any African port, it is equally clear that most of the faces observed express either exclusive interest in some immediate affair or complete apathy.*

*(1953, 108)*

**FRANTZ FANON (1925–1961)**

Frantz Fanon, one of the most influential thinkers on anti-racist and anti-colonialist movements, was born on 20 July 1925 in the French colony of Martinique to middle-
class parents of mixed-race lineage (African, East Indian, and white Alsatian). At the age of eighteen, young Fanon joined the Caribbean Free French movement, and was later recruited by the French army during World War II. While fighting in France, Fanon was exposed to severe European antiblack racism, despite being awarded the French Croix de Guerre for his bravery. After the war he received a scholarship to study medicine and psychiatry in Lyon and became acquainted with Freudian psychoanalytical theory and the existentialist phenomenology of Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980). When he completed his psychiatric training, Fanon secured an appointment in a French hospital in colonial Algeria and later devoted himself to the struggle of Algerian independence from France.

Fanon’s studies, as well as his own experience of racism and colonialism, inspired his first book *Peau noire, masques blancs* (1952; *Black Skin, White Masks* [1967]). He theorized race as an historical construct mediated by a colonialist culture wherein blackness assumes inferiority, and whiteness superiority—each racial signification existing only in relation to the other. As a psychologist, he analyzed the mental effects of colonialism and discovered that colonized subjects tend to internalize inferiority complexes through their encounters with white colonizers—a process he termed “epidermalization” (*Fanon 2008, 13*). He asserted that “the black man wants to be white” and “the white man slaves to reach a human level”—in other words, both suffer the effects of alienation and neurotic disorder (*Fanon 2008, 11*). Inspired by Aimé Césaire’s virtues of negritude, Fanon envisioned “the liberation of the man of color from himself” through a decolonization of the mind—a subject he fully theorized in *Les dames de la terre* (1961; *The Wretched of the Earth* [1965]).

Since Fanon’s death in 1961, scholarly engagement with his work, especially on sexuality, has attracted huge attention with varying interpretations. Notwithstanding his liberationist and anti-racist politics, Fanon has been criticized for a “prejudiced analysis” of homosexuality in European colonial settings (*Epprecht 2008, 86*). He attributed homosexuality to a “neurotic” disorder common in “negrophobic” white males but foreign to Martinicans who led “normal sex lives” and “became homosexuals” in Europe only as “a means to a livelihood”—as in prostitution (*Fanon 2008, 180*). While Fanon’s tentative assumptions about male homosexuality may seem a minor error in otherwise revolutionary writing, Kobena Mercer maintains Fanon’s comment is “homophobic” because it denies the “political economy of masculinity in black liberationist discourse” (*1996, 125*). For Terry Goldie, the homophobia in Fanon’s work comes from “his psychoanalytical model” that was influenced by Freudian traditions (*2005, 85*). Lewis R. Gordon extended the critique of Fanon’s psychoanalytic theory, showing how it fostered the “colonization of sex and sexuality” (*2015, 67*). These varying interpretations of Fanon and sexuality complicate an assessment of his liberationist mission, although his homophobia may be as personal as his experiences of negrophobia.
In contemporary Africa, controversies about sexual minority rights show no sign of disappearing, despite the apparent dematerialization of homosexuality as a “nonissue” by some African leaders. The media has consequently fuelled stereotypical images of a “homophobic Africa” vis-à-vis a progressive West (Zimmerman 2013). Despite Fanon’s limitations, his strident call to evade an imitation of colonial-racist impulses of human comparison, and its concomitant construction of inferiority and superiority, may be relevant to addressing modern expressions of homophobia. He cautions: “Humanity is waiting for something from us other than such an imitation, which would be almost an obscene caricature” (1965, 315)—a moral imperative to chart a new course.

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He then extended this claim to speculate that Africans in urban areas all had a “mental uniformity” that failed to develop in the same way as Europeans. Carothers surmised that
the failure of Africans to follow traditional initiation ceremonies, which he thought aided in their social and mental development, could in turn lead to failed relationships and sexual dysfunction. Similar assumptions were common in many practitioners’ writings. However, because these practitioners were arguing that homosexual behavior rarely occurred in traditional African societies, they were also indirectly inferring that it was more common among the urban white or European populations.

Thus, in discussing the advent of nonhetero practices among white men on the African continent (they rarely discussed women’s sexuality), the practitioners’ arguments were usually careful not to chastise or promote criminalization for what they saw as a psychological disease. In a 1928 article, F. O. Stohr argued that “the only right way to treat perverts of every kind is with pity, and if possible, with understanding. They are people whose sexual life has somehow gone astray or remained undeveloped, who are therefore shut out from the greatest happiness of life—marriage and children” (459). Even in more totalitarian states, such as apartheid South Africa, practitioners argued that homosexuality should not be demonized or criminalized. In a government investigation into homosexuality during apartheid South Africa in the 1960s, when psychiatrists were called in to testify about the prevalence of homosexuality in Johannesburg, the Society of Psychiatrists and Neurologists of South Africa argued that homosexual practices were psychological afflictions that were fashioned by child-rearing and parental practices outside of the person’s control. Although various practitioners presenting information disagreed on the cause and treatment of homosexuality, all argued that homosexuality should not be criminalized (Jones 2012).

Even though a few ethnographical studies—such as Pierre Hanry’s Érotisme africain (1970; African eroticism) and Paul Parin, Fritz Morgenthaler, and Goldy Parin-Matthèy’s research (1980)—contradict the idea that homosexuality was not prevalent in African societies, these have not been acknowledged by practicing psychologists in Africa. African scholars still adopt the idea that LGBT individuals are rare among traditional Africans. These views have been perpetuated by some prominent African politicians, including Robert Mugabe, the former president of Zimbabwe. Mugabe’s personal physician for many years after 1980 was Michael Gelfand (1912–1985), who was initially the physician in charge at the old Salisbury Hospital in Southern Rhodesia (colonial Zimbabwe). He, too, argued that homosexuality was virtually absent in “traditional” Shona society and suggested that modern influences increased dysfunction (Gelfand 1979). Thus, it should not be surprising that Mugabe declared that homosexuality was an imported European scourge on the continent. The literature of denial created by ethnopsychiatrists has served to substantiate these claims.

Although ethnopsychiatry claimed to offer some insight into the African mind, it was loaded with racist inferences and conjecture about African sexuality. Far from being an altruistic, systemic view of mental and sexual health, it inserted itself into the colonial process under
a pseudoscientific veneer. The application of ethnopsychiatric beliefs has led to absurd conclusions about normality and sexuality that have reinforced heteropatriarchal European ideas of superiority. Ethnopsychiatry is, therefore, an example of how a supposed scientific theory could be socially constructed and extremely prejudicial.

SEE ALSO Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara; Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara; South Africa

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Eunuchs

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The role of the castrated male in various cultures throughout history.

Historically, a man who was castrated was called a eunuch in English. According to Dorland’s Medical Dictionary, the term eunuch is defined as “a male deprived of the testes or external genitals, especially one castrated before puberty so that male secondary sex characteristics fail to develop” (2012, 653). The condition of being a eunuch is called eunuchism. The castration of males is an ancient practice that began with animals and over time has been used to punish conquered peoples, or men who have committed certain crimes against society. There have been two types of castration: the first is the removal of the testicles, and the second, also called “shaving,” involves the complete emasculation of males, with all external genitalia excised.

Eunuchs have been traced the world over, including in indigenous populations in the Americas. Historically, scholars have identified three primary types of eunuchs: castrati, who have had both the penis and testicles removed; spadones, who have had only the testicles removed; and thlibiae, whose testicles have been bruised or crushed. Research reveals at least seven purposes for castration, historically:

1. to retain the supremacy of male elders, as when older males mutilated the genitals of younger men to prevent challenges to their authority and to possess more women;
2. to demonstrate having vanquished an enemy and to gain a trophy, as when, in the 1896 Battle of Aduwa, Ethiopian forces castrated 7,000 Italian soldiers;
3. to provide trusted guards for harems, as well as advisers for rulers;
4. as punishment for rape, adultery, and other sex-related crimes;
5. for religious purposes, such as self-castration to promote chaste living;
6. to preserve a boy’s voice for singing; and
7. to “treat” certain conditions, such as leprosy, epilepsy, sexual perversion, insanity, gout, priapism, excessive masturbation, cancer, or an enlarged prostate, and other maladies.

Contrary to the modern use of eunuch as a derisive term to indicate a man’s powerlessness, history reveals that many eunuchs held high social and political positions, exhibited formidable managerial and pedagogical skills, were artists and scholars, and excelled in
other areas. Not only were many eunuchs not celibate or asexual, but they could be sexually active and seen as desirable by men, women, or both. Eunuchs are primarily known for their professional roles in religion, the legal system, and the military, as well as in government bureaucracies. For instance, eunuchs in the city of Medina, present-day Saudi Arabia, have guarded the tomb of the prophet Muhammad since the twelfth century. In China, eunuchs held a high degree of political power during twenty-three dynasties, and a few were military leaders, such as Tong Guan of the Jin dynasty (1115–1234), who commanded 800,000 troops. In the Ottoman Empire, the sultan’s chief black eunuch (CBE) held the third most powerful position (Aucoin and Wassersug 2006).

Although the sexuality of eunuchs has long been written about and discussed, there has been little reliable information on the subject until almost the twentieth century, probably because of social and religious censure of nonnormative sexualities. During the Ottoman Empire there were accounts of eunuchs—castrati, spadones, and thlibiae—in heterosexual relationships. Furthermore, there are hints that some eunuchs were chaste and others probably engaged in homosexual activities, but much of that lacks support. There is no reason to assume that eunuchs would not have engaged in the array of sexual relationships, just as other men would.

An important power that eunuchs possessed was the ability to move between men’s spaces and women’s spaces, particularly in societies that secluded women. Eunuchs oversaw the administration of royal harems in the Ottoman Empire, for instance, because they were perceived to be immune to sexual temptation, by virtue of their physical condition. While eunuchs policed the sexuality of the women in their care—which included ensuring the women did not have sex with each other—some eunuchs did engage in sexual activities with harem women.

**Eunuchs in China**

The first recorded use of eunuchs dates to the Chou dynasty (1122–250 BCE) in China, although there is some earlier evidence of eunuchs in Mesopotamia as well. Eunuchism was practiced in China until the collapse of the imperial government in 1911. Castrated males worked in imperial palaces as chamberlains in the harems and in other areas. Enslaved captives of war sometimes were castrated to serve in menial positions, and some free men, desiring power and wealth, castrated themselves; these ambitious eunuchs sought to attain power by demonstrating their undistracted devotion to their emperors and guaranteeing that, since could not have children, they would not establish a rival dynasty. Those who chose castration carried their sex organs with them in a jar of brine in accordance with the Confucian belief that in order to enter the next world after death, one’s entire body must be buried together.

In her book *Harem: The World behind the Veil* (1989), Alev Lytle Croutier related that in
1877, English soldier and traveler G. Carter Stent published an article that described how the Chinese castrated their eunuchs and, furthermore, how they controlled hemorrhaging, which was a problem in other areas of the world. The subject was first bound with bandages around the thighs and waist to staunch the flow of blood. Then, after the groin area was bathed in hot pepper–water, an instrument shaped like a sickle was used to cut off the testicles and penis and a pewter plug was pushed into the urethral opening. The man or boy was held up and forced to walk around for a couple hours and then placed in a horizontal position and not allowed to drink anything for three days, suffering from pain and thirst. After the third day, the bandages were removed along with the plug. If urine spurted from the opening, the eunuch would probably recover; if no urine flowed, or if it flowed slowly, he was likely to die from his wounds. Among the Chinese, the death rate from castration was only about 4 to 5 percent (Stent 1877), compared to mortality rates as high as 90 percent in other parts of the world.

The Chinese tradition of castrating foreign prisoners of war lasted more than 3,000 years. The practice ended in China only in 1924, and the numbers of eunuchs varied from just a few hundred in the early years to over 100,000 in 1624. However, it appears that only Chinese eunuchs were employed in royal palaces of emperors and princes; this contrasts with the Ottoman Empire, for instance, where the court employed eunuchs from European and African countries.

Sometimes Chinese eunuchs in the inner court closest to the rulers challenged government officials or bureaucracies that were primarily run by Confucians, who had their own civil service examinations by the tenth century. Despite challenges to their authority, the Confucians did not call for the complete elimination of the practice of castration because they believed that eunuchs provided important services, including protection of the harem women. The Confucians did, however, move against individual eunuchs for corruption, abuse of power, and other offenses.

Many Chinese eunuchs, like eunuchs in other societies, had families outside the palace. Younger ones may have been permanently separated from relatives when they were conscripted from faraway provinces. Older ones who were married and had children before being made eunuchs sometimes were able to maintain family life outside the palace. Powerful ones were able to arrange the marriages of their children with important officials or even members of the imperial family. Others married maids or other female domestics of the palaces, or even managed to marry women from outside the palace. A few had both wives and concubines.

Chinese eunuchs “constituted a distinct and powerful administrative cadre for 2,000 years” (Balch 1985, 319) to check the “influence in politics of the tenacious Chinese family system” (Coser 1964, 883), and this often incited jealousy that negatively focused on their unique physicality. For example, the Chinese eunuch Chao Kao, who was recorded to have been the
tutor of Ha-hai, the younger son of the first emperor, Qui Shi Huang (r. 246–210 BCE), was described by one scholar as the first in a long line of eunuchs in Chinese history, many of whom were also disreputable. In the Former Han dynasty (c. 206 BCE–25 CE), eunuchs staffed government positions, but only a few rose to significant positions of power. Depending on the politics of the time, Chinese eunuchs, like those in other empires, had authority that ranged from low-level administrative status to almost running the kingdom.

In Beijing, in the Forbidden City that housed the Chinese court, eunuchs protected the cloistered women. Approximately 1,000 eunuchs were in Beijing during the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), but their numbers declined to only 200 in service for the reign of the last emperor, Pu Yi (r. 1908–1912). Many received good educations and held positions ranging from singer to imperial administrator. In 1996 a Washington Post article announced the death of ninety-three-year-old Sun Yaoting, the last eunuch to have served in China’s imperial court system.

**Eunuchs in India**

Like the thugs, a supposedly widespread gang of professional robbers and murderers sanctioned by the goddess Kali and suppressed by the British, eunuchs became implicated in Britain’s empire-building project in India. In the mid-nineteenth century British colonial officials in North India claimed that the region was plagued by a criminal system of eunuchs who were addicted to sodomy, worked as prostitutes, and forcibly castrated children (Hinchy 2017). After the passage of Part 2 of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871, police began to register eunuchs suspected of sodomy, kidnapping, and castration. Particular targets were the region's *hijras*, a rather fluid term, but assumed to mean “male-bodied emasculates or ‘eunuchs by birth’ who adopted feminine clothing and, in many cases, female names” (Hinchy 2017, 127). Hijras were thus implicated in the processes by which Indian sexuality was typed as deviant; as Anjali Arondekar notes, it is crucial to pay attention to the role that the “coupling of colonialism and sexuality” plays in recent academic studies of them (Arondekar 2009, 90). Hijra studies as an academic area has emerged only in recent decades, while previously much of the disseminated information came from colonial accounts.

In India, the term *hijra* (a Hindu/Urdu word with Arabic roots) is laden with controversy over who is included in the definition and who is excluded. Some associate hijras with homosexuality, others with transvestites (*zenana*), and still others see hijra as a transgendered identity involving castration, genitalia defects, or impotency (*sandha*). Some include hermaphrodites in their definition, whereas others include women and “third-gender” individuals. Many hijras stroll through public spaces and earn a living by attending wedding ceremonies and singing and dancing for the guests, singing at births, or through sex work. Although castration is outlawed in India, some hijras still undergo the procedure (Gannon 2009).
The eunuchs who served as guards and attendants in the Muslim sultanates and Mughal Empire—who were also considered hijras—have a history that spans from early recorded history to modern times. Also known as khojas, they were employed in the palaces and harems of the queens and have been featured in literature. Those who were selected to guard the harems sometimes had their tongues cut out, probably to keep the intimate matters of the harem confidential. Whenever the queen left the palace, as many as 400 eunuchs guarded her, while others served and cooked for the king. Some eunuchs—for example, Malik Kafur, who dismissed the heir to the throne of Alau-Din-Khiliji (r. 1296–1316)—were able to attain considerable power. Others became prosecutors, built towns and mosques, commanded the police, and held other important positions. From 660 until 1955, they commanded the inns that protected people traveling across India.

Eunuchs in the King James Bible

The Old and New Testaments of the King James version of the Bible mention eunuchs over twenty times. The book of Deuteronomy states that castrated eunuchs were not allowed to enter the temple according to Jewish law (Deut. 23:1), probably because this was done to ban “outsiders” and non-Jews. In the book of Matthew, Jesus distinguishes between three types of eunuchs: those born with the condition, those who were made eunuchs, and those who “have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake” (Matt. 19:12). Although the first two forms of eunuchism are better known, there were cases of men castrating themselves for religious or political reasons. Philip, a disciple of Jesus, converted a eunuch who was a highly ranked official serving Queen Candice of Ethiopia. As told in the book of Acts, Philip baptized him in a river, making him the first recorded eunuch member of the early Christian church (Acts 8:26–40). Later Christian churches forbade marriages between women and eunuchs.

Following in the wake of liberation theology, some scholars looked to the biblical representation of eunuchs when interpreting contemporary queer identities and reinterpreting sacred books such as the Bible in more liberal ways. Sean D. Burke, for instance, points to the ways that eunuchs—both those castrated prior to puberty and those castrated later—“troubled the multiple discourses of gender, sexuality, social status, and race that produced ancient constructions of masculinity” (Burke 2011, 181). He concludes his analysis with the hope that “members of Christian communities will consider the implications of the role of queering in early Christian discourse for the lives of contemporary persons who could be identified as flesh-and-blood queering figures, including lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered persons” (Burke 2011, 187). In a related vein, Manuel Villalobos sees the story of the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8:26–40 as challenging the way Israel understood masculinity, gender, and the body (Villalobos 2011). Reading this episode through the lens of queer Chicana theorist Gloria Anzaldúa, Villalobos argues that bodies in borderlands—such as the Ethiopian eunuch and queer,
undocumented, and poor persons—offer new ways to envision being human.

**Eunuchs in the Middle East**

During Iran’s Safavid dynasty of the sixteenth century, eunuchs guarded the inner gate of the royal harem’s three gates. This was a position of respect and honor for those who also regulated the sexual practices of the women, escorted guests inside the harem area, and alerted women so they could conceal themselves when strangers arrived. The eunuchs also accompanied and guarded the women when they left the harem. A few of them did obtain high government positions, such as the Georgian eunuch Khusra Khan Gurji, who was governor of the Iranian provinces of Yazd and Isfahan, as well as Kurdistan and other regions. Eunuchs in the Qajar dynasty (1785–1925) also had major roles as overseers and administrators.

Egyptologist Piotr O. Scholz (2001) has traced castration in Egypt back to prehistoric times and has noted that it was designated as punishment in the Code of Hammurabi (1728–1686 BCE). He further detailed that early Buddhist, Christian, and Muslim ascetics performed self-castration to secure their chastity and to satisfy their quest for redemption. Additionally, castration was used to punish sex crimes and as a medical treatment for hernias and transsexuality. Scholz notes that castration was an ancient custom and that hundreds, or even thousands of eunuchs were employed in the courts of Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, Persia, and Kush.

**Castrati**

From the end of the sixteenth century and during the seventeenth century, particularly in Italy, castrati singers in churches and opera were very popular. The castrati were prepubescent boys who were castrated before puberty caused their vocal cords to lengthen, deepening their voices. Observers described the singers as having smooth and pale skin, no beard, and a tendency to be overweight. The Church of Rome provided the impetus for producing castrati; the first one sang in the church’s choir, probably in 1553. In 1589 Pope Sixtus V (1521–1590) issued a papal bull supporting the inclusion of four eunuchs in the choir of St. Peter’s Rome. Although bodily amputations were against canon law, the castrations were deemed acceptable because the castrated boys were used in music that honored God. Previously, boys and adult males had sung in falsetto, but the voices of the adult males were unsatisfactorily deep and the boys’ voices did not have enough power. Furthermore, at that time there was a papal injunction against women singing in public.

It was the new Italian musical entertainment of the early seventeenth century, opera, that prompted the rise of the castrati. Although some professional castrati moved to opera from church choirs, the popularity of opera, which catered not only to the upper classes but also
to the general citizenry, produced greater demand for singers. The treatise “Eunuchism Displayed,” published in 1718, describes operations on boys between the ages of seven and nine. The operations almost always took place in Italy and in secret, and it has been estimated that their numbers were as high as 4,000 a year; castration, however, could not confer a talent for singing, and many boys underwent the process needlessly.

As opera spread to many European cities, some castrati, such as Giovanni Manzuoli (1722–1782), became very famous and wealthy. Carlo Broschi (1705–1782), known as Farinelli, had a voice that spanned three octaves and reportedly could hold a note for a full minute. Giusto Tenducci (1735–1790) moved from Italy to London and became a friend of composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756–1791); he (like some other castrati) maintained his libido and married. Giovanni Velluti (1781–1861) was probably the last of the famous castrati singers. Castrati continued to be part of the Sistine Chapel choir until 1808, when Napoleon ruled the Papal States; after his removal in 1815, they returned and continued singing in the choir until 1902. The last Vatican castrato was Alessandro Moreschi, who died in 1922; he was recorded by gramophone in 1902 and 1904, and although the quality is not optimal, his voice is discernable.

Jean D. Wilson and Claus Roehrborn (1999) note that although there was a long association between singing and castration in Italy, there is none in the histories of the Chinese, Ottoman, and Skoptsi eunuchs. Furthermore, they assert that some of the castrati were actually cross-dressing women posing as castrated men, men with diminished functioning testes (hypogonadism), and men who were physically intact but had natural countertenor or falsetto singing voices.

**Skoptsi**

During the reign of Catherine the Great (r. 1762–1796) and through the Stalinist era, a community of Christians in Russia practiced self-castration in their quest for both spiritual pureness and eternal life. The Skoptsi (also transliterated as Skoptsy, Skoptzy, Skoptzi, or Skopzi) secret sect of Central Russia, founded in 1757, may have numbered more than 10 million at its height. The castrations of its adherents took two forms. In the first, called the minor seal, the scrotum was sliced open and the testicles removed as the practitioner called out “Christ is risen”; in the second, the major seal, which conferred higher purity, the penis was also removed. Because of the threat of prosecution, Skoptsi would claim that an unidentified stranger, or someone who had since died had made them eunuchs.

The Skoptsi, also known as the White Doves, believed that Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden were sexless, and that after the Fall caused by eating the fruit of knowledge of good and evil, portions of the forbidden fruit were transplanted onto them as genitalia and breasts. In order to regain the prelapsarian chaste state, the Skoptsi castrated and emasculated themselves with knives, razor-sharp stones, pieces of glass, or red-hot pokers.
Women's breasts and external genitalia were sometimes mutilated. The Skoptsi believed that the second coming of Christ would occur only when their numbers reached 144,000, the number of the elect according to the book of Revelation; although they no longer have the number of adherents they once had, they still have a few followers.

Historically, it appears that many regarded eunuchs as messengers of God, and some have argued that images of angels were modeled on pre-Christian concepts of eunuchs (Taylor 2002). Religious art from the Byzantine era, for instance, depicts angels as genderless or even mortal. They were supposed to serve as “trusted guardians, celestial protectors, and advisors to the Lord,” fulfilling a role similar to that of eunuchs serving earthly rulers (Aucoin and Wassersug 2006, 3166). That explains why some sects, such as the Skoptsi, extolled eunuchism as a path to heaven, and why others refused to engage in sexual activity.

**Byzantine Empire (330–1453)**

During the rule of Irene of Athens (r. 780–802) in the Byzantine Empire, eunuchs reportedly formed a swarm like bees around her in the palace (Guilland 1943). Another ruler was given 300 slaves, 100 of whom were eunuchs. Theobald I, when marquis of Spoleto (r. 929–936), captured Greek soldiers and made them eunuchs. Although the Byzantines had laws that prohibited eunuchism, they seemed to have ignored them.

Justinian I (r. 527–565) specifically banned eunuchism after learning that out of ninety men who underwent the operation, only three survived. Those caught creating eunuchs had their property seized and were sent to work the mines—if they survived the retaliatory operation. Furthermore, all enslaved eunuchs were emancipated. However, the practice did not end, and when Leo VI ascended the throne (r. 886–912), he significantly rolled back the penalties to fines and whippings.

Until the Council of Nicaea (325), the Byzantine Christian church did not reject eunuchs, many of whom held clerical positions as patriarchs, metropolitans, bishops, and monks. Others, including Narses, a general under Justinian I, served with distinction in the military, or in civilian service, even managing the state on occasion. Still, eunuchs were criticized and even reviled, as revealed in a saying that dates to the Byzantine era: “If you have a eunuch, kill him; if you do not have one, buy one and kill him” (quoted in Guilland 1943, 234).

**Ottoman Empire (1453–1923)**

It is in the Ottoman Empire that one finds some of the most complete histories of eunuchs, via a system inherited from the Byzantines, whom they conquered. The Ottomans kept very detailed records for over 500 years; these have been supplemented with travelogues,
photographs, letters, newspaper articles, court records, and diaries. In 1893 and 1903 the sultan had an official compile detailed registers of eunuchs of the royal family, which included brief biographies, positions held, and dates of service. Previously, historians had mostly focused on the sultans, including some information about important court eunuchs and their roles.

The Ottomans, like others, took slaves from populations they conquered and also participated in slave trades. Many of their captives were made eunuchs, and many from the slave trade arrived as eunuchs. At the beginning of the empire, eunuchs mostly from Europe worked in the harems of the royal palaces, but also in the harems of rich men who had multiple wives and concubines. From the early 1500s, European eunuchs—Hungarians, Slavs, Germans, Armenians, Georgians, and Circassians—virtually ran the daily operations of the palace under the direction of the Babussada Aga (Kapi Aga, or chief white eunuch [CWE]), who wielded immense power. Penzer (1956) notes that palace eunuchs held the following important positions:

1. Kapi Aga: as head of the inner service and confidant to the sultan, palace gatekeeper, and head of the infirmary, he controlled all messages, petitions, and state documents for the sultan, and could speak to the sultan in person;
2. Hazinedar-basi: as head of the treasury and head of the corps of pages, he was responsible for the royal treasure and kept the financial records;
3. Kilerji-bashi: as head of the kitchen staff, he supervised the sultan’s food;
4. Serai Aga: he supervised the harem and headed the palace school.

Because it was contrary to Islam to castrate a man, the operations took place outside Constantinople. Although some Muslims ignored the ban, most traders got eunuchs from "eunuch factories" located in Verdon (France), Samarkand, and Coptic Christian communities in Egypt, Bukhara, Prague, and Kharazon. Centers in Africa included Damagaram (in present-day Niger), Bornu (in present-day Nigeria), and Baghirmi (in present-day Chad). Because many African captives were neither Christian nor Muslim, some felt that it was acceptable to castrate them.

Six of the Ottoman governors-general of Egypt in the sixteenth century were white eunuchs who had previously served in the imperial palace. Until the late sixteenth century, all eunuchs, African and white, were under the authority of the CWE, the palace’s officer-in-chief. When the royal family and the harem was relocated to the new Topkapi Palace, which was completed in 1465, a separation became necessary, and the black eunuchs were placed in charge of the harem. White eunuchs were no longer in charge of the black eunuchs, and a division of labor based on race came into effect, with white eunuchs assigned to the male areas of the palace and the blacks to the harem, which put them in close contact with the sultans.
A major change in the Ottoman system occurred under the reign of Sultan Murad III (r. 1574–1595), after the death of the powerful CWE Gazanfer Aga, a powerbroker who had on occasion challenged the sultan. Other white eunuchs also created their own centers of power and challenged the sultans, but after Gazanfer’s death by beheading in 1603, the power of the CBE expanded substantially as he was able to develop his own political networks. He was also head of the religious foundations, educated and managed the harem women, established a foundation that funded the holy mosques in Mecca and Medina, mediated between the sultans and their courts, endowed religious institutions, built public fountains to supply clean water, set up endowments for mosques throughout the empire, supervised the publication of books and collected books, was a witness at sultans’ marriages and other ceremonies, held councils meetings of his own, participated in political decisions, supervised the guarding of the palace, and in a couple of cases, assisted in eliminating a sultan. From the late 1500s until the end of the Ottoman Empire in the early twentieth century, the CBE was the third most powerful person in the empire.

There was only one CBE at a time, and at times he supervised over 200 other eunuchs, plus other personnel. Some of the CBEs died in office, some were executed if they ran afoul of the sultan, and others retired or were forcibly retired to Egypt, leaving behind their horses, some of their personal slaves, mansions, and many of their personal belongings. In Egypt, the retired CBEs received a salary and supervised the sultan’s investments in the flax trade and other areas. Some were appointed guardians of the Prophet’s tomb in Medina and the Ka‘ba in Mecca until recent years. One, Abbas Aga, amassed twenty-seven books, commercial properties in seven regions, shops, storage rooms, a dye house, linen works, homes, lands, storehouses, coffeehouses, and more. It is quite clear that in today’s money, the CBEs would have been millionaires, or close to it.

El-Hajj Beshir Aga was the longest serving CBE, from 1703 to 1730. He was born in Abyssinia around 1655, castrated as a boy, and eventually received increasingly powerful appointments from the sultan. He presided over important building projects, including a hostel in Medina, educational institutions in Medina and present-day Turkey and Bulgaria, various public fountains, and a mosque complex in Istanbul.

The last two Ottoman CBEs each served for only a month; Nadir Aga (d. 1962) served in March 1909, and Fahreddin Aga served during April and May of the same year. Following the end of the Ottoman Empire, Nadir Aga purchased over three dozen head of cattle and sold milk. He and other palace eunuchs remained in Istanbul and, along with other members of the former sultans’ household, formed a retirement association by pooling their resources. Others found positions in various parts of the Arab world that still used eunuchs in harems and households. Into the 1970s, one could see the last of the palace eunuchs walking around Istanbul.

Croutier, whose grandmother and grandaunt were in the harem of a wealthy man, grew up
in a house with servants and odalisques who sometimes revealed to her details of harem life. According to them, some eunuchs were familiar with aphrodisiacs and erotic paraphernalia, and because they could leave the harem, “they were able to obtain a variety of sex toys, including artificial phalli and other kinds of erotic succedanea” (Croutier 1989, 135). Furthermore, they were so skilled at oral sex that women who married after leaving the harem were dissatisfied with their husbands, and their marriages sometimes ended in divorce when the wives told their husbands that eunuchs were better lovers.

Modern Castration

In the period following World War II, chemical castration began to be used in certain instances to “treat” homosexuality, which was illegal in many parts of the world. Chemical castration has also been used and continues to be used on sex offenders in cases of pedophilia and rape in many parts of the world.

In North America, about 40,000 men a year begin androgen-deprivation therapy, either through surgery or chemicals, as a treatment for prostate cancer (Aucoin and Wassersug 2006). Side effects include gynecomastia (breast development), erectile dysfunction, and reduced libido that may affect a man’s self-identity and sexuality. According to Gary Taylor (2002), the operation to create a eunuch should not be confused with gender-confirmation surgery. Trans people transfer from one gender category to another to achieve a desired gender position through surgery or hormonal therapy. Eunuchs, by contrast, are socially produced through procedures and, therefore, biologically altered, but they do not change gender category. Yet, many scholars and trans people themselves find this distinction problematic, seeing it as a reductive way of thinking about the complex gender positions of eunuchs both historically and in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

There are other men who undergo, or desire to undergo castration, including fetishists, for reasons as diverse as libido reduction, gender dysmorphia, and masochism. In 2007 Richard J. Wassersug and Thomas W. Johnson published a study of eunuchs and “wannabes” (men who express the wish to be castrated) based on a survey they conducted with members of the Eunuch Archive, an internet community of more than 3,500 members who reported fascination with castration and/or castration paraphilia (sexual interest in the idea of being castrated). Responses from wannabes far outnumbered those of “voluntary eunuchs.” Wassersug and Johnson compared “castrated cancer patients” with “voluntary eunuchs,” and concluded that “the biological impact of castration can vary greatly depending on one’s desire and expectation” (2007, 553).

Representing and Theorizing Eunuchs in the Contemporary World

Whether or not eunuchs embodied queer identities and sexualities in the historical past
and whether or not being castrated was traditionally seen asemasculating and leading to a loss of authority and power, both suppositions constitute important ways of thinking about eunuchs in the contemporary era. In the second half of the twentieth century, feminist and queer scholars began to unpack the idea that the organizational principle for society revolved around the possession of a penis, or phallus (a situation sometimes called phallocentrism). Phallocentrism was central to the theories of the influential psychoanalyst and critic Jacques Lacan (1901–1981). Particularly under the microscope were claims by psychologists, beginning with Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), that women's sexuality is grounded in a notion of lack; that is, because women do not have a phallus, they suffer from what is popularly termed “penis envy.” Also challenged were psychological models of homosexual men that relied on notions of an “arrested development” akin, in many ways, to emasculation and to the status of women vis-à-vis their perceived “lack.” In 1970 Australian feminist scholar and writer Germaine Greer (1939–) published *The Female Eunuch*, arguing that traditionalist social structures had made women into eunuchs and rejecting assumptions about women's supposedly innate lack of sexual desire. Greer critiqued the definition of femininity “as meaning without libido, and therefore incomplete, subhuman, a cultural reduction of human possibilities”; to become feminine, according to Greer, is to be castrated (Greer [1970] 2012, 79).

That same year, French literary theorist Roland Barthes (1915–1980) published *S/Z*, a structuralist analysis of Honoré de Balzac's novella *Sarrasine* (1830), about the castrato Zambinella. *S/Z* anticipated many of the insights of 1980s and 1990s queer theory; since its publication, queer theorists have mined literary and social texts to argue that the eunuch is a figure who destabilizes gender norms—and one who highlights the performative nature of gender. In her 1989 book *Chaucer’s Sexual Poetics*, Carolyn Dinshaw proposed a “eunuch hermeneutics” in her reading of the “Pardoner’s Tale” in Geoffrey Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (1387). Dinshaw argued that as “not-man, not-woman,” the Pardoner foregrounds an ideal for a Christian society not bound by the norms of the male/female gender binary (1989, 184). The figure of the castrato stands as a representation of the queering of vocalization in *The Queen’s Throat: Opera, Homosexuality, and the Myth of Desire* (1993), in which Wayne Kostenbaum draws connections between “the castrato's scandalous vocal plenitude” ([1993] 2001, 159), repressive discourses around sexuality, and coming out as a kind of voicing.

Outside the European context, Howard Chiang’s *After Eunuchs: Science, Medicine, and the Transformation of Sex in Modern China* (2018) charts a genealogy in Chinese culture from the eunuch's historical role as an exceptional figure on the margins of gender categories to the emergence of trans and queer identities in the twentieth century. Chiang also considers China’s metaphorical portrayal as a “castrated civilization” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, alongside perceptions of eunuchs as a demasculinized “third sex.” Chiang is one of a number of scholars who implicate eunuchs in a long global queer history of sex and gender, particularly around Western imperial expansion into Asia. Frank
Proschan (2002) analyzes French colonial interest in the “capon” (literally, castrated roosters) or “eunuch mandarins” who served in the imperial court in Annam (now Vietnam). Claire Lowrie describes how white British and Australian men viewed their Chinese “houseboys” in Singapore and Darwin, respectively, as “eunuch-like, feminised, servile and cunning creatures” (Lowrie 2016, 72).

This queering of eunuchs is also found in literature, film, art, and television. Since 2011, eunuch characters have featured in the television program Game of Thrones. As Brooke Askey argues, Game of Thrones uses eunuchs to subvert the notion that the penis or phallus is the root of power and, thus, to subvert heteronormativity. “Castrated men and women characters from the HBO series Game of Thrones challenge the patriarchal ideas of who is able to have power,” Askey writes, noting that these characters also challenge the relationship between anatomy, power, and gender norms (2018, 65). Acclaimed writer and activist Arundhati Roy’s 2017 novel The Ministry of Utmost Happiness, which revolves around the character Anjum (born Aftab), a Shi’a Muslim who becomes a hijra, signals one of the ways various cultural conceptions of eunuchs circulate today. As the contemporary era’s understanding of gender and sexuality continues to evolve, it is certain that the ways we look back at and reinterpret eunuchs from the historical past will also continue to change.

SEE ALSO Asexuality; Hijras; Sex Reassignment Surgery in Asia; Zheng He (1371–1433)

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From its inception in 1956, the annual Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) was conceived as a European institution but has become increasingly queer, not only delineating an understanding of the European community but also bringing together fans across nations, thus forging a transnational community. The event with its original seven participating countries has steadily grown alongside the evolution of what is “European,” a concept that goes beyond borders and the political definition of the European Union (EU). Starting in 1993, former Warsaw Pact countries began entering the contest, increasing the list of participants to twenty-five that year alone; and by 2017, forty-two countries participated in the event hosted in Kiev by the preceding year’s winning nation, Ukraine. The increasing scope of the ESC has resulted in the decision in 2008 to divide the original one-night event into two separate semifinals and a finale so that every nation has the opportunity to have its contestant broadcast at least once. The ESC has made it its policy to include countries not considered European in political or geographical contexts, such as Israel (participating since 1973) and Turkey (since 1975), and even Australia entered the contest in 2015. This development has been seen as an indicator of pro-Europeanness because many of the countries being added to the list of contestants have, in many cases (but certainly not all), become members of the EU later on.

Although the ESC rules explicitly state that no lyrics, speeches, or gestures of a political nature are permitted, the intermingling of music and politics has drastically increased since the late 1990s. Especially with regard to gender and sexuality, the avowedly apolitical ESC agenda has become a hotly debated political arena. Turkey, for instance, has been bidding for EU membership for years and for the longest time was without luck in the ESC contest. Therefore, the victory of Sertab Erener in 2003 was seen as a historical moment, turning the frustratingly slow movement toward the Turkish EU membership into a feasible goal. Turkey’s sudden success after years of spectacular failure has been a cause for debate. Certainly, Erener’s song “Everyway That I Can” projected a Euro-friendly Turkishness with its hybrid musical aesthetics mixing Euro-hip-hop-pop with Middle Eastern belly-dancing rhythms. Yet, in addition, the Turkish government's decision at the time to oppose the US effort to set up a military base in Turkey to provide an invasion route into Iraq garnered
Turkey much sympathy across a Europe displaying increasingly antiwar sentiment and may have sparked extra support for Turkey's ESC participation. What seems evident, though, is that this success boosted the confidence of an increasingly visible gay community in Turkey and especially in the country's “gay capital,” Istanbul, a boost that climaxed toward the end of the decade and has since diminished as a result of the government's conservative turn to re-Islamized politics. As in Turkey, the ESC has a great appeal for LGBT audiences all over Europe and beyond and there are celebratory parties hosted in bars and clubs across all participating nations akin to gay pride and gay Olympics festivities. While this suggests a queerness transcending national borders, the contrary may be true if looking at developments since the turn of the twenty-first century.

**Camp Politics**

The ESC has been hailed—and chastised—for its campiness. Indeed, Eurovision fandom can be read as a secret code for being gay. While traditionally camp is known for its exaggerated style, surface entertainment, gay sensibility, and, above all, apolitical stance, the various instances of camp performance on the ESC stage have repeatedly been understood as sending clandestinely political messages and thus moving beyond a commodified notion of camp that has become all too accessible and nonthreatening in its willingness to suit the (straight) masses. Ultimately, camp is a mode of deconstructive reading from a queer perspective mocking hetero assumptions about gender, desire, and identity. Camp thus produces a dialogue between performers and spectators with the assumption that the latter have a sensibility to decipher the formers' ironic undertakings ([Babuscio 1993; Ross 1988](#)). In contrast to camp performances in gay clubs, at gay pageants, or during gay pride events, where there is a recognized confluence of queer actors and queer audiences, the ESC campiness relies on a covert acknowledgment that large parts of the audience have a queer enough eye to successfully indulge in the guilty pleasure of enjoying the carnivalesque transgressions of the performances. Because the contest is about nations competing against each other, notions of nationality may very well be the butt of any campy joke.

Verka Serduchka's second-place performance in 2007 representing Ukraine can be seen as an instance of camp that has the potential for both aesthetic disruption and political subversion. Such camp taps into archival resources of the past and produces new perspectives on familiar material. Serducha's song and drag show "Dancing Lasha Tumbai," through her glittery and futuristic costume, played with notions of the ESC's status as "gay Christmas" (or "gay Passover" in Israel)—a "national holiday" for the LGBT community as important as gay pride—and the drag tradition of staged feminine hypersexuality, while the lyrics and score were ambiguous. "Lasha tumbai" was variously understood as meaning either "Russia goodbye" or "whipped cream" or making no sense at all, and the music had resonances to marches and waltzes, thus referring to various musical
traditions of “old” Europe, such as military parades and ballroom dancing. Serduchka as representing the emerging “new” eastern Europe was holding up a self-reflective queer mirror for the celebratory claim of a unified Europe moving in a synchronized beat and forging a coherent transnational body out of disparate anonymous crowds. Other performances have also used camp to point toward future events not yet known. Among the performances arguably perceived as camp were the Russian (faux) lesbian girl-group t.A.T.u. in 2003 and the Norwegian monster rockers Lordi in 2006. These performances may convey a multitude of prospects, including above all utopian notions of an imagined queer transnational community.

Queer Nationality after 2014

Such utopian longings notwithstanding, developments since the late 1990s have opened up new gaps between queerness and national identities. Starting in 1997 with the high camp performances of the first openly gay contestant, Páll Óskar (Iceland), and the following year with the first trans woman, Dana International, representing Israel with her contest-winning song “Diva,” Eurovision entered its acknowledged phase of visible LGBT politics. At the same time, Dana International’s victory was discussed both as symbolizing Israel’s membership in a sexually liberal West and as diverting through “pinkwashing,” a sort of publicity campaign to consolidate Israel’s proclaimed democratic reputation and paper
over the country's continuing discrimination of Palestinians and its internal homophobia; reproach for the latter was repeated years later when Azerbaijan hosted the ESC in 2012 despite accusations of ongoing human rights violations and repression of LGBT people. The phase of visibility continued in the twenty-first century with the lesbian Serbian winner Marija Šerifović (2007) and Krista Siegfrids from Finland (2013) with her song “Marry Me,” which covertly critiqued the Finnish parliament’s decision not to vote on equal marriage legislation and ended in a stage kiss between two female performers. The trend furthermore included Slovenia’s 2002 trans group Sestre and culminated in Conchita Wurst’s victory for Austria in 2014 with her anthem “Rise Like a Phoenix.”

Controversies about Conchita’s performance already surfaced prior to the contest and escalated after. Russia, along with Belarus and Armenia, called for a ban on the broadcast of the ESC in 2014 because of the participation of Conchita and to replace the event with an alternative “Voice of Eurasia” contest, which would have revived the short-lived Intervision Song Contest, the equivalent of the ESC created for the countries of the Warsaw Pact and held from 1977 to 1980, with a single follow-up contest in Sochi in 2008 featuring eleven post-Soviet countries. The various discussions did not so much concern the openly gay singer Thomas Neuwirth but rather his choice of the bearded drag persona Conchita Wurst (later just Conchita), and they were as diverse as hailing her as an ambassador for diversity (a role she herself adapted later on in her visits to the European Parliament and the United Nations) and as denouncing her as a harbinger of moral decay. Clearly, with a gay man appearing as a woman sporting a full beard, Conchita’s performance challenged a gender system based on heteronormativity.

Initial homophobic and transphobic media reaction from Austria and other European countries gave way to a more streamlined narrative that lauds a progressive queer-friendly western Europe against a backward homophobic eastern Europe. While there is no denying the extreme homophobic statements, especially those of several Russian politicians, this cannot be taken to represent millions of eastern European people making up a largely enthusiastic ESC audience. Indeed, contrary to the often assumed West-versus-East bloc-voting, Eurovision voting revealed that while the expert juries of all the excommunist states voted significantly lower than all the other competing countries in favor of Conchita, the public televotes varied far less.

Given that the official policies in Russia and some other countries participating in the ESC have run counter to the overall tendency in Europe to ensure LGBT equal rights protection and have involved the enforcement of legislation that de facto encourages discrimination against queers, the pro-queue voting behavior in these very countries gives reasons for hope. The increasingly queer discernibility of the ESC, however, has so far not expanded to include visible and outspoken bi- and intersexuals, queer Muslims and Roma, or LGBT people of color. Time will tell whether the call for an all-encompassing queer politics, so dear to LGBT devotees from all nations, will reach a truly transnational ESC vision.
SEE ALSO Anti-gender Movement in Europe; Anti-Semitism and Zionism; Camp; Sexual Revolution in Europe

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Marriage equality has been at the forefront of media attention for some time now, with rights to marriage linked to “love rights” and to the entitlements of equal citizenship by LGBTQ groups. Following the legalization of same-sex marriage in the Netherlands in 2000, many countries have enacted versions of the same, and several countries in Asia have either succeeded in doing so or are in political ferment over the issue. This entry examines such attempts as part of global and national aspirations for rights and resources, while also remaining cognizant of the disproportionate attention given to claims of love-associated rights (e.g., marriage) of certain groups by appeal to sovereign powers in certain times/spaces. The framework of marriage ironically validates a powerful model of heteronormative belonging and marginalizes alternative forms of kinship and belonging. Mindful of the impossibility of providing a panoramic view of the divergent practices of love, family, and law in the different histories, cultures, and geopolitical localities that loosely constitute “Asia,” this essay foregrounds the tangled and uneven relationships between family law and broader structures of political economies, ideologies, and cultures. It argues for possibilities of queering legal heteronormativity and decolonizing marriage equality as a form of aspirational Western modernity by highlighting some strategies of sexual minorities in Asia for negotiating love, marriage, and law.

Although “Asia” often features in the Western imagination as an exemplar of overweening patriarchal culture and associated violent practices, it is a continent with uneven histories of colonization (European and/or intra-Asian), different types of states (from Global North capitalist to socialist to the underdeveloped Global South and much in-between), a variety of religions, class and caste hierarchies, and kinship systems (including several matrilineal and polyandrous groups), as well as divergent traditions of gender and sexuality. Gender and sexuality, correspondingly, do not line up neatly along axes of heterosexuality versus homosexuality or as straight versus LGBTQ as characterized in Western reckonings. They
are better understood through discourses of embodiment, gender, and sex as “a global process of transformation whereby a variety of non-procreative, same-sex behaviors become homogenized under the rubric ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian,’” with “these new identities … merged into local histories and contexts” (Phillips 2000, 18) or generating new hybrid forms (Kang 2014).

**Forms of Kinship and Belonging**

Intimate relationships and legal systems of marriage do not line up neatly. Asian subjects, like their counterparts elsewhere, seek rights, entitlements, and recognition through engaging the state as well as by drawing on transnational discourses of liberal subjectivity and sexual human rights. Instead of uncritically celebrating legalization of same-sex marriages in Asian nations as necessarily “progressive” and “emancipatory,” we might contextualize these moves within the broader political economy and ideology. At the same time, we cannot discount other groups’ persistent efforts to pursue their intimate and affective life outside/beyond the radar of the state. For instance, instead of seeking formal conjugal relationships or “coming out,” many gay men and lesbians in China choose to “bring in” their partners as close friends to live with their parents, a practice of kinship and family alternative to the legalistic form of marriage (Chou 2000).

Queer theorists have argued that “family law” is arguably heteronormative to its core, grounded in the mapping of property, rights, and responsibilities in terms of kinship, following “sex-gender” systems (Rubin 1975; Butler 2002). Kinship formally functions through the traffic of marriage, with heterosex being the technology that constitutes the validity of marriage (and thereby the route to accessing entitlements of labor, property, children), with “consummation finaliz[ing] the performative utterances of wedding, … very precisely articulated in law as a particular corporeal practice” (Brook 2000, 140). Same-sex marriage can thus pose a threat to “the heterosexual logic of the conjugal body politic” (Brook 2000, 147). When states do adopt marriage equality they may do so in dissonant ways, such as by extending the scope of the formal marriage contract to same-sex couples as a form of equity, while not reconceptualizing the reproductive logic of family law (Robcis 2004), in effect “extend[ing] rights of contract while in no way disrupting the patrilineal assumptions of kinship or the project of the unified nation that it supports” (Butler 2002, 16–17). Such legalization of intimate relationships of sexual minorities follows a teleological lineage of incorporating new categories that reinforces rather than unsettles the underlying reproductive logic of marriage, and excludes groups that might not be willing to follow this route.

**Colonial Codification of Heteronormative Patriarchy**

Marriage and its variant legal forms have always been at the center of ideological and geopolitical maneuvering in the Asian context. In some parts of Asia under direct European
colonialism, such as British governance of India, there was allegedly minimal intervention in “personal laws” (largely overlapping with “family law”). The colonial authorities claimed to cede authority in this domain to families and communities, but thereby often encoded the practices of select hegemonic patrilineal communities into law, marginalizing matrilineality, plural marriage, other customary practices favoring women, or customs sheltering kin who were unmarried or widowed. Postcolonial laws typically retained these practices favoring the new ruling regimes.

In other Asian regions that allegedly maintained an “independent” status both before and throughout the two world wars, European colonizers also effectively spread their influence and solidified their de facto control through the manipulation of the systems of marriage, family, gender, and sexuality. For instance, as early as the late nineteenth century, King Chulalongkorn (1853–1910), the fifth monarch of the Chakri dynasty in Siam, started the modernizing process of the country through the adoption of Western military and agricultural technologies. While the British government did not establish a direct colonial control in the region during the process, it did disseminate its hegemonic influence over the Siamese government through the imposition of its monogamous marriage system and heteronormative gender codes as “civilized” and “superior.” Chulalongkorn’s successor, King Vajiravudh (1880–1925), succumbed to colonial pressure and adopted the Western monogamous marriage system and gender norms (Atkins 2012). During the Meiji era in Japan (1868–1912), the posturing and showcasing of the Victorian nuclear family style and gender relationships in the public space became one of the central conduits for the reformist camp to articulate their political stance and successfully rally support from the general public, which turned out to be a watershed moment in Japanese history (Karlin 2002). Likewise, in China at the dawn of the twentieth century, the Nationalist government relied upon the reform of families to articulate and legitimize its vision of building a new nation. The intellectuals involved in the New Culture Movement proposed the replacement of the authoritarian, patriarchal, extended family structure with a more egalitarian conjugal family as the key to national salvation and state-building (Glosser 2003).

**Postcolonial Marriage Reforms**

After World War II, the reform of marriage systems and family law was key to decolonizing/independence movements across Asia. Since the foundation of the People's Republic of China in 1949, marriage has been utilized as a key biopolitical tool to consolidate and further the so-called socialist construction (Friedman 2006). For instance, state-imposed “marriage reform” targeting ethnic minorities was foregrounded as one of the central moves to symbolize and circulate the narrative that the party-state “salvaged” minority groups, such as Tibetans, from their “barbaric” practices of kinship, sexuality, and gender relationships, and catapulted them into “civilized” socialist society. In the meantime, the state restructured the legal system of family and marriage in ways to allow
women more room to claim their own rights (particularly that of divorce) and independence, which was in turn used to indicate socialist China’s moral superiority over the “decayed” capitalist camp (Wang 1999). In postcolonial Singapore, the state has instituted a draconian homophobic law that originated but was never practiced in Britain, and meanwhile has been promoting the bourgeois nuclear family as one of the core social values to increase the fertility rate and produce more “high-quality” (read here as native, middle-class, and well-educated) populations to engineer and sustain the city-state’s global hub status (Atkins 2012).

More recently, many contemporary nation-states, decolonized or otherwise, have instituted laws of marriage and property that bring increased equity along gender lines, in the wake of transnational treaties such as the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). Many LGBTQ movements have also sought inclusion within family law, given the place that marriage and family occupy as proxy for some of the most substantive entitlements through the state, including health care, rights to children, or economic support. But rather than seeing these reforms toward gender equality or rights for sexual minorities as welcome hallmarks of modernity, we might notice that the reforms often signal a nation’s political maneuvers as much as a triumph of LGBTQ organizing. The newly elected Taiwanese government utilizes its legislative move toward marriage equality not only to demonstrate its own liberal stance over social issues vis-à-vis its predecessor but also to highlight its alignment with the liberal West and to garner more moral leverage in geopolitical competition, especially with China’s drastic return to an authoritarian stance under the presidency of Xi Jinping after 2013 (Shi and Sung 2017).
Taiwan’s First Same-Sex Buddhist Wedding, 2012. Activists hoped that the marriage ceremony between You Ya-ting (left) and her partner Fish Huang (right) would help in the campaign to legalize same-sex marriage on the island.

In 2015 the Vietnamese government abolished the ban on same-sex marriage—a sharp departure that not only distinguishes it from other communist/postsocialist states, such as China and Russia that have tightened their control over LGBTQ issues recently but also marks it as the first country in the region to legalize conjugal relationships between same-sex couples (Lewis 2016). By contrast, its close neighbor Thailand has tightened the policing of extramarital sexual relationships, particularly commercial sex work, which is defined by the law as “illegal” but not usually punished by the state in practice.

This move is a sign that the Thai government, under a military regime, is trying to move away from the Western liberal governance it has long embraced, and toward Chinese-style authoritarianism (Pawakapan 2015). In the meantime, while widely known for its LGBTQ scenes and once seen as the first Asian country that might legalize same-sex marriage, Thailand now lags behind Taiwan and might take up the cause again at some point. In other performances, nation-states signal modernity by highlighting heterosexual conjugality as the core of citizenship. For instance, the Hong Kong municipal government not only uses heteronormative kinship as the discursive basis of citizenship defining belonging and exclusion but, more importantly, to also justify ethnicity (being born as Chinese) as the legal foundation to decide citizenship (Yam 2018).
Queering Legal Heteronormativity

Since heterosexual marriage has been a crucial means of access to livelihoods, inheritance/maintenance, and lineage rituals, many LGBTQ groups seek to carve out an alternative space of survival and living within the normative forms of marriage, such as “cooperative marriage” among gay men and lesbians to satisfy their respective families in China recently (Kam 2013; Engebretsen 2014), or marriages of convenience among South Asians. These may be arranged by the individuals marrying, but are deemed in the United Kingdom to fall under forced marriage practices among Asians (Amara 2014). As Amy Brainer’s ethnography points out, strategic marriages by gay men and lesbians in Taiwan are embedded in the logic of patrilineal kinship, property, and labor, such that lesbians have no access to natal, affinal, or matrimonial resources when they adopt the common practice of living in “separation without divorce,” assume the bulk of reproductive labor in households in line with their assigned gender, and are cast out of ritual recognition. Trans men and women have been newly able to navigate laws with some fluidity, retaining property rights of the gender assigned to them at birth or gaining new ritual recognition under their newly adopted gender, but Brainer’s argument is that these forms of embodiment still highlight the norms of patriarchal property transmission (2014). Like Brainer, Wah-shan Chou (2000) also suggests that family-kinship, instead of sexuality, constitutes the basis of individual identity, and thus a homosexual intimate relationship practiced along with/within kinship relationships reinforces rather than unsettles the patrilineal and reproductive logic of the family system in Chinese societies.

While these strategies have social and material advantages, they also illustrate the categorical violence of family law, both in the coercion of living within marriage as a form of survival, and in the dangers of exposure in countries where homosexuality is criminalized. Tanaz Eshaghian’s poignant film Be Like Others (2008) follows gay men in Iran, where homosexuality is criminalized but sex-reassignment surgery is sanctioned and encouraged as a remedy for a medical condition: men ambivalently seek surgery as a way to marry their partners and satisfy their families about gender and marriage, but often end up losing kin connections and livelihoods anyway. Transsexuality has been constituted as a space of livability in Iran, inhabited strategically by queer people even as it serves as a disciplining discourse (Najmabadi 2013). Marriage equality may also be part of civic recognition sought by cosmopolitan, class-privileged groups, and may purposefully shun associations with sexual minorities marginalized by class, livelihood, and region, compounding structural violence (Datta and Roy 2014; Kang 2014).

Often, the authority assigned to patriarchal norms in families means that transgressions in family law are also imbricated with a variety of criminal penalties; gender is flexibly manipulated in legal pluralism for peculiarly punitive effects. A recent case in Bangladesh exemplifies the impunity of criminal law deployed simultaneously with family law, in which
the father of a Muslim woman who had a customary form of marriage with her female Hindu partner had the partner arrested on charges of kidnapping and abduction (a common use of these criminal laws by parents to curb their children’s marriage choices), then forced his daughter into marriage before that case was resolved (Pelham 2016). Vaibhav Saria (2015) highlights a legal case that emphasizes the constant state of exception for those in liminal legal categories: Shamseri, a hijra (a specific religio-cultural community of trans women in India), agreed to marry her brother’s mistress as a cover for the mistress’s pregnancy, only to be brought up on criminal and civil charges for domestic violence and alimony when her brother tried to end the relationship.

Asia’s varied kinship systems also provide a useful reminder that patrilineal patrilocal marriage is not the universal currency of kin entitlements. Through kin networks, people have usufructuary, or use rights, to maintenance and property that may capably incorporate gender flexibility or alternative lines of descent. Unni Wikan (1977) describes the Xanith/Khanith of Oman as a third gender, adopting female clothing and activities and inhabiting female space while having the same access to legal property rights as Muslim men. Hijra communities in India fall under legal precedent that property is transmitted within lineages of gurus and disciples rather than through their biological kin, a right in danger of being forfeited through upper/middle-class marriage equality initiatives where conjugality is placed center stage (Suresh 2011; Manayath 2015).

**Beyond Legal Governance** It is such alternative reckonings that provide possibilities for queering family law beyond calls for state recognition through marriage equality. While LGBTQ demands for marriage are politically prominent negotiations, others have identified templates of practices of queer communities that provide a way to rethink the logic of family law. One way is to restructure kinship and religion based on practice, such that the legal realm is not the only place where rights are granted: Ruth Vanita (2011) uses the case of the marriage of a lesbian couple solemnized in a Hindu temple to posit a path for creating new “customary” practices that then set precedents to be incorporated into family law. Another is to rethink the “family” in law: for example, the Delhi-based organization Partners for Law in Development has long argued for economic rights and rights of social recognition for a number of different kinds of conjugal and marital arrangements that are customarily accepted and durable, as “relationships in the nature of marriage.” These include economic rights for polygamous families, second wives who have no legal rights, short-term sexual-social contracts such as visiting husbands and maitri karar (short-term contracts that may include sex, labor, etc.), same-sex partners, and third-gender partners whose “husbands” may be also married to women (Partners for Law in Development 2010). Such imaginings dislocate the Western nuclear unit as the archetypal subject of family law, and invite us into Judith Butler’s vision for “radical projects” that rethink the governance of kinship (2002, 17).

**SEE ALSO** Marriage, Same-Sex, in Latin America; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Taiwan; Marriage.
Universal in Europe; Marriage Migration in Asia; Parenting Rights in North America; Section 377 in South Asia

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The British writer Henry Fielding (1707–1754) coined the term *female husband* in the mid-eighteenth century. Fielding used the term as the title of a criminal biography he wrote in 1746 that was based on newspaper accounts he had read earlier that year. After the publication of Fielding’s work, the term *female husband* went on to appear with relative frequency in the British and US press, most often to describe women who lived as men, or who partnered with other women and took on “masculine” occupations. Of course, this phenomenon most likely predated Fielding’s pamphlet, but with the publication of *The Female Husband*, the Anglo-American world had a label one could assign to this pattern of behavior, and its meaning gained coherence.

**Fielding’s Creation of the Female Husband Character**

Fielding’s pamphlet was inspired by newspaper stories about Mary/Charles Hamilton that had been published in England in 1746. These stories reported that Hamilton was an individual assigned female at birth but who had been living as a male since the age of fourteen. In July 1746 Hamilton married Mary Price in Wells, England, although the marriage was short lived. Indeed, after two months, Mary complained to authorities that her husband was biologically female, and Hamilton was subsequently arrested and placed in prison to await trial, during which he was sentenced to six months of hard labor. When Fielding encountered the newspaper stories about Hamilton, he apparently thought they would serve as the basis of an entertaining narrative, so he fictionalized the account and published a pamphlet titled *The Female Husband* several months later.

Significantly, in fictionalizing the stories that he had encountered, Fielding created a character (the “female husband”) that would go on to have salience across the Atlantic world, including in the United States. In *The Female Husband*, Charles Hamilton married not only one woman but a series of women, whom she/he subsequently abandoned. Hamilton’s masquerade was ended only once she/he was discovered by authorities and flogged. Fielding wrote this pamphlet in a tone of repeated disbelief, with frequent use of the term *surprising*. 

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century term used to refer to an individual assigned female at birth who posed as a husband to a woman.
Perhaps on account of its tone, the pamphlet was an instant hit and sold out two runs of 1,000 copies each in November 1746. This pamphlet had a wider circulation than the newspaper accounts of Hamilton’s life, and as such, it served to introduce many throughout Britain and the Americas to the idea of a female husband. The term quickly gained traction, and soon journalists on both sides of the Atlantic were using the term to refer to individuals who were assigned female at birth and who lived as husbands to women, but it was also occasionally used to refer to individuals who simply took on traditionally masculine occupations. Importantly, the tone Fielding used to describe Hamilton carried on as well; as Rachel Hope Cleves has written, female husbands were often perceived as “objects of bemusement rather than existential threats to the gender order” (2015, 1064). In this sense, the term female husband was often used to poke fun at its subject—to ridicule him/her as absurd or ridiculous.

Indeed, the term appealed to many journalists in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries because it seemed, on the surface, to be an oxymoron. At that time in the Anglo-American world, women were defined through their status of dependency either on their father (in childhood) or on their husband (in adulthood). The figure of the husband was seen as the caretaker of dependents, and therefore the phrase “female husband” drew attention to itself as being a formulation clearly outside the boundaries of normative gender expectations (Clayton 2010). To audiences, however, the term might have suggested things beyond what Fielding and others intended: that gender is elastic and that some individuals assigned female at birth might want to live as men and/or marry women.

Although it is unclear how audiences interpreted the term female husband, it is clear that the term was used with relative frequency in the Anglo-American press from its first use in 1746 until the late nineteenth century. Indeed, while most stories about female husbands characterized their subjects as wholly unique, by the nineteenth century most newspaper readers in Anglo-America would have recognized this figure as a common character. For example, in 1838 the Barre (Massachusetts) Weekly Gazette published a story under the headline “Another Female Husband,” suggesting that the editors understood that this was not the first story of a female husband that their readers had ever encountered.

**Historical Insights on Gender and Sexuality**

The term female husband proposes two overlapping insights into the history of gender and sexuality. First, it reveals that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were many recorded cases of individuals who were assigned female at birth but who lived, for at least some time, as men. While it is impossible to determine what motivated this movement away from the sex assigned at birth—and no doubt there was a range of different motivations among female husbands—this phenomenon nonetheless serves as a reminder that gender transgression has a long and storied past. Second, it is likely that some of the individuals referred to as female husbands would, if they were alive today, identify has
transgender.

Of course, it is also likely that some individuals labeled female husbands did *not* identify as men, but rather posed as men in order to live out their romantic and/or sexual desire for other women. The existence of a category of “female husband” suggested to women in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries that a range of types of marriages are possible, including marriages between two women. As Cleves has written, “The diversity and longevity of stories about female husbands leads to the conclusion that this form of same-sex union, in particular, had cultural legibility within American society…. Many women believed it possible, and found it possible, to form marriages with other women” (2015, 1067).

Additionally, there is evidence that some female husbands and their wives were able to find tolerance of their queer relationships in early America. Charity Bryant, for example, was a woman who lived in New England in the nineteenth century. Although she did not pass as a man, she served the role of husband to her female partner, Sylvia Drake, and the townspeople of Weybridge, Vermont, and family members accepted them as a married couple. Indeed, this acceptance is commemorated in the headstone that the couple share, buried side by side, just like the other married couples in the village (Cleves 2014, 2015).

By the end of the nineteenth century, use of the term *female husband* in US newspapers began to wane. The individual who has the dubious distinction of being the last person referred to in the mass circulation press as a female husband is Frank Dubois, who gained national attention in 1883. Dubois had been assigned female at birth and had married and given birth to two children before he ran away from his family and began living as a man, starting a new life in the small town of Waupun, Wisconsin. In Waupun, Dubois gained a reputation for being a hardworking individual, and he met and married a young woman named Gertrude Fuller. Everything proceeded happily until Samuel Hudson, Dubois’s former husband, came to Waupun looking for him—at which point Dubois and Fuller went on the lam, running from Hudson, the authorities, and journalists who scrambled through the Wisconsin countryside looking for the couple. The manhunt was covered in newspapers nationwide, and Dubois was referred to as a female husband, along with other terms, such as *insane freak* (Grand Forks [North Dakota] Daily Herald, 30 October 1883).

Dubois’s tenure in the press placed him and Fuller in the spotlight along with the term *female husband*. This prompted many Americans to consider the term, its implications, and the possibility of such queer relationships. For example, the *New York Times*, on 4 November 1883, published a satirical editorial wherein the author poked fun at the idea of women performing the role of husband, writing, “What more could a New England spinster desire than a husband who never smokes, swears, or slams the door; who keeps his clothes in order, and does not stay out of the house until late at night, and who reads Emerson, understands the nature of women, and can discuss feminine dress with intelligence and
appreciation?” This editorial was designed to poke fun at the idea of a woman serving as husband, but of course it was written in such a way that individuals who desired (or who were participating in) a queer relationship might have found it validating. As such, this editorial highlights how multivalent the term *female husband* was; it was at once a sensational and singular term, but it was used to describe a fairly widespread phenomenon throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (*Skidmore 2017*).

### Waning Use of the Term

However, the late nineteenth century gave rise to sexology, the medical science devoted to studying human gender and sexuality. Early sexologists were very interested in understanding sexual and gender deviance, and they defined a new category that soon supplanted the notion of female husbands in the popular press: the female sexual invert. According to the sexological theory of sexual inversion, homosexuality was the result of an inborn reversal of one’s gender characteristics, and thereby masculine women “naturally” desired women. By the 1890s the figure of the female sexual invert had become an identifiable figure in the mass-circulation press, particularly within sensational newspapers published in large metropolitan areas (*Duggan 2000*). Importantly, the female sexual invert was defined in the press as a pathological figure, one that threatened the stability of heterosexual relationships because her sexual object of choice was the “normal” woman. In this context, the term *female husband* fell out of favor, because the mainstream mass-circulation press was increasingly interested in portraying nonnormative relationships as clearly deviant. Even though the term *female husband* had the potential to be interpreted in a positive light, after the 1880s, that was something many newspaper editors were seemingly uninterested in.

Overall, the term *female husband* was used in the Anglo-American press for about 150 years. While Fielding’s coinage of the term may have been with the intent to ridicule the idea of individuals assigned female at birth serving as husbands, the term quickly gained salience as a social formation that conveyed the possibility of queer relationships. Even though the term has fallen out of favor, examining its history reveals to modern audiences a queer past wherein individuals moved from one gender to another, and wherein queer relationships could, at times, be tolerated.

**SEE ALSO** Barbin, Herculine (1838–1868); *Boston Marriage and Women’s Romantic Friendships; Cross-Dressing in the West; Femmes and Butches; Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa*

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Feminism, African

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The ways African feminists have intersected with queer theory and activism.

There is a very long history of Africa-based women, in diverse national contexts, who have organized against oppression. Consider, for example, the 1929 Igbo Women’s War, which took on British colonial policy in Nigeria, and individuals such as Wangari Maathai in Kenya, who drove forward a powerful popular movement known as the green belt movement around issues of land, poverty, and agriculture. It is important to recognize the depth and resonance of this history, but it is also useful to understand that the term African feminism is best applied to theorists and activists who used the term themselves to describe their work. Obioma Nnaemeka, for example, is one of several Africa-based feminists who have contributed to vigorous debate during the last three decades of the twentieth century on the meaning of African feminism as an umbrella concept. She has argued that “there is a pluralism of … [African feminisms] that captures the fluidity and dynamism of the different cultural imperatives, historical forces, and localized realities conditioning women’s activism/movements in Africa … [that] underscores the heterogeneity of African feminist thinking and engagement as manifested in strategies and approaches that are sometimes complementary and supportive, and sometimes competing and adversarial” (Nnaemeka 1998, 5). Nnaemeka’s rejection of a homogenizing narrative on African feminism refuses to dislocate theoretical work from grounded, complex, and often mutually unintelligible contexts. Such an approach works well as an introduction to a critical discussion of African feminist theories’ and activisms’ engagement with continental and global queer theory and sexualities studies.

This entry is structured in three sections, the first of which presents some of the dominant ideas in African feminist theory since the 1970s. Such theory emerged from critical activism and thought concerning the meaning of decolonization and pan-Africanism after the 1960s wave of independence from colonial governances. Located in movement building, research spaces, and cross-country networks, such feminisms took inequities in gender dynamics very seriously, theorizing these as responsible for major injustices in terms of access to political space and the meaning of gender-based violence, and overall for the perpetuation of colonial regimes of gender and race. Although there are serious debates among these voices, there are also some points of consensus, and it is possible to foreground particular voices as key to understanding contemporary feminist organizing
and thought on the continent. The second section explores the iterative relationship between African feminisms and queer and LGBTI activism and theory on the continent. It concludes with the argument that even though particular African feminists (such as Sylvia Tamale of Uganda and Elizabeth Khaxas of Namibia) and sexual and reproductive justice organizations (such as the Sexual and Reproductive Rights Coalition in South Africa and the International Centre for Sexual Health and Reproductive Rights in Nigeria) have played critical roles in African queer work, the work of African-based LGBTI and queer activists, artists, and writers has influenced African feminism more effectively than the other way around. The final section looks very briefly at the influence of African-generated LGBTI and queer work on the meaning of contemporary African feminisms, but the overarching argument is that there remains an ongoing tension for feminists and/or queer theoreticians and activists between working on the continent and working globally (Ocholla 2010).

**Defining African Feminism**

Following Nnaemeka's caution about simplistic readings of continentally generated theory, Jane Bennett goes further:

> [What is] critical to recognize is that it is impossible to speak of Africa as a generalization without erasing complexity, nuance, and difference. The continent is vast, and its civilizations, peoples, languages, and histories are extremely rich.... In a very real way, there is no such thing as Africa, except as such a space is highlighted and debated in opposition to the discourses that stereotype the continent as undeveloped, its peoples as incapable of self-governance or poor, and its cultures as primitive. Such discourses abound, even in the twenty-first century, and when we seek to understand questions of African-based activism in the area of ... sexualities it is important to try to do so in a way that respects the depth and complexity of the political, social, and historical realities of the continent.

*(BENNETT 2011, 80)*

Despite the recognition of the dangers of homogenization, there are several arguments within feminist theory and activism that are explicitly named as “African.” Such arguments wrestle for prioritization and perspective, as is to be expected in robust and resilient
political thought.

Many of the arguments are positioned in direct, and proactive, response to—and rejection of—feminisms developed by middle-class and white feminist writers, particularly those in the United States and United Kingdom in the 1970s and 1980s. The notion that “sisterhood is global” (sloganized by US feminist Robin Morgan) is understood here as a form of colonialism, and in addition, a weakly theorized understanding of the production of gendered forms of power. Oyèrónké Oyèwùmí in *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (1997) argues strongly that Western feminism focuses on the meaning of the body in a way utterly foreign to the Yoruba ontological frameworks for conceptualizing the “human.” Her position refuses the notion of a “womanhood” separable as a class from “manhood,” and draws on the Yoruba language and Yoruba patterns of community hierarchy to theorize Western concepts of gender as irrelevant to African epistemologies. Ife Amadiume takes on a similar task. In *Male Daughters, Female Husbands* (1987) Amadiume theorizes matriarchal systems of economic and political formation in Nnobi, Nigeria, stressing that gender is only one of many interlocking influences on the operation of power, access to resources, and symbolic meaning. Amadiume takes cultural ritual, particularly around issues of fertility and sexuality, very seriously as processes of enormous power for women at specific stages of their lives.

A second argument, loosely allied to the work of African feminism, comes from the adoption of new terminologies for an African-generated feminism. Mary Kolawole, for example, in *Womanism and African Consciousness* refutes the impotence of women living on the continent. She defines womanism as the “totality of feminine self-expression, self-retrieval, and self-assertion in positive cultural ways” (Kolawole 1997, 31). With Nnaemeka, Kolawole supports a womanism that advocates for negotiation (“nego-feminism”) between the cultural power of womanhood and men’s forms of authority, so that any inequalities between men and women can be resolved. In some ways, this womanism resonates with African American writer Alice Walker’s definition of womanism in that Walker, explicitly conscious of the roles of racism and class oppression in the lives of men of color in the United States, rejects any blanket relegation of men to the status of the privileged. Walker’s embrace of ordinary (poor, and usually black) women’s art and weaving work as versions of feminist theorizing is not too distant from Kolawole’s celebration of African women’s “ways of being,” but the concepts are separated by political and contextual roots.

A 1997 collection of essays titled *Engendering Social Sciences in Africa*, edited by Ayesha Imam, Amina Mama, and Fatou Sow and published by the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), bears witness to a very different thread in African feminist theory. The collection explicitly takes on the decolonial but androcentric epistemologies of some of the leading African scholars of the 1970s to the 1990s, including
Thandika Mkandawire, Archie Mafeje, and Mamadou Diouf. Structured through engagement with diverse disciplines, such as history, psychology, education, theories of culture, agricultural studies, and economics, the volume analyzes late twentieth-century theory that purports to effect revolutionary change in the production of African knowledges and finds it gender-blind, even antifeminist. The writers, all of whom galvanized significant feminist projects of policy making, movement building, and research in their own national contexts, are some of the leading names in contemporary African feminist organizing and thought on the continent. Collectively, this trajectory of African feminist thought takes the postdemocratic African state very seriously as a site founded on both the unfinished work of decolonization and the operation of patriarchal and militaristic forces, and it demands epistemological transformation of the ways in which knowledges, and hence strategies, are created. In this way, feminist analysis of gender dynamics informs every layer of institutional, organizational, and personal work toward African-centered sociopolitical change. Takyiwaa Manuh, Sylvia Tamale, Amina Mama, Ayesha Imam, Dzodzi Tsikata, Marjorie Mbilinyi, Charmaine Pereira, Ruth Meena, Fatou Sow, Rudo Gaidzanwa, Hope Chigudu, Elaine Salo, Pumla Gqola, and Desiree Lewis constitute a transnational network of African feminist theorists and researchers allied within this thread of African feminism despite their very different country contexts.

While it is possible to see glimpses of liberal feminism in, for example, the election of women to high political office (such as Ellen Sirleaf-Johnson’s election as president of Liberia in 2006) and ongoing developmental organizations’ concern with gender mainstreaming, popular African feminisms owe much to their predecessors’ theorizations of land, class, race, and sexuality. Yet, they have taken up an African feminism deeply engaged in grounded movement building that is also fluent in the language of social media. This thread of African feminism is young, and in a country such as South Africa, strongly attuned to the politics of race and land dispossession, fueling student movements, and impatient with earlier generations’ concern with the quantification of women politicians in terms of quota policies or concerns about the ratio of women to men in political office. Blogs such as those by MsAfropolitan, Dr T. (Tlaleng Mofokeng), Sokari Ekine, and Nana Sekyiamah reflect on both the politics of the body and the meaning of histories that have, globally, deployed race and gender to build exploitative economies.

A final thread that must be included in this brief introductory survey of African feminisms is Islamic feminism in Africa. As Shirin Edwin points out, Islamic feminism is often neglected in discussions of African feminisms that otherwise recognize the continent’s diversity and complexity. Edwin argues that some African feminists stereotype Islam, but that “Ayesha Imam’s work on the seclusion of Muslim women (kulue) and on the history of Islam in northern Nigeria offers a deeper and more objective understanding of the role Islam has played in the lives of women in northern Nigeria from the fifteenth century through independence from British rule” (Edwin 2006, 142). In addition to Imam, Nawal El Saadawi, an Egyptian feminist, is one of several voices speaking about the complex
relationship between rejection of Islamophobia and passionate and informed advocacy for Muslim women's power; Fatou Sow, Fatima Mernissi, and Fatima Seedat also address this issue.

The diversity of African feminisms animates a continent-wide engagement with the dynamics of gender as these have arisen historically and contextually. While there are clear conversations with feminisms borne out of struggles on other continents (particularly those with legacies of slavery and colonial rule), African feminisms are at their most influential in dialogue with one another. The website of the African Feminist Forum, for example, profiles dozens of activists and writers, and a drilldown into biographies, leaderships, theories, and experiences bears witness to both the strength and the range of “African feminisms.”

**African Feminisms and the Politics of Sexualities**

It could be argued that all threads of African feminism speak, in different ways, to the politics of sexualities. However, such an argument would conceive of sexualities very broadly, encompassing the examination of Islamic texts’ construction of sexuality, the meaning of very diverse heterosexual cultures and norms, the political economy of unpaid “domestic labor,” the robust engagement between legal reform and questions of reproductive and sexual health, the political economy of sex work, and the ongoing negotiation between medical- and social science–oriented debates about the prevention and management of HIV/AIDS. The terrain is rich and dominated by two overarching concerns: the meaning of complex and changing sexualities and the need to challenge stereotypic and stigmatizing Western discourses on “African sexuality” (*Tamale 2011*).

Overall, though, until very recently, African feminisms have been slow to theorize sexualities and genders beyond the borders of heteronormative epistemology. A bird’s-eye view suggests that it has been African lesbian, gay, transgender, intersex, and queer activists and writers (often living in contexts where their counterheteronormativity is criminalized) who have influenced African feminisms, rather than the other way around.

There are two spaces in which the influence of African feminism on queer activism and theory can be articulated. The first arises from African feminist organizations’ and policy makers’ challenges of early discourses on the prevention of HIV/AIDS. When the HIV/AIDS virus spread very rapidly across Africa south of the Sahara in the late 1990s, state responses to the devastating epidemic included public sex-education campaigns that demanded that populations “abstain, be faithful, condomize” (ABC). Sociomedical research simultaneously constructed groups “at risk”—long-distance truck drivers, sex workers, and young female partners of “sugar daddies”—and advocated for special campaigns focused on these groups’ vulnerability. It took feminist organizing and writing to challenge the narrowness of the state approach to what constitutes “sex” and “violence” (*Muthien 2004*) and to demand new approaches to possibilities for sexual partnership. Feminist demands
to consider gender-based violence, to take the complexity of sexual lives seriously, and to acknowledge diversities of sexual life, community, and culture changed many approaches to understanding the epidemic (Horn 2013).

The second space involves the persistent work of particular African feminists and organizations that—as feminist partnerships—have stood their ground against both state homophobia and progressive civil society networks to insist on the rights of lesbian, gay, and transgender people. Sylvia Tamale of Uganda is one such African feminist. In 2003 Tamale, then associate professor of law at Makerere University (where she later became dean of the faculty of law) was pilloried by a leading newspaper, the *New Nation*, as one of the “worst women in the world.” The reason was her political support for lesbian, gay, and transgender people as “minorities” for the purposes of new draft equity legislation. Tamale’s position as a well-known feminist stimulated open and virulent homophobia as well as feminist engagement in eastern Africa around the need to name the violence and advocate for protection of LGBTI people. From 2004 to 2005 Urgent Action, a feminist organization fighting for women’s rights based in Nairobi, Kenya, directed at that time by Kaarai Betty Murungi, initiated a series of research projects and workshops that sought to better understand the discrimination suffered by East African LGBTI people and activists. Some of the most influential activists in the region, including Victor Mukasa, Frank Mugisha, David Kato, and Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera, participated in discussions, and the networks created lent strategic support to a number of fledgling LGBTI organizations. Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG) and Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), for example, grew to become leading advocacy voices in the battle against the recriminalization of lesbian and gay people in Uganda beginning in 2009.

Sylvia Tamale remains a well-known feminist ally in LGBTI activism, and her colleague Stella Nyanzi proactively researches questions of queer community in Uganda. Similar connections between African feminists and LGBTI activism can be found in other contexts. In Namibia, the feminist organization Sister Namibia produced a regular and influential newsletter run by Liz Frank and Elizabeth Khaxas, and wove questions of LGBTI knowledge making into its programs on feminist issues from its earliest instantiation. In Nigeria, Dorothy Aken’ova, a feminist working with civil rights, spearheaded a 2006 protest against the newly proposed recriminalization of lesbian and gay people (Aken’ova 2011). More recently, in 2017, Charmaine Pereira and Bibi Bakare-Yusuf, both influential feminists working in Nigeria, completed research on gender and sexual diversity for the Initiative for Equal Rights (TIERS), an organization committed to documenting discrimination against LGBTI people in Nigeria. Pereira and Bakare-Yusuf’s engagement with the research is typical of the way African feminisms have contributed to LGBTI and queer African-based work—that is, it is driven largely by their own politics and vision rather than as part of an organizational strategy linking the theorization of feminism to the meaning of queer justice.

In South Africa (one of only two countries on the continent that has removed colonial-era
legislation against homosexual behavior, as of 2018), the interaction between feminists and LGBTI activism has been complex. Although several leading LGBTI knowledge creators and activists are outspokenly feminist—including Sibongile Ndashe, Zanele Muholi, Funeka Soldaat, Mary Hames, Dawn Cavanagh, Liesl Theron, and Sally Gross—and bring diverse principles of feminist work to LGBTI strategizing, debates within South African feminisms have concentrated more intensively on the theorization of race, class, and the meaning of “womanhood” under the South African state than on the priorities of queer thinking. That said, it is worth noting that South Africa’s leading feminist journal, *Agenda*, has published several special issues on queer theory and the politics of counterheteronormative activism (*Matebeni 2014*), and that the Sexual and Reproductive Justice Coalition encompasses feminist and queer advocacy and theory as mutually enriching activisms.

### LGBTI, Queer Theory, and African Feminisms

Since 2000, the growth of African-rooted LGBTI and queer work has been expansive, diverse, and—despite the legal and sociopolitical hostility of country contexts—highly influential in debates within African feminisms, particularly those driven by younger voices interested in the politics of performance and the power of social media to affect change. Some conversations, especially those focused on the legally guaranteed human rights of lesbian, gay, intersex, and transgender people, led by organizations such as the Coalition of African Lesbians and the Initiative for Strategic Litigation in Africa, require specialist knowledge of the international legal terrain, and are rarely glossed in popular African feminist e-debate. Others, however—such as those concerning the meaning of violence, the power of the visual, decriminalization of sex work, and the need to challenge the legacies of colonial borders of many types—are very strongly driven by the work of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex writers, artists, activists, and strategists.

*Queer African Reader* (2016), a collection of essays coedited by Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas, exemplifies the range of continental queer theorization on space, solidarity, religion, and culture, and the politics of movement building. The collection has been widely distributed internationally, placing African queer debate squarely within global discussions. In a similar way, the visual activism, or photography, of Zanele Muholi, representing the “face and phases” of black Southern African lesbians and transgender people, has travelled the world’s museums and galleries. In 2004 Muholi was also the first South African to write about the rapes and murders that target black South African lesbians. Her influence on the theorization of black embodiment in a twenty-first-century global and African context is monumental. Alongside Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera of Uganda, whose LGBTI activism put her on the cover of *Time* magazine (5 August 2015), and Binyavanga Wainaina of Kenya, who won the Caine Prize for African Literature in 2002 and was named one of *Time*’s most influential 100 people in the world in 2014, Muholi stands as a major African figure of queer Africanity. These voices, together with others, carry
debate into conversation with African feminisms and beyond.

Despite the success of particular queer theorists and artists coming from and working both within African contexts and further afield, divisions remain between historical legacies of some African feminisms and new LGBTI and queer agendas that refuse any reification of the body. Akinyi Ocholla captures this in autoethnographic research exploring her experiences working as a feminist, Kenyan, lesbian, and international queer activist; she points out the tensions in navigating the meaning of African struggles with US-dominant global ideas of queer vision (Ocholla 2010) alongside the need to understand the multiplicity of African feminist understandings of gender dynamics.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa; Queer Theory, African; Sports, Women in, Africa; Transfeminism

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Femmes and butches occupy a central, if contested, position in lesbian history. The terms *butch* and *femme* defy easy definition as women have adopted and adapted these identifiers in diverse ways to reflect queer identities and desires since they emerged as foundational concepts of public lesbianism in the 1940s. For the next few decades, these women were the only visible figures of queer womanhood. Commonly understood in relation to one another (stylized in a variety of ways, such as "butch/femme" or "butch-fem"), lesbians developed these concepts to make their sexual desire visible and to create a social system through which to build community. The growth of the queer community and the evolution of social, cultural, and political beliefs about sexuality created a number of challenges to the utility and legitimacy of femme and butch identities, yet they continue to function as significant ways of making meaning among queer women.

**Background**

Until the late nineteenth century, Americans generally understood same-sex sexual engagements as standalone acts or behaviors rather than an indication that participants were inherently different. Industrialization, urbanization, and large-scale movement of peoples around the country created new conditions that facilitated the growth of queer identity and subculture by the onset of the twentieth century. Women found that these changes provided new opportunities for employment that translated into greater independence from family and gender norms. These changes also came with more time spent in homosocial spaces and greater access to leisure activity. At the same time, there was an increased recognition of women’s sexual agency. An understanding of women’s sexuality independent of men opened up opportunities for women to understand their desires and marked women as sexually available to one another. Medical inquiry into gender and sexuality coincided with subcultures developing around homosexual activity, the two helping along the transition from homosexual practice to identity. Initially, these sexologists interpreted same-sex sex as gender inversion. They asserted that a woman desiring another woman actually experienced these feelings because she understood
herself as masculine rather than feminine. Sexologists moved rather quickly from ideas of inversion to defining those people who engaged in same-sex sex as a category of people: “homosexuals.” The idea of gender inversion lingered well into the twentieth century, however, especially for women (Rupp 1999; Stein 2012).

Prior to these developments, history offers glimpses of “passing women” who presented themselves as men. The restrictions placed on women’s lives before the twentieth century make it complicated to determine the influences of gender identity, sexual desire, and a drive for independence in interpreting the motives of passing women. Passing women held jobs that would have been otherwise off limits, such as soldiers, laborers, and politicians. These roles provided independence and adventure, attractive to those women who described childhoods chafing under the restrictiveness of femininity. This life also frequently included female companionship, with many passing women taking wives. Romantic friendships provided a model for female intimacy, although the absence of gender roles may have complicated sexual unions in such partnerships. These women were important predecessors to butch women inasmuch as they situate the ongoing struggles of

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A Butch/Femme Lesbian Couple at the 1982 Gay Pride Day Celebration in New York City. Lesbians developed the concept of butch/femme to make their sexual desire visible and to create a social system through which to build community, starting with the onset of World War II. During the 1970s, some militant lesbian feminists began to argue that this gendered representation of lesbians actually promoted the oppression of lesbians of all types.
women to find ways in which to locate a gender identity that is something other than feminine, to express sexual desire for other women, and to reject the gendered barriers to employment and independence (Katz 1992).

The mannish lesbian marked an important transition from the passing woman to the butch; she represented lesbian sexual desire and the ongoing connection between queer womanhood and the subversion of gender norms. The scholar Esther Newton defines the mannish lesbian as a woman whose lesbianism is visible through “behavior or dress” that “manifests elements designated as exclusively masculine” (2000, 177). While this mannish figure emerged in the early twentieth century as a public expression of queer female desire, lesbian community continued to develop primarily outside of public attention. By the 1920s a small number of lesbian subcultures developed as a result of early twentieth-century social changes, exposure to Freudian theories, and bohemian rejections of Victorianism. This included working-class lesbians who began to gather in public houses. Even among mainstream society, increasing numbers of women began to explore sexual desire for other women (Faderman 1991). In spite of rapid change, most women continued to have less access to spaces for public gathering and had to mind cultural values in order to maintain economic and social stability. It took a radical transformation of American society in the coming decades to make public lesbian communities possible.

Rise of Butch-Femme Community

The onset of World War II (1939–1945) made possible the creation of public lesbian community. Men mobilized for military service, necessitating women’s accelerated entry into the workforce and thus creating opportunities for independence and homosociality. They migrated around the country to power wartime industries and join the military and in so doing found new opportunities to live, work, and socialize with one another. In this new world, lesbians also found financial freedom, distance from the watchful eyes of family, and refuge in the wartime flexibility of gender norms. The paucity of men normalized women moving about in public without the company of men. The upsurge of working women in nontraditional fields normalized a greater range of women’s clothing, including pants. Lesbians became less conspicuous, facing fewer dangers as they traversed public spaces and finding greater opportunity to build subcultures. Under these conditions lesbian community flourished in bars. Most public spaces would not accept overt displays of lesbian activities or were not safe for women to do so. Bars, especially those “in areas known for moral permissiveness,” provided the only consistent option for lesbian socializing (Kennedy and Davis 1993, 31).

“Butch” and “femme” materialized in the 1940s as varied configurations of lesbian gender and sexuality, identity and practice, independent character, and reciprocal role. The simplest definition is that butches appeared and behaved masculine, whereas femmes appeared and behaved feminine. In this conceptualization, the femme identity relied
heavily on attraction and attachment to the butch in order to be legible. Butches adopted the clothing of working-class men and styled their hair short, whereas femmes maintained conventional fashions for women of the period. Commonly replicating the gender roles of heterosexual couples, the butch was the dominant partner and sexual aggressor with the femme yielding to and caring for her butch. In the early twentieth century there were few other partnership models, so it is not surprising that lesbians looked to heterosexual roles in order to make sense of their desire. Butch/femme roles further provided a means of structuring community relationships. Given that butch/butch and femme/femme relationships were taboo, the gender norms of these roles guided social interactions and expressions of sexual desire. Yet butch/femme partners were hardly naive copies of husband and wife. Rather than a form of imitation, femmes and butches transformed gender roles to suit their needs and even understood the butch/femme relationship as a political act of subverting the norms of the period. Subsequent generations of lesbians challenged the legitimacy of butch/femme identities but have been unsuccessful in challenging their importance to queer women's community.

These identities filled a number of needs among women who felt in some way limited by existing sex and gender roles. Identifying as butch required a more overt deviation from traditional gender norms and grew out of an internalized sense of difference. Presenting as butch was, for some, a natural expression of female masculinity. For those who felt misgendered as women, living as butches was the closest option to living as men. In this case the butch role functioned more as a gender identity than as a sexual one. In addition to any gendered meanings, distinguishing oneself as butch was a means of declaring sexual interest in (femme) women. Making this desire public was an act of rejecting gender norms and claiming privileges typically reserved for men. Butches made visible the fact that women could be active sexual agents. Femmes typically were not visible on their own even as they understood this role functioned as an identity that shaped the ways they went about their daily lives. While femmes seemingly did not transgress traditional gender norms, they rejected what was arguably the most important tenet of womanhood: being sexually available for men. Some femmes understood this identity as a form of lesbianism, whereas others felt that partnering with butches left their (hetero)sexuality unchanged. Her presentation meant that she could pass when on her own, but with her butch she demonstrated that women were capable of living free from the support or control of men. So while the relationship appeared a facsimile of heterosexuals, by marking themselves as butch and femme, queer women claimed sexual agency, flouting gender norms and rejecting a social structure that defined women as objects for male desire (Kennedy and Davis 1993).

Not all women who loved women embraced these roles with equal enthusiasm; some rejected it outright. Wealthy and middle-class women were not inclined to frequent bars. They were reticent to enter the neighborhoods where these bars were located, and they feared the exposure possible when entering an establishment associated with deviant
sexuality. Upper-class women had resources that allowed them to build social networks elsewhere, and professional women relied on private gatherings rather than risk being found out and losing their jobs or risking familial ostracism. African American lesbians were also reticent to take part in this bar culture. The racism they found there made them feel uncomfortable, even unsafe, and ensured they were not likely to find other black lesbians there with whom to socialize. Black lesbians created their own semipublic social communities through house parties. While removed from the bar scene, they too developed gendered dynamics with masculine “studs” and their femme ladies. This dynamic is an important indication that butch/femme roles had utility for lesbians outside of bar culture. Even among those who were willing to frequent bars, not all found the butch/femme roles natural or appealing. Those anxious to belong to lesbian community adopted whichever of the two felt most fitting or the least objectionable. They otherwise risked being labeled a “kiki,” the derogatory term for those women who identified as neither role and thus did not fit into the structure of the butch/femme world. In spite of these concerns and limitations, butch/femme culture was a vitally important political phenomenon. By making lesbianism visible, this culture helped queer women understand their desires and find safe spaces in which to explore their feelings, develop friendships, and find lovers. Femmes and butches functioned as the primary figures of lesbianism through the 1960s. They did not disappear after this date; instead, new options slowly opened to queer women.

**Homophile Movement**

Lesbians in search of alternatives to bars or the butch/femme system created a new vehicle for political activity. A small number of gay men and lesbians mobilized in the 1950s to advocate for social acceptance of homosexuals. Known as the homophile movement, this group of people evolved toward greater political advocacy in the 1960s. Lesbians created a women-only group, Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), in 1955. Founders initially hoped to create a social alternative to the bar scene, but the group quickly evolved into a political organization with extensive programming and its own publication, the *Ladder*. The DOB advocated assimilation as a means of achieving acceptance within mainstream society. This meant accommodating traditional gender norms. Their argument that lesbians were no different from straight women other than in whom they loved silenced those women for whom lesbianism was an expression not only of sexual desire but also of gender nonconformity. Leaders called on participants to wear traditionally feminine clothing at events, and the *Ladder* published indictments of butch lesbians. Some held a genuine belief that roles were unnatural and that all lesbians (all women) should embrace their femininity. These women interpreted butch/femme presentation as a phase through which lesbians tried to make sense of their sexuality. More commonly, however, homophile women rejected femmes and butches because they understood their visibility as a barrier to the political expediency of assimilation. The DOB succeeded in offering an alternative to butch/femme culture, but in so doing it established similarly rigid boundaries to inclusion.
Yet this position is only one part of a more complex story. While rejecting butch/femme identities as problematic role-playing that prohibited lesbian acceptance, members commonly expressed leanings toward masculinity or femininity. The DOB’s presidential message in the second issue of the *Ladder* emphasized that members were “women first” but went on to state that they were “butch or fem secondly” (Griffin 1956, 3). Founders Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon explained that early in their relationship they had a “butch-femme relationship” and later viewed their early selves as “caricatures in a heterosexual marriage” (1991, 72). They came to reject their various preferences as markers of masculine or feminine identities. Homophile activists were predominantly middle-class women, often professionals who relied on feminine respectability for job security. Yet the DOB’s own research indicates that a butch/femme spectrum was also important to self-understanding among middle-class women as well. In 1958 the DOB circulated a survey via the *Ladder*. It sent out over 500 questionnaires that included questions about “sex roles,” asking how lesbians identified in their relationships. Of the 157 responses it received, 37.6 percent identified as masculine, 36.3 percent as neither, and 21.2 percent as feminine, with 5.1 percent declining to answer (Lyon 1959). Respondents, the majority of whom earned an above-average income, worked to qualify their answers by commenting that their identification was fluid depending on their partner or that they held both masculine and feminine traits. These responses and comments indicate that homophile objection to butch/femme culture may have been more an issue of objecting to association with working-class lesbian culture than it was a rejection of gendered experiences of their sexuality. While the DOB worked to present themselves as “normal” women and change public perceptions of lesbians, it was the feminist interpretations of queer womanhood that finally supplanted femmes and butches on social perceptions.

**Lesbian Feminism**

In the 1970s the militant lesbian feminist became the new lesbian stereotype. Femmes and butches did not disappear; instead, the social and political shifts of the day diversified the types of lesbianism open to women, and media coverage of the new social movements propelled a new lesbian figure into the spotlight. In the latter part of the 1960s young lesbian activists found that the women’s liberation movement was resistant to addressing the political aspects of queer sexuality and that gay men failed to take seriously the gendered nature of lesbian oppression. Queer women responded with the creation of an independent lesbian feminist movement primarily aligned with the goals of the women’s movement but organized around ideas of lesbian separatism. Early theorizing introduced the concept of the “woman-identified woman” or the “woman-loving woman,” which asserted that lesbians were those women who directed all their energy toward one another, rather than toward men. They rejected existing definitions of women’s roles and sexualities as concepts that had been used to keep women oppressed. In this framework, any behaviors that seemed to replicate traditional heterosexual relationships, such as the
butch/femme dyad, propped up the patriarchy. Lesbian feminists commonly adopted androgynous dress meant to reject a gender binary and contrasted this to the “role-playing” of bar lesbians.

Though using a different line of reasoning, lesbian feminists joined the DOB in arguing that femmes and butches harmed rather than aided social and political progress for queer women. And as with homophile activists, the members of this new movement set about creating social and political alternatives to what they saw to be the restrictive limitations of the bar culture. This included liberation groups, women’s centers, bookstores, and music festivals, among much else. These were spaces designed for the celebration of womanhood and thus had no room for those who identified with or were attracted to any practices associated with the trappings of masculinity. Through much of the 1970s, new lesbians continued to find the bar scene the most visible entry into community, although increasingly women’s spaces offered an alternative. This speaks both to the desire for greater variety in models of lesbianism and to the longevity of butch/femme culture (the bar). Lesbian feminists’ rejection of butch/femme culture functioned as a stated rejection of bar culture, even as they continued to turn to lesbian bars as a site of lesbian socializing. This brought lesbian feminists and butch/femme lesbians into contact and conflict. That lesbian feminists had this option demonstrates that their emergence did not replace butch/femme culture. While much of it was maintained by older women who found their lesbianism prior to the new political moment, young, primarily working-class women continued to join their ranks, although possibly at lower numbers given that the women’s and gay movements represented new alternatives for young queers.

Beginning in the 1980s, the adoption of butch/femme culture by activists and scholars further expanded its possibilities. Butches and femmes gained visibility within lesbian feminism in the early 1980s through the feminist debates over sex and power known as the sex wars. While fought primarily around the issues of pornography and sex work, the larger issue of the place of power in sex drew all manner of practices into the conversation. By engaging this issue, those lesbians who were butch/femme-identified and those who found pleasure in consensual power play newly articulated the political implications of this culture and expanded the settings in which it was visible. Queer theory emerged by the onset of the 1990s, further recasting interpretations and practices of femme and butch. Theorists challenged the idea of fixed identities, reframing gender and sexuality as something people do rather than something people are. In this context butches and femmes were celebrated as a form of performance that exposed and subverted gender as a social construct. These ideas brought a greater range of participants into the butch/femme world. Contemporary emphasis on the fluidity of gender and sexuality means that a host of new concepts have joined “butch” and “femme” to aid individuals in more accurately voicing their identities. With all that is available, however, femme and butch remain centrally important ideas in understanding lesbian community.
SEE ALSO Boston Marriage and Women’s Romantic Friendships; Daughters of Bilitis; Female Husband; Lesbian Feminist Encuentros of Latin America and the Caribbean; Lesbian Lands, Women’s Lands, and Separatist Communes

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When the first gay and lesbian film festival was founded in San Francisco in 1977, few could predict that it would become the model for hundreds of festivals around the world (White 1999). Over the next four decades, LGBTQ+ film festivals grew from small, grassroots events to multimillion-dollar nonprofit organizations with ties to the commercial film and television industry. From London to Istanbul, Houston to Uganda, the international network of LGBTQ+ film festivals today makes up the single-largest institutionalization of queer cultural production.

Critical writing about the development of the LGBTQ+ festival network has primarily focused on issues of visibility and access to production, distribution, and exhibition. Debates about multiculturalism, corporate influence, funding structures, and cultural policy have occurred alongside discussions about programming strategies, globalization, community building, and political protest. This entry touches on many of these debates while sketching a brief history of the growth of the LGBTQ+ film festival network from its founding to the present day.

A Brief History of Film Festivals

LGBTQ+ film festivals must be understood in the context of film festivals more broadly, which began as a national showcase for film and propaganda in Fascist Italy before World War II (1939–1945). After the war, film festivals proliferated among resort towns in an effort to extend tourist seasons into the autumn months. They spread across Europe over the next thirty years as tourist attractions until the 1960s, when they began to spring up in global cities such as London, New York, and Berlin. Other cities, such as Moscow, established annual festivals in an effort to reconnect with the West after a period of isolation. (The Moscow festival got its start as early as 1935 but did not become a regular event until 1959.) Most often, these festivals programmed a combination of international art cinema and major studio releases, both of which took on increasingly politicized connotations in the wake of decolonization and at the beginning of a new wave of economic globalization (Stringer 2001).
The rise of the urban film festival accompanied the birth of community-based film festivals during the late 1960s and early 1970s, as well as the growth of museum film archives, all vying for screening venues. This trend corresponded not only to the mobilization of new social movements—the women’s movement, the civil rights movement, the gay and lesbian liberation movement, and others—but also to the development of portable video as an accessible and affordable medium. Film festivals offered a forum in which to share work among newly formed communities. The early 1970s also saw the rise of erotic film festivals in New York and San Francisco, which connected the message of sexual liberation with artistic innovation and European sensibility.

By the 1990s the schedule of the international festival circuit had become a fixture in the lives of most film industry executives. The New York Film Festival, Toronto, Cannes, Telluride, Sundance, Tribeca, and Berlin are today the places to launch Hollywood’s fall and winter lineup.

LGBTQ+ film festivals grew out of the gay liberation movement of the 1970s and other social justice movements. From the beginning, these community media practices were deeply invested in the discourse of democratic participation but at the same time were decidedly anticapitalist and in defiance of state-sanctioned homophobia. LGBTQ+ film festivals came out of a movement to deploy media in the building of social movements but would develop into a loosely structured global network of radically diverse organizations.

**Origins**

Most histories of LGBTQ+ film festivals trace their roots to a modest film series in London. In 1977 the English scholar Richard Dyer curated a survey of gay and lesbian film that screened at the National Film Theatre. It would be nearly a decade before a yearly festival would launch in London, but in San Francisco an ad-hoc screening that launched that same year would immediately become an annual event. Outfest was launched in Los Angeles just a few years later, in 1982. In 1984 the Ljubljana Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, the first in Europe, was founded in the midst of a small but growing gay and lesbian movement in Yugoslavia (Kajinic 2008). In 1986 London and Turin launched festivals, and Amsterdam hosted the International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. (The latter would not become a yearly festival until 1996, as the Roze Filmdagen Amsterdam.)

In the beginning, festivals were informal events and primarily relied on earned-income activities such as ticket sales to cover their small operating budgets. But over the next decade, organized festivals would crop up in Manitoba, Copenhagen, New York City, Atlanta, Vancouver, Hong Kong, and Honolulu. These festivals were increasingly financed through arts subsidies and grants (for example, the British Film Institute sponsorship of the London festival), funds donated by foreign cultural ministries (most often linked to the screening of a particular film), and sponsorship by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)
and philanthropic foundations. George Soros’s Open Society Institute, for example, granted funds to the Ljubljana event as part of a program to grant funds to arts organizations working in eastern Europe and Central Asia (Rhyne 2007).

Culture Wars

Festivals in the United States would not begin to access government funding until the late 1980s. As festivals grew in size and scope, their earned-income strategies could no longer support the organizations, especially as community resources were diverted to respond to the growing AIDS crisis. Simultaneously, government arts grants began to open up to gay and lesbian organizations; in a shift from its underground origins, festivals began to invest time and resources in accessing federal funding.

The festival network in the United States began to grow with the help of these federal and state arts grants, but in the late 1980s these granting agencies, such as the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities, came under attack by the Far Right for supporting gay and lesbian artists and cultural organizations. Gay and lesbian film festivals were systematically cut off from federal funding. These “culture wars” were famously part of a larger national debate in the United States regarding the role of the federal government in facilitating artistic production. Festivals began to restructure their fund-raising strategies in order to find alternative funding sources. Many turned to the commercial sector and private funding.

Founded in 1988, the New Festival is a prime example of this shift. The New Festival arose from the ashes of the New York Gay and Lesbian Film Festival, which had collapsed as a result of funding concerns the previous year as ticket sales could no longer support the event. Susan Horowitz, the founder of a lesbian-owned printing company, provided financing to restructure the festival as a mission-driven business. According to Joshua Gamson, conveying Horowitz’s vision, “The original impetus of the festival ... was to join grassroots community politics and film art: to bring lesbians and gays together in another public space, to increase lesbian and gay visibility, to demonstrate the pluralism of that community, and to raise lesbian and gay consciousness” (1996, 242). Whereas Frameline (the San Francisco festival launched in 1977) began as a sort of artists’ collective and venue for experimental works, the New Festival—founded a decade later—was built on the politics of identity and visibility that had by then grown to characterize gay and lesbian organizational strategy in the United States (White 1999).

Soviet Stonewall

As the 1990s began, the festival network became more deeply connected to international networks of NGOs, particularly those investing in human rights and post–Cold War democracy building. In the wake of state censorship, festivals began to see themselves as
part of a global movement to connect LGBTQ+ people across national borders through a sort of grassroots cultural diplomacy. In 1991, for example, Frameline received funding to produce the first gay and lesbian film festival in the Soviet Union. Dubbed “the Soviet Stonewall” (named for the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City that catalyzed a movement of gay rights activism), the festival was held in conjunction with a gay and lesbian rights conference organized by the San Francisco–based International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.

**FRAMELINE: THE WORLD’S FIRST LGBTQ FILM FESTIVAL**

On a February night in 1977, 200 people crowded into a San Francisco loft for what would become the first and longest-running LGBTQ film festival in the world. That night, nine gay filmmakers projected their Super-8 films onto a sheet hung from the wall. Cofounder Marc Huestis described the founding members of Frameline as “a ragtag band of hippie fags” and artists who frequented Harvey Milk’s Castro Street camera store (quoted in Guthmann 1994). The festival was conceived as an artists’ collective for independent and experimental gay filmmakers whose work had no other distribution outlet. To the surprise of its founders, the first screening of their films was such a success that it reran a month later at a larger venue.

In 1981 Frameline, the producing organization for the festival, founded a distribution arm through which video rentals raised the most significant portion of its revenue, a response to the limited availability of gay and lesbian film in the United States—particularly of gay and lesbian foreign film. Frameline distribution became a critical resource for new festivals that were emerging in cities such as Boston, Seattle, Philadelphia, and Washington, DC.

Frameline incorporated as a nonprofit in 1982 and received its first federal arts grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in 1988. By 1990 Frameline’s primary income sources—generating nearly 70 percent of its revenue—were film and video rental, ticket sales, and special events. The remainder was raised from government grants, private foundations, and individual contributions. But with the introduction of the Helms Amendment in 1991, Frameline came under attack by conservative groups as being in violation of federal decency regulations for its gay and lesbian themes and sexual content. Frameline’s NEA funding was soon withdrawn. These famous “culture wars” meant the loss of dollars, but it energized the festival’s base. Attendance doubled at the 1992 festival compared to the previous year and would continue to grow over the next decade.

In 1990 Frameline deepened its connection to the filmmaking community, launching the Frameline Completion Fund, which continues to award grants for the final stages of editing work. Prominent LGBTQ filmmakers have received support through the
Frameline continued to receive support from a growing list of funders, including Barbara Hammer, Cheryl Dunye, and Rose Troche.

By 2005 Frameline had developed a sufficiently robust network of supporters that it launched a campaign to raise funds to expand its programming efforts and improve distribution access to global media markets. Its growth ambitions were stalled, however, with the 2008 financial crisis, which hit midsized nonprofits such as Frameline particularly hard in the United States.

Nonetheless, the festival produced by Frameline remains the largest of its kind in the world. In 2017 it screened 147 films from nineteen countries to more than 60,000 people, with total organizational revenue of around $2 million, dramatic growth forty years in the making.

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The films programmed at the 1991 Moscow festival included both mainstream American releases such as *Desert Hearts* (1985; directed by Donna Deitch) and independent documentaries such as *The Times of Harvey Milk* (1984; directed by Rob Epstein) and *Tongues Untied* (1989; directed by Marlon Riggs). It also included the British feature *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985; directed by Stephen Frears), produced by Channel 4, and the East German film *Coming Out* (1989; directed by Heiner Carow). Following the Soviet Union’s political and cultural isolation from western Europe and North America, the programming of the Moscow festival presented a postwar, Euro-American gay history with resonance beyond national boundaries.

**New Queer Cinema**

Also in 1991, gay and lesbian films took center stage at mainstream film festivals, including Sundance, Toronto, and Berlin (Rich 1992). This commercial interest was as significant as the films themselves, including Todd Haynes’s *Poison* (1991), Jennie Livingston's *Paris Is
Burning (1990), Isaac Julien’s Young Soul Rebels (1991), and Derek Jarman’s Edward II (1991). Soon after, LGBTQ+ film festivals cropped up in the new global marketplaces of East Asia, eastern Europe, postapartheid South Africa, and South America. Festivals in the United States began to define themselves as the center of an international marketplace for gay and lesbian film, particularly as commercial distributors expanded their markets overseas.

By 1994 LGBTQ+ festivals had begun to be framed in dramatically new terms—not only as significant organizations within the growing network of the gay and lesbian community but also as part of a quasi-commercial complement to the film industry, where Hollywood and independent distributors were finding product, talent, and new markets. Frameline, for example, responded to this new industrial interest with an assertive plan to host the “world’s first lesbian and gay film market.” Frameline’s marketplace was most certainly developed with the explicit intent to elaborate on the festival’s already robust distribution program, which had generated the bulk of the organization’s revenue until the early 1990s, but following the death of the festival’s art director, the organization suspended the effort.

Festivals located a new source of funding in the form of corporate sponsors and commercial film distributors interested in marketing to the newly defined gay and lesbian consumer demographic. But almost immediately, festivalgoers, scholars, filmmakers, and activists began to identify this moment as one characterized by the intrusion of corporate interest into community institutions. Corporate sponsors were highly visible through festival marketing and promotions, but in reality they provided only a small portion of the festivals’ growing budgets. Festival growth was instead subsidized by a newly cultivated sense of philanthropic responsibility among individual donors that accompanied the articulation of a gay and lesbian consumer identity during the early 1990s.

In North America the growing skepticism regarding the ability of community-based festivals to remain independent from the market and the state particularly coalesced around questions of multiculturalism. Filmmakers, especially, questioned the terms on which women and people of color would have access to the new economic opportunities presented by the festivals, particularly as higher-budget, narrative features by white gay men received increasing attention from the commercial film industry. These debates colored much of the critical discussion around LGBTQ+ festivals following the debut of New Queer Cinema and inspired a wave of festivals devoted to underrepresented groups within the community.

**BFI FLARE: LONDON'S FIRST LGBTQ FILM FESTIVAL**

In the summer of 1977, the English scholar Richard Dyer screened thirty-five gay films at the National Film Theatre, a cinema operated by the British Film Institute (BFI) and located in the London cultural district known as South Bank. Although this was a one-
off event, it is widely considered the world's first gay and lesbian film program and the origin of gay and lesbian film festivals. Certainly, it launched the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival, one of the largest and longest-running LGBTQ+ festivals in the world.

It would be another nine years, however, before the festival was officially launched. In 1986, a former student of Dyer's, Mark Finch, persuaded the BFI to fund a gay film series. Finch and Tyneside Cinema’s Peter Packer launched a selection of nine films in a program called “Gay's Own Pictures” at the Tyneside in Newcastle before bringing it to London. Films screened over the seven-day short season included *Parting Glances* (1986; directed by Bill Sherwood), *Desert Hearts* (1985; directed by Donna Deitch), and *Buddies* (1985; directed by Arthur J. Bressan Jr.).

The festival debuted during the height of the AIDS crisis, which had hit gay communities in urban centers such as London particularly hard. It also coincided with a national movement to squelch public support for gays and lesbians. Beginning in London, it traveled to major cities across the United Kingdom in defiance of the Margaret Thatcher–era Section 28, enacted in 1988, which prohibited local authorities from “intentionally promoting homosexuality.” While members of Parliament questioned the government’s role in supporting these screenings, the London Lesbian and Gay Film Festival (as it became officially known in 1988) would nonetheless become an annual event sponsored by the BFI (and thus through tax money). Section 28 would remain on the books until 2003.

The festival grew from a seven-day event to a full two weeks of programming, drawing audiences from all over the United Kingdom, other European countries, and the world. In 2011, as the festival prepared to celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary (and with the Conservative Party back in government), the BFI suffered broad budget cuts, and the festival was cut down to half its previous length. These austerity measures proved a boon for the festival, however, as the scarcity of tickets brought audiences out in new force. By 2016, five years later, the festival had expanded to an eleven-day program at BFI Southbank (the renamed National Film Theatre, where Dyer presented his original series), with larger audiences than ever before.

The festival’s programming has expanded beyond the festival itself, with monthly screenings, talks and lectures, a traveling program, and a streaming service through BFI Player. The BFI generally streams free shorts around the festival dates. The festival also established an ongoing relationship with the UK distributor Peccadillo Pictures. Peccadillo is one of the sponsors of the festival and regularly includes titles in its program. The festival’s relationship with Peccadillo illustrates the role of the London festival—and that of LGBTQ+ festivals around the world—in the circulation of LGBTQ+ film. Festivals are primary markets for independent filmmakers and producers to find
distribution in the commercial marketplace.

In 2014 the festival was officially rebranded as BFI Flare: London LGBT Film Festival in an effort to reflect the diversity of the festival’s program and its audiences, which continue to grow. In addition to support through the BFI, Flare has received corporate sponsorship over the years—support that has strengthened with changing attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people.

Corporations such as longtime sponsor Renault, American Airlines, easyJet, Accenture, London’s May Fair Hotel, and Sky, the London-based media and telecommunications company, have sponsored festivals. Indeed, attendance at the 2016 festival exceeded 25,000 people, up nearly 10 percent from the previous record-breaking year, so it remains an effective tool for corporations to reach this niche market. In 2018 the Pureland Foundation, founded by the producer and philanthropist Bruno Wang, made a three-year grant to the festival, becoming its most significant supporter. Like BFI Flare, LGBTQ+ film festivals around the world have begun to depend more heavily on private philanthropy, particularly in the wake of the 2008 global recession.

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Tranny Fest (now the San Francisco Transgender Film Festival) was launched in 1997 to present the work of gender-variant filmmakers—the first and longest-running festival of its kind. Since then, a dozen trans and gender-variant festivals and film programs have been hosted around the world, including in India, the Netherlands, Australia, and Canada, as well as the biggest trans film festival, Translations (held in Seattle and programmed by the same organization that stages TWIST: Seattle Queer Film Festival). These festivals continue to struggle for funding, particularly in markets with more broadly framed LGBTQ+ festivals. The transgender festival in Amsterdam, for instance, has gone through several iterations since its launch in 2003, primarily because of funding concerns ([Steinbock 2013](#)).
Second Wave

More than 150 LGBTQ+ festivals could be counted at the end of the 1990s, and critics were declaring the next Gay New Wave as an international phenomenon. Festivals were programming content from the breadth of production prompted by the New Queer Cinema movement and a subsequent increase in financing for gay and lesbian film outside the United States, particularly in western Europe but also in Australia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Brazil, the former Soviet republics, Japan, and Israel, as well as to a lesser extent Africa and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Indeed, this second wave of queer cinema produced a number of internationally recognized films, especially from gay filmmakers located outside Europe and North America, but US-produced films still overwhelmingly dominated the screens at most festivals. The proliferation of LGBTQ+ film festivals did not necessarily correspond to new production infrastructures during the 1990s, despite the growth in the network precipitated by a growing market for LGBTQ+ film.

Corporate and Government Funding

By the first years of the twenty-first century, production of gay and lesbian film in the United States had stalled, and the growth of festivals along with it. Indeed, of the hundred or so festivals that were founded in the 1990s, most did not last more than two or three seasons. Those that did survive during this period found financial support primarily through government subsidies and corporate investment, but access to these funds varied dramatically by country.

The São Paulo–based Mix Brasil, launched in 1993, grew out of André Fischer’s 1992 program “Brazilian Sexualities” at the New York Lesbian and Gay Experimental Film Festival. Mix Brasil, launched as a project of the Cinema Department of the Museu da Imagem e do Som (Museum of Image and Sound), received most of its funding from the public sector, a large portion of which was from health departments. But the festival also attracted commercial sponsors, including Banco do Brasil and the oil company Petrobras, which was a large funder of the Brazilian film industry and the country’s festival network; government initiatives focused on gays and lesbians encouraged corporate investment, but this was unevenly spread across the network (Rhyne 2007).

The Hong Kong Lesbian and Gay Film Festival was launched in 1989 and ran intermittently until 1998, when the festival lost its funding during a recession and government defunding of cultural programs with the handover of Hong Kong to China the previous year. It was resurrected in 1999 as a commercial enterprise connected to Fortissimo Films, a film promotion, distribution, and production company known for its relationship to high-profile Asian directors. The festival leveraged these connections to secure donations from local
businesses and other pools of government and NGO monies, notably those connected to HIV/AIDS prevention. The festival incorporated as a nonprofit in 2000 (Rhyne 2011).

Other festivals found support in the growing sector of gay and lesbian tourism and travel, which was reflected in the programming of festivals. The Manchester gay and lesbian film festival, a program of the queerupnorth arts festival (formerly It’s Queer Up North), for example, was supported by the now-defunct British Midland Airways. Manchester’s international exposure as the setting for the Channel 4 television series Queer as Folk (1999–2000) certainly contributed to its growing popularity among tourists, and sponsors hoped to capitalize on this new tourist demographic. The positioning of the United Kingdom as an international gay destination was marketed in the United States as well. The 2003 New Festival (New York) was sponsored, in part, by VisitBritain, a UK tourist board.

**Home Distribution**

By the turn of the millennium, the distribution companies that had seen mainstream commercial opportunity in queer film had turned their attention elsewhere, and they were overtaken by gay- and lesbian-owned production and distribution companies developing content on a smaller scale (Straayer and Waugh 2005). Cable, digital, premium, and pay-per-view television became significant buyers for gay and lesbian media, surpassing theatrical release as the primary exhibition venue for LGBTQ+ film. These outlets also became key sponsors of festivals, investing in cause-related marketing initiatives to publicize their gay and lesbian programming. HBO and Showtime, in particular, “branded” festivals, using organizations such as the New Festival and Outfest to premiere films and television dramas already picked up for rotation.

In 2006, in conjunction with its thirtieth annual festival, Frameline introduced its home video line, in partnership with Strand Releasing. The festival framed the initiative in terms of its transition from the education and festival markets that had sustained it over the previous two decades to the direct-to-consumer market. Frameline’s home video marketing positioned the brand as a mediator of taste—a trusted guide for authentic LGBTQ+ media for the consumer market. While the nonprofit structure of the festival-as-event has previously been held up as the most effective strategy for ensuring this kind of diversity of programming, Frameline began to look directly toward the consumer market to fulfill its mission.

**Financial Crisis**

Following the 2008 global recession, LGBTQ+ festivals lost significant revenue along with much of the nonprofit sector around the world. Many small festivals closed entirely; others were forced to reorganize their structures and fundraising strategies as they struggled to recover amid a rapidly changing media landscape and changing political status in many
countries. In the United States, for example, New York’s New Festival merged with Los Angeles’s Outfest; San Francisco’s Frameline laid off significant numbers of its staff as its budget shrank by nearly 30 percent over the next several years. South Africa’s Out in Africa festival closed in 2015 after twenty-one years of programming because of fund-raising challenges.

But festivals are exploring new revenue sources, new distribution strategies, new networks, and new technologies. The strategy launched as early as 2002 with Here TV, a pay-per-view service. Viacom launched Logo, a cable channel, in 2005. Both drew on the content and format of LGBTQ+ film festivals. Since then, the ubiquity of streaming video services, in particular, is changing the landscape, programming strategies, and institutional priorities of LGBTQ+ film festivals. In 2018, for example, Amazon announced that it would offer more than sixty films featured in Outfest festivals, a strategy Amazon has employed with other festivals, including Frameline, Sundance, Tribeca, and Toronto. BFI Flare, the London LGBTQ+ film festival run by the British Film Institute (BFI), offers its titles on its own streaming service, BFI Player. The wide availability of LGBTQ+ independent film through streaming services such as YouTube, Vimeo, and Viddsee (in Southeast Asia) may in fact be creating new markets for theatrical screenings; the POUTFest in the United Kingdom, for example, is a traveling festival launched by the distributor Peccadillo Pictures and funded through the BFI to develop new audiences for LGBTQ+ film. Indeed, developing new audiences through educational outreach has also become an important part of the mission of several festivals and distributors. Frameline’s Youth in Motion program, for example, provides free LGBTQ+ films and curricula to youth and educators in schools around the United States. Vancouver’s Out on Screen launched an education program in 2004 that serves 60,000 students in British Columbia.

In conclusion, LGBTQ+ film festivals are particularly productive sites for inquiry because they have been one of the primary spaces for the public exhibition of queer images since the late 1970s and further because their relationship to the global circulation of film makes them uniquely situated at the intersection of the market, the state, and civil society. Moreover, as exhibitors (and, in some cases, distributors) of media, LGBTQ+ film festivals have been particularly enmeshed with debates about visibility politics, multiculturalism, and globalization in the international queer community (Loist 2016).

LGBTQ+ film festivals also reveal a great deal about how queer people understand their own relationship to the state and the economy in various national contexts. The history of development, expansion, collapse, and stabilization of festivals demonstrates how crucial material concerns are to the formation of LGBTQ+ collectivities and how organizational sustainability informs the scope of possibility for effective political strategy. LGBTQ+ film festivals offer an ideal case study through which to examine how structures of governance—nonprofit administration, state censorship, cultural policy, and commercial marketing strategies, to name a few—have influenced the size, shape, and scope of what is now a
global institution.

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In Latin America, the decades between 1880 and 1920 represent a period of dramatic demographic, cultural, and political change. It was during this time that technological advances along with increased investment in infrastructure and communication led many nations to enjoy unprecedented economic growth. But this growth was often uneven, benefiting the traditional landed elite and entrenching divisions between the rich and the poor. Issues such as the (over)exploitation of natural resources, poor working conditions, and rapid urbanization affected vast swaths of the population. At the same time, the growing middle class sought greater political representation in countries such as Argentina, Chile, and Brazil, while indigenous movements in Peru, Bolivia, and Mexico sought to gain a voice in national affairs. Socialist organizations were formed to advocate for better working conditions for disenfranchised populations, while anarchist groups sought to completely restructure social and economic relations. The Spanish-American War (1898) marked a paradigm shift in regional power dynamics, with the United States exerting ever-greater influence. The Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) sought a redistribution of land for peasants and indigenous communities. In this context, the notion of “progress” for Latin American nations became central to cultural, political, and economic policies. This ideology of progress was buoyed by a shift toward positivist science and increased interest in managing diverse and growing populations.

The study of sexuality in the fin de siècle period should be understood in relation to the aspiration, held by most Latin American nations, to control population growth. Leading politicians argued that for nations to modernize they had to know the precise makeup of their populations in addition to their sexual habits. Across Latin America, but particularly in countries with large immigrant communities such as Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, demographic control was aimed at “whitening” the national population. Intellectual leaders often conflated the behaviors that were attributed to white European immigrants, such as industry, work ethic, and morality, with whiteness itself. Latin American nations sponsored new methods of scientific inquiry, such as demography, social psychology, criminology, and public hygiene (known as hygienics), not only to promote a whiter and thus more “modern”
populace but also to discover and potentially cure what was called at the time “sexual perversion.” Any form of sexuality (such as homosexuality) or gender variance (such as transvestism) that was thought to detract from the overarching goal of promoting the national cause was seen as pathological and dangerous, and nations sought to reform these “deviant” practices in the name of progress. While the influence and application of scientific approaches (known as positivism) to sexual difference was ubiquitous across cultural and political lines, not all spheres of society engaged with this difference in the same way. The following sections describe major conceptual debates in fin de siècle Latin America around the role that sexuality should play in science, politics, literature, art, and culture.

**Positivism and Sexuality**

At its core, positivism can be understood as a set of beliefs meant to promote a country’s social, political, and economic advancement by privileging the scientific method. As a philosophy, positivism discounts as unknowable anything that an individual is unable to observe in the natural world. Scientific principles were applied to politics and economics, as well as to social relations and art, all of which had profound implications for the politics of gender and sexuality. In Latin America, intellectuals such as Justo Sierra (Mexico), José María Samper (Colombia), and José Ingenieros (Argentina) adapted ideas from the prominent European philosophers Auguste Comte, Gustave Le Bon, and Herbert Spencer to develop models of education and public policy that privileged scientific observation over metaphysics or religious doctrine. In particular, the concept of social evolution came to bear on how these intellectuals sought to promote the development of Latin American nations.

Variations existed across Latin America, but as a whole, these new theories of scientific inquiry allowed the intellectual elite to justify attempts to retain control of land, politics, and economics, as well as to promote a heterosexual citizenry. Positivism became a way to determine which types of sexual practices would promote progress and which would lead to “degeneracy.” The fear of social and ethnic regression—degeneracy—was inspired by the work of the Italian criminologist Cesare Lombroso and focused on populations that did not fit the normative model of social and sexual identity. In this way, homosexuality, cross-dressing, and gender variance all became crucial objects of study for social pathologists and criminologists. Detailed case studies, reform programs, and invasive therapeutic techniques became commonplace across Latin America during this period. Given the interest of national leaders in managing local populations, positivist science came to represent the central tool in identifying those who might diverge from the heterosexual norm.

**Case Study: Argentina**

In Argentina at the turn of the century the central concern of government officials was how
to incorporate into a cohesive national culture the massive influx of largely European immigrants that arrived during this period. Rapid economic expansion, based particularly on bovine and grain exports, had turned Argentina into one of the wealthiest countries in the region. Leading politicians such as Domingo Faustino Sarmiento and Juan Bautista Alberdi argued that immigrants were needed to populate land expropriated from indigenous communities and to provide labor for developing industrial economies. By 1914, 30 percent of the national population was foreign born, most coming from Italy and Spain. The capital, Buenos Aires, became a cosmopolitan city with a burgeoning middle class. Despite this economic growth, however, social tensions persisted between recent immigrants and those of generations past.

In both the social sciences and literature this tension was consistently attributed to recent immigrants and their supposed unwillingness to adapt to the Argentine culture. Sexual deviance was one of the principal characteristics attributed to many of these immigrants, and criminologists, social pathologists, writers, and politicians sought to construct a detailed taxonomy of the various forms of sexuality that might prove detrimental to the future of the country. Politicians feared the inversion of gender roles, as well as the possibility that the existing class structure, which concentrated power and wealth in the hands of a small group of traditional landholding families, would be upended. Key social scientists of this period include the physician José María Ramos Mejía (1849–1914), the forensic psychiatrist Francisco de Veyga (1866–1948), the psychiatrist José Ingenieros (1877–1925), and the sociologist Carlos Octavio Bunge (1875–1918), whose work focused on explaining supposedly abnormal behavior—both sexual and cultural—so that it might be purged from the national body. This preoccupation with cultural assimilation and sexual deviance led to the invention and scrutiny of figures such as the invertido (sexual invert), uranista (homosexual), pederasta (pederast), tribadista (tribadist; what today would be called a lesbian), and tercer sexo (third sex). It is important to note that in Argentina in the first decade of the twentieth century neither cross-dressing nor homosexual erotic practices were prohibited by civil or criminal codes. However, physicians and psychiatrists would often appeal to police in an effort to "prevent" public scandal or a crime yet to be committed by sexual “deviants,” who would be arrested preemptively and turned over to positivist scientists for examination. The resulting case studies were published in prestigious journals such as Archivos de psiquiatría, criminología y ciencias afines (Archives of psychiatry, criminology, and like sciences) and Revista argentina de ciencias políticas (Argentine journal of political science) and were often sponsored by the Argentine government, giving criminologists of the period a significant role in the process of shaping and reforming the national population.

In the case of men, these studies did not necessarily stigmatize homoerotic practices per se, but rather the particular role in sexual activity that was adopted by an individual. The distinction between “active” (insertive) and “passive” (receptive) sexual activity in men was crucial. Thus, in Argentina what most worried social scientists was the betrayal of the
stereotypical role of men as active partners in sexual relations. The adoption of the passive role, called “sexual inversion,” particularly when accompanied by a shift in gender presentation or cross-dressing, was especially vexing for the Argentine elite. For example, de Veyga’s 1903 study of Aurora, a transvestite and “professional invert” (prostitute), describes the subject as having a long criminal history, and notes that in fact “it is frequent, or better yet the rule, that a professional invert be a criminal in the same way as ‘Aurora’” (199; translated by Joseph M. Pierce). This sexual abnormality, for de Veyga, was the product of mental weakness and economic need rather than genetics. Aurora’s “inversion” was attributed to an insalubrious lifestyle, a lack of intellectual development, and a tendency toward criminality.

In the case of women, physicians and criminologists used the term third sex as a sexual category to refer to those who entered the labor force and became economically independent from men. The early feminist movement in the region had to negotiate long-standing political and social opposition to women’s freedom and rights, and only in the early years of the twentieth century did questions of gender relations and women’s rights come to the fore. On the one hand, socialist politics found room in its platform to advocate for labor reforms and the juridical emancipation of women. On the other, middle- and upper-class women invested in the feminist cause often relied on conservative appeals to maternity and liberal notions of civic equality under the law. The development of Argentina’s education system—in particular the escuelas normales (normal schools) that trained young teachers (they are usually called teachers colleges in English)—led to more opportunities for women. However, these educational centers were often regarded as dangerous for their potential to incite women to homosexuality. Enclosed spaces such as the convent and the normal school—spaces in which women exercised a modicum of independence from men—became suspicious in the eyes of social pathologists, whose interest in maintaining traditional gender roles led them to criticize early feminism and to associate outspoken women with anarchism and social decay.

In Argentina, the central question for social scientists was whether sexual deviance was congenital (innate) or acquired (environmental). Most tended to blame circumstance or economic need. (As noted above, some inverters were described as “professional,” supporting themselves through prostitution.) Physicians and psychiatrists thought that early detection and strong (i.e., traditional) educational programs could prevent or reverse acquired sexual deviance. This approach contrasted with that taken toward congenital homosexuality, which, following European sexology, was seen as incurable. In this way, criminologists and social pathologists worked in tandem with national educators to identify what they deemed to be the dangerous but preventable social phenomenon of acquired homosexuality. Ramos Mejía, de Veyga, and Ingenieros championed the cause of reform in both men and women, which they consistently attributed to the influence of foreign ideas and people (immigrants). In his 1899 study Las multitudes argentinas (The Argentine multitudes), for example, Ramos Mejía described recent immigrants (guarangos [the uncouth]) as
biologically underdeveloped, adding that they “are like the inverts of sexual instinct who reveal their dubious potential for the bilious manifestation of appetites” ([1899] 1977, 214; translated by Joseph M. Pierce). Thus, positivist discourse in Argentina linked foreignness to the potential for both sexual and cultural inversion, and social scientists sought to incarcerate and reeducate those deemed to have acquired “deviant” behaviors.

**Case Study: Mexico**

The issue of homosexuality came to the fore in Mexico in November 1901 when forty-one men were surprised and arrested by the police at a private home where they were holding a drag ball. Some were dressed as women, wearing elegant gowns, wigs, and makeup, whereas others wore typically masculine suits. They were tried quickly and sentenced to work with the military on the Yucatan Peninsula in order to be “rehabilitated.” This scandalous episode came to be known as El Baile de los 41 (The Dance of the 41). Newspaper reports of the incident ranged from discreet to sensationalist, and the famed artist José Guadalupe Posada (1852–1913) produced a series of etchings depicting the event and its aftermath.

**INVERTIDO AND FEDERASTA**

In Latin America during the fin de siècle period, two key figures emerged as objects of scientific study for criminologists and social psychologists: the *pederasta* (pederast) and the *invertido* (invert). Replacing earlier terms such as *sodomita* (sodomite) or *uranista* (uranian), which were adapted from European sexology, *pederasta* and *invertido* preceded the contemporary use of “homosexual” and were deployed in similar though not identical ways. While scientists distinguished between active (insertive) and passive (receptive) pederasty, they did not always connect these sexual acts to a particular gender identity. *Invertido*, in contrast, referred to what scientists saw as a form of sexual and mental inversion that typically involved a cross-dressed (male-to-female) subject, often associated with prostitution. Criminologists stigmatized both as morally corrupt, but the *invertido* was seen as particularly dangerous because he feminized—that is, inverted—his physical appearance, dress, and mode of speech, thus transgressing his biological sex in the eyes of the scientific community. The central question that scientists asked was whether these subjects were products of the surrounding environment or the result of some “corrupt” genetic trait.

For example, the Cuban physician and anthropologist Luis Montané (1849–1936) published a study in *El progreso médico* in 1890 analyzing the mental and physical characteristics of twenty-one *pederastas* who had been arrested by the Cuban police. He first made a distinction between “aficionados”—that is, those who sought sexual satisfaction with men and paid for that service—and “prostituidos” (prostituted),
which were those who made a living by selling their bodies as pederastas. Montané describes the mental state of the prostituidos as nervous and narcissistic and cites the French medical doctor and forensic scientist Auguste Ambroise Tardieu (1818–1879) to characterize their appearance as “strange, repugnant, and suspicious” (62; translated by Joseph M. Pierce). The Cuban differentiated between active and passive pederasty, concluding that there is no definitive correlation between passive sexual activity and an outwardly feminine gender presentation. However, following the work of the European sexologists Armand Goubaux, François Carlier, and M. Henri Marx, he did find that passive pederasts can be identified by examining the dilation and shape of the anus, something he calls of great value for the scientific community. For active pederasts, Montané examined the volume and appearance of the penis, finding no clearly identifiable marker in those subjects. Thus, the search for scientific certainty regarding sexual deviance often involved invasive examinations that yielded unsatisfying and ambiguous results.

Another example was published by the Argentine physician Francisco de Veyga (1866–1948) in 1903 in Archivos de psiquiatría, criminología y ciencias afines (Archives of psychiatry, criminology, and like sciences). He describes a case of inversión sexual adquirida (acquired sexual inversion) in which, according to de Veyga, a wealthy Argentine man suffered a mental breakdown and because of this is shunned by his friends and family. He spent his days in local brothels where eventually, according to de Veyga, a marica (faggot), defined by the physician as a paranoid invert, invited him to a party (207). There he found the attention that he had been lacking at home among the attending invertidos, and he eventually decided that he would like to become one. He abandoned his previous family and began a new life with a man who fell in love with him as an invertido. Even more alarming for de Veyga, however, this subject did not shy away from society but rather, as he notes, “flaunted his life, becoming a notable figure in his/her special milieu” (de Veyga 1903, 207; translated by Joseph M. Pierce). On the one hand, for de Veyga this case study represents the possibility that sexual inversion may remain dormant as a genetic disposition and become activated after a psychic or social trauma. On the other, it recalls certain tropes that would continue to be associated with homosexuality over the course of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, such as uncleanness, a desire for ostentation, gender nonconformity, and deceptiveness. For the Latin American elite, this type of sexual practice represented a pathological threat to reproductive sexuality, one that should be closely monitored and, if possible, cured.

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The case of the 41 should be understood within the particular context of Mexico’s political regime at the turn of the century. Known as El Porfiriato, the reign of Porfirio Díaz as president (from 1876 to 1911) was characterized by strong-arm policies, election fraud, and the repression of dissent, but also national investment in modernizing the country under the auspices of scientific investigation. “Order and Progress” became the motto of a regime that saw sexual deviance as not simply a hindrance to modernization but rather the cancerous product of lax cultural attitudes toward pleasure and intimacy. Again, cross-dressing was particularly stigmatized, a practice that challenged social and cultural norms, as well as conservative ideas of sexuality. In this context, the homosexual as transvestite or effeminate man (maricón) again serves as a cultural marker for the breakdown of order and the potential for social regression.

In contrast with the Argentine case, however, El Baile de los 41 as a cultural phenomenon was not necessarily attributed to outside influences or immigration but rather to what was seen as the moral decay of Mexican society from within. In particular, Posada’s art associates transvestism with the emasculated fashion sense of upper-class (ostensibly heterosexual) men, known as lagartijos (literally, “lizards”; figuratively, “fops”). The scandal disrupted not only social conventions based on heterosexual norms but also divisions of class, age, and gender. Instead of the schematic rendering of sexuality by Argentine social scientists, at least in Mexico’s popular newspapers, the event was seen through the lens of sexual libertinage. Upper-class men of El Porfiriato were criticized as affected and overly influenced by the artifice of modernity.

This contrast can also be seen by comparing the novel Los cuarenta y uno: Novela crítico-social (1906; The forty-one: A socio-critical novel), signed with the pseudonym Eduardo A. Castrejón, which leans on the carnivalesque tradition in Mexico to explain cross-dressing, to Argentine José González Castillo’s (1885–1937) play Los invertidos (1914; The inverted/faggots), which portrayed foreign influences such as socialism, anarchism, and
homosexual activism as a collective disease that was corrupting Argentine youth. In Mexico, the fear of sexual excess was eloquently described in Castrejón's novel, which locates the decline of society in the figure of the homosexual: "And into that insatiable vortex of brutal pleasures they have fallen, never to get up. The fallen young men, at the height of stupidity and prostituted degradation, contribute to the bastardization of the human race, committing grave harm against Nature" (quoted and translated in Sifuentes-Jáuregui 2002, 46). Evidently, positivist discourse was not limited to the sciences; it also found expression in literature and art, as with Posada's drawings and Castrejón's Los cuarenta y uno. In many cases, literary re-creations of scandalous events, disruptive figures, or pressing social problems provided a more engaging platform for public consumption. The following section turns to the literature of the turn of the century in order to expand on its role in defining sexual identities and practices in Latin America.

In Literature: **Naturalismo and Modernismo**

Two major literary currents dominated fin de siècle Latin America: naturalismo (naturalism) and modernismo (modernism). Naturalismo relied on the realistic depiction of social ills, a treatment that privileged scientific terminology and a tendency to pathologize characters deemed to be racially, culturally, or sexually abhorrent. Inspired by the French author Émile Zola, naturalist writers such as Julián Martel, Eugenio Cambaceres, and Manuel Podestá (all from Argentina), Aluísio de Azevedo and Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis (both from Brazil), Clorinda Matto de Turner (Argentina/Peru), Alcides Arguedas (Bolivia), and Federico Gamboa (Mexico) took aim at Latin America's history of racial mixing and supposed cultural backwardness vis-à-vis Europe and the United States. Their work often took the form of a diagnostic appraisal of a nation's history and contemporary social problems. In particular, emasculated male characters came to represent the failure of a country to maintain order in this contradictory period. Of note in this regard is a novel from Brazil, Adolfo Ferreira Caminha's (1867–1897) Bom-Crioulo (1895; *Bom-Crioulo: The Black Man and the Cabin Boy* [1982]). *Bom-Crioulo* describes a homosexual relationship between an escaped black slave (slavery was abolished in Brazil in 1888) working as a sailor in the Brazilian navy who falls in love with a young cabin boy, Aleixo. The novel is remarkable for its ambiguous treatment of this relationship, eschewing the moralizing view taken by most naturalist writers. Same-sex desire is the primary engine of this novel, which is structured as a classical tragedy, with Bom-Crioulo killing Aleixo in a fit of jealousy at the end. Typically, however, sexually ambiguous or deviant characters in this period suffer tormented lives and deaths, as in Cuban José Martí’s 1885 novel *Lucía Jerez* (also known as *Amistad funesta* [Fatal friendship]) and Chilean Augusto d’Halmar’s 1924 novel *La pasión y muerte del Cura Deusto* (The passion and death of Father Deusto). If in psychiatry the homosexual had to be “cured” through education and therapy, in literature he or she almost always meets a violent end.
Modernismo, in contrast, was a philosophical and aesthetic movement based on strangeness (rareza), formal renovation, preciousness of style, and escapist imagery. Modernismo was perhaps the most important literary movement to come from Latin America, and modernistas such as José Martí (1853–1895; Cuba), Rubén Darío (1867–1916; Nicaragua), and José Enrique Rodó (1871–1917; Uruguay) revolutionized the way sensuality was understood in the region. On the one hand, these writers were inspired by French decadentistas (the decadent movement), who posited the body as a site of pleasure and perversion, and on the other, such an open transgression of decorum was met with skepticism in Latin America. For example, Darío’s Los raros (The strange/queer ones), published in 1896, is a series of personality sketches, primarily of French symbolists, that at once celebrates their aesthetic sensibilities and reproduces homophobic discourses around sensuality and eroticism. Latin American modernismo looked to figures such as Walt Whitman, Paul Verlaine, and Oscar Wilde in a complex framework of admiration and reticence. While never identified specifically as homosexual, the strangeness of these raros served to highlight Darío’s modernity. Still, their sexual ambiguity and the sensuality of their work was grounds for censure by Latin American critics.

The most prominent example of this contradictory position is Rodó’s 1900 essay Ariel, which attempts to provide a corrective to what the author believed to be the overly sensual poetics of modernismo at the turn of the century. Rodó proposes a spiritual and anti-utilitarian reformation of Latin American aesthetics, one more in keeping with a conservative vein of intellectualism in the region. Nevertheless, homoeroticism and corporeal sensuality would resurface in Latin American letters, such as in the work of Julián del Casal (Cuba), José Asunción Silva (Colombia), Delmira Agustini (Uruguay), and Salvador Novo (Mexico), as aesthetic trends moved toward the avant-garde after World War I (1914–1918).

As noted earlier in the case of the lagartijo, these aesthetics were also applied to the bodies, dress, and attitudes of those producers of literary texts. As with the lagartijo, the figure of the dandy came to represent the modernization and cultural acumen of bourgeois men (but also some women), as well as the potential excesses of artifice. The adornment of men’s bodies, their preoccupation with style, and the unpredictable nature of their speech and gestures led to contradictory understandings of gender as performative, as a pose. The dandy was a nonconformist—a provocateur—interested in beauty, elegance, and eccentricity in a period marked by the gradual decline of the elite and the relative homogenization of culture. Thus, for artists interested in standing out in the ever-growing and always mistrusted crowd, dandyism represented a shift toward individual style and ostentation. This shift was controversial in many of the same ways as modernismo: by pushing the limits of aesthetic propriety, both forms of representation were revising the way gender and sexuality were understood as relative and relational rather than as biologically determined.
Across Latin America in the fin de siècle period, the rapid pace of modernization led to massive shifts in demographics, politics, and modes of life. Social anxiety—especially on the part of Latin American elites—over the future of Latin American nations found expression in the scientific community, which used positivism to justify the examination of sexual pathologies in an effort to explain the supposed decadence of groups such as immigrants, the working class, homosexuals, and transvestites. Social scientists adapted European models to local populations and attempted to “correct” deviant identities and practices in the name of order and progress. However, a close examination of the period reveals how the interrelated spheres of science, art, and culture did not universally reject sexual difference and gender variance. Instead, for members of the elite, the contradictions of modernity reflected a simultaneous fascination with individual expression, fear of cultural decadence, and disdain for populist rhetoric. The supposed objectivity of positivist science allowed upper-class politicians to attempt to control the future of Latin American populations. Yet in looking to Europe for inspiration, many of those same politicians (writers and artists) became enamored with stylistic innovations that were seen by critics as overly sensual or even queer (*raro*). Modernity implied simultaneously seeking to promote a specific cultural identity and adapting to new and at times revolutionary ideas. In literature and art as in science and politics, the Latin American fin de siècle staged the negotiation of contradictory ideologies, people, and desires. This complicated period underscores the paradox of control and repression, liberalism and the expansion of individual freedoms—issues that continue to inform Latin American politics to this day.

**SEE ALSO** El Baile de los 41; Bom-Crioulo (1895; Adolfo Ferreira Caminha)

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Fire (1996; Deepa Mehta)

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The first mainstream film in India to portray homosexual love.

The film Fire, written and directed by the Indo-Canadian filmmaker Deepa Mehta (1950–), was first released in Canada in 1996 and opened in India at the International Film Festival of Kerala in 1997. Its mainstream distribution in India in 1998, its circulation, and the ensuing turmoil are by all accounts a watershed for queer representation in India; they portended a seismic shift in the ways in which both queer movements were orchestrated and queer visualities were shaped. The effects of the film’s release were widespread and cannot be easily folded into a linear narrative of opposition or visibility. Instead, the film and its ensuing responses provide tools to theorize about changes in the landscape of queer rights in India.

Loosely based on the Urdu short story “Lihaf” (The quilt), by the communist Muslim writer Ismat Chughtai (1911–1991), who was charged with obscenity in the early 1940s, Fire is centered on the growing desire between two married women who eventually fall in love, have sex in one of their marital beds, and effectively abandon their family household. What is striking about the film, and particularly a South Asian film, is its setting: a “joint-family” household, in which each woman is married to a brother. This household, which was composed of the two women, Sita and Radha (the names referencing mythic characters); their husbands, Jatin and Ashok; their mother-in-law; and the man-of-all-work Mundu, is located in a lower-middle-class neighborhood in New Delhi, and both women labor in the thriving family business selling videos (both over and under the table, so to speak) and snack-style delicacies. The two men have other so-called pastimes that sidetrack them from healthy relationships with their wives: Ashok has a guru who recommends curbing his sexual proclivities with his wife, while Jatin is irrevocably entangled with a young Chinese woman, Julie, who had turned down his offer of marriage. Both Radha and Ashok are played by renowned film actors, and the film’s palette evokes the colors of the Indian flag: orange, green, and white.

Film’s Showing and Critical Reception

What made Fire so remarkable, as the filmmaker and professor Shohini Ghosh pointed out
in a 2010 monograph on the film, was that it was the first mainstream Indian film to deal with homosexual love, unlike other films on sexuality that hit the circuits around the same time that were relegated to film festivals and similarly obscure venues. This portrayal of a formerly taboo subject was made possible when, under pressure from international banking institutions, India was forced to open up its economy in 1991, which also dramatically transformed what Indian citizens could watch on television and in movie theaters. Not only did television programming expand beyond the predominantly state-mandated content, but viewers began renting movies to watch in groups; choice had entered the arena of home viewing—a matter that the film dramatized in several ways. Both the English and Hindi versions of Fire opened in forty-two theaters throughout India in 1998 under these circumstances.

Fire had been reviewed well, bolstered by several international festival awards. In a 6 November 1998 article in the Times of India, the film’s distributor described the film as being about masturbation and lesbian interaction, although he was cautious about its prospects; after all, it had no songs. However, it showed to packed houses that were at 80 percent to 90 percent capacity. Several theaters had women-only shows, and many viewers went to see it multiple times.

Like all mainstream films, Fire had to be reviewed by India’s Central Board of Film Certification, notorious for cutting scenes and asking for rewrites, especially in instances where films were even mildly explicit about desire or sex. In the case of Fire, the board, led by Asha Parekh (nicknamed “Ms. Scissorhands” for her aggressive approach to censorship), released it uncut because it was considered an important movie for Indian women. The board asked for only one change: that the name Sita be changed (in both the Hindi and English versions, though there is some dispute over this) to Nita. The shift in names articulates an awareness of modern evocations of Indian womanhood that signify through the mythic character Sita, the heroine in the epic Ramayana who had been abducted and her chastity eventually questioned, and although this was never said at the time, it became a point of contention as the debate over the film wended its way through various venues.

The film itself received mixed responses from feminists. Some were perturbed that both women were married, which they believed abrogated the political efficacy of the challenge that two single women trotting off into the sunset together might pose. By contrast, many queer commentators had a much more positive take on the film, seeing in the movie’s lower-middle-class, thoroughly mundane household, chock-full of the iconographic and plot conventions of religiosity, a challenge to the seemingly seamless collusion between everyday domesticity, ritualized religion, nationalism, and desire—and perhaps seeing that challenge more deeply than if it had been queer in the ways advocated by its detractors. Ironically, right-wing commentators concurred, suggesting that if women were given the option of running away with other women, they might not be so amenable to being domesticated in the usual fashion, through marriage to a man. (Sita, recently married, tries
to pique the interest of her new husband before she turns to Radha; Sita is more adventurous than the sedate Radha, and this flips the usual expectations associated with each name.)

Conservative Backlash and Counterprotest

*Fire* drew the ire of conservative Hindus. On 2 December 1998 some 200 Shiv Sainiks (members of a local right-wing Hindu organization/party, Shiv Sena), both men and women, stormed into two theaters, New Empire and Cinemax, in Mumbai, broke the glass on the display windows, damaged a ticket counter, and burned posters of *Fire*. In response, theater managers canceled showings of *Fire* in Mumbai. Theaters in New Delhi—including the iconic Regal in Connaught Place—were attacked by members of Shiv Sena almost immediately after the show opened to packed houses at noon on 3 December; in Kolkata cinemagoers carried Shiv Sainiks out of the theater when they attempted to stop the film. Meanwhile, a cinema hall in Pune had withdrawn the Hindi version of the film, voluntarily.

Opposition members of the Rajya Sabha (the upper house of the Indian parliament) lodged complaints against Shiv Sena’s attempts to shut the film down, while filmmakers, writers, and artists also rallied to protest the violent shutting down of the film. Between the first
week of December 1998 and February 1999, demonstrations abounded. One in New Delhi included thirty-two organizations of local women’s groups who held a candlelight vigil in front of Regal Cinema. The campaign for lesbian rights had begun in New Delhi, and women came together to make posters, enter into discussions, and begin the process of consolidating the issues they felt needed to be enunciated and vocalized—issues that brought sexuality to the fore. Members of organizations in various cities in India and within the diaspora, including Stree Sangam in Mumbai, SALGA in New York City, and CALERI in New Delhi, took to the streets to protest the violent opposition to the film. In Mumbai, Stree Sangam put up 1,000 posters, with community help, that stated in vivid red against a stark white background, “They destroyed the Mosque, dug up a cricket pitch, burnt paintings, throttled music, stopped a film from being shown, will Mumbai just stand by?” The Times of India (4 December 1998) called the poster a bold statement against cultural terrorism. Mumbai is the heart of Shiv Sena territory, and residents had become familiar with that organization’s overt and sometimes more subtle forms of violence.

The political situation in India at the time was fraught. Several seasons of bad harvests had voters ushering right-wing incumbents out of office, and the Right’s retaliation against Fire, as the poster in Mumbai made clear, was only one of many such at the time. Losing its base, the Right struck out against what they designated foreign infections (including lesbians). Ironically, and in a perversely Foucauldian form, the Right’s attempts to suppress events, objects, iconography, access to religious spaces, cricket games, and music they deemed objectionable exploded in an efflorescence of resistance and conversations around precisely what they wanted spirited away or excised from immediate view. Because the controversy around Fire went beyond gender representation to include battles over freedom of choice and freedom from censorship, it drew in others from outside the queer community. Queer political organizing hit the mainstream, not just as itself but as part of an amalgam, and not just in local settings but on the national stage. Earlier refusals from feminists to make sexuality seminal to their political projects out of a belief that they needed their attention directed to issues deemed more pressing, such as wife burning, were laid aside.
Poster Denouncing the Violence Associated with the Movie Fire. Activists put up thousands of these posters around Mumbai to protest against violent attempts by conservative Hindus to stop showings of Fire. The poster in Hindi is translated as “They destroyed the Mosque, dug up a cricket pitch, burnt paintings, throttled music, stopped a film from being shown, will Mumbai just stand by?”

“What you can’t see, you can see. You just have to see without looking.” These sentences from the film signpost ensuing habits of viewing. For a short time, *Fire* mainstreamed sexuality into feminist projects. *Fire* produced both expected and unexpected alliances, echoed in diverse coalitions across the nation coming out for queer exigencies, such as the multitude defying the Supreme Court of India's 2013 decision in favor of the sodomy statute. The film shows the women engaging in religious rituals such as *karva chauth*, a daylong fast completed by Hindu women for the safety and longevity of their husbands, which, in the movie, is completed by the two female leads while flirting elegantly with each other. These rituals are juxtaposed alongside the effusive consumption of melodramatic television serials that play out the story underlying the rituals by two errant witnesses (their mother-in-law and the masturbating factotum, Mundu). Many queers searching for recognition in India turn to religious archives for evidence, hunting assiduously for queer subjects in religious texts. By using *karva chauth* in this way, *Fire* posits that these ventures lead to a dead end. Instead, the film suggests, the religious past makes sense in the playful rescripting by the women and in the over-the-top televisual form, in the shapes it assumes in the present—shapes that in this case have been turned to queer designs. *Karva chauth* and each commonplace occasion in the household the women shared become something
else in the film—what the film has the viewer begin to grasp via allegorical realism is mundane homosocial female closeness, especially in putatively heterosexual domesticities, staged as queer; it trains all audience members to read askew, finding homoerotic titillation where once they might have merely noticed or floated by everyday pooled habits of cooking, washing, massaging, picnicking, and so on. The film thus inaugurates, in Ghosh’s (2010) words, “retrospectatorship” as everyday practice so that what was once seen as homosocial could be discerned as homosexual.

*Fire* left its spoor on cinema; desire and sex between women came to be much more quotidian in mainstream cinema. These traces were even evident in miscarriages where narratives married the phobic to erotic and killed off one woman lover, such as in the film *Girlfriend* (2004). A more recent homage to *Fire* was spectralized in *Dedh Ishqiya* (2014), another take on the Chughtai story. Here the women abscond with one another, and the male protagonists have to review their own conventions of looking to provide, in *Fire’s* wake, another paean to viewing askance folded into the movie’s denouement.

**SEE ALSO** *New Media in Asia*

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The sexual activities of the Nahuas, the indigenous Nahuatl-speaking peoples of central Mexico (more commonly, and incorrectly, known as the Aztecs), before the Spanish conquest (1519–1521), included categories to describe same-sex sexual behaviors, although such categories are unclear to observers today and certainly did not suggest immutable identity. The Nahuas also had individuals who cross-dressed and may have engaged in some activities most often reserved for individuals who had been born into the other sex. Yet, it would be anachronistic to argue that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Nahuas existed before the conquest. There is simply no evidence of the existence of such sexual identities before the conquest, and there is one important piece of evidence that shows that such identities could not have existed: the Nahuas, like many other Mesoamerican peoples before the Spanish conquest, did not have a discreet category that can be called “sexuality.” Instead, they connected sexual activity with fertility and sacrifice—aligning them with the larger cosmology and with processes of death and rebirth.

Background on the Nahuas

Two main principles organized Nahua thought about sexual behaviors and desires (Sigal 2011). First, sexual behavior related directly to the fertility rituals, which were ceremonies that promoted the concept that everything and everybody must maintain and support fertility (particularly designed to support the fertile earth) in order for the community to survive (Quezada 1975). Second, one needed to maintain moderation in respect to sexual activity. In Nahua thought, moderation was considered a virtue, and excess a vice.

Before the Spanish conquest, Nahuas did not equate sex with “sin.” The concept of sin did not adequately translate into the Nahuatl language, much less the cultural framework for that language. The Nahuatl term tlatlacalli roughly corresponded with a sense of disorder and disarray. After the conquest, the Franciscan friars, who acted as linguistic experts, translated tlatlacalli as pecado (sin), believing this to be the Nahuatl term most closely
associated with the various concepts that Europeans associated with sin (Burkhart 1989). Still, Nahuas believed that sexual activity linked them with the earth and the cosmos, and they did not think of any particular sexual acts as spiritually problematic. They did not think of sex as necessarily good or bad, although they did deem excess sex (like anything in excess) dangerous.

Representatives of the Catholic Church—especially the Franciscans and the Dominicans—who encountered the Nahuas found their views of sexual behavior problematic. They attempted to get Nahuas to link sex with sin, often using particular indigenous concepts (of trash, dirt, dust, damage, and excess) as terms that could be used to train Nahua individuals to think of sex itself, in theory and practice, as sinful. The missionary attempt, through instruction and the sacrament of confession, at conquering Nahua thoughts about sexuality largely failed, instead eventually producing a hybrid sexual system that still survives today in many indigenous Mesoamerican societies (López Austin 1988). Although conscious efforts by Spaniards to alter Nahua ideas of sexuality for the most part did not succeed, much change did occur as the Nahuas came into daily contact with Spaniards, Christianized Africans, and their descendants. During the same period, however, Nahua commoners connected sexual desires with preconquest gods and goddesses, and both nobles and commoners had great difficulty understanding the clerical concept of sin.

Having said this, and despite numerous studies of the available Nahuatl-language texts and Spanish-language documents, the contingent nature of modern knowledge of Nahua sexual desire and behavior should be emphasized. Spanish authorities mediated the postconquest Nahuatl-language documents. Even for those cases when Nahuas wrote the documents outside of Spanish influence, it is important to note the internal conflicts and external power relations involved in the production of those texts. Furthermore, because preconquest Nahuas wrote in pictographic form, these sources require significant decoding of the painting process. Spanish-language sources that broach Nahua sexuality, often produced in the context of criminal trials or inquisitorial proceedings, are even more opaque.

As Pete Sigal notes in The Flower and the Scorpion (2011), Nahua nobles on the eve of the Spanish conquest believed that the flower signified, among other things, excessive sexual desire. Nahua commoners believed that the existence, life, and death of the scorpion showed them the ways in which the gods manipulated human sexual behavior. The Nahuas wrote extensive texts, often in the form of songs, about flowers. In these documents, they used the flower as a metaphor for sexual excess, including mock intercourse that took place during massive ceremonies designed to invoke fertility. In one of these ceremonies, known as Ochpaniztli (The Sweeping), some men wore giant paper phalluses and engaged in mock intercourse with a priestess dressed as a goddess. Such a rite, frowned on as excessive in daily life, was encouraged during this ceremony.
Nahuas also, at least until the seventeenth century, performed curing ceremonies in which issues of gender and sex played central roles. In one such ceremony, performed by Nahua commoners, a cross-dressed male curer would take on the identity of a goddess in order to engage in mock sexual intercourse with an individual sick from a scorpion sting. As the curer did this, he called on a myth in which the goddess once seduced a warrior, preventing that warrior from engaging in his duty. The goddess then beheaded the warrior, who became a scorpion. The myth says that this is why people no longer die from scorpion stings. The cross-dressed curer, calling on this mythology, symbolically seduced the scorpion through this intercourse and then beheaded that scorpion, preventing the scorpion’s venom from killing the patient.

These stories of the flower and the scorpion, related to Nahua metaphor and myth, demonstrate that indigenous understandings of sexuality were different from the views of the Spanish colonizers, who tried to fit them into their own notion of “sin,” and that these concepts are at least partially unknowable to people today. However, some Nahuatl and Spanish texts can still provide great insight into sexual imaginations, desires, and acts.

**Florentine Codex**

As with any study of sexuality among people outside of the modern Western world, one must try as much as possible to study their words and actions independent of Western influence. In the case of the Nahuas, one would think that this would be easy: they had a written language before the Spanish conquest, and they continue to speak, read, and write in this language today. Yet, few documents exist from before the Spanish conquest, and, as is described below, even Nahuatl-language documents from after the conquest betray significant Spanish influence.

This entry provides two examples of such writing, both from a text called the Florentine Codex (*Sahagún 1979*), a mid- to late-sixteenth-century ethnographic text written in Nahuatl and Spanish. This document was based on extensive interviews conducted by a Franciscan friar, Bernardino de Sahagún (1499–1590), and four Nahua individuals in a series of Nahua communities a generation after the Spanish conquest. From this source, particularly when combined with other Nahuatl- and Spanish-language texts, a unique understanding of “homosexuality” in Nahua communities can be gleaned. That said, one cannot begin to understand Nahua conceptualizations of same-sex sexuality without carefully decoding such texts.

In the mid-sixteenth century, with the support of the Franciscan order, the largest mendicant order of the Catholic Church in the Spanish Empire, Sahagún began an extensive ethnographic research project that would become the *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (*General History of the Things of New Spain*), a massive work divided into twelve books and more commonly known as the Florentine Codex. Sahagún produced this text in
coordination with four Nahua aides—his “trilinguals”—individuals fluent in Nahuatl, Spanish, and Latin. Sahagún and the aides went to several Nahua communities and spoke to a group of elders in each community. They asked those elders to describe the rituals, histories, flora, fauna, and social customs as they had existed at the time of the Spanish conquest. The text was written in parallel columns of Nahuatl and Spanish, with the more extensive Nahuatl text accompanied by a significant number of illustrations. By the time the project was finished in the late 1570s, the Catholic Church and the Spanish monarchy were less interested in ethnographic accounts of the indigenous populations, so the Historia general was sent to Seville and then, at some point, given as a gift to somebody in Florence (hence its name, the “Florentine” Codex). It eventually made its way to the Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana in Florence, where it is currently housed.

FROM BOOK 10 OF THE FLORENTINE CODEX.

Gay Nahuas? As Sahagún and his aides began this ethnographic project, they made some notes that would come to be known as the Primeros memoriales (First memorials), a collection that comes from their first ethnographic interviews from the 1550s, in the Nahua community of Tepepulco (Sahagún 1993). In only one place does one find “homosexual” activity or, for that matter, quotidian sexual behavior of any kind: toward the end of a folio where one reads in Sahagún’s own hand the terms patlache, cuiloni, and other terms that may, perhaps, be linked with sexuality. The rest of the text is written in the handwriting of the aides. It is not known why the Franciscan friar intervened here, but this suggests the contrived nature of such a text. As the text is only in Nahuatl, it is not even possible to know the Spanish terms that the friar may have used to elicit the Nahuatl words. Patlache, as is noted in the next section, has been used (incorrectly) to suggest a Nahuatl term for “lesbian.” Similarly, some have argued that the Nahuatl term cuiloni was used to describe “gay” sex (Kimball 1993), but one must take such a claim with a grain of salt. The Franciscan friar Alonso de Molina, in his sixteenth-century Nahuatl-Spanish dictionary, used the Spanish term pecado nefando (“nefarious sin” of sodomy) as a translation for
cuiloni (Molina [1569] 1984, 2:27r). He also translates puto (faggot) as cuiloni (1:100v).

In Book 10 of the Florentine Codex, which focuses on people’s daily lives, Sahagún and his aides expanded their intervention into Nahua homosexuality by developing cuiloni into a decontextualized quasi-identity. Here the authors connect cuiloni with “excrement, corruption, filth, ... [and] effeminacy,” among other things. A cuiloni also “passes himself off as a woman.” As a penalty for his acts, he is “burned.” Indeed, the second image in Figure 1 one shows a person executed by fire.

With so little context, though, it is impossible to know if this image and text came from a European or a Nahua framework—or, more likely, some combination of the two. The term cuiloni appears to be derived from cui, “to take,” and the passive–loni suffix, obscurely suggesting that a cuiloni is “one who is taken.” The term cuiloni is rarely found in any other texts except for the highly contrived, bilingual (Nahuatl and Spanish) confessional manuals that were used to train priests to hear the confessions of their parishioners. Spanish chronicles, criminal trials, and similar documents show that some Nahua men had sex with other men. They also show that some Nahua men dressed as women—or at least the Spanish observers perceived them as dressing in such a manner. In the image in Figure 1, the individual on the right side of the flower has the hair and clothing that the Florentine Codex artist regularly depicted as the hair and clothing of a woman. Could this have been a cross-dressed man? The fact that this image refers to a cuiloni certainly suggests such an interpretation.

Simply put, Nahuas from before the Spanish conquest would not have understood the term, category, or concept of being “gay” (or, for that matter, “transgender”). While there is evidence of men engaging in sexual activity with other men, and there is yet more evidence that biological males dressed in women’s clothing (Trexler 1995), Nahuas did not have a term that can be translated as “sex.” Sexual behaviors instead fell under other categories, particularly those linked with sacrifice and, as discussed below, with “trash.” If the Nahuas did not have a term for either “sex” or for “sin,” then they could not have understood specific sexual identity categories. The simple (and facile) translation of cuiloni as “faggot” or “sodomite” misses this key point. Instead, it seems likely that cuiloni referred to a set of actions that became reinterpreted in the production of the Florentine Codex and in the context of the Spanish conquest.

Lesbian Nahuas? It would seem impossible for Nahuas to have understood the category “lesbian,” which leaves open the question as to what Spanish phrase Sahagún used to elicit the word patlache from the Nahua elders. One possibility is the obscure terminology used by his Franciscan colleague Molina, in his dictionary definition, hazerlo vna muger a otra (“for one woman to do it to another”; Molina [1569] 1984, 2:80r). The entry for patlache in Book 10 of the Florentine Codex does not provide much help. Sahagún translates the term as hermafrodita (hermaphrodite). The Nahuatl text says that “the patlache is a filthy
woman, a woman with a penis, possessor of an erect penis.” Furthermore, “she does it to another woman [tepatlachuia],” and “she makes a woman her friend.” In Figure 2, one sees a standing individual with women's breasts exposed but with a hand hiding his or her genitals. The person wears only a man's cape and stands and talks to another person, who is dressed as a woman and seated. The standing person may be a figure of indeterminate gender, but there is no way to know this. The person appears to be simply a woman wearing a cape, but it is impossible to understand how a sixteenth-century Nahua individual would have interpreted this image.

FROM BOOK 10 OF THE FLORENTINE CODEX

Figure 2 from the Florentine Codex Showing a Patlache. In this illustration, a figure is shown with a woman's breasts but wearing a man's cape, possibly indicating the figure is a hermaphrodite or a woman who has sex with women. The term for such a figure, patlache, defies categorization.

Here, in the movement into the Florentine Codex, it would seem the term patlache has become utterly indefinable. It is unclear if this individual is a hermaphrodite. And, if so, whether her or she has sex with women. It is impossible to determine if sexual activity between this in-between gender individual and women would be analogous to a modern lesbian. One thinks not, and perhaps this marks the limits of the ability of present-day scholars to understand preconquest Nahua sexual categories.

By thinking about the Florentine Codex as a quintessentially hybrid text—produced by and through colonial encounters of language, religion, and culture—perhaps more of the context for these sexual identities can be understood. Sahagún and his partially Hispanicized aides would have known about Spanish and Christian categories. In this
context, sexual sin became a key theme, as did the Spanish denigration of individuals deemed putos (faggots) and hermafroditas. These individuals, deemed monstrous in the Spanish imagination, became transferred onto the Nahua context through the terms cuiloni and patlache.

**Trash**

For the Nahuas, the concept of tlazolli (trash) was central to the ideas of order and disorder that relate to Nahua sexual categories and acts. Although tlazolli is most often translated into English as “trash,” it meant much more. Tlazolli to the Nahuas linked closely with the excess they believed necessary to produce the large ceremonies so central to Nahua society just before the Spanish conquest. Tlazolli was a sign of ritual and sacrifice, and the bulk of those activities that Westerners consider to fall under the category “sex” fell under the category of tlazolli for the Nahuas. Nahuas in this sense did not see any sexual activities as sinful, but rather they saw them all as potentially pleasurable and as both ritually and symbolically positive for society. Nahua discourse strongly supported bodily pleasures, practiced in moderation, and condemned excessive indulgence in such pleasures. In the years prior to the Spanish conquest, cuiloni and patlache would have related to tlazolli rather than to a sexual identity of any kind.

In the early colonial years and through at least the late sixteenth century, Catholic priests attempted to alter the Nahua discourse to mandate a connection between sex and sin, but they failed to fully accomplish this change. Instead, the Nahuas adjusted their sexual performances to accommodate the changes mandated. They began to assert a hybrid discursive framework in which excess would lead to spiritual condemnation, whereas moderation remained connected with fertility and fulfillment. Only through the study of indigenous language sources can scholars work to understand Nahua ways of adapting sexual subjectivity to colonial and postcolonial rule.

**SEE ALSO** Confessional Manuals in Colonial Latin America; Conquest and Sodomy in Latin America; Sins against Nature in Colonial Latin America

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Fortune and Men's Eyes

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The 1967 play and 1971 film adaptation that highlighted both the injustice of Canada's prison system and its treatment of homosexuals.

Fortune and Men's Eyes (1967), by the Canadian playwright John Herbert (pen name of John Herbert Brundage [1926–2001]), is the most widely produced Canadian English-language play and was the first Canadian play to address homosexuality and violence within prison. The title comes from the opening line of Sonnet 29 by William Shakespeare:

When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes,
I all alone beweep my outcast state,
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries,
And look upon myself and curse my fate.
The play and the subsequent film adaptation are an indictment of the particular historical context of society's aversion toward homosexuality and its ignorance of the effects of prison on inmates' lives. At the time of the play's production, homosexuality, appearing in public in drag, and performing in drag in bars were still illegal in Canada. Individuals convicted of these crimes could be sentenced to lengthy prison sentences. These acts would be decriminalized only in 1969.

**Background**

The play's story is semiautobiographical, based on John Herbert's six-month imprisonment in 1947 at a reformatory in Guelph, Ontario, on trumped-up charges of solicitation. In 1946, while dressed in drag, he was mugged, but when confronted by the police his assailants accused him of soliciting them. Herbert was then charged with gross indecency and sentenced to the youth reformatory. During his incarceration, Herbert was raped and beaten—corporal punishment being a legal method of punishment at that time in Canadian prisons.
**Plot**

The play centers on four main characters in a single prison cell: the teenager Smitty, sentenced for stealing a car; Rocky, the dominant and aggressive male; Queenie, a drag queen in prison for prostitution and the self-described “Mother of the Cell”; and Mona, a young gay man wrongly imprisoned for solicitation. The story explores the dominant/submissive roles that structure prison life, as well as the brutal physical and violent sexual realities inside prisons.

The play opens with Smitty’s arrival at the prison and his subsequent “education” about the ways of prison life. Rocky takes ownership of Smitty by manipulating him into believing that he will protect Smitty from being gang raped by other prisoners. Smitty submits to Rocky’s sexual appetite but grows weary of being Rocky’s “property.” Queenie also manipulates Smitty into challenging Rocky’s authority, and Smitty subsequently beats Rocky into submission. Queenie’s agenda is to gain further power within the prison, and Queenie sees Smitty as a potential ally. Now dominant, Smitty seeks to take ownership of Mona. When Mona refuses, Smitty attempts to rape him. By the end of the play, Smitty has been transformed by the violent sexual culture of the prison and challenges the audience to face the hypocrisy of prison as a place of positive social reform (Dickinson 2002).

**Reception**

Herbert attempted several times to have the play produced in Canada, but producers fearful of putting on a play that dealt with homosexuality meant the play would not receive its premiere in Canada. Through the efforts of the Toronto-based theater critic Nathan Cohen, the play was produced in New York City at the Actors Playhouse, where it ran from February 1967 to January 1968 and was directed by Michael Nestor (Wagner 2013). The play received mostly mixed reviews from critics but was generally well received by its audiences, not only in New York but also eventually in Canada and in numerous countries and translations. A 1967 postperformance audience discussion in New York City led to the creation of the Fortune Society, a nonprofit organization that advocates for prison reform and offers services to help former prisoners reenter society.

*Fortune* was granted special recognition by the US Library of Congress for its contributions to social reform, and in 1971 Herbert was inducted into the Société des Auteurs et Compositeurs Dramatiques (Society of Dramatic Authors and Composers) in France. In 1975 the play received the Floyd S. Chalmers Canadian Play Award, and in 1967 Herbert was granted a lifetime membership in the US organization Actors Studio. Herbert went on to write sixteen more plays, but few were produced, and he remains best known for *Fortune and Men’s Eyes*.

**Importance**
Most of Herbert’s writing and directing focuses on theater as social criticism, and the difficulty of getting *Fortune* produced in Canada demonstrates the reaction against the vitriolic challenge that Herbert’s script launches at Canadian society. The story’s blatant depiction of homosexuality and camp, rape and violence, materialism and corruption of power challenged Canadian society to see itself for what it was and to see the marginalization and brutalization of nonheterosexual-identified peoples. As Herbert describes it, his play is like a mirror held up to Canadian society:

> As I see it, in this small setting of a reform institution cellblock the whole political situation is intensified. The same things are wrong with our [Canadian] society as a whole, but they rise to the crest in the cellblock.... The manipulation and consuming of one human creature by another breaks through the surface.

*(DEMPSEY 1967, 47)*

However, reviews of the play were decidedly mixed. Toronto theater critic Cohen championed the play’s social criticism, whereas New York critic Norman Nadel railed with disgust at the portrayal of homosexual behavior on stage (*Wagner 2013*).

**Film Adaptation**

Herbert went on to write the screenplay for the 1971 film adaptation, which was directed by the Canadian filmmaker Henry Hart (who replaced the original director, Jules Schwerin) and filmed on location at a prison in Quebec City, Quebec. The film was criticized by various reviewers, including the out gay film historian Vito Russo, for its stereotypical representations of effeminate homosexuals and for not effectively challenging the heteronormative aspects of society through the film’s focus on violence in prison. The film has since been recognized as making a significant contribution to Canadian gay film in English (*Waugh 1999*).

*Fortune* and *Men’s Eyes*, as a play and as a film, challenges audiences with its wit, camp humor, and brutal truth telling. The play premiered two years before the Stonewall riots in New York City during a time of social and political turmoil in both Canada and the United States. Herbert’s message for society to wake up and face the fact that the criminalization of homosexuality and the effects of imprisonment on people’s lives was a bold step in helping to create a visible gay and lesbian community. Despite the decriminalization of homosexual acts in Canada in 1969, discrimination continued. *Fortune* provides an important historical account of a time and a place that should not be forgotten.
SEE ALSO Canadian Criminal Code Reform (1969); Situational Homosexuality

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If there is one name nearly synonymous with LGBTQ history, it is Michel Foucault (1926–1984). A French philosopher, historian, and activist, Foucault was an enabling force in the emergence and development of queer history. For decades, Foucault’s work has been read and misread in widely differing national contexts and across divergent academic disciplines. It has attracted substantial criticism, particularly from feminist and postcolonial scholars. Such a layered legacy and complicated reception, it need be noted, makes any brief overview of his contested influence a fraught endeavor, one particularly prone to oversimplification.

By the time Foucault began to publish on the history of sexuality in the mid-1970s, he was already an intellectual giant. Foucault’s earlier work, on topics ranging from madness to medicine and criminality, appeared in such well-known books as *History of Madness* (2006; originally published in French as *Folie et déraison: Histoire de la folie à l’âge classique* [1961]) and *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1977; originally published in French as *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* [1975]). But it was the multivolume project *The History of Sexuality* that helped inaugurate a new field of study, and on a global scale. The introductory volume, *Histoire de la sexualité, 1, La volonté de savoir* (*The History
of Sexuality, 1: The Will to Knowledge), appeared in France in 1976 and was immediately translated into Italian, German, and Portuguese, quickly followed by Spanish and Greek. By the mid-1980s, editions in Japanese, Chinese, and Turkish, among other languages, were in circulation. The book first appeared in English in 1978 as The History of Sexuality, volume 1, An Introduction.

Sexuality as Historical Construct

Foucault’s short book had an explosive impact. It challenged much commonsense thinking, which either rooted sexuality in nature or stressed its biological basis. Against such conventional wisdom, Foucault insisted that “sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given” (1978, 105). Better, Foucault maintained, to think of sexuality as “the name that can be given to a historical construct” (105). The history of sexuality, Foucault argued, was “not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensification of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of controls and resistances, are linked to one another, in accordance with a few major strategies of knowledge and power” (105–106).

This key idea—sexuality as “historical construct”—proved immensely influential in what during the 1970s and 1980s came to be known as social construction theory. Social constructionism held that sexuality was not a timeless, unchanging feature of human life—a view known as essentialism—but something “constructed” by myriad social forces that varied over time and were subject to vast cross-cultural differences. While Foucault is often given credit as the originator of social construction theory, the truth is he did not come up with the idea alone. Across the Anglo-American world during the 1970s, those active in the feminist and gay/lesbian liberation movements also found essentialist notions of sexuality wanting and were busy devising social constructionist accounts of the sexual past. A full decade before The History of Sexuality appeared in English, Mary McIntosh, a British socialist-feminist lesbian, published “The Homosexual Role” (1968), in which she argued that there existed no transhistorical homosexual, only categories and experiences of same-sex relations that shifted over time.

As McIntosh’s reference to role theory suggests, many of the early adopters of Foucault were sociologists. As Jeffrey Weeks, another British sociologist and one of the earliest and most sensitive interpreters of Foucault in English, remembers it, “What we found in Foucault was resonance rather than revelation” (2005, 189). In North America, feminist historians such as Carroll Smith-Rosenberg drew productively on Foucault, while Foucault had high praise for the lesbian historian Lillian Faderman’s pioneering book Surpassing the Love of Men (1981). Perhaps paradoxically, among groundbreaking gay historians such as Jonathan Ned Katz, Martin Duberman, and John D’Emilio, the influence of Foucault remained muted. Still, there can be no doubt that Foucault’s intellectual stature stamped
the history of sexuality with a new legitimacy.

Foucault did more than denaturalize sexuality by giving it a history. In fact, Foucault was not much interested in historical subjects such as the change in attitudes toward sexuality over time. For Foucault, such an approach missed the mark, for it presumed the existence of precisely what ought to be the object of historical inquiry: sexuality itself. Foucault argued that the very concept of “sexuality”—the notion that individuals each have a sexual identity and can be categorized into different groups on the basis of shared sexualities—was a historical creation, one that first emerged in the eighteenth century, coincident with the development of capitalism, and cohered in the nineteenth century around an array of medical, legal, pedagogical, and familial processes and institutions. In short, sexuality was an invention of modernity. In the subsequent volumes of his series, Foucault proposed to track the emergence and solidification of modern sexuality by tracing the genealogy of four great strategic unities: the hysterical woman, the procreative couple, the masturbating child, and the perverse adult.

Acts versus Identities

Foucault's “pervert” proved pivotal for queer history. Indeed, his queer readers zeroed in on and greatly magnified what is perhaps the most frequently quoted passage from The History of Sexuality, one related to the historical emergence of the homosexual. Foucault argued that in the early Christian era sodomy constituted “a category of forbidden acts” (1978, 43), but as sodomy passed through the apparatus of sexuality, the “nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage” (43). Through its “incorporation of perversions” and its “specification of individuals” (42–43), a new type of person emerged, one defined not simply by a sexual act—sodomy—but by a certain sexual sensibility or all-encompassing identity. As Foucault famously put it, “The sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (43).

Not all historians signed on to Foucault's argument about the nineteenth-century invention of the homosexual. Some scholars, such as John Boswell (1980), insisted that “gay people” could be found as far back as the early Christian era. There is also much debate over whether Foucault intended such a dramatic distinction between acts and identities. Whatever the case, the formulation stuck, and the “act versus identity” distinction represented one of sexual history's first major conceptual breakthroughs. It not only gave a leading role to the homosexual in the history of sexuality, it provided a way to think about all sexual identities as fundamentally historical.

Power/Knowledge/Discourse

Much of the initial enthusiasm for The History of Sexuality among lesbian/gay activists rested on a reading of it as a political manifesto and a theoretical text. Apart from some
early interpreters, such as Weeks, who appreciated and elaborated on the historical in Foucault, many historians approached the work with a skepticism rooted in the belief that Foucault was more a theorist than a true historian. This was a misapprehension of Foucault’s project, which he undertook at the height of his interest in formations of power/knowledge. The French subtitle of the introductory volume, omitted in the English translation, is La volonté de savoir (The will to knowledge), underscoring that, for Foucault, sexuality was first and foremost a domain of knowledge marked by the will or power to characterize, classify, and control it. Moreover, for Foucault, knowledge and power were always historically specific formations. For example, he assigned a central role to nineteenth-century doctors and their specialized knowledge of psychiatry and sexology in the historical emergence of the homosexual. The historical emergence of that same homosexual also provided Foucault with an illustration of his argument about the productive capacity of power (which one could say is the true subject of The History of Sexuality) to incite new discourses and to proliferate new sexual subjectivities. This “veritable discursive explosion” around sex beginning in the eighteenth century delivered a blow against what Foucault dubbed “the repressive hypothesis”—the idea that sexuality as power only ever functioned in a negative fashion to censor and silence (1978, 17).

Historians, however, tended to restrict their engagement with Foucault to the level of empirical correction, treating, for example, Foucault’s dating of the homosexual’s birth to 1870 as an error of historical fact rather than a rhetorical device. Homosexual identity, they countered, could be found much earlier throughout Renaissance and Enlightenment Europe. Historians also favored setting Foucault up to knock him down in their arguments against the medical-discursive invention of homosexuality. Many, however, radically oversimplified what Foucault meant by “discourse,” viewing it narrowly as written texts or language, even when Foucault made clear that discourse should be understood not as “abstract” or “speculative,” but in “the form of concrete arrangements,” as “institutions of power” and as “techniques of power,” from the architecture of schools to “the great instruments of the state” (1978, 140–141; emphasis in the original).

It was a fateful misreading, for it coincided with and was conditioned by the rise during the 1990s of the linguistic turn and discourse analysis in the discipline of history. When Foucault proclaimed that “the history of sexuality … must first be written from the viewpoint of a history of discourses” (1978, 69), despite being written long before the linguistic turn in history, many LGBTQ historians, immersed in community and oral histories, and committed to a more or less materialist account of sexuality, linked Foucault with the linguistic turn, and turned away. If Foucault never entirely disappeared from the field—historians continued to draw on Foucault’s authority by frequently citing, if not engaging with, his work—his influence, particularly among social historians, began to wane.
Biopower, Truth, and Technologies of the Self

As the field of LGBTQ history continued to develop through the 1990s, historians remained relatively uninterested in what they regarded as Foucault’s theoretical speculations, largely ignoring, for instance, Foucault’s thoughts on biopower—that is, sexuality as the crucial historical linchpin between the disciplining of individuals and the regulation of populations. Historians were also impatient with his philosophizing about “the truth of sex.” But for Foucault, the significance of sexuality—the objective in writing its history—was to answer the question of how, in addition to operating as an effective conduit for the relay of power, sexuality came to be the privileged locus for producing the truth about the human subject.

While Foucault had finished the research for many of the remaining volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, much of which he delivered in his now-published lectures at the Collège de France in the mid-1970s, he ultimately abandoned his original plan. Foucault decided it was necessary to first understand the place of pleasure and desire in periods “before sexuality,” and so, after an eight-year gap, just before he died from HIV/AIDS-related complications, the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality* appeared. *The Use of Pleasure* (1985; originally published in French as *L’usage des plaisirs* [1984]) and *The Care of the Self* (1986; originally published in French as *Le souci de soi* [1984]) examined the role of the erotic in ancient Greek and Roman cultures. Foucault also placed much more emphasis on the self-stylization of the sexual subject through what he called “technologies of the self,” something he admitted he paid insufficient attention to in the first volume. One consequence of this temporal shift has been to stimulate debate over Foucauldian approaches to sexuality among historians of the ancient and medieval periods, arguably generating a more productive and ongoing engagement with Foucault among premodern and early modern historians than historians of modern sexuality.

Queer and Feminist Challenges

The past several decades of queer theory and queer history have produced ambiguous results for Foucault’s fortunes in the field. On the one hand, the nonidentitarian expansiveness of *The History of Sexuality*, including its attention to heterosexuality, Foucault’s endorsement of “bodies and pleasures” as the basis for a counterattack against the regime of sexuality, his well-known thoughts on the limitations of identity categories, and his own enthusiastic participation in urban sexual undergrounds, all this made Foucault and his work queer before queer politics and theory first emerged in the 1990s. On the other hand, prominent queer theorists did not shy away from criticizing the Foucauldian enterprise. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990), for example, called into question the usefulness of “the Great Paradigm Shift,” or the transition from act to identity, not so much on historical grounds, but for its unstated assumptions about homosexuality in the
In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Judith Butler delivered a sharp critique of Foucault's handling of Herculine Barbin, a nineteenth-century intersex figure whose memoirs Foucault published, and of his characterization in *The History of Sexuality* of a case from the French countryside of sex between a village man and a young girl as “inconsequential bucolic pleasures” (*Foucault 1978, 31*). For Butler, the trouble here is how Foucault romanticized sex before its capture by sexuality, something at odds with Foucault’s claim in the conclusion to *The History of Sexuality* that “sex” followed from, was an effect of, sexuality, not the other way around. Butler's was only one of many feminist critiques of Foucault’s inattention to gender.

Queer and feminist critiques, while delivered with due respect, had the effect of sidelining Foucault and clearing the way for Derridean deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis—Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan being two theorists with whom Foucault differed, but whose ideas were more in keeping with queer theory’s poststructuralist and often ahistorical underpinnings. Among queer theorists with a historical orientation, David M. Halperin kept the Foucauldian faith with two books: *Saint Foucault* (1995), which anointed Foucault as the founding father of a radical queer politics, and *How to Do the History of Homosexuality* (2002), which attempted to resurrect a Foucauldian approach to the queer past.

**Postcolonial Critiques**

Some of the most sustained and provocative engagements with Foucault have come not from historians but from anthropologists, literary critics, and other scholars engaged in postcolonial studies. Throughout *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault repeatedly refers to “the West,” but the designation is more descriptive than analytically meaningful. On the few occasions Foucault ventured beyond the West, as in the contrast he set up between a “scientia sexualis” in the West and an “ars erotica” in “China, Japan, India, Rome, [and] the Arabo-Moslem societies” (*Foucault 1978, 57*), he displayed not only a dismaying Orientalism but also an ignorance about the histories of sexual science indigenous to places such as China, Japan, and India and their complex interactions with Western medicoscientific knowledge. Scholars such as Leon Antonio Rocha (2011) and Sanjay K. Gautam (2016) have pushed past Foucault’s distinction between the “scientia sexualis” and “ars erotica,” while recent efforts to globalize the histories of sexual science—to map the transnational circulation of sexual knowledge—promise to complicate Foucault’s overly simplified division between “the West” and the rest of the world (*Fuechtner, Haynes, and Jones 2018*).

Neither did Foucault consider how the periods and forms of sexuality he traced overlapped in what should have been obvious ways with Europe’s age of empire. Ann Laura Stoler read
The History of Sexuality alongside Foucault’s lectures on state racism, delivered in the same year the book was published, to interrogate the relative absence of empire and race in Foucault’s history of sexuality. Using Dutch colonial archives, Stoler argued that “Foucault’s tunnel vision of the West” blinded him to the ways European bourgeois sexuality depended for its definition on colonial power and the racialized bodies of colonial subjects (1995, 11). While Foucault could have found, had he wanted to, plentiful evidence of the imbrication of sexuality and colonialism in historical archives, Anjali R. Arondekar (2005, 2009), using the example of South Asian history and subaltern studies, questioned the very impulse to search for the history of sexuality in the colonial setting. Arondekar asked historians of sexuality to think hard about what is behind their desire to find Foucault’s sodomite in the colonial archive and what it means when one discovers barely a trace of such a figure.

Confession and the Return to History

While queer, feminist, and postcolonial critiques of The History of Sexuality continue apace, there are also signs of a new appreciation for Foucault as a historian. Lynne Huffer (2010) has redirected attention from the thin first volume of The History of Sexuality to the much thicker historical description of History of Madness as a proto-queer history. In Germany, historians have produced work on a wide range of sexual subjects to demonstrate what the field can encompass “after The History of Sexuality.” The 2016 translation into English of Foucault’s work with the French feminist historian Arlette Farge, Disorderly Families: Infamous Letters from the Bastille Archives, reveals their mutual fondness for archives and historical documents, particularly the lettres de cachet both spent decades researching. (In France, during the ancien régime, lettres de cachet were orders to arrest and imprison someone, sealed by the king and often solicited by people of humble background.)

More than four decades after the publication of the introductory volume of The History of Sexuality, a fourth and final volume, completed just before Foucault’s death but left unpublished, appeared in 2018. Les aveux de la chair (Confessions of the flesh) is widely regarded as the crucial missing link, both temporally and interpretively, between Foucault’s studies of pleasure in ancient culture and the modern period of sexuality. As Foucault only hinted at in the first volume of his history of sexuality, it was in the Christian confessional under pastoral power where one first sees the transformation from an injunction to confess the commission of sinful acts of the flesh to a demand to decipher sexual desires hidden deeper within. If the fourth volume is anything like the previous three, Foucault will once again enjoy influence over a field for which he has been formative—and in ways that are sure to be celebrated, contested, and conducive to new historical horizons.

SEE ALSO Barbin, Herculine (1838–1868); Classical Studies; Queer Theorists

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The Frente de Liberación Homosexual (FLH; Homosexual Liberation Front) was the first self-defined organization of homosexual men (and a few women) in Argentina, and quite possibly in all of Latin America. The FLH emerged as a coalition of smaller groups of activists, the first of which was known as Nuestro Mundo (Our World). Formed by unionized post office workers, the activists from Nuestro Mundo gradually recognized each other as homosexual men after union meetings and began to meet in cafés around the mid-1960s. The group was led by Héctor Anabitarte, who was originally an important union and community organizer in the Communist Party of Argentina. After Anabitarte came out of the closet, party officials sent him to a psychiatrist, who suggested a curative trip to the Soviet Union. Communists often equated homosexuality with “bourgeois decadence” and were convinced that homosexuality had been almost eradicated from the Soviet Union as a result of the existence of an allegedly healthier society. Anabitarte agreed to enjoy what was more likely a free trip, but back in Argentina he continued to reassert his homosexual identity publicly, and as a result he was relegated to lesser roles within the party. Later, he left to fully devote himself to homosexual politics.

By the early 1970s, several groups of activists would eventually come together as the FLH: the group known as Profesionales (Professionals), Alborada (Dawn), Safo (a lesbian group), the anarchist Bandera Negra (Black Banner), a group of left-wing humanities students known as Eros, and religious groups made up of several denominations including Emanuelle, Católicos, and Grupo Cristiano. Although many of the groups had emerged amid a growing wave of anticapitalist politics since the mid- to late 1960s, some of the members of the FLH did not belong to the Left. In fact, the activists shared no political agreement other than the desire to improve the situation and image of homosexual men who were persecuted by the police. In Argentina during the 1970s lesbian women would rarely identify themselves as such, so they did not feature prominently in the political agenda of the FLH. However, they played a fundamental role in the feminist movement, especially in the Unión Feminista Argentina (UFA; Argentine Feminists’ Union), which often worked in alliance with the FLH.

The FLH demanded the abolition of certain edicts— a body of bylaws created by the
Argentine federal police that violated the constitutional division between legislative and executive powers. These edicts against homosexual men had existed since the 1930s, and they were more repressively enforced in the following decades. Police harassment of homosexual men intensified during the regime of Juan Carlos Onganía (1966–1970) and in the 1970s. By the late 1960s, the police had accrued extensive lists of homosexual men who could be detained for a period ranging between a few hours and a month, depending on the arbitrary decision of the police agents in charge of the operation. As the situation for homosexual men worsened, this became the main impetus for the formation of the group that eventually created the FLH.

**Founding and Early Activities**

Nuestro Mundo and Profesionales formed the FLH in 1971. The latter group was created by a handful of intellectuals and writers whose ideas eventually shaped the FLH. Some of the writers in this group were already famous and well-published figures within Argentine intellectual circles, such as Juan José Sebreli and Blas Matamoro. Another participant, Manuel Puig, would later become internationally renowned as the author of *El beso de la mujer araña* (1976), adapted in 1985 by the Argentine-born Brazilian filmmaker Héctor Babenco as the internationally famous movie *Kiss of the Spider Woman*. One of the writers, Juan José Hernández, traveled to the United States in the early 1970s and became acquainted with the materials about lesbian and gay politics published by the Black Panthers. Surprisingly, Argentine activists were unimpressed by the Stonewall riots in New York City in 1969 that launched the wave of radical gay liberation groups in the United States and were more interested in an anti-imperialist platform that could help them establish an alliance with left-wing organizations in Argentina. Black Panther Huey P. Newton’s “A Letter from Huey Newton to the Revolutionary Brothers and Sisters about the Women’s Liberation and Gay Liberation Movements” (1970) provided such a platform and was translated into Spanish and circulated widely in Buenos Aires, especially within left-wing circles and the homosexual community. Below Newton’s letter, the FLH added a list of demands, emphasizing the release of all political prisoners and the end of police harassment of homosexual men.

Led by Néstor Perlongher (1949–1992), a group of radical students from the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras at the Universidad de Buenos Aires joined the FLH under the name of Eros soon after it was formed. A young sociology student, Perlongher had been an activist in Palabra Obrera (Workers’ Word), a Trotskyist party, before he became a homosexual activist. He eventually demanded this organization incorporate homosexual politics into its agenda, but he was denied, after which he created Eros with other students like himself. Unlike the writers from the group Profesionales, Perlongher was a man of action, and together with Anabitarte and others he pushed the members of the FLH to seek alliances with the Left and other groups. Although the Profesionales group was composed of
members of the Argentine left-wing intelligentsia, they were more academically oriented and preferred to write and study rather than directly engage in politics. For this reason, the relationship between the Profesionales and Perlongher became fraught with tension. This was one of the most important conflicts within the FLH.

As part of the politics of alliances promoted by Perlongher, the FLH developed a closer relationship with the UFA in the early 1970s. This feminist group was interested in issues that concerned all women, such as the critique of gender roles and the demand for legal equality and equal job opportunities, but it was also formed by many lesbian women who were also interested in themes more specific to their identities. Members of UFA and the FLH formed the Grupo de Política Sexual (GPS; Sexual Politics Group) around 1973 and began to read texts combining Marxism and psychoanalysis, such as the work of Wilhelm Reich and Herbert Marcuse. Although the relationship between the GPS, the FLH, and the UFA was quite fluid, informal, and difficult to define, the GPS would become the intellectual powerhouse of the FLH, publishing a 1973 summary of its views under the title *Sexo y revolución* (Sex and revolution) that would be republished and circulated widely, even outside Argentina.

### The FLH under Peronism

The year 1973 was crucial in the history of the FLH. After democracy returned to Argentina, and a Peronist government was elected that year, all political prisoners were released, and for a few months the persecution of homosexual men by the police came to a halt. The largest working-class political movement in Argentina between 1945 and the 1970s, Peronism, led by charismatic leader Juan Domingo Perón (1895–1974), was in favor of maintaining and expanding the welfare state. Excited by the return of Perón in 1973, the FLH lobbied Peronist congressmen and sought a place in the so-called process of “national liberation,” as left-wing Peronists called their ascension to power and the project for the new, stronger, and radicalized welfare state in Argentina that they had in mind. After Perón arrived back in Argentina in 1973 from his seventeen-year exile in Spain, however, the political situation shifted in favor of the right wing of the Peronist party. Partly because of this shift, the situation also quickly deteriorated for homosexual men. Perón distanced himself from the Left and pursued a right-wing agenda that affected the FLH’s chances of building alliances with Peronism.

For years, some members of the FLH led by Perlongher had been attempting to build an alliance with left-wing Peronism. This was a dividing issue within the FLH, as older members still remembered the extensive police raids on homosexual men under the Perón administration in 1954. Despite the association of Perón with antihomosexual politics, when he returned to Argentina in 1973, a group of activists from the FLH joined the more than two million people who went to welcome the leader at Ezeiza Airport in Buenos Aires. Once there, the tension between the left and right wing of the Peronist party erupted into
open violence. The first shootings came from the right wing of the party, and Perón immediately distanced himself from the Left. Right-wing Peronists began accusing the left wing of the party of promoting homosexuality. The FLH was partly responsible for this. Although the group of activists who went to Ezeiza Airport was barely noticeable in the large demonstration, Perlongher and others were interviewed by Así, one of the most widely read magazines of the period. Right-wing Peronists used this public appearance to claim that all the young activists from the Left were falling under the influence of homosexuality. As a result, left-wing Peronists refused to engage in any alliance with the FLH. This was quite problematic for the FLH because left-wing Peronists were the largest political group with whom they had sought to ally.

Other attempts to relate to left-wing parties also failed, and the FLH shifted its agenda from one of alliance with those parties to one focused on grassroots work within the broader homosexual community. The members of the FLH started to attend a few of the first emerging discos where homosexual men gathered at the time. Activists would approach other homosexual men and try to persuade them to organize against police persecution, telling them about the efforts of other gay liberation movements at the international level. The publication of the magazine Somos (We are) between December 1973 and January 1976 was part of this attempt. Shifting away from the previous politics of alliance with left-wing groups, Somos emphasized performative politics. The marica, or effeminate homosexual, was presented as a subject that could subvert capitalist society as it existed.

Dissolution

After Perón’s death in 1974, his third wife, Maríá Estela Martínez Cartas de Perón (1931–), popularly known as “Isabelita,” became the new president of Argentina. Under her rule, between 1974 and 1976, the political situation deteriorated. In collusion with such officials as José López Rega, she funded paramilitary groups that began killing thousands of left-wing activists, union and student organizers, journalists, and even politicians. For the FLH, it became increasingly difficult to even meet. Although they managed to undertake some activities through 1974, by late 1975 the group was effectively dissolving. By the time the military staged a coup d’état in March 1976, the FLH had, for all practical purposes, disappeared. In order to avoid persecution, several activists escaped the country. Anabitarte became an exile in Spain, where he still lived as of 2018, and Perlongher eventually went to Brazil, where he continued his academic studies and published a study of male prostitution. Although the experience of the FLH abruptly came to an end as a result of political repression, the example of this organization would be kept in the memory of LGBT people from Argentina, and it would influence the development of other similar movements abroad, as was the case with the group Somos (We Are) in Brazil (1978–1982). The emergence of a new wave of LGBT activism in Argentina would have to wait until the return of democracy in 1983.
The FLH found it hard to accomplish any of its goals because the organization existed for only a few years and faced a hostile political environment to the point of being forced to dissolve in less than a decade. With probably no more than 100 committed members and a larger group of sympathizers who circulated in and out of the organization, the FLH became renowned among the homosexual subculture of Buenos Aires of that time. The FLH has the merit of being the first attempt, in the midst of adversity, at organizing a group devoted to radical sexual politics in Latin America.

SEE ALSO Argentina’s Gender Identity Law; Cold War and Sexuality in Latin America; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Psychoanalysis in Argentina

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Friendship societies were associations of gay men (and less commonly lesbians) that proliferated across Europe at a grassroots level in the early twentieth century. Although they went by different names, they were all in essence social clubs that organized conversational meetings, dinners, parties, and celebrations. As the historian Andreas Sternweiler put it, they were dedicated to fostering a “feeling of community [Gemeinschaftsgefühl] ... that enabled a gay sense of self” (1997, 97; translation by Clayton J. Whisnant).

Although a few such clubs seem to have emerged in large cities such as Berlin prior to World War I (1914–1918), the number of friendship societies exploded during the 1920s and 1930s. By 1925, there were two rival organizations of friendship clubs in Germany: the Deutsche Freundschafts-Verband (DFV; German Friendship Alliance) and the Bund für Menschenrecht (BfM; Federation for Human Rights). The DFV was connected loosely with the homosexual periodical Freundschaft (Friendship) and later, after 1928, Neue Freundschaft (New friendship), while the BfM was promoted by the German publisher Friedrich Radszuweit’s (1876–1932) many newspapers and magazines, especially Das Freundschaftsblatt (The friendship paper) and Die Freundin (The girlfriend), the world’s first magazine aimed specifically at a lesbian audience.

Although the German friendship clubs were forced to shut down by the Nazis, many reappeared for a time after World War II (1939–1945) and were joined by other groups across Europe. The Swiss society known as Der Kreis (the Circle) was especially important internationally in the post-1945 era. Its journal, Der Kreis, edited by Karl Meier (1897–1974), was multilingual, publishing texts in German, French, and (after April 1954) English. It had a number of international correspondents who kept readers informed about conditions and events around the world. In Zurich, Der Kreis continued to carry on a very successful club tradition by producing skits, throwing parties and balls, hosting talks, and holding poetry readings. Amsterdam’s Cultuur en Ontspannings Centrum (COC; Culture and Recreation Center) was also vitally important. Locally, it organized social events, even opening two famous dance halls that helped to turn the city into a center for gay tourism.
beginning in the 1950s. Internationally, the COC played a critical political role by establishing, in 1952, the International Committee for Sexual Equality (ICSE), which made contact with individuals and organizations around the world and arranged international conferences.

In France the most important friendship society was Arcadie, led by André Baudry (1922–2018). Beginning his many years of activism as a correspondent for Der Kreis and as the French delegate for the ICSE, Baudry went on to found the journal Arcadie in January 1954. By 1957, Arcadie’s network of friends, readers, and contributors had gotten large enough that Baudry was able to rent a clubroom for his society. The society offered cultural events such as lectures, debates, poetry readings, plays, and films; above all, however, it was known for its dances, because before the end of the 1960s the society’s clubroom was the only location in the city where men could dance together safely.

From the very beginning, friendship societies were associated with a strategy aimed at winning respect and legal rights for homosexuals by emphasizing their respectability. Important leaders such as Friedrich Radszuweit, Karl Meier, and Baudry all encouraged gay men to live discreetly, avoid effeminacy, and above all refuse to engage in prostitution or other vices. This strategy caused many later activists during the 1970s and 1980s to look down on these earlier groups as conservative, timid, bourgeois, and saturated with self-hatred. Scholarly works in the twenty-first century, however, have offered a fresh perspective on the friendship societies, suggesting how important they were for offering paths toward political engagement in an era that was not particularly welcoming to homosexual politics. Julian Jackson’s detailed 2009 book on Arcadie suggests that the people involved with these groups were more diverse in terms of backgrounds and perspectives than one might guess from just reading the friendship societies’ publications. Furthermore, the groups were very much devoted to creating safe places in which men and women could develop a healthy sense of empowerment and self-worth.

The friendship societies mostly disappeared during the second half of the twentieth century. Those that had not yielded to constant legal battles during the 1950s eventually succumbed as new, more commercialized spaces for gay men and lesbians emerged from the 1960s on and as a new generation of activists demanded more radical strategies for pursuing homosexual rights during the 1970s. Only Amsterdam’s COC remained as of 2018, although it had been greatly transformed over the years by successive generations of leaders who brought in new energy, perspectives, and goals.

SEE ALSO Anti-gender Movement in Europe; Bars and Cabarets in Europe; Kinship in Europe; Molly Houses

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FTMInternational

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The largest and oldest organization serving female-to-male transgender communities and their allies, established in 1986.

FTMInternational (FTMI) is the largest and oldest organization serving female-to-male (FTM) transgender communities and their allies. The organization works through a network of local and regional chapters in eighteen countries that offer support groups, event planning, and awareness-raising programs, in addition to advocating for intersectional human rights (OAC, n.d.). FTMI leaders steer the entire international network toward a coalitional political platform, building connections with immigrant rights movements, labor movements, and prison abolition movements. Established in 1986, the organization holds in-person and online support groups, presents at and helps organize conferences, hosts a variety of social events, and focuses on education and referrals around legal and health concerns specific to FTM individuals and their allies. FTMI publishes a monthly newsletter, the *FTMI Yellow Pages* (a resource directory for FTM services), and an educational CD that narrates the story of a trans man’s transition.

While activism and support for male-to-female people, or trans women, began to emerge in the 1960s, activism focused specifically on the experiences and needs of female-to-male people, or trans men, only began to take shape in the 1980s, in large part due to the work of FTMI. The organization was founded by Lou Sullivan (1951–1991), a gay-identified FTM author and activist based in San Francisco who was inspired by some of the vanguard of FTM activism, such as Rupert Raj, Jude Patton, Steve Dain, and Mario Martino.

FTMI quickly grew from a support group to a more outwardly active advocacy group, and the organization began publishing a regular newsletter in 1987. Sullivan played a considerable role in urging medical and psychiatric professionals to offer services to transgender people who, in addition to their preferred gender roles, identified as gay or lesbian, like himself. This work had a lasting impact on present-day understandings of gender identity and sexual orientation as related but separate aspects of human experience and identity. Sullivan, who passed away at the age of thirty-nine in 1991, was also an important historian of transgenderism, with an emphasis on community-driven memory and history projects. With leadership handed over to Jamison Green, the organization began holding monthly meetings in 1991, and in 1994 added the word *International* to the
name as the organization grew toward a global reach (Stryker 2004). After Green, other presidents include Drago Renteria, Dion Manley, and Zion Free Johnson.

The FTMI president as of 2018, Rabbi Levi Alter, focused his individual efforts and influenced the organization more broadly toward addressing access to health care and hormone replacement therapy for incarcerated trans people, as well as bridging gaps between religious communities and organizations and transgender communities, individuals, and rights. Alter founded the FTMI Trans Health Clinic for Southern California in Los Angeles. Along with the organization’s initiatives at large, he worked to raise awareness about transgender experiences through media appearances. In 2005 the Trans Unity Pride awarded Alter the Icon Award for lifetime service to the FTM community.

FTMI invites individuals to found their own chapters and offers support in establishing the logistics of participation, emphasizing the benefits of team building and networked support at the local and international levels. “Allies, friends, loved ones, and tribe” who are not FTM are invited to join the FTMI AFLOAT online community, which hosts moderated conversations. In an attempt to embed trans history at the local and community level, individual chapters are often named after historic transgender figures, such as the Charlie Parkhurst Chapter in Sacramento, California; the Reed Erickson Chapter in San Buenaventura, California; the Dr. Alan L. Hart Chapter in Albuquerque, New Mexico; the Dr. M. Edwards Walker Chapter in Cincinnati, Ohio; and many more across the United States. The organization also sponsors the FTM+ Coming Out Group, led by board member the Reverend Alexander Yoo.

## LOU SULLIVAN (1951–1991)

Louis Graydon Sullivan was born 16 June 1951, and assigned female at birth. He was the third of six children in a white middle-class family and grew up in a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As an adolescent Sullivan dreamt of being a writer or a social worker for “lost boys.” He also began having gay fantasies and both wanted men and to be one himself.

Sullivan's social consciousness developed while he was a teenager, first through the civil rights movement and later the 1960s counterculture. In his early twenties Sullivan joined the gay liberation movement. He was active in Milwaukee's Gay People's Union (GPU) where he learned how to mentor, network, organize meetings, research, and publish a newsletter. At the time, gay female-to-male transsexuals supposedly did not exist, so Sullivan identified as a female transvestite, or crossdresser.

In 1975 Sullivan moved to San Francisco where he joined the transvestite organization Golden Gate Girls/Guys (GGG/G) and soon became its treasurer and newsletter editor.
In 1980 Sullivan began volunteering with the Janus Information Facility where he answered letters from and about female-to-males (FTMs) and published Information for the Female-to-Male Crossdresser and Transsexual. This booklet was so well received by FTMs and health-care providers specializing in their treatment that Sullivan published a second edition in 1985 and a third in 1990, both with updated and expanded information. In 1990 Sullivan also published From Female to Male: The Life of Jack Bee Garland, the biography of a gay FTM journalist, social worker, and veteran of the Philippine-American War (1899–1902). Sullivan’s research into Garland led him to become a founding member of the GLBT Historical Society, where he published the newsletter and served on the Archives Committee.

On 6 December 1986, Sullivan held the first meeting of what would become FTMInternational. Everyone was welcome regardless of where they fell on the transmasculine spectrum or whom they loved. Through get-togethers, a newsletter, and tireless networking, Sullivan organized individuals around the world into an FTM community.

Tragically, the birth of FTMInternational coincided with Sullivan’s AIDS diagnosis, which he received at the end of 1986. It had taken over a decade for Sullivan to access all the services he needed to physically transition because health-care providers would not acknowledge the existence of gay FTMs. He feared other gay FTMs being similarly denied. Sullivan embraced being the first female-to-male living with AIDS and went from being mute to holding a megaphone. Now Sullivan compelled audiences to broaden their understanding of gender identity to include all sexual orientations.

Sullivan died on 2 March 1991, at the age of thirty-nine. At the end of his life, Sullivan’s peers credited him with fostering the trans movement. That movement would gain great momentum in the years following his death and would burst into the mainstream a generation later. The trans movement as we know it today would not exist without Lou Sullivan.

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The FTM International Legal Resources program offers each new member the “No More Billy Tipton” Durable Power of Attorney for Health Care form that enables members to appoint health-care advocates in a move toward ensuring correct name and pronoun usage, appropriate roommate assignment, and confidentiality of private medical information. FTMI also sponsors the Transgender Law Center and offers online resources regarding applications for asylum, name change and gender marker changes on federal documents, family law, employment, and interactions with police. Many legal resources offered are available in English and Spanish and respond to locally specific contexts.

The FTMI Healthcare Resources program provides all members with prescription discount cards that can be used at local pharmacies throughout the United States, providing a discount for those who purchase testosterone without a prescription. In Los Angeles, FTMI sponsors a weekly community clinic that offers respectful care at sliding-scale prices, accepts a wide range of insurance plans, and does not require referral letters or documentation. In addition, FTMI Healthcare sponsors workshops, seminars, and support groups and acts as a community partner for conferences, especially the Philadelphia Transgender Health Conference. President Alter regularly advises medical schools and medical conferences, and the Reverend Yoo teaches classes at psychology schools and presents workshops for therapists. FTMI member Dr. R. Nick Gorton cowrote and published a free manual, Medical Therapy and Health Maintenance for Transgender Men (2005). Former president Green serves as a committee chair of the World Professional Association for Transgender Health. The organization and its website also offer medical information for FTM children and teens. FTMI's archives from 1985 to 2005, inclusive of conference materials, the quarterly newsletter, social events materials, art, artifacts, correspondence, photographs, posters, and financial records, are held at the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Historical Society in San Francisco.

SEE ALSO Asia Pacific Transgender Network; Southern Comfort Conference; Transgender Organizations in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan; Transvestites/Transsexuals; Travesti and Trans Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Gangs and Street Kids in Africa

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The emergence and practices of homosexual gangs and street-connected cultures, as well as their relationship with new forms of homophobia and/or occult beliefs.

Gangs in Africa are a natural outgrowth from the homosocial age groups or secret societies that were widespread throughout the continent in precolonial times. These had a socially cohesive intent in societies that often lacked formal or central political structures, in particular by bonding a generation of young men in a common purpose, such as defending the community, or by exercising behind-the-scenes power to control socially disruptive factors, such as witchcraft or the excessive display of individual wealth. Under colonialism, apartheid capitalism, and rapid, demographically skewed urbanization, gangs emerged as a familiar form adapted to survival for many African men. These gangs typically originated as groups of homeboys, or young men from the same rural area, clan, or tribe uprooted to the burgeoning cities. They banded together to defend themselves against historic or new rivals for jobs and women. Indeed, with men sometimes outnumbering women by tens or even hundreds to one in some early colonial cities and labor camps, competition among men for women could be intense and violent. An element of “social banditry” also characterized some early gangs as traditional structures of governance collapsed or were coopted by the colonial regimes. To the founder of the most feared gang in early twentieth-century Johannesburg, Mzuzepli Mathebula (locally known as Nongoloza), it was his desire for justice that first drove him to violence (van Onselen 1982, 2008).

The Numbers Gangs

Mathebula’s gang was originally called the Ninevites, after the notorious sinners of the Bible, and were so named because of their fearless contempt not just for the law but for the most basic social norms of African society. Powerfully symbolic of this was their adoption of hierarchical homosexual relations among themselves and homosexual rape as a means of terror against enemies. Their jailers during the apartheid era reputedly exploited this by
turning a blind eye or by directly exposing political prisoners to the sexual terrorism of the gangs. Something of this subculture then survived through to the present in the so-called numbers gangs, the 28s being the most infamous. According to Sasha Gear and Kindiza Ngubeni (2002), Gear (2005 and 2007) and Heather Parker Lewis (2006), the rituals of the 28s include colorful and highly symbolic initiation rites for young men recruited into the gang: “All new recruits are ... raped by ranking officers on entry into the gang.... All men now begin their career as probationers, from sexual service providers and enter the cave to be sodomised by senior gang members” (Lewis 2006, 75).

Since the establishment of the 28s, there have been breakaways from the gang such as the 27 and 26 gangs. There are important cultural and ritual differences between the prison gangs, but they are all characterized by a reliance on strong group rules and discipline. Violation of strict rituals can result in death. As demonstrated in the work of Jonny Steinberg (2004), for example, it was just not anyone in the gang who could rape other members of the gang. A war was started among the 28s in Victor Verster Prison in South Africa because “soldiers” (lowest rank) of the gang were raping “privates” (next rank up), an inversion of the proper hierarchy (Steinberg 2004, 216). The established prison gangs also frown on occult practices because they bring dishonor to the established rules of the gang.

**Sexual and Gender Roles in Prison**

Importantly, the 28s do not consider themselves to be homosexual, despite engaging in such acts. Because of the macho culture inside South African prisons, any man’s public identification as being gay would invite rape by other prisoners. Even an implicit admission through an act of mutuality could be interpreted as evidence of homosexuality. Yet long-term, relatively stable relationships could develop within the gang system. These were closely modeled on the hierarchies of traditional gender roles, the man or husband being the inserter and provider of protection and gifts, and the “woman” or “wife” being the insertee, the protected, and the recipient of gifts. Similar gang structures and gender dynamics have been described in female prisons (Chetty 1995; Schreiner 1992).

There may be cause to doubt how rigidly sexual and gender role discipline was maintained in the prison system. Based on Zackie Achmat’s 1993 account of his erotic night as a young gay anti-apartheid activist in prison, for example, even hardened gangsters may have been open to experimentation in their cells. It is also important to note that the old strict delineations of the established gangs have started to crumble, and the cultural practices and rituals have lost much of their dominance in the age of globalization and the new technological revolution (Pinnock 2016; Pinnock and Douglas-Hamilton 1997). The prison gangs have, in fact, lost much of their power and the space they controlled inside prison as a result of more resources being made available by the authorities and by policies to protect the dignity and human rights of prisoners. Since the late 1990s, prison gangs have
thus been largely eclipsed by organized, armed street gangs.

Street Gangs and Violence against LGBTI Individuals

Street gangs have shifted the nature of criminality. For example, since the late 1990s there have been numerous attacks on albinos in different African countries, mainly for body parts that are used as “medicine” (Burke, Kaijage, and John-Langba 2014). The body parts are made into a paste by traditional healers and mixed with herbs and plant roots, which is then smeared on the body to heal people or provide a protective shield against ill fortune. This type of attack is often a transnational crime that can be organized only by people who have usurped the power and honor code that prison gangs formerly exercised.

Attacks on LGBTI individuals have also been increasing in South African townships. Incidences of reported corrective rapes of lesbians (assaults intended to “cure” women of their lesbianism) have been on the rise, with one support group in Cape Town encountering an average of ten new cases each week in 2009 (Strudwick 2014). The violence of such assaults is also increasing; according to a 2015 article by René Koraan and Allison Geduld, there had been thirty-one murders linked to such cases in the previous fifteen years. The common feature of media reports of attacks on lesbians in the townships of the country is that the victims were gang-raped. The men in such cases commonly justified themselves with reference to the political homophobia espoused by leaders who construct homosexuality as a threat to the nation coming from the West. In Tanzania, for example, the police and militia groups such as the Sunga Sunga vigilante group have been at the forefront of attacks against LGBTI community members, according to a 2013 Human Rights Watch report written by Neela Ghoshal. That report tells of the levels of violence meted out to homosexual men and women who use drugs, who are systematically refused treatment when they are gang-raped and are then humiliated, tortured, and also gang-raped by the police. The covert use of gangs or youth militia by the state to carry out political violence has also been attested to in Nigeria, Kenya, and Zimbabwe (Baker 2002; Ruteere 2008; Chitsike 2013), a deeply worrisome development when the fight against homosexuality becomes an issue of patriotism.

Street-connected children are a further phenomenon associated both with the collapse of the traditional extended family under neoliberal economic conditions and with same-sex practices. For many reduced to living on the street, selling sex is a means of survival that does not allow the sellers to refuse buyers, whether the latter are men seeking boys for sex or men wishing not to wear a condom. Same-sex relations have also been observed to develop among boys living on the streets in Tanzanian cities. The kunyenga practice there refers to a street sexual encounter between boys that involves nonmutual anal penetration (Lockhart 2002). As in the old prison etiquette, homosexuality and mutuality are strictly denied, and as the boys mature, they first become “men” over other boys and then men in heterosexual relationships. The implications for the struggle against HIV, and for the
attainment of human rights for sexual minorities, are serious and thus far underresearched.

SEE ALSO Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa; Rape, Corrective, in Africa; Situational Homosexuality; Witchcraft/Occult in Africa

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Launched in 2011, the Gay European Tourism Association (GETA) had almost 5,000 members by the end of 2017. Membership is open to any travel-related business operating in Europe, or that promotes tourism to Europe, and that welcomes gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered customers. The use of *gay* in GETA’s name is meant to include all nonheteronormative sexualities. GETA aims to promote LGBT tourism to, and within, Europe and is predominantly an online, business-to-business organization, providing resources and advice for businesses wanting to engage with what it considers to be the multibillion-euro LGBT travel market. To that end, GETA provides marketing advice, access to marketing research, an archive of articles that have been published on LGBT tourism in the LGBT press, and more specifically tailored information for individual businesses.

A significant focus of the association is its Innovation Programme, which aims to encourage, support, and facilitate innovation in LGBT tourism in Europe. GETA has partnered with a range of other organizations, such as the European Travel Commission, to provide guidance for travel professionals wishing to serve the LGBT market and, in partnership with the global public relations firm Grayling, launched a multinational communications service for its members in 2014. GETA also operates another website, Gay Welcome, which provides a range of information for prospective LGBT travelers about destinations, accommodation, cruises, and tours within Europe. The website includes a very comprehensive gay media directory, which includes an archive of articles, features, and shorter stories about aspects of gay travel that have previously been published in LGBT magazines such as the *Advocate*, *Gay UK*, and *LOTL*.

The incentive to establish the organization came from its executive director, Carlos Kytka, who, while acknowledging the role that the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association (IGLTA) played at a global level, felt there was a need for an LGBT travel business organization that focused exclusively on Europe, as he explained in personal communication with Kevin Markwell in 2017. Kytka and three other business partners established the organization, with the three partners taking on voluntary directorships for development, operations, and communication. In addition, GETA comprises a number of
“patrons,” or people with experience in aspects of LGBT tourism who provide an additional source of knowledge and expertise from which members draw.

GETA is a membership-based organization in which the first level of membership is free, while the upgraded membership is 100 euros per year. Upgraded membership provides access to a wider range of resources such as marketing tools and expertise and findings from market research undertaken by GETA. For example, an analysis undertaken by GETA in 2012 estimated that the LGBT travel market in Europe was worth between $61 billion and $75 billion.

LGBT rights organizations and scholars have often been skeptical about the political and social value of focusing so much on the economic significance of the LGBT market. There has been considerable criticism of the commercialization of LGBT cultures, in which LGBT people are viewed simply as consumers rather than as subjects or citizens (Gluckman and Reed 1997), and the phenomenon of “pinkwashing,” in which businesses appear to be LGBT friendly simply to gain market share (Guaracino 2007). However, studies such as the aforementioned one published by GETA in 2012 that demonstrate the economic value of LGBT tourism can be used to persuade national governments to take LGBT tourism seriously and provide resources to promote destinations as “LGBT friendly.” Such a reputation, however, does not necessarily translate into a safer, more inclusive town or city for LGBT residents.

While GETA sees itself as not taking a political stance, as noted by Kytka in his 2017 communication with Markwell, it does provide travel advice for gay tourists, emphasizing on its website that an array of legislation regarding homosexuality exists across Europe as does an equally diverse array of attitudes toward homosexuality (GETA 2017). Such information, framed around providing information for prospective tourists, nevertheless maps out the politics of LGBT citizenship in Europe. The association has also issued news releases calling for the International Olympic Committee to affirm its support for LGBTI rights at the Sochi Winter Olympics and for the European Union to suspend talks on visa-free travel for Russian officials as a response to the antigay legislation introduced in Russia in 2013 (GETA 2013).

The extent to which an organization such as GETA, with its mission entwined so much with the “pink dollar,” can contribute to the promotion of LGBT rights and citizenship will continue to be debated. Indeed, such debates about tourism’s role in creating positive social, environmental, and economic outcomes permeate tourism scholarship. GETA, however, is an example of a regional, private-sector tourism organization (Gee and Fayos-Solá 1997) that aims to serve the specific interests of its membership. Industry-based organizations such as the IGLTA (established in 1983) and GETA play significant roles in the structuring and organization of the LGBT travel industry, helping to raise the profile of LGBT tourism, enhancing professional and industry credibility, and increasing
opportunities for communication and professional development among their members (Waitt and Markwell 2006).

SEE ALSO Resorts; Sex Tourism in Asia; Sex Tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean; Sex Work/Sex Tourism/Sex Trafficking in Africa; Travel/Travelogues on the Middle East

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The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations

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The critique by Columbia University professor Joseph A. Massad of LGBTQI rights organizations in the Middle East as agents of Western organizations in support of a greater colonialist strategy.

In the fields of gender and sexuality studies, the question of how and if homosexuality is enacted and understood as an identity is still fiercely discussed. The roots of this discussion are in the debate about essentialism, which argues that certain features of identity are innate, or essential to the person, versus social constructionism, which argues that all facets of human identity are products of the society in which people live. The topic of essentialism versus social constructionism vis-à-vis homosexuality is particularly heavily discussed both in the Arab world and regarding it, because of repressive laws against homosexual activities in most of the Middle East, the history of portrayals of same-sex desire in the Arab world in particular, and Orientalist fascination with the topic.

In the premodern Arab world, homosexuality was frequently seen as something that one did, not something that one was, as such scholars as Khaled El-Rouayheb, Dror Ze’evi, and Joseph A. Massad have claimed. While homosexuality was considered a sinful act in Islam, it was considered an act that anyone was capable of. Modern Western concepts of homophobia and gay rights would thus not translate well into the premodern context. However, as the Arab world came into closer and more frequent contact with the West in the context of colonialism, Western concepts of both homosexuality as an identity and of this identity being a “deviant” identity began to take hold in the Arab world. With this systemic oppression of homosexuality that accepted homosexuality as a category of identity a priori, those who were identified as homosexual in this hermeneutic began to agitate against this discrimination that they faced. Starting in the twenty-first century, LGBTQI activists in the Arab world, particularly in Lebanon, began to organize in order to advocate for their civil rights in the organizations Helem (2004 to the present; evolved out of forerunners Club Free and Huriyyat Khassa), Meem (2007 to approximately 2014; now existing solely as a support group), alQaws (2001 to the present), and Aswat (2002 to the present).

Massad, Foucault, Incitement to Discourse, and the “Gay
Because homophobic discourses and structures that activists in the Arab world were agitating against were Western in origin, as was the identity of “homosexual” itself, Columbia University professor Joseph A. Massad critiqued this activism in his book Desiring Arabs (2007). In it, he claimed that these activists were engaged in what the French philosopher Michel Foucault termed in his book The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction, as “incitement to discourse” (Foucault 1978, 17)—that is, generating discourse about same-sex desire in the Arab world in order to control how it is understood in the region. In terms of the history of this, Massad (2007) claimed that this “incitement to discourse” had both intentionally and unconsciously taken place in the Arab world since the 1800s, beginning with the censorship of representations of same-sex desire in the Arab world in the poetry of Abū Nuwās (c. 756–c. 814 CE), a famous classical Arabic poet who wrote extensively on homoerotic themes, and continuing to the present day.

Within this context, Massad accuses those who work in LGBTQI activism in the Arab world of belonging to something he calls the “Gay International”—that is, a collection of Western and Western-funded gay rights organizations that work in the Arab world and have sought through this incitement to discourse to define sexuality in the Arab world solely in Western terms, thus allowing it to better be controlled. Massad also argues that this incitement to discourse on the part of the “Gay International” serves to maintain the hegemony of the West over the Arab world, as a part of the discourses of colonialism and Orientalism. It serves as an attempt to produce knowledge that allows the West to subjugate the Arab world and that both “others” the Arab world to its own sexuality and “others” the Arab world to the West. This othering of same-sex desire in the Arab world has been for the purpose of creating shame and anxiety in the Arab world about its sexuality in order for the Arab world to be more easily exploited by the West. The forms of this imposition have had major political implications, according to Massad. The hegemonic aspirations of the West through this incitement to discourse, he claims, can be seen in the interrogation methods used by the United States on detainees in Iraq (including, but not limited to, the sexual torture used in the Abu Ghraib prison) and in forms of sexual cruelty and torture used by Israeli soldiers on Palestinians.

The “Gay International” and Homonationalism

In her book Terrorist Assemblages, Jasbir K. Puar makes a similar observation to Massad regarding Abu Ghraib, claiming that the sexual abuse of the Iraqi detainees in that prison was based on the Orientalist construction of Arabs simultaneously as “monster-terrorist-fags” and as sexually repressed (2007, 46). Through the deployment of homonationalist discourse, Puar and Massad argue, Western gay rights discourses serve a hegemonic purpose in the Arab world. Their foci, however, are completely different. Puar focuses on
how homonationalist discourse has shaped the concept of LGBTQI rights in the West and has positioned the West as sexually “more modern” than the Global South. Massad, however, looks at how this discourse has shaped both the political identities of Arab LGBTQI activists and the sexual identities of Arabs that experience same-sex desire. He claims that what happened in the Arab world as a result of this incitement to discourse was the creation of “gay people” and, through that, the creation of “straight people” who could then oppress “gay people” (Massad 2007, 188–189). Furthermore, he claims that the imposition of this new paradigm was epistemically violent, resulting in the politicization of “gay people,” who were unprepared and unwilling to engage in the assertion of their identity—an identity that they did not claim, and that Massad claims was thrust on them in an epistemically violent manner by this discourse. This is not to be understood as an “outing” of LGBTQI people in the Middle East, according to Massad, but instead as a situation in which, “by inciting discourse about homosexuals where none existed before, the Gay International is in fact heterosexualizing a world that is being forced to be fixed by a Western binary” (Massad 2007, 188). As a result of this, Massad argues that phenomena such as the Stonewall riots that took place in the New York City in 1969 have not been seen in the Arab world. Instead, activists acting on behalf of the “Gay International” are disingenuously arguing for gay rights in order to reify the hetero/homo binary.

The Gay International and Erasure of Women

In her 2009 article “Medieval Arab Lesbians and Lesbian-Like Women,” Sahar Amer, like Massad, observes that categories of sexuality in the Arab world do not necessarily match perfectly with sexual categories in the West. Amer mentions the wide range of words that were used to describe various configurations of same-sex desire and also observes that “no medieval Arabic word existed for the sort of bisexuality that was considered as the unmarked, most common form of sexual practice, for heterosexuality, or even for sexuality” (2009, 224). Jins, the modern Arabic word for sex, acquired that meaning only as a result of “Arabic translations of [Sigmund] Freud in the 1950s and of Michel Foucault’s History of Sexuality in the 1990s.” She also observes that it is this same period in which Arabic terms for “homosexuality” and “heterosexuality” were also coined (224).

However, Amer, unlike Massad, observes, in addition, that the Westernization of norms of same-sex desire in the Arab world has also resulted in the erasure of both gender as a category of analysis and of women as a subject. Writing about “lesbian-like” women (borrowing the term from the historian Judith M. Bennett) and their representations, Amer (2009) describes her encounters with censorship of the works that she was studying and the difficulties that this censorship posed. She shows how this censorship has served to erase women and gender from the discussion of the internationalization of gayness in the Arab world by concluding with an unusual instance of censorship through capitalism, in which can be seen the triple articulations of patriarchy, homophobia, and emphasis on men
in Orientalist homoerotic discourse:

The only English translation of al-Tifāshī's Nuzhat al-albāb is called The Delight of Hearts and was translated by Edward A. Lacey from a French translation by René Khawam rather than from the Arabic original. The translation has ended up ghettoizing this important Arabic text. Even though it is almost certain that this medieval Arabic work was addressed to a much wider audience, its contemporary English translation is published by an exclusively all gay [male] press called the Gay Sunshine Press and thus has a limited circulation and is likely to be known primarily to a gay audience. Moreover, Lacey has taken the liberty to excise from his work the chapter on lesbianism as well as other sections dealing with heterosexuality because of budgetary concerns and press policy, which dictates that Gay Sunshine Press address exclusively male gay literature. The manipulations that Nuzhat alalbāb has thus undergone have transformed this important text almost beyond recognition. Not only has this English translation utterly erased those lesbian voices that were audible in the medieval Arabic tradition, but it has also categorized sexuality in ways that were certainly not present in the medieval text. Translating only the sections on gay men's sexuality has imposed a modern and Western perspective onto the medieval Arabic work that places sexual desires and behaviors much more on a continuum.

(235)

This incident provides an excellent example of the concerns expressed by Massad about the role of the "Gay International" in the manipulation of previous constructions of same-sex desire in the Arab world. By analyzing Nuzhat al-albāb from an exclusively Western, gay male perspective, conflating both androcentrism and cultural relativism, the experiences of women and understandings of heterosexual sexuality in the Arab world discussed in that work are erased, and one particular frame of experience is privileged instead. One can also see the role of global patriarchy in the erasure of gender from the entire discussion altogether, as female same-sex desire in the premodern Arab world is rarely spoken of in academic literature that problematizes same-sex desire in the modern Arab world. This silence on the part of the academy is puzzling indeed, as Amer (along with the scholar Samar Habib) convincingly documents “the survival of a noteworthy body of primary texts dealing precisely with this topic” (2009, 215).

LGBTQI Activism in the Arab World and “The Gay
Massad has stated in writings and interviews that groups such as Helem and alQaws are modern examples of incitement to discourse about homosexuality in the Arab world (Massad 2015), and that they, by creating “gay people,” serve to oppress the same groups that they are attempting to protect by simultaneously creating “straight people” (Massad 2007, 188–189). He further argues that these activist groups are colluding with Western LGBTQI rights organizations for the express purpose of reifying same-sex desire as a “gay” identity, and that thus it can be argued that groups such as Helem and alQaws work in an epistemically violent manner to impose both Western hegemony and Western sexual norms on the Arab world.

In providing evidence to support his argument, Massad (2009b) claims that Helem is a small unrepresentative minority in the Arab world that argues for LGBTQI rights in the region, likening its members to “racist white women who through US imperialism want to defend the women of Afghanistan or who want to define the nature of the difficulties faced by women in different non-US and non-European societies in accordance with the priorities of their segment of the white women’s movement.” He further attacks the Palestinian LGBTQI activist group alQaws as being an “Israeli-based” organization, claiming that it cannot speak authentically on behalf of normative Arabs with same-sex desires (Massad 2015), and argues that Helem receives “funds from the same American military industrial complex that funds the Ford Foundation” and that its connection to other organizations that fund it, such as the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice and the Heartland Alliance, show that Helem is fully complicit with the aims of the “Gay International.” In making this argument, Massad (2009a) cites the website of the Heartland Alliance, quoting its explicit mission as follows:

*Develop a grassroots global network focused on protection of LGBT populations in danger; Build local capacity in regions where LGBT rights are hampered by political, social, and religious opposition; Establish several anchor institutions to build regional networks and serve as regional resource centers; Provide a forum for learning and capacity development to build LGBT civil society from the ground up.*

Through his writing in *Desiring Arabs*, Massad clearly believes that this “capacity building” is a form of epistemic violence perpetrated by the Heartland Alliance and other organizations that focus on LGBTQI rights in developing countries. It is important, however, to look at the responses of some of these organizations to this particular criticism of international LGBTQI rights activism, whether they directly name Massad or not.
LGBTQI Responses to Massad’s Critique

Perhaps the most notable and direct response to Massad’s critique of LGBTQI rights organizations that work in the Arab world came from former Helem executive director Ghassan Makarem, in his response to Massad’s interview (2009b) with Ernesto Pagano in *Reset DOC* magazine titled “The West and the Orientalism of Sexuality.” In this response, titled “We Are Not Agents of the West,” Makarem (2009) argues that “it is odd that Massad, a Palestinian in the Diaspora, refuses to recognize the agency of persons with non-conforming sexual orientations in ‘the East’ and their ‘right’ to seek social community and choose identities.” He further claims that factors such as the urbanization of the Middle East as a result of capitalist modes of production have led to the formation of new identities in the Arab world, and that Massad’s argument is something that he has heard before from “Salafists and chauvinists,” further arguing that

> the contention that homosexuals are agents of the West, that they are “imposing Western values,” and that they belong to the upper classes was also used by [the Iranian leader Ayatollah Ruhollah] Khomeini before rounding up homosexuals and executing them. It is the same justification given to call for the arrest of HIV positive persons in Egypt and elsewhere and to pass a viciously homophobic law in Uganda.

While Massad has not been consistently named explicitly in responses to this particular critique by LGBTQI rights organizations that deal with the developing world, his criticism, it can be argued, has resulted in it becoming necessary for each of these organizations to address it on one level or another. One example of this can be seen on the website of the international LGBTQI rights organization OutRight Action International. The group articulates that its goals are not necessarily to create a new “gay international identity” but instead to work within the identity framework of the countries in which the group operates, saying that, instead of establishing and supporting “a grassroots global network”

> four critical goals shape our work: We advocate for the elimination of discriminatory laws, policies and practices, such as sodomy laws which empower police and other authorities to abuse, harass, extort, imprison and execute us. We support the enactment and implementation of anti-discrimination laws, policies and practices to help build a world that is more equitable and fair. We strive to reduce family, community and state-sanctioned violence, publicly condemning all forms of violence against individuals because
of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. And we
actively promote economic, social and cultural rights, such as those related to
employment, housing, education and health.

(OUTRIGHT ACTION 2018; EMPHASIS IN THE ORIGINAL)

Later on the same web page, OutRight Action makes its opposition to the "Gay
International," as Massad describes it, even more explicit, saying that

we bring a fluid understanding of identity to our work. We support people who
experience violations to their rights on the basis of their actual or perceived
sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression. This means that we
work with those self-identifying as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or
intersex (LGBTI) and with those whose identities do not fit the LGBTI paradigm,
such as those who call themselves tongzhi or hijra.

(EMPHASIS IN THE ORIGINAL)

While one can easily argue that this is merely paying lip service to the issues that have been
raised by Massad, or that this is simply putting new words to the same strategy that
Heartland Alliance uses, it is important to observe that Massad’s problematization of global
gay identity has shifted the discourse on LGBTQI rights in the Arab world to the point
where these issues and questions must be explicitly answered and addressed by
nongovernmental organizations that deal with LGBTQI rights in the region.

As a result of colonialism, the Arab world has gone through a long period of examinations
of the question of modernity that stretches all the way back to the 1800s. This crisis of
modernity and the civilizational anxiety (to use Massad’s term) that it has produced have
also extended to sexuality, and particularly homosexuality, in the Arab world. Differing
epistemologies of same-sex desire in the Arab world from those of the West have resulted
in Orientalizing discourses constructing Arabs as “polymorphously perverse” and
backward in their sexual desires. These differing epistemologies have also led to a silencing
of homoerotic literature and discourse from the premodern Arab world, as well as to a
higher degree of oppression than existed previously for people who acted on their desires
for members of the same sex.

With this increase in oppression of people who acted on their desires for those of the same
sex came organization on the part of the oppressed in order to advocate for their rights. As
a result of globalization and colonialism, these oppressed people began to assemble under Western labels for same-sex desire, such as “gay” or “lesbian,” and to work with organizations abroad that used those same labels and that were sympathetic to their goals. This relationship between local activists in the Arab world and global organizations based in the West is how these global organizations came to become what Massad termed the “Gay International.”

This concept of the “Gay International” (whether or not organizations in the West actually operate in this manner) has resulted in global LGBTQI rights organizations feeling it necessary to address the claim that they are imposing their Western sexual framework on the developing world in some manner in their research and activism, while also possibly leading to an erasure of the relevance of gender in analyses of sexual identity and activism in the Middle East and North Africa region. Additionally, it has opened the question of sexual identity vis-à-vis colonialism and has played a crucial role in reexamining the history of sexual frameworks in the West, the Arab world, and elsewhere.

SEE ALSO alQaws; Aswat; Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; Foucault, Influence of; Helem; Nuzhat al-Albāb Fīmā Lā Yujad Fī Kitāb (Ahmad ibn Yusuf al-Tifāshi); Meem; Pinkwashing

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The Gay Latino Alliance (GALA), a San Francisco–based gay Latino organization, was the first gay Latino association to attain nationwide visibility in the United States. GALA offered a safe forum for its Latino gay members, who experienced racism in San Francisco's white gay communities and homophobia in Latino communities. Its leaders organized social events and participated in national and international political movements during its period of activity between 1975 and 1983.

Founding the Gay Latino Alliance

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many gay Latinos and lesbian Latinas migrated to the San Francisco Bay Area to live their sexuality freely, as many of their white counterparts did. Gay Latino newcomers could meet other Latinos in the Mission District, San Francisco's Latino neighborhood, but had to travel outside of the Mission in order to meet their white gay counterparts, who mainly resided in the Castro, San Francisco's predominantly white gay neighborhood. In a heated social and political context, these new migrants had to navigate urban discourses on race, place, immigration, gender, and sexuality. Gay Latinos encountered homophobia in their Latino home neighborhoods and racism in the mainly white gay neighborhood of the Castro. Gay Latinos and lesbian Latinas felt therefore marginalized, isolated, and discriminated against.

Rodrigo Reyes, a Latino gay male, had moved from Texas to San Francisco in 1971. Reyes knew only a few Latino gay males in the Bay Area. When, in 1975, a lover invited him to spend a few days in Los Angeles, Reyes discovered an all-Latino gay nightlife for the first time. He remembered the experience vividly in an interview with GALA historian Horacio N. Roque Ramírez:

This bar [was] full of nothing but Chicanos and Mexicans. White people [were] a very, very small minority. So for the first time in my life I [found] myself as a gay man and as a Chicano at the same place, at the same time, and all of a sudden...
all those people that I grew up with, all my ideal types, all the people that I used to have crushes with, were there, present, in this place. And for once I did not feel like a minority of any kind, not a minority as a gay man, not a minority as a Chicano. This was a place where I could be the majority. It felt wonderful. It felt incredibly wonderful.

(ROQUE RAMÍREZ 2003, 234)

Upon returning to San Francisco, Reyes decided to organize the Latino gay male population of the area. He published a classified ad in a gay newspaper, the Bay Area Reporter, that read: “Chicano and Gay? An organization is now forming in San Francisco to explore and attempt to fill the social, cultural and political needs of the Gay Chicano. Being a Gay Chicano is a unique experience only other Chicano Gays can truly understand” (quoted in Roque Ramírez 2003, 231). Reyes received twenty responses.

Manuel Hernández Valadéz, who had by then started to organize a group of gay Latino men in San Jose, was one of the individuals who responded to Reyes's ad. Hernández Valadéz had lived in the Bay Area since the late 1960s and regularly attended San Jose's and San Francisco's gay bars. His best friend, Jesús Barragán, had moved to California from Arizona in 1955 and was also a regular in the Castro's gay bars, where they had met. Their experiences were similar: they both encountered racism and discrimination in these predominantly white spaces, wanted to meet more gay Latino males, and aspired to organize politically.

In 1975 Barragán and Hernández Valadéz hosted a dinner party in Barragán’s San Jose home. Reyes, along with fifteen Latino gay men, were in attendance. While the goal of the dinner party was to define strategies to include a Latino float in the upcoming San Francisco gay parade, the party was, de facto, GALA’s founding event. As the night progressed, and more people were in attendance, the discussion shifted from the necessity of having a float in the gay parade to San Francisco’s racial and sexual politics. The Latino men in attendance decided to form an organization and to recruit more members.

In order to recruit members, Reyes, Hernández Valadéz, and Barragán posted flyers in the bars of the Castro, Polk Street, the Tenderloin, and the Mission, where Latino gay men socialized. These flyers informed gay Latinos of an upcoming meeting at the Society for Individual Rights center for a still nameless Latino gay organization. At this meeting, sixty individuals, mainly men, voted to form an official organization. Hernández Valadéz first suggested naming the organization Gay Latinos Unidos, adding the slogan “Like glue we stick together.” Reyes, however, coined the name of the organization, GALA, which he insisted on pronouncing “gay-la.”
A few lesbian Latinas attended GALA's first meeting. Diane Felix, considered one of the early female founders, was present. Originally from Stockton, California, Felix had left her hometown for the Bay Area in 1975. A San Jose resident, Felix was politically involved in the Latino community, as were many of her male peers. She had participated in protests against the Vietnam War, in the Chicano Moratorium movement, in protests against the Los Angeles Police Department's murder of the Mexican American journalist Ruben Salazar, and in solidarity movements with Chile and Cuba. Like many of GALA's founding male members, she had not been previously involved in any gay organizations.

**Negotiating Gay and Latino Identities**

While most of GALA's members were socially and politically active in Latino communities, many of them had never been involved in gay politics. The organization's main goal, therefore, was to help its members develop strategies to express gay identities in Latino communities. Although San Francisco’s Latino and gay communities occupied different spaces in the city, negotiating between these two communities was not part of GALA’s main political agenda. GALA’s members experienced racism in gay communities but also experienced homophobia in Latino communities, and they sought to gain acceptance in Latino communities first. In a 1981 article published in *Nuestro* magazine and then reprinted in the gay newspaper *Coming Up!*, in which Reyes narrated the history of the organization, he also discussed the difficulty of being gay in Latino families:

> Homosexual. The word alone elicits responses that range from nervous giggles to physical violence. For Latina lesbians and Latino gays, growing up and maintaining an existence in Latino communities has been a painful process, often endured in silence and isolation. “The love that dares not speak its name,” as the Victorians called it, dares even less to speak it en español. But even in la comunidad, times have changed. A group of gay and lesbian San Franciscans, deciding to organize for their right to a place in the community, formed GALA, The Gay Latino(a) Alliance in November of 1975.

*(REYES 1981, 3)*

Rooted in the Mission District, where most of its members socialized, GALA was defined as a Latino organization, grounded in San Francisco’s Mission District and designed to address the specific needs of gay Latinos in their home neighborhood.

In order to help its members, GALA became both a social and political organization. GALA’s leaders organized not only fund-raisers and marches but also dances and drag balls. GALA
participated mainly in mainstream Latino events, such as Cinco de Mayo festivities and Carnival festivals, but also in gay-dominated happenings, such as the Gay Freedom Day parades. Composed of several committees, the organization offered its members a wide variety of groups and boards: a social committee, a bylaws committee, a political committee, and a coordinating committee. Although only the most active members attended the political biweekly meetings, hundreds of gay Latinos and lesbian Latinas attended GALA’s social parties.

GALA managed to integrate and rally other political (predominantly heterosexual) Latino organizations by underlining the similarities between gay and Latino political struggles. By emphasizing issues around immigration, labor, violence, discrimination, and racism, which both gay Latinos and heterosexual Latinos experienced, GALA associated with many Latino organizations in the Mission. For example, El Comité Salvadoreño (the Salvadorian Committee) marched with GALA at a Gay Freedom Day parade, because GALA had supported them in a march they had organized. By sharing their means of resistance in workshops and meetings with the wider Latino community, GALA became a staple in San Francisco’s Latino political landscape. As a result of being involved in many nongay political activities, GALA was also supported by many Latino organizations in San Francisco.

At the same time, however, conflicts between GALA’s community and the mainstream white gay community were intense. Racial tensions reached a climax during the 1977 San Francisco Board of Supervisors election. For District 6, which encompassed the Mission, white gay leaders supported white lesbian Carol Ruth Silver. The San Francisco Sentinel, a gay-owned newspaper, argued that Silver best represented the interests of the Latino district. The members of GALA, however, forcefully rejected the white gay leaders’ choice and endorsed a straight Latino candidate, Gary Borvice.

As a result, the organization found little acceptance in San Francisco’s gay communities. In 1981, for example, a heated debate in Coming Up! forced GALA to denounce racism in white gay communities, in writing. Shortly after its sixth anniversary, GALA had organized a party called “Night in Havana,” based on a Cuban theme, which was criticized by white gay leaders. Tim Speck, a gay white man and Mission resident, had written a letter to Coming Up! to express his discontent. In his letter, Speck claimed that he enjoyed living in the Mission because “one of the greatest joys in my life is to walk through my neighborhood and be in the middle of such stunningly beautiful latino people, and hear their marvelous language.” Speck noted, however, that “the only problem is that I have to be back in my room before dark, when the teenagers come out with lead pipes, knives, and guns” (quoted in Roque Ramírez 2003, 248). GALA responded to the letter, noting that “[Speck’s] generalization of our youth as violent marauders is an affront to all latinos,” calling him “racist” (249). GALA’s letter also condemned Speck’s objectification of Latinos.
As a Latino group, GALA managed to integrate many of San Francisco’s Latino political organizations, mainly because of its anchorage in the Mission neighborhood. It also, however, forcefully denounced racism in gay communities, which further separated it from the Castro’s mainstream gay political agenda.

**GALA's Demise**

In the early 1980s GALA further disconnected from white gay communities and experienced growing tension between its male and female members. For many, the 1979 opening of the gay Latino bar Esta Noche in the Mission symbolized the beginning of the organization’s decline. While the opening of Esta Noche was a victory for many Latino gay men who previously did not have a Latino-owned bar in which to socialize, GALA’s leaders also started to organize meetings, dances, and fund-raisers at the bar, a space designed for gay men’s entertainment. This spatial shift forced many women to leave the organization and many men to reassess their involvement in the organization.

GALA had not originally been created to recruit women. The first meetings were male-centered. The subsequent dances and fund-raisers focused mainly on male entertainment. Some lesbian Latinas, such as Diane Felix, were involved in the organization, but women remained a minority. GALA’s male members, unaware of their own misogyny, did not embrace the specificities of lesbians’ political agendas. Barragán, for example, remembered his male peers’ lack of concern for GALA’s lesbian membership: “GALA had thrown all these dances, basically for men. And, yes, women went, but I remember the first GALA dance … some idiot shows gay porno on the walls during the dance and of course some of the women complained” (quoted in Roque Ramírez 2003, 252). Felix remembered experiencing tension since the first meetings:

> Most of the men were very welcoming, very happy. It wasn't until like later on, like the third, fourth meeting that some people had approached me and told me, “You know, I’m really sorry you came back, because I wanted to be just around Latino men, I didn’t want to be dealing with women.” I said well, too bad [laughter]. Sorry you feel that way. Once you get to know me you'll love me [laughter]. And we fought all through the eight years. I wouldn’t leave and they wouldn't leave.

(252)

Early on, Felix had insisted on adding the word *co-sexual* to GALA’s official description. It must be noted, however, that GALA did not completely ignore women’s issues; a women’s
The caucus was formed in 1976, and the name of the organization was changed from Gay Latino Alliance to Gay Latina/Latino Alliance in either 1976 or 1977.

GALA was not only a social organization that organized balls, dances, and drag shows but also a political organization that supported Latino causes in San Francisco, the nation, and around the world. Challenging heteronormativity in Latino communities and racism in gay communities, GALA remained rooted in the Latino neighborhood of the Mission. Its main founders—Barragán, Reyes, and Hernández Valadéz—created what Roque Ramírez called a "hybrid culture, in which members reformulated the meanings of both 'lesbian/gay' and 'Latina/Latino'" (2003, 258). By aggressively challenging the discourses at the intersection of race, place, gender, and sexuality, GALA was, between 1975 and 1983, a safe space for gay Latinos and lesbian Latinas to develop strategies for acceptance and resistance in both the wider gay communities and Latino communities of the San Francisco Bay Area. Like their African American counterparts, who had created their own associations away from mainstream white gay organizations, LGBT Latinos were more comfortable addressing the needs of their own community with their own political groups. The American LGBT political landscape, in the early 1980s, had become fragmented, by race, class, and gender.

SEE ALSO Diasporas, Queer; Urban Queerness

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The Gay Liberation Front refers to an international network of organizations founded in New York City in 1969 following the Stonewall riots, the prominent uprising in response to police raids on a popular gay bar in Greenwich Village. Following the riots, activist Michael Brown reached out to Dick Leitsch, president of the Mattachine Society (a homophile organization working to educate the public about homosexuality with the intent of reducing discrimination in civic society and legal policies), who had recently published “The Hairpin Drop Heard around the World,” one of the best-known accounts of the event, which focused specifically on events following the first night of riots and was influential in shaping dominant narratives of the events. Together, they formed the Mattachine Action Committee, which soon branched off into the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). The formation of the GLF marked a turn in gay rights organizing from promoting inclusion to making more militant, radical demands, represented in part by the explicit reclamation of the word *gay*, which had previously been played down by existing movements.

**The GLF Manifesto**

The GLF proposed broad, sweeping social and political revolution based on the premise that all of society was oppressed by heterosexual gender norms and that a radical rethinking of self and interpersonal relations through sexual liberation could achieve structural change. While perhaps an idealistic mind-set in retrospect, this shift denoted a significant reframing of sexual politics at the time: *gay* came to mean freedom, liberation from embedded systems of oppression, rather than naming a particular identity or even a set of sexual practices. As the GLF manifesto asserts,

Gay shows the way. In some ways we are already outside the family and we have already, in part at least, rejected the “masculine” or “feminine” role society has designed for us.... Gay men don’t need to oppress women in order to fulfill their own psychosexual needs, and gay women don’t have to relate sexually to
the male oppressor, so that at this moment in time, the freest and most equal relationships are most likely to be between homosexuals.

(MANIFESTO GROUP OF GLF 1971)

The Gay Liberation Front manifesto identifies a number of means by which society is oppressed: family, school, church, the media, words, employment, the law, physical violence, psychiatry, and self-oppression. In each case, the manifesto connects individual suffering and oppression to larger structural logics of power, primarily heteropatriarchy. These connections tease out how each institution perpetuates stereotypical binaries that position male roles as oppressors and female roles as oppressed. In a section titled “WHY We’re Oppressed,” the manifesto spells out the justification for a revolutionary rather than reforming stance, pointing to the shortsighted nature of legal and social reform, which emphasizes tolerance in order to preserve broader structures of power rather than altering deeply seated attitudes, which the manifesto locates in the institution of the patriarchal family. The patriarchal family structure naturalizes oppressive divisions between the sexes, and then social structures, including industrialized labor, work to reflect and engender these norms as truths.

Throughout the document, the organization asserts its belief that because gay people defy normalized gender roles, the sexual liberation that would be more accepting of gay people could potentially offer alternatives to the present models of masculinity and patriarchal oppression for all people. In this way, the document incisively tracks the reproduction of patriarchal supremacy from individual sexual preferences and gender roles through social units like the family all the way to capitalist systems of production. While striving for a revolutionary, structural political platform, the manifesto does not necessarily interrogate the potential for gay men to reproduce toxic masculinity or patriarchy, or the differential ways gender intersects with race, class, ability, and citizenship. However, in addition to considering the way that oppression becomes internalized, the GLF identifies how gay people can replicate patriarchal oppression within their own communities, specifically through an obsession with youth culture, through binary butch/femme roles, and through compulsory monogamy.
Gay Liberation Front Banner at New York City's Gay Pride Day Parade, 1970. Founded in New York City in 1969, the Gay Liberation Front marked a turn in gay rights organizing to more militant, radical demands and an unapologetic attitude about being gay. Gay pride was a key strategy of the organization to visibly celebrate gay communities and lifestyles.

The manifesto goes on to suggest steps toward this revolution, including realizing that gay lifestyles begin to anticipate, enact, this future liberated society in the present. Two more practical steps that the manifesto proposes are to develop consciousness-raising groups and gay communes based on values of more thoroughly understanding and critiquing multiple modes of oppression and working to dismantle one’s own attachments to personal property, lovers, privacy, and current prioritizations of work and leisure. The GLF manifesto then offers a list of immediate demands that counteract the direct acts of oppression perpetuated by family structures, the police, employers, health-care providers, educational systems, and various laws. The document and the organization itself were instrumental in advancing gay pride as a key strategy for visibly celebrating gay communities and lifestyles and thus modeling their vision for a broader audience and consequently shifting social structures and cultural values.

**Organization Structure and Membership**

The GLF proposed redefining the family from a biological, nuclear unit toward a looser affiliation of people, which was mirrored in the group’s organizational structure as well as their political collaborations. By connecting sexual liberation to dismantling larger systems of power, the GLF regularly worked in coalition with liberation movements against
militarism, racism, sexism, and capitalism, and was inspired by the radical movements of the 1960s. Similarly, the organization’s structure was a decentralized matrix of committees and subgroups that pursued their own specific goals, programming, and actions, while also contributing to the image and vision of societal transformation put forward by the GLF as a whole. An informal group of founding members held “think-ins” to establish an intentionally unstructured set of guidelines or rules for the organizations. GLF meetings were to be run by consensus, and there were only three guiding rules for all chapters: (1) no one could serve on the steering committee for more than two months; (2) heterosexuals could not serve on the steering committee; and (3) no one could serve on the office collective for more than three months. Further guidance came from the movement’s expansive set of demands and principles agreed upon in December 1970 and a manifesto circulated in October 1971.

Early membership of the GLF leaned heavily toward young urbanites, but due to the organization’s expansive politics and the efforts of key founding members such as Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, and Martha Shelley, the group included more gender, class, and race diversity than previous movements, which tended to be segregated along these lines. The GLF explicitly included drag queens, transgender people, queer women, working-class individuals, and people of color. The movement became quickly transnational, again primarily in urban centers of “Western,” white-dominant countries: the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and other parts of Western Europe. Core members of the US GLF included Michael Brown, a young leftist organizer; Martha (Altman) Shelley, poet, activist, and president of the Daughters of Bilitis; Bob Martin (pseudonym Stephen Donaldson), leader of the Student Homophile League at Columbia University; Karla Jay, pioneer of lesbian and gay studies, student at Barnard College, and later professor at Pace University; Lois Hart, founder and prominent activist; Marty Robinson, member of the Mattachine Society; and Bob Kohler, anti-racist and early AIDS activist. They organized marches to protest the lack of or skewed representation of gay people in Time magazine and the Village Voice, who refused to print the word gay in their ads, as well as radical study groups, fundraising dances, and consciousness-raising groups. These eventually became semiautonomous cell groups, such as the Planned Non-Parenthood Cell, the June 28th Cell, and the Red Butterfly Cell, each with its own specialized agenda. There are claims that the ideas and practices of GLF were more heavily influenced by groups on the West Coast, though their history often is contested and overshadowed by that of their New York partners (Power 1995).

**GLF in Canada and the United Kingdom**

In Canada, the first GLF, called the Front de Libération Homosexual (FLH), was established in November 1970 in Montreal in response to police raids of gay establishments, similar to those executed on the Stonewall Inn. The group disbanded just two years later, however,
when forty of their members were arrested for failing to obtain a liquor license for one of their events. There was a sister group in Vancouver, British Columbia, which developed from a commune called Pink Cheeks. This group enjoyed a slightly longer life, opening a drop-in center, publishing a newsletter, and gaining support from the Georgia Straight, but it eventually folded under competition from other local gay rights organizations (Warner 2002).

While the Gay Liberation Front was importantly transnational and decentralized, its influence remained largely Anglocentric as it quickly spread across the United States and the United Kingdom and established communities in Canada and Australia. The movement’s UK network was particularly widespread. The first GLF was established in London on 13 October 1970, by Aubrey Walter and Bob Mellor at the London School of Economics, where Mellor was a student. From this instantiation, UK chapters of the GLF maintained close connections with academic institutions, establishing an annual national conference at the University of Birmingham, and by 1971 the GLF was officially recognized as a political movement by the national press. The Gay Liberation Front in the United Kingdom staged a number of high-profile direct actions, most notably the 1971 Festival of Light Disruption. The Festival of Light was a morality campaign planned by a fundamentalist Christian group; at its opening held at the Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, members of the GLF dressed in drag interrupted the meeting for a kiss-in, while other members made a ruckus with horns, displayed banners, and released mice. Another unit disguised as workers gained access to the hall’s basement and turned off the building’s lights. This dynamic intervention garnered the movement a reputation for provocative, creative actions that were acutely effective.

The UK GLF’s success was due, in part, to its innovative, cohesively fragmented structure consisting of segments such as the media group, which published a newspaper called Come Together. The antipsychiatry group worked to counter the pathologizing of homosexuality, which was often informed by close relationship between psychiatry and religious institutions/values. To this end, the GLF made progress in decreasing the use of electric shock treatments intended to correct or cure homosexuality. A women’s group worked to make present the voices and experiences of women and to resist the potential replication of patriarchy in a male-dominated group. The communes group organized alternative living structures to begin to apply the founding belief in dismantling nuclear family structures. The youth group worked specifically with members younger than twenty-one to fight for youth rights and reduction of the age of consent, which was often enforced disproportionately to prosecute homosexuals. The action group planned specific events such as dances in town halls, gay days in parks, and general meetings. The street theater group dreamt up exciting, effective aesthetic interventions to enact and support the movement’s broader political aims.

Like their counterparts in the United States, UK GLF groups were highly coalitional in their
activism, participating in protests against the Industrial Relations Bill and joining demonstrations against internment in Northern Ireland, though these movements sometimes attempted to play down the involvement of their gay comrades. Another major success, which some have claimed to be the root of London’s gay pride march, was the Gay Day held in Hyde Park in August 1971, followed by a march to Trafalgar Square organized by the youth group. The following July, the first gay pride march retraced this path, marching from Trafalgar Square to Hyde Park for a gay pride party. This march was attended by over a thousand people and overseen by twice as many police (Feather 2007).

These sorts of collaborative political endeavors are rarely untroubled, however. For instance, repeated attempts by the women’s group of the GLF to join the women’s liberation movement were resisted. In October 1971 they attended the Women’s Liberational National Coordinating Conference but were told that their concerns were esoteric distractions. The GLF group refused to be shut out and grabbed the microphone, compelling much of the conference to listen to their concerns and successfully centering a lesbian voice in the women’s liberation movement, beginning the long process of forging lesbian-feminist solidarity.

The End of the GLF and Its Legacy

The Gay Liberation Front’s unstructured network of affiliate groups and its broad, coalitional political platform were both the organization’s strength and its ultimate downfall. Most iterations of the GLF struggled to maintain coherent membership, and discord easily emerged among the loose arrangement of political commitments and beliefs. Even so, the details of how the GLF disbanded and the legacy of this movement hold important keys for better understanding shifts in queer politics from the 1970s to the present.

One of the significant contributions of the GLF was their insistence that coming out about one’s sexuality is a political act. Inspired by the feminist belief that the personal is political, the GLF helped to change the view of sexuality from a private secret that should be seamlessly integrated and largely unacknowledged in the public sphere to a political standpoint that advocated not only for the recognition of rights for LGB individuals, but for political shifts more broadly. However, at the same time, making the personal political produces the distinct risk that the individual becomes the primary unit around which rights should be oriented. Toward the end of 1971, a divisive conceptualization of rights emerged in the GLF, causing a rift between members who saw sexual liberation—of which coming out was one part—as a transformative gesture in confronting structures of masculinity, homophobia, patriarchy, and more, and members who began to campaign more and more around single issues. This latter group became known as the “straight gays” because their political beliefs and efforts mirrored heteronormative mores and did nothing to deconstruct structural oppression.
In the United States, these internal tensions officially terminated the GLF in 1972. The US-based GLF inspired the formation of a number of groups including the Lavender Menace—radical lesbian feminists who pushed for the inclusion of lesbians in the feminist movement. The drag caucus of the GLF morphed into the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, founded by Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, which provided support for queer youth, homeless people, and trans women of color. In the United Kingdom, the movement lasted until about 1974, when it splintered into a number of organizations, some of which survive today. These include the London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard, Gay News, Icebreakers, and the celebrated theater group Bloolips. The Leicester Gay Liberation Front’s resource information service Gayline is still functioning and even received funding from the National Lottery. Peter Tatchell, a wellknown GLF activist, founded Outrage!, an organization that stages performance-based protests and employs tactics influenced by the GLF, including “zaps”—playful, disorderly demonstrations intended to embarrass public figures. Further afield, GLF-inspired political movements FAHR and FUORI! were formed in Paris and Italy, respectively. The UK GLF papers are held in the Hall-Carpenter Archives at the London School of Economics.

The fracturing of the GLF into multiple international groups and organizations exemplifies its broad-reaching political aims and in many ways permits the movement’s work to carry on in pressing for societal transformations. These persisting organizations, movements, and publications are tangible legacies of what was and the persistence of GLF’s political vision that has yet to be realized. A less concrete but perhaps more impactful legacy of the Gay Liberation Front was the political ground they had prepared and the social awareness they had galvanized by the time HIV/AIDS began to emerge. Thanks to the widespread efforts and manifestations of the Gay Liberation Front, there existed a network of related organizations, a public pride in LGB sexuality, and a foundational social understanding and support for members of LGB communities.

SEE ALSO Lavender Menace; Mattachine Society; Stonewall Riots, International Effects of

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Debates about gender equality and the rights and identities of sexual minorities have been at the forefront of postcolonial African politics since the 1990s. Addressing the pressing issues of gender inequality and state-sponsored homophobia requires an understanding of how historical and social processes shaped gender and sexual identities in African societies (Epprecht 2008; Essien and Aderinto 2009). Numerous anthropologists and historians have critiqued the tendency of colonial-era ethnographers to impose European gender norms and conventions on otherwise flexible African gender identities (Gevisser and Cameron 1994; Murray and Roscoe 1998; Allman, Geiger, and Musisi 2002; Epprecht 2008; Fallon 2008; Essien and Aderinto 2009). Because sexual and gender identities are culturally constructed, African expressions of these categories did not conform to Western dichotomies or binaries.

**Overview of African Gender Expressions**

The ethnocentric ethnographies of colonial anthropologists (and their African acolytes) often failed to distinguish between “sex” and “gender” (Amadiume 1987). By treating gender and sex as one and the same, colonial anthropologists failed to highlight occasions when or situations in which women could become men in social terms and vice versa. Even in social and political contexts where women became “men,” as Ifi Amadiume (1987) has observed about the Igbo, anthropologists often tended to regard them as “manly” or “manlike.” The tendency of colonial anthropologists to consider gender flexibility in African societies as an aberration, rather than as a constituent part of a spectrum, led to the imposition of a male-female binary on local sociosexual expressions. In order to understand historical African gender expressions, Africanists have called for the need to decolonize contemporary scholarly understandings of these social categories. By confusing or conflating sex with gender, contemporary scholars may provide distorted understandings of how men became women and vice versa in political, religious, and ritual contexts (Amadiume 1987; Oyewùmí 1997).
Pushing this argument further, Oyèrónké Oyewùmí (1997) argues that the concept of
gender did not exist as an organizing principle among the Yoruba. Studies on gender (and
sexuality) in African societies, Oyewùmí explains, have not been “decolonized” and thus
rely on Western categories of knowledge. To explain her point, Oyewùmí distinguished
between what she termed as “anatomic sex,” “anatomic male,” and “anatomic female” to
emphasize the nongendered attitude toward the relations between the human body and
social roles, positions, and hierarchies (1997, xii). However, Oyewùmí’s claim about the
absence of gender in precolonial Yoruba culture has been challenged. For instance, J.
Lorand Matory (2008) shows that Yoruba myths and legends were not devoid of gender
categories. Likewise, Yoruba religious initiations and spirit possession performances
among Sángò and Yemoja priests in Òyó North employ both gendered and nongendered
arrangements and combine those representations in powerful mixed metaphors. For
example, “cross-dressing” or “transvestite” priests in Yorubaland could be regarded as
performing and/or expressing gender. Rather than having an absence of gender, Yoruba
culture seems to have deployed this social category in ways that emphasize gender
inversion and flexibility. Similar studies on the Akan/Asante suggest that gender was
central to that culture’s social and political organization. Like the Yoruba, the Akan had
gendered deities. Female deities in particular often required women spokespersons “who
knew the ways of the deity” (Akyeampong and Obeng 1995, 491). Certain rituals, especially
the cleansing and reintegration of social deviants such as kleptomaniacs and witches
(abayifuO) into Akan society, were the preserve of women priestesses (Akyeampong and
Obeng 1995).

Gender inversions and flexibility were crucial in many precolonial and contemporary
African cultures. Scholars have identified these flexible gender practices in African societies
such as the Igbo, Yoruba, and Akan/Asante where postmenopausal women could become
“honorary men,” sons, or even kings (Amadiume 1987; Akyeampong and Obeng 1995;
Oyewùmí 1997, 2011; Achebe 2011; Semley 2011). Through the biography of the early
twentieth-century female king Ahebi Ugbabe, Nwando Achebe (2011) examines the
continuities and changes in the overlapping constructions and definitions of female
masculinities and manhood in the colonial Nsukka Division of Igboland. For Achebe, female
masculinity underscores the ways in which women performed malegender political and
social roles within an Igbo society dominated by men. Ahebi’s dual position as a female king
and a warrant chief in the British colonial administration epitomizes Igbo women’s female
masculinities. Despite the rapidly changing colonial landscape, Ahebi’s reign makes it
possible for Achebe to challenge and complicate gendered categories such as “woman” and
“prostitute” in order to recognize a multiplicity of African female masculinities, while
delineating the limitations of such gendered transformations. Such female masculinities
included “female headman,” “female king,” and “female husband” (Achebe 2011, 2).

In examining the historical and political meanings of motherhood in the Yoruba town of
Ketu, Lorelle D. Semley draws on parallels from West Africa and the Brazilian diaspora. By
exploring what she terms “public mother figures,” Semley (2011, 135) argues that the roles of women in African societies were far more complicated than previously thought. In discussing these complex gender relationships, Semley argues that subordinate men in Ketu could be viewed as “wives,” and women who were royal advisers could be viewed as men. By relating the concept of public motherhood to kinship and politics, Semley shows that powerful mother figures survived the Middle Passage and French colonial rule in Benin. In discussing Ketu in the context of the African diaspora, Semley shows the ways in which the powerful symbols of motherhood were sustained on both sides of the Atlantic during the slave trade. Whereas “public mothers” were partnered with kings in Ketu, their counterparts in the Afro-Brazilian religion of Candomblé, known as “mothers-in-saint,” were paired with men. These striking semblances are important in understanding the ways in which gender ideas and power were transformed and deployed in different precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial contexts in West Africa and the Brazilian diaspora. Despite the stultifying constraints of enslavement and colonialism, gender in the Yoruba diaspora in Brazil and in West Africa did not conform to a specific stereotype.

**Imposition of Binary Western Gender Categories**

The imposition of rigid Euro-Christian gender norms in parts of colonial Africa tended to enhance the gendered status of men and undermine gender flexibility (Allman, Geiger, and Musisi 2002). In many ways, African men facilitated the ways in which colonial regimes in Africa “invented” customary or native law (Ranger 2000; Allman, Geiger, and Musisi 2002). African males often welcomed the opportunity to exercise greater control over the females in their households and societies. Women thus became victims of African and European colonial patriarchal structures (Schmidt 1991, 1992). For instance, in Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe), colonial and African patriarchal structures tended to reinforce each other by attempting to control women’s labor and their migration to urban areas. The control of women's migration and economic activities was not only central to colonial rule in Southern Rhodesia but also entrenched the gender roles (Schmidt 1991).

Elsewhere in colonial Africa, women were largely confined to the margins of “traditional” and modern governance (Allman, Geiger, and Musisi 2002). For example, British colonial authorities, with their bias against women's political and economic autonomy, undermined the dual-gendered political systems of Asante and Buganda in favor of a male-dominated indirect rule (Allman, Geiger, and Musisi 2002). The political systems in Asante and Buganda emphasized gender complementarity. Male and female rulers jointly exercised political power over different spheres. Nonetheless, British colonial rule in Asante and Buganda slowly but effectively encroached on the political space accorded women in those polities. Under colonial rule, queen-mothers were subordinated to kings in order to provide support to the male-dominated system of indirect rule (Allman, Geiger, and Musisi 2002). As queen-mothers became less significant in the colonial administration in Asante and
Buganda, women became casualties of the sexual politics of colonialism (Hanson 2002).

Other studies (Moodie and Ndatshe 1994; Banks 2012) have shown the ways in which gender roles could be inverted in same-sex relationships in (pre-)colonial and postcolonial southern Africa and Ghana. Despite the above examples of gender specificity in ritual and sociocultural and religious practices, gender flexibility was far from being an aberration and was crucial in shaping African social and political organization. Evidence for ritualized gender inversions has been recorded in sixteenth-century Angola and Namibia. For example, cross-dressed male diviners known as zvibanda, chibados, quimbanda, gangas, or kibambaa, who were often possessed by female spirits, performed female sexual and social roles. The “transvestite” zvibanda were also known to have anal sexual intercourse with their clients for a fee. This ritualized sex is in itself a highly gendered act and was thought to bring about prosperity, agricultural abundance, good health, and protection from evil spirits. The zvibanda and other “cross-dressing” religious figures may have influenced the African-derived Candomblé and Santeria religions in Brazil and Cuba (GALZ 2008).

**Njinga (R. 1624–1663)**

Njinga was the most powerful ruler of the Mbundu people of present-day northern Angola for nearly forty years (1624–1663), including for a time as leader of the neighboring kingdom of Matamba and of the invading Imbangala people, much feared for their cannibalism as well as military ferocity. The daughter and sister of successive kings of the kingdom of Ndongo, she first came to power through election by the royal court following her brother's death (which she may have engineered). While she called herself queen or lady, she also sometimes referred to herself with the same term historically applied to kings (ngola), thus emphasizing her legitimacy as a strong and inspiring leader. She amply demonstrated that leadership in deeds over the decades through intelligent diplomacy, performance of ritual, and sometimes ruthless politics. Indeed, Njinga's reign was characterized by almost continuous war against the Portuguese and their African allies, and she personally led many successful battles (Thornton 1991; Heywood 2017). That dogged defense of independence has made her a hero of Angolan nationalist histories. Her reputation for resistance to Portuguese colonialism and cultural arrogance was also carried across the Atlantic with the Mbundu and Kongo people whom the Portuguese shipped into slavery in Brazil, where her name still resonates today as an icon of Afro-Brazilian culture.

Njinga's gender expression and sexuality tend to be understated in the nationalist traditions, but they certainly attracted much attention during her lifetime. Contemporary accounts by Europeans were often openly hostile to her and prone to exaggerate or sensationalize the most negative, scandalous aspects of her behavior. The more lurid of these contemporary accounts then got picked up by novelists in the eighteenth century (e.g., Castilhon [1770] 1993) and may even have influenced the
Marquis de Sade (1740–1814) in his depiction of a sexual dystopia in his fictionalized African kingdom Butua (Epprecht 2007).

A consensus nonetheless emerges from the contemporary accounts that Njinga not only defied conventional feminine roles, attire, and conduct, she may also have taken both male and female lovers. Among the former, she is said to have had multiple male concubines and formal marriages to men. One such marriage was to an Imbangala lord whom she required to dress in women’s clothes and to address her as a man. During that period she also required a virtual harem of male concubines to dress as women and to cohabit, chastely, with her female bodyguards. After her conversion to Christianity in 1657, she married again, when she was around seventy-four years of age, in a formal church service, first dismissing her dozens of consorts then taking a “graceful ... beautiful ... young boy” in monogamous union (Heywood 2017, 200).

Northern Angola and western Congo were historically populated by patriarchal societies, but, in addition to Njinga, the region also produced a disproportionate record of powerful, charismatic female leaders. Njinga was succeeded as ruler of Matamba by her sister Kambu, also known as Barbara, and several other women who ruled over the following centuries. In neighboring Kongo, a great, millenialist uprising at the beginning of the eighteenth century was led by another woman, Beatriz Kimpa Vita, who claimed to be possessed by the spirit of a male saint. Kimpa Vita as a young woman had married in the normal way but divorced reportedly for her incompatibility to the expectations of feminine comportment. She then trained as a traditional healer, a role also widely reputed to involve the transgression of gender and heterosexual norms (see, e.g., Purchas 1625, 587, 590). After becoming a Christian, she preached abstinence and sexual discipline as a mode of moral resistance to Kongolesi slave traders and their Portuguese allies (Thornton 1998).

It would be highly misleading and anachronistic to interpret Njinga or Kimpa Vita as early exemplars of bisexuality, transgender, or lesbian identity in Africa. However, Njinga especially was undoubtedly queer in the sense of her dramatic nonconformity to gender and sexual norms. Her life speaks to the very powerful role that the public performance of gender and sexuality had in precolonial African politics and society.

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Same-Sex Relationships in African Cultures

Anthropologists have long observed that same-sex relationships in many African cultures embody an expression of gender roles that does not conform to biological sex. In Ghana’s Central Region, groups of saso, or “gay” men, perform and experience diverse female-gender roles and identities (Banks 2012). As a priest of the saso community, Œkomfo Kwabena, who died before 2012, sought to develop and provide spaces for the affirmation of queer identities and also challenge prevailing postcolonial views that mark queer identities and sexuality as incompatible with Ghanaian and African culture and experiences. Similarly, in her studies of same-sex female intimacies in Ghana, Serena Owusua Dankwa (2013) challenges the assertion that masculinity in women is a “pathological sign of misidentification and maladjustment” (Dankwa 2013, 171). For Dankwa, Ghanaian or African women who understood themselves in “masculine ways” should not be dismissed as “bad copies of ‘real’ men” (Dankwa 2013, 171). In what she describes as “relational masculinity,” Dankwa (2013, 182) explores the ways in which women appropriate or are ascribed masculine roles in both their socioeconomic and their same-sex relationships. For example, by positing one’s self as the “man” in such a same-sex relationship, “he” is required to provide for “his” lover. By assuming the position as the obaa barima, or “man-woman,” one does not change bodily styling to reflect that gender role but rather the “ideal of assuming a provider role” often associated with biological males (Dankwa 2013, 187).

Elsewhere in southern Africa, gender flexibility and inversion in same-sex relationships was crucial among ethnic groups such as the Zulu, Shona, Ndebele, Xhosa, and Fengu. For instance, the southern African practice of taking boys or youths as temporary wives was quickly adapted to the mine compounds. Far from their spouses back home, mine workers began to experiment with same-sex hlobonga (or nonpenetrative, prenuptial sex). The
“rules of mine marriage” (umteto ka sokisi), as it was called, provided rules of conduct for such mine relationships. Mine “wives,” or nsati (literally meaning “wife” or “woman”), were usually young boys who performed feminine duties such as cooking and fetching water and firewood. Males who performed these feminine roles became feminized in their dressing and appearance. However, as these feminized young men grew up, they “graduated” to masculine roles. Initially, the colonial authorities of Natal handed heavy punishments including lashes and imprisonments for this gender transgression (GALZ 2008). By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the practice had become normalized in the mines (Moodie and Ndatshe 1994). The flexible gender identity inherent in mine marriages ensured that “wives” could graduate into masculine roles when they matured and got the financial means to do so. By emphasizing seniority and the providing role of “husband,” mine marriages in southern Africa tended to reinforce the idea of relational masculinity (Dankwa 2011).

The rising tides of state-sponsored homophobia, patriarchy, and understandings of gender as fixed categories in contemporary Africa tend to obscure the complex expressions and inversions of gender and sexuality. Not surprisingly, such trends are driven by neoconservative ideas and anxious masculinities inherited from the colonial period but continuously inflamed by postcolonial governments and religious activists (Msibi 2011). That said, the representations of an increasingly homophobic Africa tend to generalize and homogenize the phenomena of homophobia on the continent and regard it simply as a hangover from colonialism. Such generalizations tend to ignore or oversimplify the ways in which diverse languages, nationalities, Islam, Christianity, traditional African religions, colonial legacies, global inequalities, and Western imperialism shape and inform homophobic legislations and discourses in Africa (Thoreson 2014).

In conclusion, African expressions of gender and sexuality have been historically diverse, fluid, and dynamic, albeit within a heteropatriarchal context. These sexual identities do not fit Western gender binaries stereotypically associated with men or women or the homosexual-heterosexual dichotomy. Rather than being regarded as “traditional” or static, the expression of flexible gender identities was rooted in internally and externally influenced political and socioeconomic changes within African societies (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2000; Matory 2008; Oyewumi 1997, 2011; Thoreson 2014). To be fair, same-sex intimacies and gender nonconformity were part of African sexual identities. It must also be pointed out, however, that colonial-era legislations and Christian moral and gender ideals are not solely responsible for institutionalized gender inequality and the “growing tides” of nationalist-driven homophobia and the assault against gender-nonconforming persons in postcolonial Africa. Rather than homogenizing homophobia and gender bias in Africa or solely attributing that phenomenon to colonialism, it is more useful conceptually to emphasize the diverse historical, ideological, economic, and political contexts and legacies driving the persecution of sexual and gender-nonconforming minorities in Africa (Thoreson 2014).
SEE ALSO Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara: Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa; Ubuntu

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The cultural, social, and economic forces behind violence against women in Latin America, including trans women.

Feminicide is a gender-based act of violence that refers to the killing of women based on their social or biological gender and the characteristics attributed to that gender. In contrast to the gender-neutral term *homicide* (the killing of a human/*Homo sapiens*), *femicide* was coined by US feminists to shed light on the existence of gendered hate crimes —on the misogynistic murder of women and girls because they are female (*Radford and Russell 1992*). *Feminicide* and *femicide* have oftentimes been used interchangeably, although it is important to note the discursive history of each term. The Mexican feminist scholar Marcela Lagarde first introduced the term *feminicidio* (feminicide) into academe in 1987 (*Monárrez Fragoso 2002*) and Julia Monárrez Fragoso was the second to use it in order to describe and raise awareness about the clusters of sexual murders of women and
girls that were first observed and documented in the Mexico-US border region of Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, during the 1990s (Monárrez Fragoso 2002). The term feminicide is therefore a closer translation of the Spanish term feminicidio, and some argue that the usage of this term is designed to reverse the hierarchies of knowledge and challenge claims about unidirectional (North-South) flows of transnational theory (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010). Given the intersectionality of gender and sexuality, misogynistic violence is also linked to homophobic and transphobic acts of violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and/or gender-nonconforming identity. Transfeminicidio (transfeminicide) specifically refers to the murder of transgender individuals as a result of transphobic violence—“a form of gender-based violence, driven by a desire to punish those seen as defying gender norms” (United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2011, 8). The use of the term transfeminicide seeks to highlight the specific individuals who are being targeted and the different experiences and circumstances that these individuals are forced to live under (Radi and Sardà-Chandiramani 2016).

Feminicide and transfeminicide in Latin America are the culmination of larger historical, cultural, political, legal, and economic conditions that have helped gendered and sexual violence become all too common, claiming thousands of women’s lives in this region since the 1990s. Because the appearance of feminicide victims in Ciudad Juárez coincided with the beginning of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA; signed in 1993), which brought manufacturing plants (maquiladoras) to the US-Mexico border and employed a largely female labor force, the feminicides in Ciudad Juárez have also been termed “the maquiladora murders,” because many of the victims were employees at these plants (Arriola 2010, 26). As of February 2005, according to Amnesty International, more than 370 young women and girls had been murdered in the cities of Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua. (Amnesty International 2005). More recently, prosecutors from the state of Chihuahua reported that in 2010, 270 women were killed within the state; of these murders, 247 occurred in Juárez. Despite the conviction and incarceration of several suspects (such as bus drivers, gang members, and a highpaid research chemist who was working for various US companies in Juárez after having served a fourteen-year sentence for rape in the United States), the murders and disappearances of women continue unabated. Both local and national governments in large part deny the problem of pervasive gendered violence, and their inaction leads to an exacerbation of the problem.

Along with Mexico, other countries in Latin America such as Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Argentina, the Dominican Republic, and Colombia also report high incidences of feminicide and transfeminicide. In 2006 Amnesty International reported that more than 2,200 women had been murdered in Guatemala alone since 2001. Feminicides in these countries stem in large part from the continued use of gendered weapons of terror that were first used by paramilitaries during decades of military repression and civil wars between the 1960s and 1990s. These countries have a long history of accepting gendered violence and the government’s and judiciary’s role in normalizing misogyny. In El Salvador,
for example, massacre survivors' testimonies from the 1980s and 1990s reveal that paramilitaries raped women and girls before killing them and throwing their bodies in mass graves (Danner 1994). Maria Guardado, a torture survivor, recounts how paramilitaries kidnapped her, beat her, applied electrical wires to her breasts and genitals, raped her, and then sodomized her with a wooden rod, leaving her in a pool of blood (Vasquez 2007). War criminals in El Salvador were rarely prosecuted. In the case of Guatemala, too, where a thirty-six-year civil war (1960–1996) took the lives of over 200,000 people, indigenous women were murdered, and there was little accountability for their deaths. In 2013 the war criminal and military general Efraín Ríos Montt (1926–2018) was tried and found guilty of genocide but was later acquitted because the court ruled that at the time he committed the crime it was not classified as genocide yet under Guatemalan law. Although civil wars may have ended, postwar Guatemala and El Salvador continue to be plagued by gendered violence and other forms of extreme violence caused by former, trained ex-military and police members, paramilitary and guerrilla forces, and street gangs. When the state fails to hold the perpetrators accountable, impunity not only intensifies the subordination and powerlessness of the targets of violence but also sends a message to society that male violence against women is both acceptable and inevitable (Ogrodnik and Borzutzky 2011).

Indeed, feminicides continue to occur because of a culture of impunity, corruption, and lack of accountability in Latin America. This kind of impunity is rampant as a result of (1) state complicity and/or fear of investigating and prosecuting powerful families and drug cartels (oftentimes with entrenched systems of patronage); (2) inadequate forensics or investigative facilities; or (3) perpetrators or members of security forces being protected by special immunities (Washington Valdez 2006). Local and national governments by and large minimize the existence of these gendered crimes. When authorities are forced to acknowledge the number of dead women's bodies, they tend to blame the victims, saying they were probably prostitutes who were leading a double life unbeknownst to their families. The attorney general of Chihuahua, Mexico, Arturo González Rascón, famously stated in 1999 that “women with a nightlife who go out very late and come into contact with drinkers are at risk. It's hard to go out on the street when it's raining and not get wet” (quoted in Amnesty International 2003, 2). Not only are authorities not properly investigating the crimes or bringing the culprits to justice; they regularly malign and discredit the victims and insult their families.

**A History of Patriarchal Culture in Latin America**

Historically, violence against women’s bodies in the Americas has been a commonly used weapon of terror and colonialism and a hallmark of warfare. As historians have noted, Spanish soldiers abducted and raped indigenous women during the conquest and subjugation of Amerindian peoples and their lands from the sixteenth to nineteenth
centuries. Native women were seen as sexual beings free for the taking, and indeed, sexual violence against Native women was common after invasion and the institutionalization of Spanish colonialism from the late fifteenth century well into the nineteenth (Castañeda 1993). As the writings of the Mexican author Octavio Paz (1914–1998) demonstrate, men's violence against women has routinely been used to assert their machismo, domination, and masculinity (Madsen 2015). This history of violence against women in the Americas and the influence of the Roman Catholic Church shaped Latin American culture into a highly patriarchal, conservative society with a clear sense of proper, divided gender roles. There exists a culture of marianismo (that expects women to be good daughters, mothers, and wives—to be virginal, obedient, submissive, and maternal like the Virgin Mary). Women who step outside of these roles by becoming educated, political, or economically independent or by enjoying leisurely activities and/or having sex for pleasure or without its principal aim being procreation are regarded as malas mujeres (bad women) who are disrupting the proper patriarchal structure of the family and society. Indeed, these are precisely the types of hegemonic patriarchal gender codes that queer women activists and writers in Latin America have directly been challenging since the 1970s. As Carla Trujillo explains in Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About (1991), lesbians are culturally regarded as representing the ultimate transgression against patriarchy because they reject male dominance by exerting their self-sufficiency. Queer women are therefore a source of fear and loathing (to men) but are also a source of admiration to those Latinas who seek feminist models of empowerment. Ultimately, gender-directed violence in Latin America may stem from a cultural backlash, as women, feminists, and LGBTQ individuals are seen as gaining greater personal autonomy and independence while men lose ground (Livingston 2004).

To be clear, gendered violence is both public and private, national and international, implicating both state governments and individual perpetrators. It encompasses systemic, widespread, and everyday interpersonal violence, from within border motels to the factory and from the domestic home to the halls of justice (Fregoso and Bejarano 2010). In Latin America, domestic violence routinely goes unreported and unnoticed by police authorities. When a woman is reported missing, the authorities wait until three days after she has gone missing to find her, demonstrating no sense of urgency to protect a woman and save her life (Arce 2010). Women can oftentimes become targets of violence by individual perpetrators (oftentimes intimate partners) who are attempting to reassert their power over them or by the state itself, which punishes these women after death by preventing them from obtaining justice and redress.

Gendered violence in Latin America has been characterized by a heinous and graphic degradation of female and transgender victims' bodies (through rape, genital mutilation, dismemberment, burning, penetration with foreign objects, etc.) (Washington Valdez 2006). As the forensic psychologist Candice Skrapec (2010) notes, this form of sexual violence carries definitive elements of hatred and rage, while amounting to the utmost
devalorization of women. To kill a woman in such a vile manner requires the perpetrator of the crime to regard a woman's body as disposable, as unworthy of being, and of little value. Such violence is a product of a patriarchal ideology that conditions men to see women and transgender individuals as an inferior sex that is not accorded the same value as men and is not entitled to safety or care, which is what so many feminists—both straight and queer—have focused their political activism on. Indeed, attitudes about and discourses on the disposability of women and their bodies abound in the private and public sectors in Latin America, but especially in US-Mexico border cities such as Ciudad Juárez and Tijuana. Conveniently located just across the border, these border cities are considered sites of vice and lawlessness, and women are regarded by Americans as sexual commodities to be consumed and readily discarded (Tabuenca Córdoba 2010). Popular American discourses of “the dead hooker” reveal this common sentiment. For example, a popular T-shirt marketed and sold to North American men on the now-defunct website Sinfulshirts.com proudly read: “I Killed 40 Prostitutes in Mexico and All I Got Was This Bloody T-Shirt” (Caputi 2010, 287).

Such a culture of female devalorization and patriarchal gender dynamics is also integrally tied to a culture of homophobia and transphobia, leading to similar but also distinctive forms of violence against LGBTQ individuals throughout Latin America. According to the nongovernmental organization Transgender Europe’s Trans Murder Monitoring Project Update of 2016, Latin America has one of the highest rates of violence against the LGBTQ community in the world. A total of 2,115 murders of transgendered people were reported worldwide between January 2008 and April 2016. Of these, 1,654 (78 percent) were reported in Central and South America: Brazil (845), Mexico (247), Colombia (108), Venezuela (104), and Honduras (80) (Transgender Europe 2016). Six of the ten countries with the most murders of trans people are in Latin America: Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, Venezuela, Honduras, and Guatemala. Argentina is in eleventh place. In a conservative Latin American culture where traditional gender roles are hierarchical and assigned distinctive values, LGBTQ people are seen as disrupting the social order. They are largely discriminated against and denied jobs. Unable to find secure employment, many trans women in Latin America must work as prostitutes, which leads to the further stigmatization that comes with the profession (REDLACTRANS 2012).

Whether sex workers or not, trans women live in fear every day that they may become targets of violence. A 2003 report by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights and other reports from the region show that violence against LGBTQ individuals is becoming more extreme: they are often stoned, tortured, and raped before they are killed, and crimes often go unpunished. Oftentimes, crimes against the LGBTQ population go unreported because of fear of reprisals and skepticism regarding the justice system (Brocchetto 2017). When LGBTQ individuals do go to the authorities, they are usually regarded more as suspects than as plaintiffs or witnesses. Moreover, because the majoritarian view in most countries in Latin America accepts only binary, cisgender, heterosexual individuals,
oftentimes when a trans individual is a victim of transfeminicide the case will often go uninvestigated because the government will not use their chosen name, but rather their birth name, which often results in not being identified by their friends or relatives (Radí and Sardá-Chandiramani 2016). Fleeing such homophobic and transphobic violence in their countries, many transgendered people have migrated to the United States or Europe seeking refugee asylum status. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees calls the exodus from El Salvador and other Central American nations—Honduras and Guatemala—plagued by gang violence, a refugee crisis (Renteria 2017).

The Globalized Economy and Feminicide: The Case of Ciudad Juárez

Women, especially poor women, play a significant role as workers in the global economy. Because corporations and their power to set standards of worker treatment encourage general hostility against poor working women, many scholars have argued that the price of globalization has been poor women’s lives. The growth of the border city of Ciudad Juárez’s globalized economy has been used as a case study to understand such economic dynamics and their impact on women worldwide. In the 1990s Ciudad Juárez experienced rapid, exponential industrialization as a result of the signing of NAFTA between Mexico, the United States, and Canada. Maquiladoras—manufacturing factories owned by foreign, multinational companies—proliferated in the area, attracted by no taxes, readily available cheap labor, much lower costs of operation, and fewer safety and health regulations. In Juárez alone, by 1999, approximately 330 maquiladoras—more than 75 percent owned by US corporations such as Nike, Acer, RCA, Delphi, General Motors, IBM, and 3M—employed about 220,000 workers, of whom “approximately 60 percent were women” (Wright 1999, 459).

The maquiladora industry created new opportunities for employment for women outside the home and in the factories, but its exploitation of the mostly female working poor in Mexico, combined with the effects of rapid industrialization, has incited increased gender violence while securing Mexico’s significant role in the globalization of the economy at the US-Mexico border. According to the 2000 Mexican census, 50 percent of the economically viable population in the state of Chihuahua worked at a maquiladora, and most of these workers were female. Women are hired in these factories because their smaller hands and fingers [can] better assemble tiny parts of export goods, such as light bulbs, cassette tapes, and recorders. The ideal maquiladora worker that emerged was thus a hybrid of stereotypes based on sex, race, and class—she was not only more docile and passive than Mexican men, but submissive, easily trainable, and unlikely to pose problems with union
These factory job opportunities led to a large-scale migration of rural, southern Mexicans and Central Americans (many of whom are indigenous) toward cities along the border whose infrastructure could not keep up with such rapid industrialization, urbanization, and population increase. Because the majority of jobs in the maquiladoras are given to women, much of that migration was undertaken by female migrants traveling alone. These same women ended up vulnerable, living alone in dangerous shantytowns lacking proper street lighting at night. Incidents of domestic violence and feminicide in Ciudad Juárez have risen in the wake of the heavy industrialization along the border. In the period between the implementation of NAFTA in 1994 and 2001, “the homicide rate for men increased by 300 percent, while for women it increased by 600 percent” (Wright 2007, 415). But neither the state nor the corporations are held accountable for creating an unsafe living and working environment and for failing to invest in infrastructure and security that would protect the residents and workforce.

In the neoliberal, globalized economy, maximum profit is the ultimate goal. As such, maquiladoras exploit women workers all over Latin America, with garment and textile factories dominating in the Caribbean and Central America. According to a 2014 report by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, approximately 350,000 workers are employed in the maquiladora industry: 80,000 in El Salvador, 150,729 in Guatemala, and 120,000 in Honduras (Crossa 2015). In the Dominican Republic and all over the Caribbean, however, factories have been shutting down during the first two decades of the twenty-first century as owners, undercut by competition from Asia, seek to cut labor costs by moving production elsewhere (Werner and Bair 2009). Latin American women workers in these factories, like their Asian counterparts, are largely expendable. The value of workers’ bodies lies in their production efficiency, and once that value is extracted, US and multinational corporations do not care to protect the female laborer’s health or safety; if she is injured, is killed, or goes missing, she is simply replaced (Wright 2007). Women workers labor under substandard conditions that include exposure to toxicity in their workplace, sexual harassment, and arbitrary disciplinary methods of women such as monthly menstruation checks (Gaspar de Alba 2010). When maquiladora workers go missing, the maquiladoras themselves, or rather the US corporations behind them, seem little interested in pursuing the investigation of these murders affecting the lives of their personnel or in seeing justice prevail. This systemic abuse is the result of investor privileges, guaranteed under NAFTA and repeated in the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA; signed in 2004), that virtually immunize the transnational investor from accountability for harm to the worker, anticipated or not, when conducting
business in Latin America. Amnesty International has denounced the Mexican government’s complicity in the deaths of these women by failing to establish worker safety regulations: “the Mexican State must ensure that the maquilas meet their legal obligations to their employees, with special emphasis on the physical, sexual, and mental wellbeing of the female workers” (2003, 7). Amnesty International calls for such measures because the Ciudad Juárez and Chihuahua cases display conditions under which “impunity reigns” and there is an “inability of the state authorities to address these violent offences against women, which also means that Mexico is in breach of international conventions to which it is a party, including standards that are specifically aimed at eliminating violence against women” (2003, 4,5). Consequently, it has been suggested that amendments be made to NAFTA and CAFTA that include human rights provisions.

**Activism**

Tired of public officials’ indifference to feminicides in Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, by the late 1990s, grassroots organizations and nongovernmental organizations emerged among victims’ families and women’s and human rights activists acting in solidarity with the families. Activist groups mobilized and organized massive marches, candlelight vigils, press conferences, public monuments and memorials, artistic performances, building occupations, and confrontations with public officials to bring both local and international attention to these crimes and violations of women’s human rights. Many of these groups were headed by mother-activists, such as Voces Sin Eco (Voices without Echo), Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (May Our Daughters Return Home), and Justicia para Nuestras Hijas (Justice for Our Daughters). Cross-border, binational groups emerged, including Amigos de las Mujeres de Ciudad Juárez (Friends of the Women of Ciudad Juárez; based in Las Cruces, New Mexico) and the Coalition against Violence (based in El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico). These groups helped raise funds for victims’ families and called for a binational task force to foster cooperation in investigating the crimes, including greater FBI involvement. Casa Amiga, a nonprofit organization established in 1999, was the first rape crisis center in Ciudad Juárez; it was created to provide shelter to victims of sexual crimes and domestic violence, as well as counseling, medical assistance, and legal aid for victims or their families. Mujeres de Negro (Women in Black) is a group that raises awareness of the feminicides through the spectacle of public mourning: women dress in black at governmental offices and large public events. Their solidarity actions have occurred in different US cities and all over the world, often at Mexican consulate and embassy offices, pressuring the state to provide answers and redress (Staudt and Coronado 2002). In 2004 Eve Ensler (1953–), the American author of *The Vagina Monologues*, joined Mexican activists to organize the V-Day March in Ciudad Juárez and create a global activist movement that seeks to end violence against women and girls.

Indeed, since the 1970s, mother-activist movements have gained momentum across Latin
America as a strategy for seeking justice in repressive political climates. The group CoMadres and the Asociación Madres de Plaza de Mayo (Association of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo) were formed in El Salvador and Argentina, respectively, by mothers whose children disappeared during military dictatorship and state terrorism in their countries (Bejarano 2002). Taking to the streets and protesting at presidential palaces, these mother-activists set an example of how to overcome traditional limitations on women and motherhood in Latin America by leaving the domestic realm and taking to the public sphere. Today, mother-activists are persistently engaged in the struggle for human, political, and civil rights in Latin America and elsewhere.

Such binational and international cooperation has been key to seeking justice. Some victims' families in Ciudad Juárez are working with El Equipo Argentino de Antropología Forense, (Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team), a nonprofit organization that assists in the analysis of forensic data and the preparation of reports. American volunteers in Ciudad Juárez continue to this day to routinely undertake community rastreos (searches), physically scouring the desert in search of disappeared women's bodies (Gamboa 2017). Through all these activists' outreach, international human rights organizations and investigators such as Amnesty International, the United Nations Human Rights Council, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights have helped investigate some crimes and seek justice for victims' families.
body was found in a rural field in Gualeguay, in Entre Ríos province. Latin American feminist activists have used marches, candlelight vigils, press conferences, public memorials, confrontations with public officials, and social media to raise awareness of gender-based violence across Latin America.

Latin American women have also taken to social media to raise awareness about gender-based violence and harassment. On Twitter, the hashtags #NiUnaMas (not one more), #NiUnaMenos (not one less), and #MiPrimerAcoso (my first harassment) have aimed to raise awareness about gender-based violence across Latin America. #MiPrimerAcoso encourages women to share their first experience of gender-based harassment, as a first step to stopping feminicide. Because gendered violence, feminicide, and transfeminicide are a lived reality in most of Latin America, coalitions and movements tend to cross international boundaries.

For example, the coalition between women's and LGBTQ grassroots activists, with their mutual denouncement of violence and the structural conditions that keep millions of citizens marginalized and unprotected, and with their shared demands that their human rights be recognized by the state, has served to highlight both the shared goals and the importance of coalition building in both groups' political activism. In defiance of hegemonic gender codes all over Latin America, there have been mass demonstrations and LGBTQ pride parades in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay, Colombia, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Puerto Rico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala, with straight women activist allies demanding equal rights and protections for all alongside their LGBTQ peers. There have also been international lesbian political demonstrations such as the biennial Marcha Lésbica (Lesbian March) in Mexico City, which brings together lesbians from all over the world to make lesbian identity valiantly visible and to demand an end to violence against all women. Indeed, activists within the Marcha Lésbica make clear the connections between LGBTQ rights and women’s rights; slogans that the participants in the 2013 march chanted included “Not one more murder!” As part of the lesbian march’s denouncement of violence, organizers of the past three marches have expressed solidarity with the aforementioned Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa, a nongovernmental organization consisting of relatives of young women who have gone missing in Ciudad Juárez. Moreover, the participants have demanded the nationwide legalization of same-sex marriage and abortion and increased punishment for crimes committed on the basis of sexuality (Sanchez 2013). The collaborations and merging of issues illustrated within the international Marcha Lésbica are but one example of the promise of coalition building and of the future possibilities for political activism across nations, genders, and sexual orientations, all united in the effort to put an end to gendered violence throughout Latin America.

SEE ALSO Hate Crime Law and Policy in the United States; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Mexican Revolution and Sexuality; Neoliberalism in Latin America; Rape, Corrective, in Africa


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FILMOGRAPHY

The term *gentrification* refers to the buying and renovation of stores in deteriorated urban neighborhoods by those in the middle- or upper-income brackets. The process of gentrification often includes new corporate development, as chain stores move into the area to take advantage of the influx of money in the neighborhood. While gentrification revitalizes depressed areas, the increase in property values often forces out lower-income residents who can no longer afford to live there. Some have criticized this homogenization and “insipidifying” of urban centers to make them “hip” and “cool” (Schulman 2012; Sorainen 2016). This argument positions gentrification as a largely negative development that damages the diversity of urban communities and the understanding of cities as places for creative and transgressive politics. Sarah Schulman, a US queer cultural critic, lesbian Jewish artist, and AIDS activist, refers to this development as “the gentrification of the mind,” where the small, diverse, and independent bookshops, cafés, art spaces, and queer bars are replaced by big, soulless, standard chains: “It leaves the replaced without context and the replacers with a distorted sense of self” (2012, 178). This was one of the most important queer critiques of the idea that if the young, educated, and affluent surged back into cities, they would reverse suburban flight and urban decline—an idea that was popularized by American urbanist Richard Florida in his 2002 book *The Rise of the Creative Class*. In that work, he claimed that the creative class, and in particular gay people, could transform cities to make them more diverse, vital, and economically more successful.

The mantra of the creative class’s transgressive powers became the leading rationale among those who were thinking about and working on city development. However, fifteen years after the launch of his influential book, Florida stated that he had been wrong. In his revised view (2017), what the creative class did for cities was not to make them more livable places but to increase segregation; the same forces that power the growth of the major Western cities also generate their biggest challenges—in other words, gentrification leads to unaffordability, segregation, and overall inequality. These changes threaten not only the ethnically, sexually, and culturally diverse bohemian neighborhoods but also those of the middle class. This unfortunate development had already been described by Schulman: “Even for a city employee with a financially secure job, getting ... the car in this
economy usually requires having family money or a partner with a much higher income—it requires being floated in some way” (2012, 168).

**Gentrification in European Cities**

To provide a clearer sense of the generalizability of the case studies discussed in depth in this entry, it is helpful to point out that the metropolitan developments in other countries such as France, Great Britain, and the Netherlands connect the discussed phenomena to other European regions. Neighborhoods such as Camden, Islington, and Hackney in London; the Marais in Paris; and the Kinkerbuurt in Amsterdam suffer from the same phenomenon already familiar in Californian cities in the Silicon Valley, where café workers, cleaners, and other people working in the service sector or even in middle-income salaried jobs could not afford to live in the cities as rents and house prices skyrocketed, subsidized housing was sold off, and uber-rich people moved in. Short-term rentals for tourists facilitated by such sites as Airbnb are often blamed for causing the high rents and the shortage of long-term rentals, and many European major cities such as Barcelona and Berlin have tried to take actions against Airbnb. Many people working in low- or middle-income jobs in European cities still have to commute for hours or live temporarily in vans on roadsides or in parking lots.

Exterior of the Fairytale Pub in the Kallio District of Helsinki, Finland. Small, independent queer businesses like this pub for older, non-scene gay men are threatened by the gentrification of their neighborhoods.
This rapid gentrification has produced a side phenomenon known as “double trouble,” meaning that in the process of being gentrified, big cities also gentrify their neighbors (Harrap 2018). For example, in France it is not only the formerly bohemian district of the Marais in Paris that has lost its cheap apartments, independent art vibe, and colorful queer residents; the gentrification effect of Paris has extended to Bordeaux, the beautiful port city in southwestern France renowned for its university and wine. The influx of Parisians seeking to relocate to Bordeaux is blamed for gentrifying that smaller city, and tourism is steeply rising; in six months in 2017 alone, the number of lodgings offered on the short-term rental site Airbnb surged by 62 percent in Bordeaux. These developments prompted the publication of an open letter to the city council by the Front de Libération Bordeluche Face au Parisianisme (FLBP; Bordeaux Liberation Front against Parisianism), an “anti-Paris” citizens’ group with over 9,000 followers on Facebook. Referring to Bordeaux’s recent regeneration, which has turned it into one of France’s most desirable locations, the letter suggests the city is at risk of losing its very identity: “You are relegating your families to live forever in cardboard houses 30km from the center so that your latest conquerors can take even more selfies in your worldly company” (quoted in France 24 2017).

The same double-trouble effect can be observed in the United Kingdom, especially in Birmingham, which has become the home of many former Londoners who cannot afford to live in London anymore. Some of these new residents commute daily to London to work, while others find jobs in the Birmingham area. In this process, the diversity of both the London and Birmingham urban landscapes has suffered: queer pubs and bars have closed while huge commercial chains, such as Starbucks and Jamie Oliver’s restaurants, replace the independent cafés, bars, and art and community spaces in Camden, Hackney, Islington, and the Birmingham city center. The common thread in all these European cities, from the early twenty-first century onward, has been extracting money from the areas, not creating inclusive communities. When prices go up, the market is thought to be doing well, while the diversity of the cities suffers, and in the process, the old historical European cities became large, boring open-air museums where Airbnb tourists wander among the historical buildings and drink their lattes in the same chain cafés or their chardonnay in the same chain restaurants whatever the country or the city (Sorainen 2016).

The existing gentrification literature and research concerns mainly US cities and cannot be applied directly to European urban developments, even though there are common trends. For example, the gentrification history of two Helsinki districts, Punavuori and Kallio, matters to the development of these formerly mixed-class or working-class neighborhoods because these are the two urban sites where the effects of gentrification on gender and diversity have been most evident in Finland. In the United States, the Mission and Castro areas in San Francisco and the Lower East Side and Williamsburg areas in New York City function as parallel examples of the impact of gentrification on queer neighborhoods and communities but within a different national context. Parallel Nordic examples include the Hornstull and Skanstull areas of the Södermalm district in Stockholm, the Grünerløkka and
Old Oslo neighborhoods in Oslo, and the Nørrebro and Vesterbro districts in Copenhagen, all of which used to be working class but underwent the process of gentrification in different ways. In all these examples, one of the districts started to gentrify in the 1980s while the second district started in the mid-1990s. The parameters for the gentrification of these districts vary, even as they also follow certain megatrends. For example, in Copenhagen, Nørrebro is much more mixed in terms of ethnic background than Södermalm in Stockholm or Kallio and Punavuori in Helsinki, but it is also less queer and still rapidly gentrifying.

**Finland's Place in Europe**

Compared to queer neighborhoods in other world cities in terms of quality of life, sexual expression, and LGBTQ communities, the two major Helsinki queer districts, Punavuori and Kallio, have been influenced by different political, economic, social, and racial histories and gendered implications that determine openness and formations of queer life. This is partly because although Helsinki, as the capital of a Nordic welfare state with liberal legislation and an open atmosphere, is today known as one of the most democratic and least segregated urban havens for queer people, Finland's historical and political role on the edge of Europe has always been complicated. Finland has had a challenging political history since its declaration of independence in 1917. It stands apart from the other Nordic countries and its significant neighbor, Russia, not only in its language, history, and culture, but also in its lack of natural resources, such as oil; instead, it has built its success on high-quality, free education and the development of innovations, such as the text message, the maternity pack (a kit of items given to new mothers for their newborn babies), and the sugar substitute xylitol. However, it was a largely agrarian, poor country until the mid-1960s, when the government pushed for rapid transformation into a more urban, welfare-state society. Thus, cities and urban life have not been centrally formative issues for the national memory as they have in many other Western countries; an inclusive, desirable, sexually diverse city life was a vision that appeared in the public forum only in the 1980s. For example, research on prosecutions of women for same-sex sex acts shows that most of the 1950s Finnish trials took place in rural areas outside of Helsinki.

It is also noteworthy for the US-dominated discussion about queer gentrification—where gay neighborhoods (such as those in New York City and San Francisco) are indelibly linked with the politics of race—that there are other contexts for theorizing on this topic. For example, it is important to note that Finland's historical immigration policy differs significantly not only from that of the United States but also from those of the other northern European and Scandinavian nations: it has had an extraordinarily tight immigration policy, and therefore, Helsinki is very white. This background is crucial for understanding the queer histories in Helsinki in that race issues have not been a substantial topic in its queer urban cultures until very recently. In addition, Finland has had
different “national traumas” regarding gender and sexuality than its neighboring countries of Sweden, Norway, and Russia. The cruel civil war of 1918, with its lethal concentration camps, where many women and children were killed, haunts the national narrative as well as the construction and politics of its public memory. Furthermore, the national history of having been part of both the Swedish and Russian empires, and the two lost wars against the Soviets in World War II, have created specific problems for the construction of urban male homosexuality in Finland as both inside and outside of national politics and borders. Tom of Finland (the pseudonym of the celebrated Finnish artist known for his homoerotic fetish art in the late twentieth century) recounted in an interview how he used to cruise both Russian and German soldiers in the parks of Punavuori while he was in the Finnish military service during World War II: “I didn’t feel guilty at all about supposedly jumping politically from one end to the other. I wanted to try everything that was available” (quoted in Arell and Mustola 2006, 22). This history continues to contribute to a specific national discourse on “Finnish” urban sexuality. It can be observed in parliamentary debates and research literature that stresses the equality of the sexes and liberal attitudes toward gays, lesbians, and queer-identified people. It has also had an impact on the development of the two main queer districts in Helsinki, Punavuori and Kallio, affecting the gentrification of these historical districts in slightly different ways.

**Helsinki’s Punavuori and Kallio**

There exists a certain gay/queer distinction between these two gentrifying districts, between the more “respectable” gay and lesbian area in Punavuori in the south and the “rougher” queer district of Kallio in the northeast of the city. In terms suggested by Samuel R. Delany (1999) in his work on “gay urban transformations,” Punavuori was historically a rougher sea-harbor area with sex trade, bordellos, seafarer pubs, and drug dealers until a 1980s facelift brought in new business money as well as commercial artists and architects, which ironically narrowed the possibilities for interclass connections and networking in an increasingly homogeneous social grouping. In contrast, in Kallio, the early twentieth-century Finnish working-class movement’s political organization entailed a certain requirement for working-class sexual “decency” and self-maintenance, and as a proxy, the area was associated with a less commercial queer visibility that provided, again paradoxically, more interclass contacts and less identity- and class-based social grouping until the first decades of the twenty-first century.
Iso-Roobertinkatu Street in the Punovuori District of Helsinki, Finland. This street was the site of the first gay bar in Helsinki (open from 1984 to 1992), as well as numerous other queer bars (including the one shown, now closed). The biggest queer disco in the Nordic countries, Don't Tell Mama, was located on this street before it closed in 2011.

Some studies suggest that it is lesbians who have been on the front lines of gentrification because women, arguably, often form gentrification’s vanguard after being displaced from areas that are no longer affordable on incomes relatively lower than men’s. Gay men then follow the lesbian “settlers” and put up commercial gay businesses, and next come the affluent straight clientele who bring raised prices and heteronormative, gender-discriminating attitudes that force lesbians out. This is not much discussed in scholarly research because the lesbian presence tends to be less visible everywhere, and because it poses a methodological problem for research because there are neither the census figures nor enough resources to produce a sufficiently extensive qualitative study. To some extent, this is true for Punavuori, where communes were created by lesbians in the early 1980s; the first steady, semicommercial locale there was established by the national LGBT organization Seta (Seksuaalinen Tasavertaisuus, or “sexual equality”) in 1984, and commercial gay bars arrived after that. Meanwhile, in Kallio the most important lesbian bar, Nalle Pub, opened in 1994, but had to close its doors in 2013 when gentrification rendered the district both too expensive for and unfriendly toward its lesbian residents.
From the mid-1980s into the second decade of the twenty-first century, Punavuori’s liberal but commodified mainstream “hetero-friendly” gay scene has appealed to the metropolitan impulse to inscribe a personal mapping of the city as part of the quest for a distinctive sense of self (Cook 2003). By contrast, the working- and lower-middle-class historical district of Kallio, the central location for urban resistance and protest, has offered cheap rents and interclass, cross-gendered queer comradeship not only for the radically political, but also for the closeted, poor, and untrendy. Both areas have been crucial to the genesis of ideas of lesbian, gay, and transgender identities in the city, to promoting the visibility of the LGBTQ community, and to making people aware of the nonheterosexual history and present of Helsinki.

Effects of Gentrification

When neighborhoods such as these become more gentrified, some things are lost as well as gained. Younger, affluent, white lesbians and gay men might feel that they do not need specific queer sites anymore because they can have their lattes and dry Rieslings in the trendy, hipster cafes and bars that, on the surface, promise a relaxed urban attitude to the diversity of genders and sexualities. However, many not-so-well-off, not-so-young, not-gender-conforming, or too-political lesbians and other queer people have noticed that this liberal promise is often almost aggressively heteronormative. According to one Kallio butch lesbian in her mid-fifties in a 2018 Facebook exchange with the author: “I went to this hip bohemian Kallio bar with my fan scarf and ordered a beer, yelling cheerfully ‘go HIFK!’ [the local ice hockey team]. The straight male hipster bartender was obviously truly shocked, and told me to go out at once.” When there is no real community anymore—that is, no lesbian or queer bars, cafés, art spaces, and bookshops—these individual experiences tend to alienate nonconforming queer people. The lesbian or queer person must either conform or be excluded if she is too poor or will not adjust to heteronormative gender behavior expectations. Those gays, lesbians, or transgendered persons who can afford good service in trendy, hip places where money buys respect no matter what one’s identity or habitus, might feel that they actually benefit from the possibility of not feeling marginalized.

Gentrification thus changes the ability of these districts to be a queer alternative to other, more commodified scenes in the city because queer visibility gets lost, and the lesbian or gay as a distinct political figure does not get recognized anymore in the streets, bars, or cafés in Kallio or Punavuori as queerness becomes merely one of the commodified “lifestyle choices.” This adds to the possibility of exclusion of those whose sexual or gender “performance” does not follow the homo or heteronormative rules. As Schulman describes the problem: “Most heterosexuals still think of themselves as superior and most gay people submit to this out of necessity or lack of awareness” (2012, 115). Others are assumed to be less important, even if they are tolerated. A few examples from the second decade of the twenty-first century show that the more political lesbian and queer businesses in Kallio
were becoming less visible or moving to the area’s frontiers, to the next, less gentrified district. For example, a lesbian businesswoman and her gay friend owned two pubs. The first, located in Kallio, was popular among the straight middle-class cultural clientele while also offering a safe space for lesbians and gays. Its queer policy was not evident from an external perspective because the pub “looked” straight, but if one was familiar with the local lesbian and gay scene, the queer clientele of the pub became obvious. The second pub, opened later by the same owners, was located in the more affordable but less gentrified district of Vallila, and was more openly lesbian and queerdominated. At that time in Punavuori, where the official LGBT organization and the commodified gay business had been booming, it was not possible to find a similar semipolitical commercial response to the forces of gentrification. The different histories of these two queer districts, Kallio and Punavuori, have to a large extent determined the way their queer residents have envisioned their role as members of these urban communities.

The Future of Cities

Finally, some researchers argue that the increased academic focus on cities, urban developments, and megatrends in economics and politics has diverted attention from the more important issue of the role of the state in everyday life and the reimaginings of that state that would broaden our thinking about the crises of sovereign political entities. From the queer point of view, this is a crucial critique because the urban developments described in this entry are not simply the result of natural or inevitable trends taking place in the Western liberal sphere, where people are seen to be free to move and to form identities and communities as long as they do not harm others. Instead, they point to the massive impact of capitalism on cities that makes them not better and more diverse, but more prone to standardization and a sort of posh or, better, superrich ghettoism. In this scenario, the major benefits go to the new “heritocracy,” the new elite regime in which one’s place in society is no longer earned by one’s own output (as in meritocracy) but via inherited access to wealth, good education, and affluent jobs in the world of global corporations. These are the people who can afford to live in cities and pay for the services they think are cool. As queer people, nonwhite people, and women find it more difficult to be supported by their families, to get a good education, to get well-paid jobs, and to find wealthy spouses, this leads to more heteronormativity in society, not more diversity as Florida (2002) first thought. But as Schulman writes, although gentrification holds a certain emotional attraction, because it feels safe to be and think like others—particularly others who look trendy, affluent, and successful—it is also true that “anything that humans construct, humans can transform” (2012, 171). However, such a transformation would require the frightening act of stepping out and stepping forward to form and participate in new knowledge communities. In this act, access to theories of state and to histories of urban LGBTQ lives and communities and, more generally, to free education, would help people to realize the potential of cities to be sites for more diverse, inclusive, and democratic urban
futures.

SEE ALSO *Urban Queerness*

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The history and current status of sexual minorities in this West African country.

The existence of sexual minorities in precolonial African societies is a heavily debated issue. In 2011 the BBC organized a debate, widely patronized by political, traditional, civic, and religious leaders in diverse African countries, on the topic “Is Homosexuality African?” The purported “un-African” nature of homosexuality is a common reason used by African leaders to justify the criminalization of homosexuality. In a 2015 address to the United Nations General Assembly, the president of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe proclaimed that Africans are not gay. Earlier that year, during a trip to Kenya, US president Barack Obama had encouraged Kenyans to protect the rights of sexual minorities. This request was rejected by Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta, who asserted that gay rights were an American value and alien to Kenya. Ghana has been no exception. In 2011 Ghanaian president John Atta Mills declared that he would safeguard Ghana’s culture by not decriminalizing homosexuality (Ghana Broadcasting Corporation 2011).

And yet, there is ample anthropological evidence of cultural practices among precolonial Ghanaian societies that nurtured sexual and gender diversity. For example, the Nzemas of Ghana were said to have practiced a same-sex marriage custom known as *agɔnwole agyale* (friendship marriage). As part of this tradition, friends of the same sex who were physically attracted to each other could express their love for each other by getting married. These marriages were contracted in an almost identical manner to heterosexual marriages and contained similar elements, including payment of a bride-price and sharing a matrimonial bed (Signorini 1973). Ashanti kings were documented to have taken men they fancied as male consorts and showered them with love and affection (Reindorf 1895). Both the Ashantis and Denkyiras practiced the ɔkra (soul) tradition that was ambiguously steeped in homoeroticism (Ellis 1883). The ɔkra custom permitted aristocrats to select same-sex slaves, whom they treated specially and with whom they had intimate relationships (Hutchinson [1861] 1967). The Fantes believed that a person's sexual attractions originated in his/her soul. Men and women with heavier souls were said to be naturally attracted to women, whereas men and women with lighter souls preferred men (Christensen 1954).

By the time sub-Saharan African countries began to obtain independence from their...
colonizers (starting with Ghana in 1957), knowledge of these practices had eroded, and a new narrative of a completely heterosexual Africa was created (Epprecht 2008). There are several reasons why this occurred. First, oral tradition was the primary mode for many African societies to transmit their history; because sexual practices were not preserved through oral tradition, on account of cultural mores against public discussions of sex, the colonialist narrative took precedent (Tamale 2011).

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Ghanaian President John Atta Mills in 2010. In 2011 Atta Mills declared that he would safeguard Ghana’s culture by not decriminalizing homosexuality, a statement in keeping with the widespread assumption in Ghana and the rest of Africa that homosexuality is a foreign practice.

Second, colonialism introduced formal education and boarding schools, which limited the interactions of children with their parents and grandparents and further disrupted the passing on of traditions from one generation to the next. Over time, knowledge of some customs disappeared, particularly silently practiced or ambiguous customs that revolved around sex and sexual/gender diversity. The agɔnwole agyale practice, for example, has now become obsolete (Grottanelli 1988) to the point that it is unknown to younger generations. For instance, in a 2017 conversation with Kuukuwa Andam, Yaa (full name withheld to protect privacy), a thirty-one-year-old Ashanti businesswoman and university graduate from Maaban, revealed that she did not know about the ɔkra tradition. However, her grandmother (age unknown), who was not formally educated and was a nanayere (king’s wife), was familiar with this practice and correctly identified and explained its tenets. Here, the effects of formal education in breaking familial bonds and hampering the transmission of historical/cultural knowledge are evident. Additional factors propelling...
these new heteronormative narratives include the influence of nonnative religions (Christianity and Islam) and attempts by Western-educated Africans to dispel colonial notions of the African as primitive, barbaric, and amoral (Epprecht 2008).

Legal Framework

Another effect of colonialism was the enactment of laws to penalize same-sex intimacy. The Courts Ordinance of 1935 imported wholesale into Ghana all laws of England in effect on 24 July 1874 (the day that the colonial authority established Ghana’s first legislature). Some of these laws banned “unnatural carnal knowledge” and “sodomy.” These laws have been maintained in Ghana’s criminal code, which currently prohibits male same-sex intercourse upon penalty of imprisonment for up to three years.

Although female same-sex intercourse has not been officially legislated against, female sexual minorities are frequently arrested under the guise of having broken this law. The Constitution of Ghana has provisions prohibiting discrimination against all persons, but these provisions do not specifically mention discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. This has led to an intellectual debate among legal professionals as to whether Ghana’s constitution protects the rights of sexual/gender minorities. A Supreme Court case filed in 2012 for these issues to be interpreted was thrown out of court owing to the petitioner’s continued absence from proceedings.

Founding the Movement

Until the 1990s, there was low visibility of sexual minorities in Ghana, and it was asserted in local and international media that there were no sexual minorities in Ghana. Nii Ajen (1998) interviewed some Ghanaian men who admitted to engaging in frequent sexual intercourse with their same-sex partners. Simultaneously, these men generally denied being “gay” or that homosexuality even existed in Ghana or Africa.

This apparent contradiction could be explained by existing cultural/colonial taboos against the public discussion of sex and the fact that at that point in time in Ghana the assumption of identities based on one’s sexual orientation was as novel a concept as it must have been in nineteenth-century Western societies, when words such as *homosexual* were first coined to describe identities (Foucault 1978). For example, festive transvestism has been a part of Ghanaian practice for many years (Geoffrion 2013). During football matches, university events, and other festive occasions, Ghanaian men dress up in a manner stereotypically associated with women. This activity was not, however, tagged as being “gay” or “straight,” although Karine Geoffrion (2013) has observed that it created an outlet for some individuals who were same-sex attracted or trans to step outside heteronormative boundaries.
All this changed in 1998 when the British Council funded training for some Ghanaian sexual minorities. Three of these sexual minorities formed the Gay and Lesbian Association of Ghana (GALAG), which encountered societal stigma and governmental opposition because of its name. To circumvent this opposition/stigma, this group was later officially registered as the Centre for Popular Education and Human Rights, Ghana (CEPEHRG). Funding from some foreign donors, including the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, was used to rent an office and purchase furniture and stationery.

Using the pseudonym Prince Kweku MacDonald to avoid being identified and persecuted, one of the founding members of GALAG granted the group’s first interview to the press in 2006. The interview occurred in the studios of Joy FM, one of the leading radio stations in Ghana. According to Mac-Darling Cobbinah, the president of the CEPEHRG as of 2018, a miscommunication with some of the journalists in the interview studio led to a widespread rumor that Ghana was scheduled to host its first LGBT conference, which would attract thousands of sexual minorities to Ghana. These rumors led to widespread condemnation of sexual minorities by several Ghanaian leaders, and Kwamena Bartels, the nation’s information minister, declared that the government was implementing a ban on all future meetings that would promote LGBT rights (BBC News 2006).

After about a year, the CEPEHRG slowly resumed its activities and decided to focus mainly on the provision of assistance to members of the LGBT community in Ghana, particularly those who were HIV positive, as some were unable to seek treatment at mainstream hospitals because of stigmatization. Additionally, the CEPEHRG worked with the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice to develop a help line that sexual minorities could text if they were facing discrimination or harassment.

**Challenges**

Sexual/gender minorities face diverse challenges in Ghana. Some members of sexual minorities have been murdered and assaulted. Since 2012, female sexual minorities in Jamestown, a suburb of Accra, have been subjected to frequent mob attacks, and there has been a lack of will on the part of police to arrest or prosecute the culprits. Similarly, vigilante groups called the “Sharia police” have sprung up, mostly in Muslim neighborhoods, and they are known to lure male sexual minorities to places where they are assaulted with barbed wire, whips, and stones.

Schoolchildren accused of being sexual minorities are dismissed from school or lynched by their classmates. After two students at St. Paul’s Secondary School were assaulted by their peers on account of allegations of being gay, the Ghana Education Service recommended that the two students be penalized. Religious organizations often advocate for sexual minorities to be abused; the Ghana Catholic Bishops’ Conference, the Christian Council of Ghana, and the Office of the National Chief Imam have all asked the government to refrain
from protecting the rights of abused sexual minorities.

**Moving Forward**

Since CEPEHRG’s formation, diverse nongovernmental organizations have been set up across Ghana focusing on LGBTI issues. As a result of the stigma and opposition GALAG encountered, most nongovernmental organizations that cater to sexual/gender minorities do not assume names that would make their objectives apparent. One of the most notable organizations is Solace Brothers Foundation, which was established in 2012 and organizes frequent sessions to train members of the LGBTI community as paralegals who can assist sexual/gender minorities who are attacked or discriminated against. Another organization is Courageous Sisters, which was registered in 2017 and is one of the first organizations to focus solely on female sexual minorities. With the assistance of health personnel, Courageous Sisters organizes regular health screenings for its members, as well as training programs to inform them of their rights. Several unregistered sexual minority organizations also operate through private Facebook and WhatsApp groups. As the LGBT movement in Ghana has developed, sexual/gender minorities have adopted a variety of ways to describe themselves. Some use Anglicized/Westernized labels such as “gay” or “lesbian,” whereas others prefer to use reappropriated indigenous terms such as *sasu* (mate) or *supi* (woman who has sex with another woman).

In November 2017 an Al-Jazeera interview of Ghana’s president, Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, went viral because of his comments on homosexuality. Akufo-Addo stated that although legalizing homosexuality was not currently on his government’s agenda, it was nevertheless bound to happen, especially as advocacy for LGBT rights has increased (Graphic Online 2017).

In January 2018 Human Rights Watch released a study it conducted on sexual minority rights in Ghana (Isaack 2018). The report was one of the most recent studies on the LGBT community in Ghana to focus not only on the experiences of cisgender gay/bisexual men, but also on those of cisgender lesbians/bisexual women and individuals who are trans. The study documented instances of abuse against Ghana’s LGBT community and the failure of governmental agencies (including the Ministry of Justice and the Police Service) to address this abuse. Human Rights Watch sent letters to these governmental agencies in response to a draft copy of the research findings. In response to this letter, the Ghana Police Service pledged to adopt “more proactive steps and pragmatic approaches” to protect the rights of LGBT individuals (quoted in Isaack 2018, 67).

In January 2018 there was a “coming out” of some LGBT individuals in Ghana. The first trans woman to come out in Ghana, Angela Coleman (popularly known as Madina Broni), was interviewed by the celebrity website GhanaCelebrities.com. The general public’s impression of Coleman after this interview was positive, and people criticized her
interviewer, whom they deemed as asking insensitive questions (Graham 2018). In Coleman's opinion, she was forced by society to change her gender, and she detailed being persecuted as a child because people said she was too feminine for a boy. With the full blessing of her family, she decided to undergo a sex-change operation in Spain, and she said she is now comfortable in her body (Myjoyonline.com 2018). On 20 January 2018, Sika and Ella, a Ghanaian lesbian couple, went public with their relationship. They were the first known Ghanaian LGBT couple. Via the Facebook page of GhanaCelebrities.com, they released a montage featuring some happy moments in their relationship.

There has been some positive representation of LGBT individuals in the arts. Notably, Eric Gyamfi, a Ghanaian artist, has been documenting the lives of Ghanaian sexual/gender minorities through photographs (Naughton 2017). His art exhibitions in Ghana have been popular, and he has received feedback that the exhibitions have caused people to perceive the LGBT community in a more positive light (Magnum Foundation 2017).

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara; Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa; Rape, Corrective, in Africa

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Ghilman

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A term for a type of male slave or servant during the era of Islamic caliphates, sometimes depicted as the homosexual “beloved” in classical Arabic literature.

The word *ghulam* (plural: *ghilman*) denotes both “youth” or “boy” and “servant” or “slave” in classical Arabic, from which language the word was also adopted by Persian and some other Islamic languages. In the latter sense, it may also be used for an older servant. While the word remained, and still remains, used in this general sense, it also developed a more specific meaning as the personal slave army of powerful men—and sometimes women.

**Historical Background**

From early Islamic times onward, affluent and powerful persons had a retinue of servants, both *khadam* (“servants,” often in the sense of eunuch servants) and *ghilman*. The latter acted as attendants and guards and sometimes made up a private army. During the Umayyad period (661–750), such private armies of ghilman were small and remained rather invisible, but in the ninth century they rapidly gained importance and visibility. They became a strong power element in society and formed major armed regiments under their own leaders, a development that reached its peak in the Egyptian Mamluk (slave) institution, with Mamluks wielding power in Egypt and parts of Syria from 1250 to 1517 under the nominal suzerainty of the Abbasid caliph (the chief civil and religious ruler in Islamic society).

Especially during the Mamluk period, ghilman were systematically trained as soldiers in a strict hierarchical system. The new recruits were often forcibly taken or bought as slaves and usually came from among the Turks. In the Ottoman period (1517–1922) they commonly originated in the Balkans from among the Christian population, and in Islamic Spain many were of Slavonic origin (*saqaliba*). When still young they were converted to Islam and given primary education, which for most of them continued with military training, while a few were trained for other careers. Sometimes the boys were also castrated, and it is often hard to tell from the sources whether they describe castrates or not as castration also opened the doors for preferment; because eunuchs were often used as high-ranking civil servants, it was not always unwelcome or forced.
While ghilman were mainly employed by their masters as soldiers and as a private retinue, there could also be a sexual aspect in their use, although it is worth emphasizing that only a minority of ghilman were involved in sexual relations with their patrons and their role as a personal army was much more prominent than their role as bedfellows. Especially younger boys were, however, targeted and the sexual interest in them was not always welcome, resulting in cases in which such ghilman murdered their patron rather than protected him.

**The Ghulam in Literature**

In literature, the ghulam often appears as a homoerotic, or homosexual, beloved, and he is often qualified as *amrad* (beardless). Homosexual relations seem to have surfaced in the Arab-Islamic culture in the mid-eighth century. Information on ghilman as targets of romantic or sexual interest mainly comes from poetry, anecdote collections (often sharing material with historical works), and erotic manuals. The manuals, though, usually discuss heterosexual love more extensively than homosexual love and sometimes completely ignore the latter.

From the early Abbasid period (750–1258) there are also the works of al-Jahiz (c. 776–868), who discussed erotic relations in several of his works and even wrote a literary debate comparing the merits of slave girls and ghilman as sexual partners (*Mufakharat al-jawari wa-al-ghilman* [Boasting match over maids and youths]), imitated by several later authors. Everett K. Rowson, in his article “The Traffic in Boys” (2008), has suggested that this comparison of boys' and girls' merits as sexual partners goes back to Greek texts, but this seems somewhat improbable. The similarities between the traditions are more probably explained by the somewhat similar social contexts and the nature of these love affairs themselves.

While very rare in earlier literature, homoerotic poetry became a central part of mainstream Arabic literature in the late eighth century, especially through the *mudhakkarat* (male love poems) of Abū Nuwās (d. c. 813), and retained its position until the end of classical Arabic literature in the nineteenth century. Later, Persian and Ottoman Turkish poetry followed suit. In another important genre, wine poetry (*khamriyyat*), the ghulam is regularly found in the role of a beloved cupbearer, or *saqi*. He also became a standard character in prose literature, especially in the *nawadir* (anecdotes), which are mostly of a comic nature. The majority of ghilman were of Turkish origin, and it is no coincidence that in later Arabic and Persian literature Turks became symbols of blond beauty, whereas dark Indians were paragons of ugliness.

Whereas love poems addressed to ghilman were mostly considered socially acceptable and cannot in any sense be labeled underground literature, more sexually explicit genres, which were not as universally condoned, also existed. These are covered by the term *mujun* (shamelessness, impudence), and they contain a variety of sexually explicit material (both
homosexual and heterosexual), atheism, and other sensational topics considered to be breaches of social norms. Even these genres were openly written, but they tended to have an effect on the reputation of the author.

In the mudhakkarat, the ghulam is mostly seen as a more or less platonic beloved, and the sexual aspects of love are rarely explicitly mentioned, with the exception of kisses (literally, the beloved’s saliva), which are compared to wine because of their inebriating effect. The physical description of the beloved is usually sexually neutral; it is the shining face of the beloved and his or her supple body that are described, often in a way that leaves the gender undecided. One of the rare features that sets the male beloved apart is the mention of his moustache, which is usually described as just starting to grow, giving a greenish, not pitch-black, hue to the skin. This was considered beautiful in contrast to a fully grown moustache, which was the sign of adulthood and made the ghulam unattractive in the eyes of his lovers. The newly grown moustache resembles the supple new growth of vegetation, whereas a full moustache is likened to dry and hardened vegetation.

More often than not, it is only the grammatical forms that betray the gender of the beloved in Arabic poetry, while in Persian even this linguistic help is missing. Consequently, when there was no story to contextualize the poem, medieval scholars themselves were often at pains to deduce whether an individual love poem belonged to mudhakkarat or muʾannathat (female love poems), and the same poem may appear in various recensions (critical revisions) in different sections of the collected works of the poet. There is a slight tendency, though, to be more risqué in the mudhakkarat than the muʾannathat, which occasionally helps to decide the question.

In love poems, the ghulam is described as a delicate youth, but in the mujun genre and in comic anecdotes he may also be a robust servant. His role may also switch from the beloved to the lover, classical Arabic literature mostly being very particular in dividing the roles in a love relation into an active lover and a passive beloved. In court circles, love relations between an adult male and a young man or boy were usually considered acceptable or at least silently accepted. Thus, King Qabus ibn Wushmgir (d. 1012) openly advises his son in the Qabus nameh (Mirror of princes) to have sex with both girls and boys instead of restricting himself to either sex. The relation between two adult males, however, was considered degrading to the one who was thought to be in the passive role. Religious scholars obviously condemned all homosexual and all extramarital physical relations.

**Slave Boys and Asymmetric Relations**

While there is ample documentation of a commerce in female slaves bought for sexual purposes, the respective traffic in boys is less well documented, and the evidence is usually indirect. Beautiful ghilman were bought and rented, often technically through a sale that was soon reverted. The law did not say anything about any waiting periods in the sale of
boys, in contrast to slave girls who had been used for sexual purposes and might have become pregnant, and, thus, short-term sales were legally valid even according to the strictest scholars. In religious literature, it is often emphasized that homosexual intercourse is forbidden even with one’s own slave boy, which implies that there were widespread ideas about this being in a sense less prohibited than having sex with others’ slave boys as a form of prostitution. Moreover, in the Shafi‘i legal school, opinions were raised that it, indeed, was a less grave thing, as, based on the analogy of legally valid relations with slave girls, one may mistakenly believe this to be legal, too, and hence err unintentionally rather than on purpose. Usually, when the beard of the ghulam started to grow, he was deemed to have lost his erotic charm, and literature is full of comic or tragic stories of adolescent slave boys trying to shave or pluck their beard to hide the fact that they have reached maturity.

Much of the evidence of the sexual use of the ghulam comes from medieval adab literature (belles lettres), and while the anecdotes themselves may be unreliable as such and the poems hard to interpret in exact terms, the general tone of the literature implies that asymmetric relations between an adult male and an adolescent boy were acceptable in court circles, although they were forbidden by Islamic law. Arabic erotic literature also includes instances of religious scholars and judges who are supposed to have shared this love for ghilman, but the stories about them make it clear that it was considered inappropriate for such men to have homosexual relations. The Islamic “clergy” were clearly expected to follow stricter norms than the lay elite, who adopted looser morals in general, and the same can be seen in attitudes toward, for example, the drinking of wine and playing chess. Such pastimes were mostly condemned by law but commonly indulged in by courtiers and the elite in general, religious scholars excluded.

It was also common to accuse Sufis of corrupting the youth and having homosexual relations with their novices and younger Sufis. In some cases such accusations may have been well founded, but more often they would have been caused by anti-Sufi prejudice, combined with the Sufi custom of using metaphors taken from homoerotic love poetry.

**Other Relationships**

Although love relations were—at least as they are depicted in the existing literary sources—usually asymmetric, there are occasional references to young men in love with each other. Even in these cases, there tends to be some asymmetry in the social status of the two: the most common setting is of a young prince or nobleman in love with his coeval servant or lower-class friend, with the father of the nobleman usually lurking somewhere full of condemnation. There are also stories, however, of kings falling in love with their ghulam generals, who would not have been immature boys. Thus, for example, Tughril Beg (c. 990–1063) was known to have been in love with his commander Khumartakin. One such pair, the Ghaznavid king Mahmud (971–1030) and his servant Ayaz, even became the leading
couple in a number of romantic epics and stories in Persian.

Sources, such as the works of the Egyptian historian al-Maqrizi (1364–1442), contain plenty of information on homosexual relations among Mamluk slave soldiers, with the older Mamluks using the younger ghilman or falling in love with them. It seems, however, that this merely reflects the source situation, and such relations appear to have been equally common at other times and in other circles since early Abbasid times (starting in 750).

There was also a short-lived fashion of slave girls posing as boys in the early ninth century, usually said to have started with the effort of the mother of Caliph alAmin (r. 809–813) to reorient her son’s sexual appetite from males to females. While there is little documentation of this trend, it does appear prominently in the poetry of the age with ghulamiyyat, love poems addressed to girls in boys’ clothes, which must have been a rather shocking sight in a society where clothing revealed much about the social status of a person and was strictly regulated by custom.

SEE ALSO Homoerotic Poetry of Abū Nuwās; Homosexual Acts in Shariʿa; Mufākharat al-Jawārī wa-al-Ghilmān (al-Jāḥiẓ); Mukhannath

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Graffiti and Graphic Art

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The history and current use of these artistic media in queer public expressions.

Conventional accounts of the origins of modern graffiti—illicit writings or drawings on public surfaces—date it to the late 1960s and 1970s, when young people of color in Philadelphia and New York began tagging, or quickly writing their street/code names, on buildings and subway cars with pseudonyms and street numbers in increasingly elaborate ways. Within a decade, stylized designs filled entire subway cars and spray-can art spread, fueled by the popularity of hip-hop, beyond the northeastern United States to around the world. Graffiti is an important medium for social expression and has many twentieth-century precursors among marginalized groups, such as the names written on freight trains by homeless travelers in the 1940s and the territorial markings of street gangs in Los Angeles between the 1930s and 1960s. There are also examples of graffiti in gay film and literature. For example, an intertitle in the 1950 homoerotic film Un chant d'amour (A song of love) by Jean Genet depicts words scratched into a prison wall, including “B.A.A.D.C” (a French acronym roughly translated as “hello to friends in need”). In his 1963 novel City of Night, John Rechy described “frantic scrawls” in bathrooms where same-sex cruising occurred (50). Although graffiti is typically understood (in popular culture and scholarly literature) in heteromasculine terms, there is a significant history of LGBT contributions to the genre.

There are significant affinities between graffiti and queerness. Both are marginal forms of expression organized around difference rather than assimilation. The urban environment has long been a refuge for people who deviate from gender and sexual norms and are punished by society as a result. The city and its institutions, namely bathhouses and bars, as well as other public spaces, such as bathrooms, alleys, parks, and piers, have historically been crucial for the subterranean development of LGBT communities. These spaces became especially utilized in the period of gay liberation from the 1960s to the early 1980s, corresponding to the time when graffiti emerged in its current form as a vibrant street art practice. However, the links between queerness, the urban environment, and graffiti tend to be downplayed if not ignored entirely in conventional accounts of the genre.

Pier Graffiti
An overlooked, though significant, archive of gay graffiti exists in the photographic history of the Hudson River piers of Lower Manhattan in New York City, an abandoned industrial area that was a gay cruising area in the 1970s and early 1980s, before the AIDS epidemic changed the culture of public sex and urban development repurposed the dilapidated piers. For artists such as Alvin Baltrop and Stanley Stellar, graffiti was central to the aesthetics of the piers and was regularly featured in the backgrounds of their photographs. Other artists, such as Keith Haring, Tava, David Wojnarowicz, and Luis Frangella, created graffiti on the piers. For many, the piers were a sexual and artistic urban environment. Wojnarowicz incorporated piers graffiti into his *Rimbaud in New York* series of photographs (1978–1979). He also created graffiti himself at the piers. Wojnarowicz (along with Haring, Jean-Michel Basquiat, and Martin Wong) was affiliated with New York City’s East Village art scene, notable for the first fine art exhibition of uptown graffiti writers. In 1983 Wojnarowicz organized an installation of graffiti and murals at Pier 38 as an East Village outpost.

PHOTO COURTESY OF TARA BURK.

**Detail from Keith Haring’s *Once upon a Time Mural* (1989).** Haring created this mural featuring his signature vibrantly silhouetted figures and various phallic images in the men’s restroom of the LGBT Community Center in the West Village of Manhattan. The mural’s liberation-era theme that sex could be pleasurable and empowering was a radical assertion at a time when the gay community was largely focused on HIV/AIDS prevention measures.

One of the most prolific artists of the piers was Tava, born Gustav von Will. Before his death in 1991, his large, phallocentric paintings of muscular men were fixtures on the piers, often serving as backdrops for the naked men who sunbathed and had sex there. Tava’s paintings
on Pier 46 were so large that they were visible—as were their human counterparts—to tourists aboard the Circle Line cruise boats that passed by. Tava’s work is visible in photographs by gay artists, including Baltrop, Stellar, Arthur Tress, Lee Snider, and Frank Hallam. Another figurative artist of the piers was Luis Frangella, who created large classically inspired heads and nudes on the walls of Pier 34. These appear in photographs by gay artists Peter Hujar and Andreas Sterzing. Many of these works are in the collection of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art in New York City.

**Haring and Basquiat**

The graffiti art of Tava and Frangella may be understood within the larger context of gay liberation. After the political activism and riots of LGBT people in the civil rights decade of the 1960s, a period of gay liberation occurred in the 1970s wherein decades of shame and persecution were replaced with pride and social justice organizing. During this time, the first lesbian and gay art group exhibitions occurred, gay bathhouses became legal, and many people “came out” as lesbian and gay. Many gay artists, such as Tava, created artworks that unapologetically celebrated male nudity, promiscuity, and group sex. Such imagery also appeared in liberation-era publications, such as *Fag Rag*, and in murals commissioned for gay bathhouses in San Francisco.

A decade later, when the graffiti artist Keith Haring created a mural called *Once upon a Time* in the men’s restroom at the LGBT Community Center in the West Village of Manhattan (just blocks away from the Hudson River piers), he harked back to this era of sexual liberation, which was cut short by the AIDS crisis. The mural, done in Haring’s signature style of vibrantly silhouetted figures, glorifies gay communal sex and is rife with phallic imagery. The mural’s liberation-era theme that sex could be pleasurable and empowering was a radical assertion at a time when the gay community was largely focused on HIV/AIDS-prevention measures ranging from abstinence to condom use. *Once upon a Time* is particularly well-suited to its location, since men’s public restrooms have historically been places where men who have sex with other men meet. The room housing *Once upon a Time* was later converted into a meeting room and today is devoted exclusively to the Haring installation. Haring, who died from AIDS in 1990 just nine months after completing the mural, devoted his life to creating sex-positive and life-affirming imagery. Haring’s ubiquitous sex-positive signature style, along with the AIDS Memorial Quilt (conceived in 1985 by Cleve Jones and now composed of more than 48,000 panels commemorating people who have died from AIDS) and other public activist art initiatives, played a major role in humanizing the HIV/AIDS crisis.

While in art school, Haring began his artistic career as a street artist drawing in chalk in the New York City subways and writing in paint in the run-down spaces of the Hudson River piers. His work can be found in the aforementioned photographic archives of the piers. For example, a Haring graffiti of two men facing each other, erect penises visible, appears on...
the wall in a 1981 photograph by Stanley Stellar, wherein porn star J. D. Slater, nude from the waist up, leans against a doorway and the artist Peter Hujar is visible having sex in the background. In another one of Stellar’s photographs, a naked man stands in front of a decrepit wall next to one of Haring’s iconic baby images. These photos capture the positive spirit of Haring’s work, which celebrated homosexuality through the idiom of graffiti.

Martin Wong was a gay artist who, before his death from AIDS in 1999, donated his large collection of graffiti art to the Museum of the City of New York, including some of the earliest works by Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat. Basquiat is an artist who, like Haring, worked in graffiti, street art, and fine art idioms. He began his street art career under the pseudonym SAMO, tagging throughout Manhattan in the late 1970s. Although in his art Basquiat did not address sexuality directly, the black queer aesthetics of his work have been explored in recent scholarship. Contemporary New York City–based artist Earsnot, a queer graffiti writer who also does not make art about sexuality, recalls the stereotype-defying impulses of Basquiat.

In the United Kingdom, some contemporary queer and trans graffiti artists, such as the “Masked Muskequeers,” focus on sexuality in their work in order to celebrate queerness and counter stigmas against LGBT people. In works such as QAF (queer as fuck) a bold pink palette and all-caps letters proclaim queerness as an identity to be proud of. These messages have been subject to vandalism, such as a recent buffing (erasure) of a Masked Muskequeers piece, Stay Queer, to read “Stay Brainwashed.” Masked Muskequeers members quickly restored the piece and embellished it with three rainbows in the colors of the transgender, bisexual, and gay pride flags. These two pieces function in a dual manner: on the one hand, they are affirmative in that they speak directly to marginalized populations offering messages of support and pride; on the other hand, they are confrontational in that they force heterosexual viewers to contend with the fact of LGBT people’s existence.

Social Justice Graffiti

In addition to sexually explicit and homoerotic images in the public sphere, another common theme of queer graffiti and street art is social justice. An early example of this is found in a 1975 photograph by Shelley Seccombe in the collection of the Leslie-Lohman Museum, called Wall Newspaper–West Street at 11th Street, which features two presumably transgender people on Pier 52 in front of hand-painted graffiti that reads “7-5-75. 2:30 pm —Pier attack by Teenagers and Adults responsible for terrorizing people—breaking Pier and probably they set the fire—daytime muggers now work in teams inside. Stay out.” Museum curators have speculated that this warning to the community was penned by the author of Warehouse Newsletter, which contained crime updates and was distributed in local gay bars.
Because women (unlike men) tend to be sexually objectified in the public sphere, lesbian graffiti that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s was more politically than sexually oriented. There are several examples in the photograph collection of the Lesbian Herstory Archives in Brooklyn, New York. One photograph shows graffiti by TK Williams and Arcus Flynn with the spray-painted phrase “WOMEN UNITE ... IMPEACH NIXON” (with two entwined women’s symbols), done in Oklahoma City in 1973 during the Watergate hearings. A photograph by the lesbian documentary photographer Bettye Lane of a gay pride march in New York City in 1976 features people sitting in front of the phrase “Gaywalk, 5th Ave” spray-painted on a building wall. Another Bettye Lane photograph, from 1971, documents graffiti that reads “Lesbian Menace Strikes Again” on the building of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington, DC. A 1982 photo by longtime lesbian activist Maxine Wolfe depicts a wall emblazoned with the spray-painted phrase “END LESBIAN OPPRESSION” in New York City.

In the 1990s a new generation of lesbian street artists created works that touched upon both political issues and sexuality. For example, the poster series by New York–based art collectives fierce pussy and Dyke Action Machine redoubled the cultural activist strategies of the late 1980s by such groups as Silence=Death Project and Gran Fury by expanding visibility tactics and intensifying public displays of queer sexuality in the public sphere. Whereas Dyke Action Machine created posters featuring lesbian stand-ins for straight characters in conventional advertising campaigns by companies such as Calvin Klein, fierce pussy avoided the overdetermined field of mass media critique by drawing upon less-mined archives, such as the feminist art movement and queer zines.

During the 1970s murals were important to the social liberation movements happening among gay people, Chicanos, and African Americans. Judith Baca, who identifies as a Chicana lesbian feminist artist, works in a figurative style of muralism that recalls the political golden age of the 1930s in the United States and Mexico. She is best known for the 1976 public art mural The History of California, popularly known as The Great Wall of Los Angeles in Los Angeles. The large mural (13 x 2,754 feet [4 x 839.5 meters]) covers six city blocks and is one of the largest murals in the world. One section, called “The Origins of Gay Rights,” depicts the efforts of such groups as Daughters of Bilitis to advance lesbian and gay civil rights during the oppressive McCarthy era in the United States. The mural is significant because it tells the history of California from the perspective of women and minorities. The social realist style harks back to the US government–funded Works Progress Administration murals of the 1930s as well as to the visual traditions of Mexican muralism by artists such as David Alfaro Siqueiros. Social justice movements that emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s, including labor rights, feminism, gay liberation, and indigenous rights, were important influences on The Great Wall of Los Angeles.

The Philadelphia mural Pride and Progress (2002–2003) carries on this tradition. Designed by Ann Northrup and sponsored by the Mural Arts Program, it depicts in vibrant colors a
crowd at a gay pride festival and includes a historical black-and-white section showing a 1966 march for gay civil rights that occurred in Philadelphia. The 55 x 165 feet (16.75 x 50.3 meters) mural takes up the entire west side of the William Way LGBT Community Center.

Graffiti writers around the globe have responded to sociopolitical debates with public declarations. In Montreal in the 1980s, graffiti written in French, English, or both appeared throughout the urban sphere, referring to gay rights, among other issues. Anna Wacławek notes that although “signature graffiti” writers tend to be young men who work in crews (replicating the working methods and aesthetics of the New York style), “political graffiti” writers in Montreal tend to be individual men and women from varying age groups (2016, 249).

**Queer Graphic Art**

As the subject matter of these works indicates, the late 1960s and 1970s were an important transitional decade, and the graphic arts were an important part of this shift. Graphic illustrations in gay magazines and newspapers and on calendars, posters, buttons, and demonstration placards were distributed at gay bookstores, at gay protests and pride marches, and through mailing networks. They were displayed in homes around the world, contributing to the newfound public, prideful, collective gay identity. After the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City and the many demonstrations and riots that occurred in the late 1960s, LGBT people were emboldened to create symbols and images to designate their identity in public, to one another, and to the world. Some of these symbols included the pink triangle, appropriated from the symbol used by Nazis to identify homosexual prisoners in concentration camps during World War II. During the HIV/AIDS epidemic that began in the 1980s, the pink triangle became a symbol of LGBT resistance to government neglect and homophobia due to the ubiquity of the poster designed in 1986 by the Silence=Death Project, a group of six men, several with graphic design experience. The design was particularly effective because of its economy: a pink triangle against a black background with “SILENCE=DEATH” written below in white. It looked more like a commercial advertisement than a traditional political graphic. The poster was adopted by the activist group ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), which used graphic campaigns and confrontational protest tactics to draw attention and demand a response to the AIDS crisis.

In the 1980s and 1990s, graphic design was used to promote sex education, hold public officials accountable, and keep AIDS in the public eye. In addition to the Silence=Death poster, there were sexually explicit stickers and posters distributed in the public sphere by such groups as Gran Fury and fierce pussy, which promoted queer visibility and combated homophobic responses to HIV/AIDS. Despite the ubiquity of this imagery on the streets of New York in the late 1980s, the Silence=Death poster was not included in an exhibition of
political graphics titled *Committed to Print* at New York City’s Museum of Modern Art in 1988, perhaps because it was posted by an art collective and distributed in the streets. The marginalization of street art and graphic activism with queer themes has been redressed in the past decade in a number of exhibitions, such as *ACT UP New York: Art, Activism, and the AIDS Crisis, 1987–1993*, curated by Helen Molesworth and Claire Grace at Harvard University in 2009.

Following in the tradition of ACT UP graphic activists, queer artists have engaged in political vandalism. This ranges from spontaneous writing (as occurred in 1992 when queer activists in San Francisco called out the homophobia of the film *Basic Instinct* by defacing promotional posters) to organized campaigns. For example, Banksy’s satirical 2003 piece *Queen Victoria* depicts the nineteenth-century monarch engaged in a sex act with another woman and has been interpreted by critics as a commentary on the hypocrisy of the British government. In 2008 the Los Angeles–based artist Homo Riot began making street art with in-your-face gay themes, in response to the passage of Proposition 8 in California (a bill that eliminated the right of same-sex couples to marry). The artist plastered images, such as two men kissing, all over abandoned buildings and poles in Los Angeles, fulfilling an important function of queer graffiti and street art: simultaneously confronting the mainstream public with an image of gay sexuality and providing an affirmative image to LGBT audiences. These works echoed the 2006 “Kissing Priests” campaign in Portugal by Opus Gay, a queer art activist group formed in that country in 1998 to promote LGBT rights using stickers, posters, and spray paint/stencil campaigns. Stencils are a quick and effective method for street art activism. Since 2010 in Guadalajara, Mexico, the group Gaystencil has made PDF templates available on the internet so that others can replicate its queer stencils (such as *Beso* or *kiss*).

**Anti-Queer Graffiti**

Unfortunately, there are as many examples of anti-LGBT graffiti as there are of affirmative LGBT graffiti. In South Africa, homophobic messages accompanied anti-AIDS graffiti found on an escalator at the University of Natal ([Bonnin et al. 1998](#)). Antigay graffiti is included in a slideshow of thirty-one still photographs of graffiti in the La Loma barrio of Medellín, Colombia, in the video *Rayones* or “Tags” ([Taylor and Pitman 2013](#)).

Anti-LGBT graffiti often occurs as a defacement of LGBT-positive writing. This is not unrelated to how graffiti artists buff each other’s work, but it is more pernicious. Some examples are detailed in the *Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing* exhibition catalog ([Goldin et al. 1989](#)) and in *AIDS Demo Graphics* ([Crimp and Rolston 1990](#)). In other cases, LGBT people have documented examples of homophobic graffiti. The Lesbian Herstory Archives include a 2005 photograph of a women’s prison in Ontario, Canada, with “KILL LESBIANS” written on an exterior wall. There are multiple examples of anti-LGBT graffiti in the photograph collections of the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives in Los Angeles.
Researchers who study latrinalia, also known as bathroom graffiti, find that sexuality is the most common theme, and “homosexual” graffiti tends to be more common than “heterosexual” graffiti, particularly in men's bathrooms.

Homophobic graffiti frequently is in reaction to homosexual graffiti and vice versa; this is known as a response chain, or back-and-forth correspondence between multiple authors (Trahan 2016, 96). The decades-old phenomenon of queer response chains persists in the early twenty-first century. In 2015 a digital mural called Por Vida, featuring two same-sex couples and a transgender person, in San Francisco on the exterior wall of Galeria de la Raza by Manuel Paul of the Los Angeles–based Maricon Collective, was defaced three times, including one time when the male couple was set on fire. As recently as 2017 in Kailua, Hawaii, the artist Jess X Snow created an outdoor graffiti installation with the text “Today I Touched My Queer Body until It Became Cathedral.” The piece celebrates masturbation as a form of self-love for queer bodies of color that are perpetually marginalized in society. Within two days the word queer was blacked out and a large penis was drawn between the hands. In an interview after the defacement, the artist attributed this vandalism to patriarchy and homophobia.
Increase in and Recognition of Queer Graffiti

Today, queer themes appear with increasing regularity in street art. In San Francisco and elsewhere, Jeremy Novy creates gay imagery, such as stencils of leathermen. Rommy Sobrado-Torrico and Crystal are contemporary street artists making queer-themed work in San Francisco. In New Orleans, graffiti artist Hugo Gyrl creates brightly colored images of disembodied hands and noses that are monstrous, playful, and decidedly queer in their flamboyant and fierce aesthetic. In the 2010s there has been a shift toward institutional recognition, with the first exhibition exclusively devoted to LGBT and LGBT-friendly street artists, *A History of Queer Street Art*, opening in 2011 at SOMArts in San Francisco, organized by Novy.

However, queer themes remain lacking in literature on graffiti. Dominant accounts of graffiti tend to focus on its heteromasculine originators, and the contributions of LGBT people have been less acknowledged, until recently. Graffiti writing has been a male-dominated and heterosexual-dominated field, but LGBT people have been involved in it since its first decades. Fundamentally, graffiti is an art form that seeks to communicate. One scholar has identified its power as a medium to give voice to those marginalized in mainstream society. Graffiti can be a powerful statement of personal identity, as well as an outlet for public affirmations of collective identity, particularly in the wake of gay liberation in the late 1960s and 1970s, the HIV/AIDS crisis since the 1980s, and our contemporary moment. Social media now also enables the promotion of illicit queer graffiti worldwide. The Tumblr site "Queer Graffiti" regularly posts images of graffiti of same-sex kissing, gender bending, and other queer imagery from over 140 countries.

SEE ALSO  *ACT UP; Boys Love (Yaoi) Manga; Cruising and Cruising Grounds; Daughters of Bilitis; Pink Triangle*

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**FILMOGRAPHY**

The Groupe du 6 novembre: lesbiennes issues du colonialisme, de l’esclavage et de l’immigration (6 November Group: Lesbians Begotten of/Out of Colonialism, Slavery, and Immigration) was the first heterogeneous autonomous self-declared lesbian of color group in contemporary France. It was founded in 1999 in Paris and remained primarily based there. It also operated more broadly in France—in the Parisian banlieues (suburban racialized working-class neighborhoods) and in other cities and banlieues. It formed links of solidarity with lesbians in France’s present and former colonies and with lesbians of color groups elsewhere in Europe and globally.

Unlike prior autonomous women of color groups in France, the members of the Groupe du 6 novembre did not come from one national, regional, or community background. Instead, they came together from many: Maghrebian, sub-Saharan African, Afro-Caribbean, Latin American, and racially mixed. The group was founded during a tumultuous political period for people of color in France. The founders converged at a national lesbian gathering in 1999, where it became apparent that lesbians of color, and questions of coloniality and racism, were not being taken seriously by most white lesbians. They created an autonomous space at the gathering and thereafter opened it to create the broader group (Bacchetta 2009).

The name Groupe du 6 novembre: lesbiennes issues du colonialisme, de l’esclavage et de l’immigration reveals quite a bit about the group’s political mandate. The first part refers to its founding date. It is not uncommon in France to use a specific date in names to mark the inauguration of a new politics that is present and simultaneously is yet to come. The group’s subtitle (Lesbians Begotten of/Out of Colonialism, Slavery, and Immigration) references a critical relationship to histories, bodies, and political geographies of the postcolonial world. The notion of “begotten of” evokes not only respect for ancestral lands but also the necessity and desire to “re-compose our own herstory” (Nedjmam 2001; translation by Paola Bacchetta).
Historical Emergence

Like many other postcolonial lesbian groups elsewhere, the genealogy of the Groupe du 6 novembre most accurately begins by recognizing that lesbians were among the many other activists in anticolonial movements (Bacchetta 2002). More recently, as France’s colonies began to win political independence, lesbians made their way to France as immigrants. The earliest postcolonial immigrants to France were men who entered the labor market at its lowest rungs, in factories. By the 1970s, the French state’s patriarchal and heterosexist “family regrouping” laws allowed women to enter in substantial numbers, but also made them legally dependent on male counterparts, thereby imposing conditions of sexism and lesbophobia (Bacchetta 2016).

The first lesbians who organized politically in autonomous women’s groups had previous experience in their national liberation movements or, in the case of Latin Americans, had fought against dictatorships organized and bolstered by US imperialism. An exception to this was the Coordination des Femmes Noires (Black Women’s Network), which organized by regional origin. Given this history and France’s policy of bilateral migration treaties with individual nations, it is not surprising that from the 1970s onward immigrant women first organized autonomously along country lines. Lesbians were among them.

During the 1980s, lesbians of color were active in the anti-racism, Beur (a term that signifies “Arab” in verlan, the language developed by youth of Arab origin in the workingclass racialized suburbs of French cities, and which is extended to signify people of color), and pro-immigration movements of the day. They did not yet organize autonomously as lesbians but instead tried to impose an intersectional perspective that would include all their struggles. For example, lesbians of color—of Maghrebian and racially mixed backgrounds, primarily—were among the cofounders of Collectif féministe contre le racisme et l’antisémitisme (Feminist Collective against Racism and Anti-Semitism), a coalitional collective created in 1984 at the Maison des Femmes de Paris (Paris Women’s Center). Some of the same lesbians, along with at least one in exile from Latin America, co-established the Lesbiennes contre le racisme, l’anti-sémitisme et le fascisme (Lesbian Collective against Racism, Anti-Semitism and Fascism) in 1985 at the Archives Lesbiennes (Lesbian Archives) in Paris. Just slightly prior to the creation of the Groupe du 6 novembre, a short-lived group called Les Négresses Sapphiques (Saffique Black Women) was formed. Then, in 1999, shortly after the Groupe du 6 novembre’s founding, another lesbian of color group, Madivine (a term for “lesbian” in Haitian Creole), was created mainly by Caribbean lesbians (Madivine 2000; Lesbiennes of Color 2016). Also in 2001, a group of Arab lesbians living in their countries or in exile in France created the N'DéesSses. In sum, this was a first crucial period for autonomous lesbian of color organizing.

Outside of the groups, during the 1980s and early 1990s, politicized lesbians of color met
informally to discuss their intersectional oppression and their relations with other movements. Some published essays and poetry on lesbianism and racism. Some of these ended up in a book created by the Groupe du 6 novembre, and some are collected, along with the texts produced by the autonomous groups, in the first anthology of writings from lesbian of color activism and creative practices in France.

**Activities**

The Groupe du 6 novembre held regular meetings, wrote collective and individual texts, organized cultural and political events, participated in conferences, and spoke on immigrant and alternative radio ([Doumia 2001](#)). It published on the following topics: how colonialism, slavery, racism, heterosexism, and lesbophobia operate together; survival; relations to dominant French lesbian, feminist, and anti-racist movements; links with lesbians across the globe; and transnational politics. It created a website to open the conversation among lesbians of color more broadly.

In 2000 the group worked to publish a special issue of a French Canadian lesbian journal. When its work was met with excessive editorial intervention, the group created its own publishing company: Nomades'Langues (Nomadic Languages and Languages Nomads). In 2001 Nomades'Langues published *Warriors/Guerrières*, a bilingual book of theoretical essays, personal narratives, poetry, and art by members and comrades. Arab lesbians in the group produced a special issue (no. 7) of the lesbian Arabic journal *Bint el nas*. Other group members organized a major exhibit in Paris by the black lesbian Italian artist Veruska. In 2001 the Groupe du 6 novembre showed up at the (white) lesbian conference on Monique Wittig in Paris, protesting that they had not been invited to speak. Members spoke out on immigrant and other alternative radio. In 2001 they went to the World Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, where they expanded their transnational connections with lesbians of color globally. After these years of intensive activities, the group met less often. However, members remained in touch and also stayed in the broader movements in which they had all been involved.

**SEE ALSO** Anti-racist Activism in Europe; Comité d’Urgence Anti-répression Homosexuelle (CUARH); Grupo de Trabalho Homossexual and LES; Strange Fruit

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The Grupo de Trabalho Homossexual (GTH; Homosexual Working Group) and LES—Grupo de Discussão sobre Questões Lésbicas (LES—Discussion Group on Lesbian Issues) were two associations that, in spite of a considerable time gap between their beginnings—1991 and 2008, respectively—were both intended to fill voids in the LGBTQ movement in Portugal. The former was created to address the pure and simple nonexistence of a LGBTQ movement in Portugal, while the latter intended to fill the absence of a proper discussion of lesbian matters in the already existent organizations, as well as in the public sphere at large. Although working separately, the two groups each sought to respond to the ongoing presence of homophobia in Portugal.

**Homosexual Working Group**

The GTH was created in May 1991 as a section of the Partido Socialista Revolucionário (PSR; Socialist Revolutionary Party), a small, Far Left Trotskyist organization that, for several years after the Portuguese democratic revolution of 25 April 1974, was the only group to openly support gay and lesbian rights (Santos 2013). The GTH resulted from an effort by some of its members, led by José Carlos Tavares, to organize autonomously and build up a proper LGBTQ agenda beyond the only too vague party proclamations, against the background of a virtually nonexistent LGBTQ movement at the time in Portugal, in spite of two ephemeral and fragile previous attempts: the Movimento Homossexual de Acção Revolucionária (Homosexual Movement of Revolutionary Action) in 1974 and the Colectivo de Homossexuais Revolucionários (Collective of Revolutionary Homosexuals) in 1980 (Almeida 2010; Cascais 2006).

Through press conferences and releases, regular participation in public debates, and interviews in the media, Tavares and the GTH’s public visibility played a crucial and pioneering role in the reframing of media representations of gay men and lesbian women, from a largely predominant homophobic/lesbophobic/transphobic frame, or a mere stereotypical and entertaining one (namely as transvestites), into a public interpretative frame of credibility and authoritativeness both as sources and vocal subjects. In addition,
the GTH played a pioneering role as an interlocutor between the LGBTQ community and the media, political parties, the government, organized churches, trade unions, the medical and psychiatric establishment, and nongovernmental organizations fighting the AIDS epidemic. The GTH founding manifesto included a call for the legal recognition of same-sex unions (implemented in 2001 and followed by a same-sex marriage law in 2010), adoption rights (formally recognized only in 2016) and medically assisted procreation for (either single or married) lesbian women (yet to be approved as of 2017), and nondiscrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation (added to Portugal’s constitution in 2004). The public presentation of the manifesto took place in a May 1992 meeting titled “A Ousadia de Quem Sabe o Que Quer” (The daring of knowing what you want).

Soon after, in June 1992, the first national celebration of Pride Day took place and a debate titled “Homosexuality and AIDS” was held to counter the underrepresentation of health and social rights of gay men in the nongovernmental organizations that at the time were struggling against the epidemic. At the 1993 Labor Day National Parade, the GTH became the first Portuguese LGBTQ association to join in a public demonstration. In 1997 the GTH was a co-organizer, with other LGBTQ associations, with which it shared prominence starting in 1995, of the first national Pride Parade, as well as the national pride party Arraial Pride. In 2002, to mark its tenth anniversary, the GTH held an international meeting titled “To Fight Loving, to Love Fighting,” an unprecedented gathering of activists (including Peter Tatchell, Peter Drucker, and Terry Conway) and academics (including Miguel Vale de Almeida, the future spokesperson for the same-sex marriage law in the parliament). A declaration of principles issued at the time restated that the GTH was an anticapitalist association that saw the LGBTQ movement as a liberation struggle of long-oppressed groups envisaging the revolutionary changing of society where homophobic, xenophobic, racist, and sexist segregation would be eradicated, along with all economic exploitation. The risk of homonormativity and the commodifying effects of the “pink market,” heterosexism, and transphobia, as well as ableism and ageism (even inside the LGBTQ communities), were also mentioned, and a special emphasis was put on criticizing gradualist and assimilationist, or unity-at-all-costs, LGBTQ politics. The declaration stressed, furthermore, that the fight against discrimination and the stigmatizing of LGBTQ persons and HIV positives lacked efficaciousness if it overlooked class inequalities.

From 1999 to 2002 a fanzine was published titled *Sem medos* (No fears). The GTH remained active under that name until 2003. When the PSR merged into a new political coalition, the Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc), former members of the GTH gathered around Sérgio Vitorino, a young and prominent activist who already had replaced Tavares in the leadership, and formed a homosexual wing of the Bloco de Esquerda. A short-lived organization, it evolved into the Panteras Rosa (Pink Panthers, inspired by the French/Belgian/Canadian Les Panthères Rose), which, with an uncompromising anti-assimilationist agenda (*Santos 2013*), presents itself as a direct heir to the political legacy and radical spirits of the former GTH.
LES—Discussion Group on Lesbian Issues

LES (short for “lesbian”) started as a discussion group on lesbian issues in early 2008, under the initiative of Eduarda Ferreira, a member of Clube Safo, the already existing major nationwide lesbian association. Completely nonaligned with the latter, however, LES purported to bridge the gap between lesbian activism and academic reflection and research on lesbian issues by gathering both activists and scholars in an environment that was self-standing and autonomous from the constraints of either academe or activism, while not shying away from scrutinizing and debating the relations between the two: “The main objective of LES is the reflection, broadcasting, and publication of opinions, researches, and inquiries on lesbian issues, as well as the development of thematic discussions” (Ferreira and Silva 2010, 55; translated by author).

The need for such a discussion group derived from a widespread perception in Portuguese lesbian organizations, among Portuguese lesbian scholars, and within the lesbian community in Portugal at large of the prevailing sexism within LGBTQ associations (Ferreira and Silva 2010; Santos 2009): “These associations invariably reproduce patterns of the societal context in which they exist; sexism and male dominance, therefore, are a pervasive reality even within LGBT organizations. Specific lesbian issues are, for example, rarely afforded the same prominence as gay issues” (Ferreira 2014, 63). In spite of the existence of a consistent and sustainable lesbian activism in Portugal since the mid-1990s, lesbian invisibility was an insurmountable issue from the inception of the Portuguese LGBTQ movement and remained so. According to Ferreira (2014), this was the unsought consequence of the increasing assimilation of lesbian collective action into the movement, which was born and gained momentum in the context of the fight against AIDS, always awarding prominence to gay issues and thus tending to dilute the opportunities for lesbian interaction and the overt expression of the specific needs and demands of lesbians.

Fully cognizant of its limited public outreach and committed to raising awareness of this fact in the movement at large, LES in December 2009 launched LES Online: Digital Journal on Lesbian Issues, an online journal that aimed to “promote scientific research, as well as intervention projects and opinion pieces related to various lesbian issues” (Ferreira 2014, 61). In fact, and although it gave priority to lesbian matters, LES Online became a lot more than that, being the only journal in the area of lesbian, gay, and queer studies that ever existed in the country, with a far greater reach than the discussion group from which it originated. A bilingual publication (English, as well as the article’s original language of either Portuguese, Spanish, or French), LES Online emphasizes the situatedness of all knowledge, which leads to a necessary recognition of the importance of the specific embodied locations of the researcher—that is, his or her self-reflexive positionality, in sharp contrast to false notions of neutrality. Its first editorial notes the diversity of women who engage in sexual/emotional relationships with other women, as well as their social
and psychological experiences, expectations, fears, and anxieties, clearly asserting that these women suffer with

the lack of specific approaches to [their] realities that included strongly diverse socio-economical, political and psychological dimensions.

We believe that those different dimensions create a specific landscape that is not completely addressable and understandable by using a feminist or LGBT analysis. This question is the starting point of LES Online.

(EDITORIAL TEAM 2009, 2)

Over the course of seven years (2009–2016), ten issues of the journal were published, with seventy-one pieces, comprising scientific essays, book reviews, and narratives about personal experiences of women engaged in the LGBTQ movement. Raquel Lucas Platero, Ana Cristina Santos, São José Almeida, Ana Maria Brandão, Ana Luísa Amaral, Maria José Magalhães, and Maria do Mar Pereira were some of the most prominent contributors, among many more from Portugal, Brazil, Italy, Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Austria, Poland, Cameroon, Senegal, Canada, Australia, Mexico, and Argentina. Most issues were thematic: “Lesbian Issues” (vol. 1, no. 1, 2009), “Lesbian (In) visibility” (vol. 2, no. 1, 2010), “Lesbianism and Education” (vol. 2, no. 2, 2010), “Activism and Academia: Intersections, Conflicts and Potentialities” (vol. 3, no. 1, 2011), “Lesbian Citizenship” (vol. 7, no. 2, 2015), and “Intersections of Gender and Sexual Orientation” (vol. 4, no. 1, 2012; vol. 5, no. 1, 2013; vol. 7, no. 1, 2015; and vol. 8, no. 1, 2016). On the grounds of a scarcity of researchers specifically concentrating on lesbian issues and the pressure to privilege publishing in indexed journals, LES Online in 2017 merged into the Revista Latino-Americana de Geografia e Gênero (Latin American journal of geography and gender).

SEE ALSO Comité d’Urgence Anti-répression Homosexuelle (CUARH); Groupe du 6 Novembre: Lesbiennes Issues du Colonialisme, de l’Esclavage et de l’Immigration; Grupo Gay da Bahia; Human Rights in Europe

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Brazilian organization for LGBTTQI activism.

The Grupo Gay da Bahia (GGB; Gay Group of Bahia) is a nonprofit organization in Salvador, Bahia, that has been a leader in the fight for LGBTTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, travesti, transsexual, queer, and intersexual) rights in Brazil, mainly in the 1980s and 1990s. It is also one of the pioneer institutions in the implementation of AIDS control and prevention policies. The GGB has acted politically with the Brazilian government agencies, demanding civil rights such as same-sex civil unions and the implementation of inclusive education policies for the LGBTTQI population. During the long period of the group's activity on behalf of the Brazilian LGBTTQI population, it has operated with the following objectives:

1. to defend the interests of the LGBTTQI community in Bahia and in Brazil, denouncing and demanding action against all LGBTTQI-phobic expressions;
2. to disseminate information about homosexual orientation in order to deconstruct deeply rooted social prejudice;
3. to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS within the community and other groups that are equally vulnerable to this disease;
4. to create proposals for legal tools to guarantee equal rights to sexual minorities and put pressure on politicians to approve such laws; and
5. to raise awareness of the urgent need to fight for full citizenship rights for LGBTTQI groups.

The GGB was founded in 1980 during the Brazilian military dictatorship (1964–1985) by Luiz Mott (1946–), a gay activist and anthropologist who is a professor at the Universidade Federal da Bahia (Federal University of Bahia). In the late 1970s several social organizations involved in the fight against the dictatorship also sought better working conditions and other citizens' rights. Organizations such as SOMOS (We Are), founded in 1978, were established during this period of increased social activism in Brazil (Simões and Facchini 2009). The important newspaper Lampião da esquina (Oil lamp on the corner)
Grupo Dignidade 2018, which was also launched during this period, gave visibility to homosexual culture at a time when public debates on (homo) sexualities were controversial (Green 1999, 2003). The GGB followed this trend, emerging as a dissenting voice in the context of a Brazilian society marked by the heritage of slavery and the ever-present legacies of colonialism and its attendant racial and social hierarchies that promote the deepening of homophobia, transphobia, and misogyny.

The GGB’s active role in the Brazilian LGBTTQI political scene is strongly linked to Mott’s political action and his well-known intellectual production. Mott’s work can be grouped around three themes: (1) homosexuality and AIDS (the subject of numerous books, chapters, and papers in journals in Brazil and abroad); (2) the Inquisition (a singular aspect of his work as a pioneer in the historical research of persecution of homosexuals during the Portuguese Inquisition, and the late sixteenth-century inquisitorial visitations to colonial Brazil); and (3) Afro-Brazilians, indigenous peoples, and the institutions of slavery and coercive labor in colonial Brazil (with an intersectional perspective on the discussions involving race, sexuality, and ethnicity, long before this debate became a trend in Brazil). Mott’s work on the Portuguese Inquisition (1536–1821) and homosexuality is the most outstanding of his scholarship (Mott 2003, 2007, 2008). His thorough survey of processes in the repression of sodomites in Portugal and in colonial Brazil made visible 200 “homosexuals” in Bahia who were judged by the Portuguese Holy Office between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, including the “lesbian” Felipa de Souza (1556–1600), after whom the main homosexual human rights international award was named; it is awarded by OutRight Action International (formerly known as the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission) of San Francisco, California. Mott also revealed the judgment by the Holy Office of the Inquisition of Francisco Manicongo in 1591, who according to the records was a man who wore women’s clothes. The Associação das Travestis e Transexuais do Estado do RJ (Association of Travestis and Transsexuals of the State of Rio de Janeiro) named its human rights award Xica Manicongo, using a female version of his name to honor her identity as a travesti (a female transgender identity that corresponds to a person who identifies with a different gender than that one assigned when she was born. They may or may not proceed with hormone therapy. The word travesti remains popular in Latin American in association with the historic, social and political struggles faced by that community so that the translation loses the specificity of their process of identification).

**GGB’s Contributions**

The GGB’s success in the fight for LGBTTQI rights in Brazil is mostly due its leaders’ ability to implement strategies in different social and economic contexts during the period of restructuring democracy. The early twenty-first century saw the broadening of discussions about civic freedom and sexual rights, a rise in the number of institutions of the organized
civil society, and an elaboration of the movement for sexual rights, highlighting an increase in the number of subjects that became empowered and started to produce specific demands for lesbians, travestis, and transsexual people (Parker [1991] 2009).

The GGB in the 1980s and 1990s was an important organizer of the political forces at the national and regional levels. At the national level, the institution acted together with thirty other institutions to found in 1995 the Associação Brasileira de Gays, Lésbicas, e Travestis (ABGLT; Brazilian Association of Gays, Lesbians, and Travestis), which had grown to some 300 affiliated organizations by 2018 (ABGLT 2018). In addition, it supported the opening of new LGBTQI organizations in different regions of Brazil, mainly in the northeast. Regionally, the GGB was instrumental in the foundation of the Fórum Baiano de ONGs/AIDS (Bahian NGO/AIDS Forum) and the Fórum Baiano de Grupos LGBT (Bahian Forum of LGBT Groups). Starting in 1995 the GGB began to organize the gay pride parade in Salvador, Bahia, for which over half a million demonstrators assemble on the second Sunday of September every year.

In addition to acting within these networks, the GGB gradually became an umbrella institution in the 1990s, supporting other groups that wanted to set specific agendas and demands, including lesbians, travestis, and trans individuals. According to Mott (in a 2018 interview), these different groups organize themselves autonomously and have the institutional support of GGB to combat homophobia and engage in HIV/AIDS prevention. They include the Centro Baiano Anti-AIDS (Bahian Anti-AIDS Center), the Grupo Gay Negro da Bahia Quimbanda Dudu (Quimbanda Dudu Black Gay Group of Bahia), and the Associação de Travestis de Salvador (Travesti Association of Salvador). These entities keep their independence and at the same time are meaningfully linked to the GGB in order to combat prejudice against sexual diversity of all types, in Brazil and elsewhere.

Two projects in particular demanded intense efforts from the GGB to develop LGBTQI policies in Brazil. The first resulted in the depathologization of homosexuality in 1985 by the Conselho Federal de Medicina (Federal Council of Medicine) after a powerful campaign headed by the GGB and aligned organizations and entities. The second fundamental contribution of the GGB was the creation and maintenance of annual reports since 2000 about lethal gender-based, homophobic, and transphobic violence involving the LGBTQI population throughout Brazil (Grupo Gay da Bahia 2018). Because the Brazilian government does not provide such information, the statistical records and annual reports developed and disseminated by GGB have been a vital source of data for analysis and academic scholarship in favor of criminalizing various forms of homophobic and transphobic violence in Brazil. The group’s database is accessible for online inquiries and includes information about homicides and suicides among the LGBTQI population, based on reports submitted to the GGB website as well as articles published in newspapers. The publication of these annual reports has brought to the attention of Brazilian society (and, to a lesser extent, local politicians) the quotidian violence suffered by the LGBTQI
population.

**Key Advances and Controversies**

The GGB and its leader Mott are indispensable actors in the development of the LGBTTQI movement in Brazil and the attainment of civil rights. Mott's legacy of scholarship on the history of sodomy and “homosexuality” during the Inquisition in Brazil and Portugal is invaluable, mainly for giving visibility to the victims of the Inquisition courts from the late sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries. Yet, several historians have criticized Mott for his interpretation of this history and his unequivocal assertion that “gays” and “homosexuals” (using nineteenth- and twentieth-century categories of identity) inhabited the early modern Lusophone world. Alécio Nunes Fernandes, for example, claims that in the historiographic interpretation by Mott and others, “An inversion is promoted: those accused of crimes in other times are placed in the category of victims of the inquisitorial injustice and arbitrariness committed by the Holy Office [of the Inquisition], and the Court, due to such injustice and arbitrariness, becomes the party accused of crimes against human rights” (2012, 34; translation by Kaciano Gadelha and Joseli Maria Silva). According to Fernandes (2012), Mott views history through the lens of the present, ascribing to the past views and beliefs (and categories of identity) that would not have existed in that particular time period (Tortorici 2012).

Initiatives in many parts of the country have adopted broader issues such as the fight against exploitation and inequalities. The intersectionalities between dissident sexualities, race, and poverty became important agendas for the LGBTTQI movements in the first decade of the twenty-first century, and they are intertwined with the deep political-institutional crisis that divided the Brazilian society into leftists and rightists, peaking with the 2016 impeachment of Brazil’s president, Dilma Rousseff of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT; Labor Party). Mott openly declared his support for the impeachment (Junior and Aguiar 2016), while the ABGLT released an official statement opposing it. The ABGLT believed that the impeachment was a strategy adopted by conservative elites aiming to take over the government and implement their neoliberal project in Brazil, and attacking the democratic state under the rule of law. The close relationship between the GGB and Mott, its founder and permanent “honorary president,” fueled tensions between the GGB and LGBT activists linked to left-wing parties. Mott claimed that the university and the LGBT movement had been co-opted by PT and their allies and complained of suffering retaliation from his colleagues due to his political position, construed by activists as rightist and neoliberal (Junior and Aguiar 2016).

The GGB’s pioneering work in the formation of LGBTTQI political activism in Brazil and its active role in several civil rights achievements are of great importance. In addition, its actions on behalf of other groups that have specific demands such as travestis, trans people, and lesbians and its support of emerging groups are relevant strategies for its own survival.
and for the creation of broader alliances that strengthen the groups and the LGTBTTQI population as a whole. However, GGB will face new challenges as the LGTBTTQI fight becomes more complex, addressing categories of resistance that encompass the different intersectional oppressions that mark gender and sexually dissenting bodies: cis/heteronormativity, white privilege in social relations, and ableism (De la Dehesa 2010; Gavério 2015; Siqueira 2016).

SEE ALSO Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Inquisition, Criminal Courts, and Sexuality in Colonial Latin America; Travesti and Trans Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean

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The Lebanese author Hoda Barakat (1952–) is considered the first contemporary Arab writer (among both men and women) to employ a homosexual man, Khalil, as the main character of a novel. In the context of her renowned first novel Hajar al-dahik (1990; The Stone of Laughter [1995]), Barakat carefully traces the traumatic impact of Khalil’s sexual self-discovery using an invisible genderless narrator who is declared to be a woman only in the last three lines of the novel. Khalil’s struggle with his newly awakened homoerotic desires develops during the violence of the Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) and culminates in his final moral decline and degradation. This is portrayed through the hypermasculine acts of raping a woman and becoming a warlord and an arms dealer. The title of the novel is a take on the philosopher’s stone, a legendary alchemical substance believed to be capable of turning base metal into gold. The author employs this metaphor to exhibit Khalil’s gradual transformation from a marginalized figure in the war to an active participant in and perpetuator of the conflict.

**War, Violence, and Masculinity**

Barakat’s war literature revolves mainly around marginalized male antiheroes struggling to cope with the violence surrounding them. Her oeuvre can be read as a detailed account of the forms of masculinities set against the unraveling social and national paradigms of war-torn Lebanon. At the outset of Hajar al-dahik, the author delineates two types of hegemonic patriarchal masculinities. The first type looks like Khalil and is “made up of youths a lot younger than [him], who have broken down the door of conventional masculinity and entered manhood by the wide door of history.” These young men, Barakat continues, “busy themselves shaping the destiny of an area of patent importance on the world map, concerned of people’s public and private lives ... with bread, with water, with emigration” (Barakat 1995, 12). This type of masculinity is portrayed through the character of Youssef, Khalil’s younger cousin, whose family seeks refuge in Khalil’s building when they have to flee their home in the south of Lebanon because of Israeli bombing. Soon after settling in the flat upstairs, Youssef assumes such manly tasks: “Now I’ve become a man and I can’t ignore things,” Youssef tells Khalil as he starts meeting the needs of his family (103).
The second group is made up of men who do not look like Khalil although they are his age. These men “have got a grip on the important things in life, and who, holding the tools of understanding, awareness, and close attention to theory have laid down plans to fasten their hold on the upper echelons ... in politics, in leadership, in the press” (12). This type is portrayed in characters such as Khalil’s college-mate Nayif and his comrade Said; both are affiliated with a political party and fervently discuss politics, and whose invitation to join their party Khalil declines politely. For Khalil, the manhood of this second group is shown in their ability to “demonstrate” because they understand politics, “and no one understands politics but men” (100).

In opposition to these two types of hypermasculine virile men who perpetuate violence and conflict, Khalil’s masculinity is represented as different and ambiguous in its androgynous and/or feminized tendencies. Alienated from hegemonic masculinity, yet still insensible of his homosexual inclinations, Khalil finds “the doors of both kinds of manhood ... closed” to him, and he thus becomes trapped “alone in his narrow passing place, in a stagnant, feminine state of submission to a purely vegetable life, just within reach of two very attractive versions of masculinity, the force that makes the volcano of life explode” (12).

Lebanese author Hoda Barakat in 2012. Barakat became the first contemporary Arab writer to employ a homosexual protagonist when she created the character of Khalil for her renowned first novel Hajar al-dahik (1990).
Mona Fayad considers Khalil’s positionality as destabilizing to the only two options presented by the author. Fayad maintains that “by placing him in the corridor between passivity and explosive activity, the narrator presents his condition as a suspension of identity rather than as a space in which identity can be formulated” (2002, 168). It is, then, only al-Akh (the Brother), a warlord who courts Khalil, who “has the power to open for Khalil the gates to one of those ‘manhoods’ that seemed out of reach, specifically that of men who bear responsibilities” (Lagrange 2006, 185).

Gender Polarity

From the outset of the novel, Barakat’s employment of a genderless narrator to recount the story of a marginalized gay man underlines the gender polarity of the novel. This gender dialectic is demonstrated in Khalil’s reluctance to identify with this gendered world. He thus finds refuge in his pregendered self:

*His voice which fell, as if into his light testicles, said to him from below that he was of a certain sex and he was of a certain age and that his sex and his age had begun the outward journey.... With this high cadence that was lost for ever was lost the delight at being outside sex, it abandoned Khalil before he knew which string he would play to compensate for this loss.*

*(BARAKAT 1995, 142)*

Therefore, Khalil seeks refuge in the feminine from the war carried by hostile masculinities. Throughout the novel, Barakat deliberately recounts Khalil’s feminine attributes. These include domestic activities, excessive cleaning, grocery shopping, cooking, knitting, and waiting for and following other men (Naji and later Youssef). *Hajar al-dahik* opens with a scene in which Khalil is chasing after his friend and neighbor Naji, “panting” as he tries to catch up to his first love (who was a double agent during the war and subsequently was killed by a sniper from East Beirut before Khalil had had the opportunity to act on his feelings). A few pages later, the narrator describes how whenever “a battle draws to an end, Khalil feels the need for order and cleanliness and the feeling grows, spreads until it becomes almost an obsession”; this cleanliness “suggests that a woman, a housewife—or a snow-white old maid—has lived for some time quietly in this little house” (9–10). As he waits for Naji’s visits, Khalil is “disgusted at the way he behaves as a plumb divorcee” (23). Later, he thinks of himself as “an old hen” waiting for Youssef “clutching the egg of [her] dreams” (105) and as Youssef’s “wife of the wrong sex” (115).

As Khalil escapes the reality of the war by indulging in domestic duties, he is aware that “a
fear of blood to the point of faintness, having short legs, a slight built, straight chestnut hair and large eyes, all these do not make a man a hermaphrodite, or effeminate, or make him any less masculine, or ... queer.” Still unable to choose one side or the other, Khalil assures himself that “the temporary breakdown that he was suffering was only a psychological crisis that the mad world outside had imposed upon him.... He knew that there were certainly more female hormones in him than there should naturally be, for they protected him from committing the crime of the act.” Yet again, his awareness yields to the passive feminine as he mournfully reminds himself “Naji is dead” (75).

Samira Aghacy reads Khalil’s reactions to violence and war along the lines of “feminized positionality” (2009, 137). She characterizes him during war as “insecure, humiliated, incarcerated, and tortured” (135) and concludes that he is a “weak male” who manages “the changes beleaguering men like himself” by “giving in to effeminate tendencies and articulating his desire for men rather than women” (131). Kifah Hanna contests such a characterization, as it domesticates Khalil’s homosexuality and consequently “undercuts the sense of homosexuality as a form of masculinity alternative to that of the heteronormative”; it “also forecloses the possibility of androgyny as that which precedes socially imposed categorizations of gender and sexuality” (2016, 120).

Controversy and Criticism

Upon its publication, *Hajar al-dahik* won the prestigious al-Naqid Award for a first novel. Shortly after the release of its first English translation in 1995, the novel claimed international recognition as one of the best works of fiction written about the Lebanese Civil War. Despite this recognition, *Hajar al-dahik* received only sporadic, yet favorable, attention among Arab critics. Although Barakat acknowledges the generosity of critics, she explicitly contested their readings of Khalil’s character in a 2014 article published in *al-Akhbar* newspaper:

Some of the criticism went almost in the opposite direction of the content of the novel. At first, I thought it was lack of professional experience on my part that made critics miss my point to the extent of praising a piece of writing that was meant to be condemned. Then I decided to consider myself “not understood” because of the uniqueness and novelty of my “pioneering” writing. To create an Arab gay man, and take his side, making his pains and estrangement a shield to ward off social and religious criticism and a tool to grant him innocence of sexual deviance ... all of this in addition to other literary “considerations” was not easy to accept. Then with a little humility I started thinking that before this novel nobody had heard of my existence altogether, from the ocean to the gulf, and that I should be happy with it. So I became happy with it.
Furthermore, the author states that her placement of a gay man at the heart of her novel is “not shocking because he narrates a real sentiment of love.” Conscious of the provocative nature of her subject matter, the author used “a passage from the Qur’an” every time she described “how much he is in love and how much he suffers and the beauty of the other [man]” (quoted in Whitaker 2006, 99). This literary aptitude, according to Brian Whitaker, “has the potential to inflame religious sensibilities” (2006, 98–99). Barakat, however, dodges such a possibility by taking “the reader slowly ... step by step, from the feeling, not in a sexy or a shocking way” (quoted in Whitaker 2006, 99). Despite such authorial techniques, Khalil’s character has usually been desexualized and read either in terms of what Aghacy calls his “feminized positionality,” as mentioned previously, or in terms of what Fayad calls his “strategic androgyny” (2002, 162). Fayad argues that by “refusing to become one [male] or the other [female], Khalil resists gender as a vector of power” (169).
Hanna (2016) maintains that such a reception of Khalil's character among critics gives insights into the limitations of the current critical discourse on homosexuality in contemporary Arabic literature and the need for a reinvigoration.

**Homosexual Self-Discovery**

Whatever the resulting attitude of the critical establishment toward the novel, it seems that Barakat’s aversion to shock for its own sake, or for publicity, is genuine, and her real intention is to portray the gradual unfolding of homosexual desire and love with a sensitivity and sophistication that these have rarely been afforded in contemporary Arabic literature. This is exhibited in the numerous homoerotic scenes that narrate Khalil’s sexual self-discovery. Khalil’s homoerotic desires first surface in a dream scenario where Rafat, a man he knows only by voice from his calls to a nightly radio program, seduces him:

> Khalil leaned back against the thick tree trunk…. Rafat came close to Khalil and pushed back a long strand of hair that was fluttering across his face. Khalil looked shyly at his legs…. He was more sure that he was beautiful and ready for love. Rafat brought his hand down to Khalil's neck, where the hair grows thick and, panting loudly, brought his eyes and lips close to his face.

*(BARAKAT 1995, 68)*

It soon becomes clear that Rafat is a displacement figure for Naji. Rafat metamorphoses into Naji, and the dream ends with Khalil bringing the image of his deceased beloved back to life in a sexual wish-fulfillment fantasy:

>Khalil saw Naji looking at him, his eyes red, his face distorted in anger…. Khalil was trembling, but not out of fear. Naji took hold of Khalil’s collar and tugged at it, pulling the buttons off his shirt as he tore it open down to the navel. Naji took a step backwards and smoothed down his hair with his hand, then slowly came close again, stretching out his hand to pull Khalil’s leather belt undone.

*(69)*

When Khalil wakes up he “found himself standing next to his bed … drowning in his cold
sweat and his pajama bottoms were clinging between his thighs,” and, as he recollects his
dream, he succumbs to “a flood of tears” (69). While these tears can be read in line with
Khalil’s lamentation for his unfulfilled desires, their “more fundamental cause,” Hanna
argues, “is the realization of these desires itself, inevitably traumatic in a society that
conditions its subjects into believing they are immoral, obscene, and unmanly” (2016, 106).
Hanadi Al-Samman asserts that by focusing on Khalil’s homoerotic desire, Barakat locates
such desire “in his biological genetic make-up,” in contrast with other representations of
homoerotic desire in Arabic literature of the 1990s that locate “the essence of
homosexuality in deviant social practices, poverty, local/colonial violations, and/or child
abuse” (2008, 294).

In addition to the elaborative narration of her marginalized antihero’s homoerotic desire,
Barakat hinges her novel on the concept of difference. “He is different,” Khalil contemplates
in an interior monologue. “If not, then how to explain the blazing of his lust when he sees
the corpses of the men who have been killed in the newspapers, the men whose torsos are
always exposed. He feels that excitement that goes directly from his lungs to his loins”
(Barakat 1995, 144). Aghacy reads Khalil’s “necrophilic attraction to corpses” as a way to
compensate for his “sexual frustration and his fear of having sex with men” (2009, 137).
Hanna reads Khalil’s “difference” in line with anti-identitarian aspects of queer theory and
concludes that with such literary aptitude, Barakat “may very well have ushered in the era
of Arabic queer literature” (2017, 391).

**Masculine Masquerade**

Khalil’s awareness of his homoerotic desire and the ensuing difference is the first step in
his transformation “into forced pseudo masculinity” (al-Samman 2008, 296). This change is
enunciated through an encounter with his own body on the operation table to remove an
ulcer that could have possibly threatened his life if left untreated. Fayad reflects on Khalil’s
transformation as a struggle “between resisting his rebirth and accepting it at the hands of
Dr. Waddah, who becomes a surrogate male mother” (2002, 175). After the successful
surgery, Khalil’s fluctuation between both sexes comes to an end with a strong desire to
“learn a new alphabet with which to love himself” and his new body (Barakat 1995, 175).
He assures himself: “Nothing is pure save love of the body. No one who has not lost it can
love his body. Who loses it, cannot. He dies” (168). This newly found love for his “beautiful
body” (171) brings Khalil’s fluctuation in the intersexed space to an end with the triumph
of the masculine over the feminine, violence over peace. And thus Khalil transforms from
the feminine passive homosexual man into the assertive warlord and arms dealer who
rapes his upstairs neighbor, a single mother who remains anonymous, and who reminds
him of himself. Frédéric Lagrange asserts that Khalil’s act of rape does not turn him into a
straight man: “The narrator does not equate homosexuality with passiveness; she equates
*fémininity* (under the circumstances of civil war) with passiveness. Khalil’s renouncement
of femininity is not necessarily a renouncement of his attraction to other men, but the narrator’s beloved character has simply become ... a violent monster she fails to condemn” (2006, 185). AlSamman contends that Khalil’s demonstration of “masculine dominance” through the violent act of rape “sadly indicates his detachment from his old feminine self, the termination of the alternative space that he created for his sexual identity, and his embrace of the rhetoric of violence” (2008, 296).

And, thus, having become the “perfect ‘masculine’ subject” (Fayad 2002, 165), Khalil seems “broad-shouldered in his brown leather jacket” and is left “rising upwards” into the ether while the narrator, now revealed to be, like Barakat, a woman, is consigned the responsibility of writing his disappearance: “And I remain a woman who writes” (Barakat 1995, 209). This ending stipulates the literal and figurative disappearance of Khalil. As significant as his presence, Khalil’s absence, according to Hanna, “marks out a space for the as-yet-unrealizable liberation of gender and sexuality in the Levant, and in the wider world” (2016, 114). “Khalil is gone,” Barakat laments about her hero. “He has become a man who laughs” (1995, 209). This laughter, Al-Samman asserts, “is not that of happiness, but that of death and destruction” (2008, 296). As long as war’s essentialist rhetoric continues to dominate the national construct, Al-Samman concludes, “there is no space left in the national discourse for an alternative homosexual identity” (296).

SEE ALSO  AsrarʿAiliyyah (2013; Hany Fawzy); ʿAwdat al-Almani ilā Rushdih (2006; Rashid al-Daif); Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories (2009); Bayrūt ʿ75 (1975; Ghāda al-Sammān); Lebanese (2008; Alissar Gazal)

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Halat Shaghaf (1998; Nihad Sirees)

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A Syrian novel that includes the story of a collective of women who offer an alternative to normative heterosexuality during the 1930s in Aleppo.

Nihad Sirees (1950–) is a Syrian novelist and television writer from Aleppo. He was trained as a civil engineer and ran a private engineering firm for many years. He then went on to write seven novels as well as a number of plays, television dramas (musalsalat), and children's dramas. Amid the chaos and uncertainty of the Syrian uprising-cum-civil war, Sirees left Syria in 2012 and eventually settled in Berlin.

The Fiction of Nihad Sirees

Much of Sirees's fiction is historical, dealing with various aspects of modern Syrian history, culture, and politics. His 1993 novel Riyah al-shamal (The north winds) was concerned with the emergence of Syrian national identity around the time of World War I. His 2005 novel Khan alharir (The silk market), which is set against the backdrop of the tumultuous Arab nationalist politics of Aleppo during the 1950s and 1960s, was adapted into a highly successful television series. Most of his novels provide a particularly Aleppan slant on Syrian history and identity.

His fiction is also political. Al-samt wa-al-sakhab (The Silence and the Roar [2013]), published in 2004 in Beirut, was banned by the Syrian regime. Until 2017 it was his only work to be translated into several European languages. The novel achieved widespread acclaim for its humane and humorous depiction of life under authoritarian dictatorship in a country not unlike Syria, although the country is never named. The protagonist of that novel, Fathi Sheen, is a down-and-out writer who has fallen out of favor with “the regime.” After his ID card is confiscated by the security services, Fathi is forced to descend into the bowels of the bureaucracy in order to reclaim his identity. Along the way, the reader is offered a window into the horror but also the absurdity of living in such conditions. His relationships with his girlfriend and his mother also raise issues of intimacy and gender norms. The romantic and sex lives of Fathi and his mother are discussed in a frank manner that does not resort to Orientalist stereotypes.
Syrian Novelist Nihad Sirees. In his 1998 novel Halat shaghaf (States of Passion [2018]), Sirees engages with modern Syrian history and politics while also delving into less well-known aspects of Syrian and Arab culture.

States of Passion and the Banat al-ʿishreh

In his 1998 novel Halat shaghaf (States of Passion [2018]), Sirees maintains his engagement with modern Syrian history and politics while also delving into less well-known aspects of Syrian and Arab culture. The plot of the novel is fairly straightforward. A government bureaucrat from Aleppo is out conducting an agricultural survey in the countryside when his team's car breaks down in the middle of some inclement weather. This first-person narrator sets out to find help, but after getting lost in the wilderness and the elements, he finds himself at a mysterious house where he is welcomed and hosted by an old man named Nafeh and his young servant Ismail. Apparently, the old man has been holed up in this remote villa for some time, and he is starved for human contact. Therefore, he seizes this opportunity to tell the wayward traveler his life story, which then also transports the reader back in time. This portion of the narrative, told from the perspective of the old man, starts in the 1930s during the heyday of the French Mandate colonial government over Syria.

Although the novel's primary protagonist and the reader are unaware of the significance of
the characters when they are first presented, the story gradually appears to have something to do with Nafeh and Ismail. The tale begins with a young woman named Widad, who travels around Turkey and the lands of Greater Syria against the backdrop of the displacement and turmoil of World War I. On her deathbed, Widad's mother sends her to the house of an old friend in Aleppo. What Widad and the reader discover in that house becomes one of the main plotlines of the novel.

The house is overseen by a khojah, which might be translated as “madam” or “mistress.” The sprawling traditional house overseen and managed by the khojah is the residence of a number of women, all of whom are musicians and performers. They live together in an intimate setting that has a somewhat ambiguous status. Eventually, the protagonist and the reader are introduced to the world of the banat al-ʿishreh, a well-attested subculture in Syria and other parts of the Arab world. Banat means “girls,” but the term ʿishreh is somewhat difficult to translate into English. It literally means “intimate association” or “befriending” or “comingling.” In this sense, a loose conceptual translation of banat alʿishreh might be “affiliated girls” or “conjugal girls,” but the nature of the relationships in this house—and the houses of other khojahs with whom Widad’s khojah has both cooperative and competitive relationships—might also be thought of in terms of lesbianism. Broadly speaking, these are women who prefer the company of other ladies and girls, and they may or may not have sexual relationships with one another. In this regard, it is useful to borrow the analytical language of theorists of gender and sexuality, such as Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, in order to recognize “the continuum of male or female homosocial desire” (Sedgwick 1990, 88).

The banat al-ʿishreh play a central role in the plot of the novel, and the living arrangement Widad discovers in the household of her mother’s friend offers a means of escape from the normative heterosexuality of Syria at the time. One reason that Widad’s mother sent her there in the first place, the reader finds, is that she is convinced that men are nothing but trouble and that men cannot possibly respect women in a relationship. Therefore, Widad’s mother believes that her daughter is better off in the care of her old friend, the khojah, than with one of the many male suitors who had come calling.

But this house is not simply a lone lesbian collective in the city. It is a node within a broader network of “women’s houses” that constitute a veritable community of lovers, friends, and performers. The women Widad meets in this particular house are musicians and dancers, and they perform at weddings and private parties throughout Aleppo high society. It is in this context that Widad happens to meet a man, and we soon discover that this man is Nafeh, the very same old man at the isolated house telling the story to the novel’s protagonist. The relationship that unfolds between Nafeh and Widad becomes a source of passion, drama, and tension for the remainder of the story. The scenes of dance and musical performance convey the emotional impact of the expressive arts in the everyday life of Syrian society.
From this point, the protagonist is mesmerized, and he is determined not to leave the house until he has heard the entire story of Nafeh and Widad, right down to the last detail. The protagonist is intrigued by the great secrecy and intrigue surrounding the circumstances of how Nafeh and Ismail wound up living in their isolation. The secret at the heart of the story leads Ismail to threaten the protagonist that he should be careful not to overstay his welcome and hear too much of the story, lest something very bad happen to him. The narrative has a somewhat predictable but satisfying plot twist that sustains the plot until the end of the novel.

**A Reflection on Friendship and Family in Modern Syria**

The lifestyle that Widad discovers and embraces among the banat al-ʿishreh is significant for understanding the power and importance of the novel. In *The Silence and the Roar*, Sirees deals with heterosexuality in a way that is honest and simple, without ever resorting to Orientalist stereotypes about Syrian or Arab sexual mores. The same can be said about *Halat shaghaf* in terms of its depiction and description of the banat al-ʿishreh. The personalities of the women Widad comes to live with are vividly fleshed out against the backdrop of their social and professional lives. The ways in which the powerful khojahs wield their influence over younger and more vulnerable women demonstrate the very ordinariness of their relationships but also the capacity for power differentials to influence homosexual and heterosexual situations alike. At the same time, the novel suggests that traditional norms of heterossexual marriage and companionship have not always been the prevailing mode of life in Syria and that there are ways out of and around such arrangements.

There has been a great deal of scholarly debate in Middle East and Islamic studies concerning the history and transformation of homosociality and homosexuality in the Arab world. Following the trend of critical LGBTQ studies, some argue that the invention of homosexual/heterosexual boundaries created new norms, as well as legal restrictions, on behavior and life that were not commonplace prior to the modern period. While this debate is not the focus of the novel, clearly the boundaries of female-female sociality, friendship, and love have not been so obviously delineated over the course of modern Syrian history. Moreover, those norms and boundaries are subject to change, contestation, and subversion. Readers of *Halat shaghaf* will find that Syrian society and culture are diverse and expansive enough to accommodate a wider spectrum of life worlds than is usually recognized.
Given the persistence of titillating Orientalist fascination with the sex lives of Arab and Muslim women, therefore, *Halat shaghaf* serves as a work of cultural excavation and historical reconstruction that sheds important light on modern Syrian history. By dealing with the complexity and variability of friendship and family in Modern Syria, *Halat shaghaf* confounds stereotypical expectations concerning the lives and loves of Syrian women and men.

SEE ALSO *Tuqus al-Isharat wa-al-Tahawwulat* (1994; Sa’dallah Wannous)

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Harlem Renaissance

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The queer side of the social and cultural movement centered in the black neighborhood of Harlem in the 1920s and 1930s.

The Harlem of the 1920s and 1930s saw a proliferation of music and writing that was influenced not only by black cultures but also by queer cultures of the period. Part of the larger New Negro movement, the Harlem Renaissance was both an artistic movement and a social and cultural movement primarily led by same-sex–desiring black Americans challenging prevailing notions of race, gender, and sexuality in both white and black communities. Following the Great Migration of African Americans from the South to industrialized cities in the North, queer African Americans joined existing same-sex–desiring communities and created their own sexual subcultures, particularly in Manhattan’s Harlem neighborhood. Though centered in Harlem, the movement spread throughout urban centers in the Northeast and Midwest, eventually traveling across the Atlantic to European cities such as Paris and Berlin. Although historians date the Harlem Renaissance from 1918 to 1935, its origins can be traced back to earlier American slave cultures and its legacy surpassed the 1930s as it continues to influence contemporary queer American artistic and popular cultures today.

The Great Migration and Race Relations in Early Twentieth Century

The hostile racial climate and the migration of black Americans from the South to the North led to the formation of black neighborhoods such as Harlem and the black consciousness that fueled the Harlem Renaissance. By 1900, 90 percent of African Americans lived in the South, the majority in rural areas. The beginning of the twentieth century saw increases in violence against African Americans in the South. With the passage of Jim Crow laws in the region, black Americans lost their civil rights, as segregation became the law of the land. Black Americans were stripped of their rights to vote, hold public office, and occupy certain public space, and they received limited funding for their schools. Jim Crow laws further naturalized the racist ideology rampant throughout the United States. The early twentieth century saw a dramatic rise in violence against African Americans, often in the form of sexual assault and lynchings. In 1915 the American terrorist organization the Ku Klux Klan
experienced a resurgence, as membership and violence grew.

As violence in the South increased, black Americans began migrating to the North for new opportunities and self-determination. The Great Migration saw the movement of over 6 million African Americans from the South to the Northeast, Midwest, and West from 1910 to 1970. There was also a rise in migration from Africa and the Caribbean to the United States, and most of these people settled in the North. Such migrants were often young, unmarried men and women. The migrants in the first wave (during the second decade of the twentieth century) found factory work that could no longer be filled by European immigrants because of World War I (1914–1918) immigration bans. Though no longer living in the Jim Crow South, African Americans in the North continued to experience racism. And racial violence increased further following World War I with the Red Summer of 1919 in which crimes against African Americans skyrocketed throughout the United States, including cities in the Northeast, Midwest, and West.

The greatest of the many black neighborhoods established out of this racial climate and the Great Migration was Harlem, which also became known as the Black Mecca. Once a community of European immigrants, Harlem had become Manhattan’s major black neighborhood during the first two decades of the twentieth century as the city's black community was displaced by the construction of Pennsylvania Station. After a collapse in the real-estate market in 1904, African American churches and businesspeople began buying up property in the area. African Americans and immigrants from Africa and the Caribbean flocked to the northern Manhattan neighborhood, where they could rent and buy housing with less discrimination.

Alain Locke. Howard University professor Alain Locke, the self-proclaimed midwife of the Harlem Renaissance, mentored and financed many queer Harlem Renaissance writers and was himself a same-sex-desiring man.
As the neighborhood grew, rich and diverse black communities took shape with people of various class and ethnic backgrounds, religious practices, and sexual affinities. As the historian George Chauncey wrote, "Harlem became to black America what Greenwich Village became to bohemian white America: the symbolic—and in many respects, practical—center of a vast social experiment" (1994, 245). The Harlem of the 1920s became the home of many ideologies on racial uplift, including Marcus Garvey's back-to-Africa movement and the ideology of the “New Negro,” the foundation of the Harlem Renaissance. The New Negro rejected accommodationist approaches to racial justice and instead advocated racial pride and social disobedience. Howard University professor Alain Locke (1885–1954), the self-proclaimed midwife of the Harlem Renaissance, wrote extensively about the New Negro and extended its political and artistic possibilities. New Negro ideology could explore black experiences, challenge white notions of cultural supremacy, and celebrate black cultures. Locke, a same-sex–desiring man, mentored and financed many queer Harlem Renaissance writers, including Countee Cullen, Langston Hughes, and Zora Neale Hurston.

**Queer Harlem**

Queer Harlem was the backdrop to the work produced by Harlem Renaissance writers, musicians, and artists. Harlem had always been a vice district. The streets of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Harlem were filled with tenements, bars, clubs, dance halls, and brothels. Black Harlem was much the same. However, as black Americans were perceived as inherently oversexed and sexually degenerate, police and vice squads tended to focus on other parts of Manhattan, leaving Harlem’s black neighborhood alone. This allowed for black queer cultures to thrive in Harlem. It became known as the place to find companionship, dance, and create an intricate black queer culture with its own language, customs, and folklore.

Even at a time when New York City still had laws banning homosexuality and when baths and gay bars were raided frequently by police, being “in the life,” or more openly gay, was possible in early twentieth-century Harlem. Queer African Americans were socializing at cafés, meeting on street corners, gathering at dance halls, and attending cabarets. While many white queer New Yorkers often traveled to gawk and experience Harlem nightlife as sexual tourists, they primarily frequented clubs for white patrons where they could “slum” from a distance. Such institutions included the famous Cotton Club. Queer black Harlemites preferred cellar clubs and rent parties in which people would come together to raise rent for someone in need. Buffet flats—often tenement apartments the renters made available to paying guests—featured parties, speakeasies, and live sex shows. News of these parties was spread by word of mouth, and the parties were frequented by artists of the Harlem Renaissance and even featured in their work, as evidenced in Wallace Thurman's and Countee Cullen's writings.
Drag and drag balls were central to Harlem nightlife in the 1920s. Drag queens appeared regularly in Harlem’s streets and clubs such as the Clam House and Cyril’s Café. But nothing compared to the annual drag ball at Hamilton Lodge. Known as the Faggots’ Ball by Harlemites, the ball was organized by the Grand United Order of Odd Fellows and was advertised as a masquerade and civic ball. It became the largest event for both black and white queer communities in the city. Most of the drag queens were black and would arrive in their gowns, with hopes of being crowned queen of the ball. Queer women would don their suits and strut around with walking sticks and cigars. Not all guests came to dance and dress in drag; a large part of the crowd came to watch the event. African American newspapers in Harlem covered the drag balls extensively, reporting back to an eager and curious audience. Scholars have argued that the presence of drag queens in Harlem, and the coverage of the Hamilton Lodge ball in particular, illustrates a high level of tolerance for drag or performative gender transgression in the neighborhood.

While Harlemites seemingly accepted or tolerated some of the queer community’s activities, the queer community was not without opposition. Members of the black middle class, imbued with notions of respectability, sexual control, and racial uplift, saw the queer community as playing into racist understandings of African Americans as hypersexual, immoral, and sexually degenerate. They worried that the queer community undermined the work they did for racial uplift. Often connected to the black middle class, African American churches condemned same-sex desire. No one was so vocal as the prominent Baptist minister Adam Clayton Powell Sr. (1865–1953), who actively campaigned against homosexuality on the streets of Harlem and worked to end drag balls. Even supporters and patrons of the Harlem Renaissance were weary of its connection to homosexuality. Richard Bruce Nugent (1906–1987), a queer artist and author and a key figure of the Harlem Renaissance, recalled the black activist W. E. B. Du Bois (1868–1963) asking him, “Did you have to write about homosexuality? Couldn’t you write about colored people? Who cares about homosexuality?” (quoted in McBreen 1998, 24). The thriving queer culture, along with the homophobia within the black community, influenced the ways in which queer writers, musicians, and artists approached their work and told their stories.

**Music of the Harlem Renaissance**

Evidence for the pervasiveness of queer culture in the Harlem Renaissance is best illustrated through the emergence of the blues and the same-sex-desiring women at the center of this musical culture. The blues became immensely popular in the 1920s, illustrating the social and sexual attitudes of the Harlem Renaissance. Following the Civil War (1861–1865), the blues developed within black communities in the rural South. It moved north with the Great Migration, as blues clubs emerged in cities such as New York and Chicago, and found its home in Harlem. With the origins of the blues in African American folk music, its lyrics deviated from secular mainstream music, which featured
romantic undertones. Instead, blues lyrics discussed the reality of the challenging world black Americans faced. Such music discussed the realities of life, including heartbreak, struggle, loneliness, poverty, and a longing for home. In particular, black women were able to discuss their particular battles with racism, sexism, and abuse, as well as their sexuality.

The blues became a space to explore sexuality, particularly queer sexualities. It is no coincidence that the musical artists Gertrude “Ma” Rainey, Bessie Smith, and Lucille Bogan, collectively known as the Big Three of the Blues, were same-sex desiring and openly sang about their relationships with women. They could explore both their sexuality and gender expression through their performances, many of which toyed with gender norms, involving the performers taking on masculine personas. The often pejorative term bulldagger emerged in 1920s Harlem to describe primarily black masculine lesbians who dated glamorous women and took on an air of chivalry. Such blatant expressions of sexual deviance furthered many careers, as such bold and brazen expressions were seen as sexy, particularly for bisexual artists. The blues, however, became more than a space to explore sexuality through song; it provided a tangible space where queer women could be with one another and create communities as they performed together, traveled on tour together, and were able to earn a livelihood without a man. The Clam House, a popular queer Harlem nightclub, became the hub of this world.

Ma Rainey (1886–1939), known as the Mother of the Blues, used her music to explore sexuality and life as a black woman. Born in the Deep South to a life of poverty, Rainey entered the stage through minstrel and vaudeville companies. She and her husband, Pa Rainey, traveled throughout the United States with different companies until the second decade of the twentieth century, when they began performing blues in cities throughout the North and South. In 1923 Paramount Records picked her up, and she began recording, becoming one of the first artists to record the blues and eventually recording more than 100 songs. Although married, Rainey pursued relationships with women. In 1925 Rainey was arrested in her home in Harlem where a group of women were having sex. She was bailed out of jail the next morning by fellow blues artist Bessie Smith. This experience led to the release of her most provocative queer song, “Prove It on Me Blues.” The song discusses a night on the town with women because, as Rainey explains, “They must have been women, ’cause I don’t like no men.” She further connects her sexuality and affinity for women with her masculine presentation, wearing a collar and tie, and ability to “talk to the gals just like any old man.” The Paramount poster for the song, which was released in 1928, includes a masculine-looking Rainey flirting with two slim feminine women as a police officer watches from afar. Unlike her other recordings where homoerotic undertones were more covert, “Prove It on Me Blues” is overt in its discussion of lesbianism and illustrates the ways in which Rainey’s sexuality was a selling point for Paramount Records.

A friend and possible lover of Rainey, Bessie Smith (1894–1937) similarly explored her queer sexuality in her music. Born into poverty in Tennessee, and having lost her parents at
a young age, Smith and her siblings looked for work anywhere they could. In 1912 she joined Rainey's traveling troupe and performed as a chorus girl. She was later picked up by Columbia Records while living in Philadelphia with her husband and became the highest-paid female performer of the time. She performed throughout the North and South for predominately black audiences but particularly for working-class Harlemites. She refused to perform at whites-only venues such as the Cotton Club. During her travels, she had relationships with women. Her husband did not approve of her bisexuality and often became violent, leading to their eventual separation. Smith performed songs celebrating same-sex desire such as "It's Dirty but Good" (1930). Unlike other blues songs by women of the era that examine the gender transgression of queer women, "It's Dirty but Good" openly discussed sex between women. The song proved quite popular.

Lucille Bogan (1897–1948), the final artist of the Big Three of the Blues, was considered the most sexually explicit blues singer of the time. Born in Mississippi but raised in Alabama, Bogan married and had her son before she was twenty. She moved to New York City in the early 1920s. Like Rainey and Smith, she too began her career in vaudeville, and she eventually began recording blues music for Paramount Records. Singing “dirty blues,” Bogan wrote songs about her experiences as a sex worker, her alcoholism, her encounters with violent men, and her relationships with women. She performed an anthem celebrating same-sex-desiring women of the Harlem Renaissance titled “B.D. Woman's Blues.” “B.D. Woman’s Blues” examined the “B.D. woman” or “bulldagger” woman. Bogan asserted that “coming’ a time, B.D. women ain't gonna need no men.” In the song, B.D. women can support themselves, drink, dance, and walk “like a natural man.” While Bogan contended that the B.D. women were akin to “natural” men, they still had “a head like a sweet angel” and don't hurt women like “a natural man” does. For Bogan, B.D. women weren't imitating “natural” men; they were superior to them.
Blues Singer Bessie Smith, c. 1920. Smith, who was bisexual, explored her queer sexuality in her music, particularly in the popular song “It’s Dirty but Good,” which openly celebrated sex between women.

Though not part of the Big Three, Gladys Bentley (1907–1960) was a key figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Born in Philadelphia, Bentley moved to New York City at the age of sixteen. She began working in clubs soon after. Her career skyrocketed after she appeared at the Clam House in Harlem. Performing in her signature tuxedo and top hat, Bentley played the piano, sang popular songs with altered sexualized lyrics, flirted with women in the audience, and discussed her relationships with women, including her alleged marriage to a white woman in New Jersey. Although she dressed in male clothing, Bentley never tried to pass as a man. Instead, she blurred the distinction between male and female. Bentley was so popular during the Harlem Renaissance that she appeared as a character in several novels by Harlem Renaissance writers, including the queer masterpiece *Strange Brother* (1931), written by Blair Niles. She continued to perform at gay clubs until the 1950s. During the McCarthy era, however, Bentley claimed to have been cured of her homosexuality. Saying that she had taken female hormones, undergone an operation, and married a man, Bentley began to wear dresses and studied to be a minister.

Authors of the Harlem Renaissance

While many queer writers of the Harlem Renaissance enjoyed sexual freedom within the world of blues halls, buffet flats, rent parties, and clubs, the realities of publishing literature with queer content were much more complicated. Although the Harlem Renaissance was
awash with queer literary production, the authors producing such work had to carefully
navigate the literary world in order to find publishing houses willing to publish their work. The Harlem Renaissance was still in many ways intertwined with earlier twentieth-century racial uplift movements led by such men as W. E. B. Du Bois. Du Bois, and his large following, believed that racial uplift was achievable only through African American communities’ “Talented Tenth.” The Talented Tenth consisted of well-educated, respectable, African Americans who would not only advocate for equality but whose work in and of itself would showcase black genius. Although the foundational ideology of the Harlem Renaissance pushed back against such Victorian understandings of racial uplift, middle-class leaders in the community often sat on the boards of publishing houses. And central to their understandings of racial uplift and black respectability was sexual respectability. Thus, queer authors had to find creative ways to subvert the establishment in order to get their work to the public.

Queer authors of the Harlem Renaissance were not monolithic in their understandings of their sexualities nor in the ways in which their sexuality influenced their work. Many authors were uncomfortable with blatant discussions of same-sex desire and instead used coded language. Some did so to maintain their literary and personal reputations. Others feared the backlash they might experience. Nonetheless, the coded language such authors employed was similar, as they needed it to be understandable to their audiences. One such recurrent theme focuses on the unattainable, often genderless, love. This is best illustrated in the work of Angelina Weld Grimké (1880–1958). The daughter of a prominent Boston family, Grimké was raised by her father and educated in Boston. Because of her father’s position, she was unable to get many of her poems regarding same-sex desire published. However, those she was able to publish used coded language. In particular, she uses flowers to discuss female sexuality. Similarly, she rarely uses pronouns within her writing. Yet the descriptions of the body of her lover were coded female (Honey 2016; Wall 1995).

Similarly to Grimké, Langston Hughes (1902–1967), remembered as one of the most prolific writers of the Harlem Renaissance, used coded language in his work, particularly his poetry. Hughes grew up in small towns throughout the Midwest and lived with his father in Mexico for a brief time. After graduating high school, he attended Columbia University. Experiencing intense racial prejudice, he left Columbia. During his time in New York, he fell in love with Harlem. After working as a crewman on a ship, living abroad for a few years, and attending Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, Hughes returned to Harlem and began writing. Although he pursued relationships with both men and women, he kept his same-sex sexual encounters very quiet. His poetry, however, was full of homoerotic coding. Whitmanesque in style and content, many of Hughes’s homoerotic poems celebrate the masculine body. Others discuss the life of the sailor and the roughness of his masculinity. It was not until 1963 that Hughes published his first openly queer work, “Blessed Assurance.” This short story about homophobia, race, gender transgression, and sexuality used sacred Christian imagery and music to critique homophobia.
Like Hughes, though doing so years earlier, Countee Cullen (1903–1946) used Christian imagery to explore queer subjectivities. Cullen was raised by his grandmother in Harlem and by the Reverend Frederick A. Cullen. He was classically educated at New York and Harvard Universities. After marrying and soon divorcing Du Bois’s only daughter after she became aware of his same-sex desire, he turned to Alain Locke, in whom he confided his same-sex attraction. Locke offered him guidance, reassurance, and countless books to read on homosexuality. It is through such reading that Cullen was introduced to the homoeroticism of Christianity. The use of sacred imagery to explore same-sex desire dated back to the late nineteenth-century, as artists and authors such as F. Holland Day (1864–1933) and Edward Carpenter (1844–1929) used religion and the queer past to think about contemporary same-sex–desiring experiences. For many same-sex–desiring men, religious imagery allowed them to see the naked, often eroticized male body. Cullen used Christianity within his work, particularly in *The Black Christ, and Other Poems* (1929), to explore same-sex desire. In this collection, Christ is a symbol for suffering at the hands of social prejudices.

While some authors had to use coded language to explore queer lives, others were more explicit in their writing and had to find ways to get it to the masses. Wallace Thurman (1902–1934) was one such writer. Born in Salt Lake City, Utah, Thurman moved throughout the West and Midwest before landing in Harlem in 1925. Upon his arrival, he was arrested in a subway washroom for having sex with a man. His wife would later use this against him in their divorce, where she claimed that he was a homosexual. For the next decade, Wallace worked as an author of novels and plays, ghost writer, editor, and publisher. In 1932 he wrote *Infants of the Spring*, a satire of the Harlem Renaissance that dealt with openly gay characters.

With his socialist leanings and contempt for the black elite and their Talented Tenth, Wallace challenged such authority. He was not alone in doing so. A group of young radical writers in the Harlem Renaissance, whom Thurman ironically named the Niggeratti, had similar objections to the old guard. The group included Zora Neale Hurston, Langston Hughes, Richard Bruce Nugent, John P. Davis, Aaron Douglas, and Gwendolyn Bennett. They met at Thurman's rooming house in Harlem, which Thurman and Hurston jokingly called “Niggeratti Manor.” The walls were painted by the author and artist Richard Bruce Nugent with homoerotic subject matter in black and red. The group discussed their frustration with the black elite and their methods of racial uplift. They believed the New Negro movement spent too much time trying to show white Americans that they were respectable and equal according to middle-class white values. This group, along with Cullen and Lewis Grandison Alexander, thus set out to publish *Fire!! A Quarterly Devoted to the Younger Negro Artists*. The journal was intended to portray black lives as they were, not as the elites wanted them to be perceived. Sexuality was at the core of *Fire!!* As African Americans were portrayed as hypersexual in the minds of white Americans, heterosexual sexual
respectability became central to racial uplift. The authors in *Fire!!* wanted to show how actual black Americans lived, not as the elites wanted them to be perceived. Hurston wrote on colorism in the black community, Bennett wrote on interracial relationships, and Thurman wrote on sex work and the corruption of black women by men of the Talented Tenth. But it was Nugent’s “Smoke, Lilies, and Jade” (1926) that upset black elites, who called for the destruction of the self-published journal.

Scholars remember Nugent as the only completely “out” writer and artist of the Harlem Renaissance. Nugent was the first black author of the Harlem Renaissance to have written and published a story with candid homosexual content. Moreover, he wrote about the intersectionality between being black and gay decades before James Baldwin (1924–1987) published *Giovanni’s Room* (1956). Punctuated with ellipses, “Smoke, Lilies, and Jade” is a Joycean stream-of-consciousness story of an interracial queer couple. Semiautobiographical, the story dealt openly with gay sex and the desire between these two men. It also dealt with the struggles of coming to terms with one’s queer sexuality, the shame experienced, and the politics of the family. Nugent’s writing career focused on homosexual characters throughout the twentieth century. At times, however, his work had to become more coded, and he often relied on biblical imagery to do so.

**Legacy**

Following the crash of the stock market in 1929, and the impending Great Depression of the 1930s, the Harlem Renaissance was in decline. The queer Harlem Renaissance, however, has had a long legacy. It not only began the rich queer black literary tradition of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it made room for the exploration of such identities within both black and white communities. Such work was resurrected during the gay liberation movements of the 1970s, as queer men and women looked for images of themselves in the past. From voguing to *RuPaul’s Drag Race*, the Harlem Renaissance forever changed popular culture, influencing queer music and television in the twenty-first century.

**SEE ALSO** *Black Freedom Movement and Sexuality; Popular Music and Queer Identities; Urban Queerness*

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


The development of US laws against crimes that target persons because of their particular status group, with a focus on legislation protecting LGBTQ persons.

Violence motivated by animus toward persons or groups, based on social statuses such as race, gender, age, (dis)ability, or sexual orientation has long been an identifiable feature of human social interaction, historically and around the globe (Boswell 1980; Comstock 1991; Jenness and Grattet 2001; Smyth and Jenness 2014). Indeed, physical and symbolic violence aimed at individuals who identify as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) or otherwise gender variant has been accepted as part of the social fabric in most societies throughout the Common Era (Boswell 1980; Smyth and Jenness 2014). In Gay American History (1976), Jonathan Katz traces a 400-year history of violence perpetrated against sexual and gender minorities that includes castrations, beatings, imprisonments, chokings, electrical shocks, forced medical procedures, drownings, hangings, and burnings. Documented cases of such atrocities throughout history and across cultures and societies underscore the claim by LGBTQ activist and former director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) Virginia Apuzzo that “to be gay or lesbian is to live in the shadow of violence” (quoted in Comstock 1991, 54). Data representing the violent victimization of thousands of gay men and lesbians in the United States led the Department of Justice (DOJ) to issue a report concluding that “the most frequent victims of hate violence today are blacks, Hispanics, Southeast Asians, Jews, and gays and lesbians. Homosexuals are probably the most frequent victims” (NGLTF 1987, 10).

Emergence of an Anti–Hate Crime Movement in the United States

Although bias-motivated violence is clearly an age-old problem, it was not until the latter decades of the twentieth century that hate crime as we understand it today emerged as a subject of public discourse and criminal justice policy making. The term hate crime (used interchangeably in this entry with bias crime and bias-motivated violence) entered public
discourse in the late 1970s and was politicized and constructed in particular ways in the 1980s and 1990s through the efforts of an anti–hate crime movement in the United States (Jenness 2009).

Terry Maroney (1998) has detailed the emergence of an anti–hate crime movement in the United States "on the coattails of previously institutionalized social movements; specifically, modern understandings of 'hate crime' in the United States are a product of a confluence of several social movement discourses, most notably the black civil rights movement, the modern women's movement, the gay and lesbian movement, the disabilities rights movement, and the crime victims' movement" (579; see also Jenness and Broad 1997; Jenness and Grattet 2001). These rights-based movements, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, were fundamentally committed to documenting and combating bias-motivated violence targeting particular status groups. Together, they "provided the structural basis and discursive themes necessary to set the stage for a reconceptualization of [all bias-motivated] violent conduct ... toward minorities as hate crime" (Jenness and Grattet 2001, 20; see also Jacobs and Potter 1998; Maroney 1998; Jenness and Broad 1997; Levin and McDevitt 1993). Composed of a variety of diverse organizations including the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL), the NGLTF, the National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence, the Center for Democratic Renewal, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), the National Victim Center, and multiple others, the US anti–hate crime movement effectively "discovered" hate crime as a social problem, rendered the problem empirically credible by documenting an alleged “epidemic” of bias-motivated violence, and called for measures to be put in place to address the problem (Jenness and Broad 1997; Maroney 1998; Jenness 2009; Smyth and Jenness 2014). The now commonplace usage and largely taken-for-granted meaning of the term hate crime in multiple, diverse settings across the social landscape is testament to the success of the anti–hate crime movement in the United States, whose work created a social perception that escalating levels of hate crime in the modern era constitute a social problem demanding a specific governmental response—in particular, the enactment of federal- and state-level legislation and the implementation of attendant policies aimed at mitigating the harm of violence motivated by bigotry (Jenness and Grattet 2001).

**Essential Elements of Hate Crime Law**

Legislative measures at both the state and federal levels rely on three essential elements to define what constitutes a hate crime. First, statutes list a range of predicate crimes that may potentially be regarded as hate crimes, given the second criterion. Second, they require some provision—whether stated or implied—of motivation driven by prejudice or extreme bias. Finally, they describe the range of protected groups, or status provisions.
Hate crime statutes all share the necessary condition of stating or implying that some form of hate or bias motivates offenses, although there are many ways that this is communicated in the statutes. There is wider variation among statutes in the degree of specification of predicate crimes and, when specified, the range of offenses listed. There are also significant differences across statutes in the level of specification and number of protected groups listed.

(SHIVELY 2005, 13)

Key Federal Hate Crime Laws

There is no definitive federal statute that addresses bias-motivated criminal activity. Like other criminal actions, a vast majority of hate crime prosecutions are handled at the state level. Nevertheless, federal officials do investigate and prosecute bias-motivated crimes as criminal civil rights violations. This jurisdiction is necessary not only to authorize federal prosecution in those cases in which state and local officials are either unable or unwilling to act, but also to permit joint state and federal-level prosecutions of certain crimes.

A number of factors make the date of the first federal hate crime law debatable. As early as 1968, federal legislation to criminalize certain bias-motivated behaviors was enacted when President Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–1973) signed the Civil Rights Act of 1968 after it was easily passed by the US House of Representatives and Senate by votes of 326 to 93 (GovTrack 2018a) and 71 to 20 (GovTrack 2018b), respectively. The provisions of the act made it “a crime to use, or threaten to use, force to willfully interfere with any person because of race, color, religion, or national origin, and because the person is participating in a federally protected activity, such as public education, employment, jury service, travel, or the enjoyment of public accommodations, or helping another person do so” (US DOJ 2018). Importantly, the Civil Rights Act of 1968 was the first federal law to draw a distinction between conventional crimes and those motivated by bigotry. However, while the act directly addressed the concerns of the civil rights era, its scope was limited vis-à-vis the concerns of the anti-hate crime movement, both in terms of the types of behaviors it proscribed and the protected statuses it included. Note in particular that the status provisions included in the act—race, color, religion, and national origin—are the core statuses that focused the work of the civil rights movement; sexual orientation, gender, and (dis)ability are not among the statuses the act is intended to acknowledge. Accordingly, while some point to the Civil Rights Act of 1968 as the first piece of federal hate-crimes legislation, it might be better understood as belonging to the body of legislative actions associated with the civil rights era rather than as the first federal hate crimes law.

Hate Crime Statistics Act (HCSA) of 1990 A majority of scholars today point to the Hate
Crime Statistics Act (HCSA) of 1990 (Pub. L. 101-275) as the first federal-level hate crimes law in the United States. President George H. W. Bush (1924–) signed the bill into law on 23 April 1990 (Herek 2017). Much of what we know today about hate crimes at the national level is attributable to the provisions included in the HCSA. Although it was the first federal law to include the term hate crime, the HCSA did not establish a new category of crime, nor did it stipulate new penalties for bias-motivated violence or provide new avenues of recourse for victims (Jenness and Grattet 2001). Instead, the act simply mandated the US DOJ, under the direction of the attorney general, to establish standards and begin collecting statistical data for each calendar year on “crimes that manifest evidence of prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation, or ethnicity, including where appropriate the crimes of murder; non-negligent manslaughter; forcible rape; aggravated assault, simple assault, intimidation; arson; and destruction, damage or vandalism of property” (Pub. L. No. 101–275). Moreover, the act requires the publication of an annual report of descriptive statistics based on the collected data.

Not only is the HCSA typically regarded as the first federal hate crime law, it was also the first federal law to acknowledge sexual orientation as a protected status. Introduced in 1985, the act, and the federal hearings it engendered, brought increased national attention to the problem of hate-motivated violence. However, the version of the HCSA that initially debuted on the national stage contained a somewhat narrower understanding of “hate crime” than did the final version of the bill that President Bush signed in 1990. Recalling that the problem of bias-motivated violence was originally brought to national attention through the efforts of watchdog agencies such as the ADL, the SPLC, and the NAACP—organizations primarily focused on racial and religious discrimination—it is not surprising that early efforts to develop hate crime legislation tended to reflect the dominant constructions of hate crime advanced by those social movement actors (Jenness and Grattet 2001). Thus, while race, religion, and ethnic origin were included, sexual orientation was not among the status provisions identified in early drafts of the HCSA. Sometime between 1985 and signing of the bill in 1990, a clause adding sexual orientation to the list of protected statuses was inserted into the bill, thus expanding the federal definition of hate crime. “Similar to the role played by the ADL in the initial hearings on hate crime, the voice of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) and other gay and lesbian civil rights organizations primarily focused on racial and religious discrimination—it is not surprising that early efforts to develop hate crime legislation tended to reflect the dominant constructions of hate crime advanced by those social movement actors (Jenness and Grattet 2001). Thus, while race, religion, and ethnic origin were included, sexual orientation was not among the status provisions identified in early drafts of the HCSA. Sometime between 1985 and signing of the bill in 1990, a clause adding sexual orientation to the list of protected statuses was inserted into the bill, thus expanding the federal definition of hate crime. “Similar to the role played by the ADL in the initial hearings on hate crime, the voice of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF) and other gay and lesbian civil rights groups proved crucial in evoking and sustaining the expansion of the law” (Jenness and Grattet 2001, 56). An NGLTF report recorded in official congressional testimony in 1986 articulated the gay and lesbian position with regard to hate crime law:

We urge Congress to pass legislation that would clarify the scope of federal statutes 18 U.S.C. 241 and 42 U.S.C., so that they clearly protect the full range of groups in this country that are subjected to acts of violence because of their status or identity. [By] failing to include provisions for gay and lesbian people in
The inclusion of sexual orientation as a protected status in the HCSA did not go uncontested. In fact, as Valerie Jenness and Ryken Grattet (2001) note, it prompted an all-out assault by conservatives in both houses of Congress (see also Fernandez 1991). While some objected to the inclusion of sexual orientation on the grounds that the addition of an additional status provision alongside race, religion, and ethnic origin would render data collection too broad and too expensive, the primary objection was grounded in the notion that the federal government should not provide gays and lesbians with “special” rights, and that to do so would render violence against gays and lesbians equivalent to violence against racial, ethnic, and religious minorities. “It is a federal responsibility to ensure the equal protection of all citizens regardless of their race, religion, or ethnic origin. It is not a federal obligation to protect citizens in their sexual orientation,” conservatives in Congress argued in 1988 (quoted in Jenness and Grattet 2001, 59). Representative William Dannemeyer (1929–; R-CA) and Senator Jesse Helms (1921–2008; R-NC) were especially vehement in their protests against inclusion, right up until the bill was signed. Congress is being “hoodwinked,” Helms argued, into passing the “flagship of the homosexual … legislative agenda” (quoted in Jenness and Grattet 2001, 59). Such conservative objections notwithstanding, the status of gay and lesbian people as victims of hate-motivated violence was ultimately recognized in the language of the HCSA and, over time, institutionalized as a key element of the character of hate crime law.

Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 Four years after the HCSA became law, President Bill Clinton (1946–) signed the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act into law on 13 September 1994. The new law identified eight predicate crimes—murder, nonnegligent manslaughter, forcible rape, aggravated assault, simple assault, intimidation, arson, and destruction, damage, or vandalism of property—for which judges would enhance penalties of “not less than three offense levels for offenses that finder of fact at trial determines beyond a reasonable doubt are hate crimes” (Pub. L. No. 103-322). For the purposes of this law, hate crime is defined as criminal conduct in which “the defendant intentionally selected any victim or property as the object of the offense because of the actual or perceived race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person” (Pub. L. No. 103-322). The new guidelines took effect on 1 November 1995. Although broad in form, the law is of limited utility because it applies only to federal crimes, such as those that fall under federal criminal civil rights statutes and other federal crimes such as attacks and vandalism that occur in
national parks and on other federal properties (Smyth and Jenness 2014).

**Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994** Shortly after sexual orientation had joined race, religion, and ethnic origin as a status provision in hate crime laws, Congress began to take seriously a growing demand to include gender as a protected status as well (Jenness and Grattet 2001). It was not until 1994, however, when the US Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), that gender was finally recognized as a protected status. Enactment of VAWA marked the end point for an effort initiated by Joseph Biden (1942–), then senator from Delaware, when he submitted to Congress a preliminary proposal to address the issue of violence against women. Working closely with Biden and the staff of the Senate Judiciary Committee, the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund brought experts and organizations together in the Task Force on the Violence Against Women Act to help draft and pass the legislation recognizing the severity of the crimes associated with domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Task force efforts met with strenuous opposition, especially in regard to a proposed civil rights remedy that would allow victims of gender-based violence to sue their attackers. Opponents of the act argued that such a provision would bring large numbers of family disputes into the federal courts and overwhelm the system with domestic matters that did not belong there (Legal Momentum 2018).

Ultimately, the VAWA was enacted with its civil rights provisions largely intact. Title III of the act positioned select crimes against women as equivalent to acts of violence based on race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, and sexual orientation. In the end, this argument met with little resistance, which “suggests that its logic had already achieved legitimacy. In other words, violence committed against an individual in order to send a message of animus to a larger community was increasingly taken for granted as a core component of hate crime law” (Jenness and Grattet 2001, 65). The VAWA survived a number of constitutional challenges in the courts. However, when a case challenging its underpinning civil rights remedy reached the US Supreme Court in 2000, the remedy was struck down as unconstitutional in a 5 to 4 decision penned by Chief Justice William Rehnquist (1924–2005) in *United States v. Morrison* (529 U.S. 598).

**Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act (Shepard/Byrd Act) of 2009** The brutal and tragic hate-motivated killings of Matthew Shepard (1976–1998) and James Byrd Jr. (1949–1998) in 1998 became a touchstone for a subsequent surge of activism calling for expanded federal legislation to protect victims of bias-motivated violence. Byrd, a forty-nine-year-old black man living in Jasper, Texas, accepted a ride from three white men, hoping that they would take him home. “Instead … the three men beat Byrd … strip[ped] him naked, chain[ed] him by the ankles to their pickup truck and dragged him for three miles over rural roads” (Human Rights Campaign 2018). Byrd was alive during much of the dragging, which abraded away most of his skin, severed his right arm, and ended in his decapitation when his body caught a sewage drain. The three
assailants, identified as members of various white supremacist organizations, expressed no regret for the killing.

Only a few months after Byrd was killed in Texas, twenty-one-year-old gay University of Wyoming student Matthew Shepard met Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney at a bar in Cheyenne. Subsequently, the two men lured Shepard to their vehicle and drove him to a remote area where they tied him to a split-rail fence, beat him severely, and left him to die in the freezing night. Shepard was found unconscious eighteen hours later by a passing cyclist, and he died six days later at a hospital in Fort Collins, Colorado. Shepard’s murder was one of 1,269 hate crimes in 1998 alone that police identified as motivated by sexual orientation bias.

The history of hate crimes committed against LGBTQ people in the United States is replete with stories such as Shepard’s. The FBI’s 2016 analysis of hate crime data indicates that the number of violent crimes targeting the LGBTQ community is second only to the number of violent incidents based on racial animus. Gay men have an especially high rate of victimization. Indeed, while race-based hate crimes are numerically the most frequent incidents, gay men are by far the most frequently victimized population per capita (Rubenstein 2004). Although it was not approved by both houses of Congress until eleven years after Shepard’s murder, the Shepard/Byrd Act (2009) was, in some ways, an attempt to acknowledge this.

President Barack Obama (1961–) signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act on 28 October 2009. The measure was a priority of Senator Edward M. Kennedy (1932–2009; D-MA) that had been on the congressional agenda for a decade. To ensure its passage after years of frustrated efforts, Democratic supporters attached the measure to the must-pass defense policy bill, over the steep objections of many Republicans (Weiner 2017). The Shepard/Byrd Act expanded federal hate crimes protections contained in the Civil Rights Act of 1968 to include crimes motivated by the victim’s actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability. In addition to expanding the umbrella of protected characteristics, the act also removed the requirement that the victim be engaged in a federally protected activity (such as attending school or voting). This law, in conjunction with those that preceded it, demonstrates a relatively strong, shared commitment on the part of many advocates in the United States to using federal power to enhance the status and welfare of sexual and gender minorities as differentially vulnerable to violence motivated by bigotry (Smyth and Jenness 2014).
President Barack Obama Speaks at the Enactment of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act on 28 October 2009. Known informally as the Shepard/Byrd Act, this legislation expanded federal hate crimes protections to include crimes motivated by the victim's actual or perceived gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability, prompted in part by the hate-motivated killing of Matthew Shepard, a gay University of Wyoming student. Shepard’s parents look on as Obama speaks.

State-Level Hate Crime Laws

Although federal-level hate crime laws generally garner more public attention, in the United States, criminal law is principally a state-level function. Accordingly, the vast majority of hate crime statutes are state-level laws, and the vast majority of hate crimes are prosecuted by state and local law enforcement officials. Hate crimes are generally not separate and distinct criminal offenses. Each state defines differently the criminal activity that constitutes a hate crime, and the breadth of coverage of these laws varies from state to state as well (ADL 2012). State hate crime laws typically contain provisions regarding some state policy action, an intent standard, and a specified list of protected statuses. “To qualify as a hate crime law, a state statute must criminalize, enhance penalties for, or amend existing statutes regarding crimes motivated by bias toward individuals or groups based on particular status characteristics” (Jenness and Grattet 2001, 77).

Although the first state-level hate crime laws emerged in Washington and Oregon in 1981, the first state to include provisions to protect the entire LGBTQ community was Minnesota, which listed both sexual orientation and gender identity among the status provisions named in its 1993 law. Washington joined Minnesota in acknowledging sexual orientation
as a protected status in 1993 (Human Rights Campaign 2017). However, it was not until 2009—after ten other states and the District of Columbia had already done so—that the state of Washington recognized gender identity as a status provision in its hate crime laws. Like the federal government, states were slow to extend legal protection to the LGBTQ community. In 1999, when forty-one states had adopted some form of hate crime statute (Jenness and Grattet 2001), only California had joined Minnesota and Washington in extending protections to include sexual orientation or gender identity. The decade leading up to passage of the Shepard/Byrd Act, however, saw significant change in this regard. Between 1999 and 2009 twenty-nine US states enacted legislation extending their status provisions to include sexual orientation, gender identity, or both (Jenness and Grattet 2001).

As of May 2018, eighteen US states and Washington, DC, had laws that address hate or bias-motivated crimes based on gender identity or sexual orientation. An additional twelve states address hate or bias-motivated crimes based only on sexual orientation. Of the remaining states, fifteen have hate crime statutes that do not include sexual orientation or gender identity as protected classes: Alabama, Alaska, Idaho, Michigan, Mississippi, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, Utah (no categories listed), Virginia, and West Virginia. Five states—Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, South Carolina, and Wyoming—have no statutes that address hate crime (Human Rights Campaign 2017).

Trends in Hate Crime Law and Policy

Among the trends in state-level hate crime legislation are moves toward (1) expanding the number of protected status groups, recognizing, in particular, that groups defined by sexual orientation and disability are frequent targets of bias-motivated violence; (2) providing penalty enhancement for hate and bias motivated crime; and (3) requiring data collection and statistical reporting (Shively 2005). Several interest groups maintain up-to-date maps and other interactive online materials that allow users to investigate the history, current status, and content of state-level hate crime laws in the United States. The ADL, the Human Rights Campaign, the NGLTF, and the SPLC, among others, offer especially effective digital materials of this type.

Over the nearly forty-year history of hate crime legislation in the United States, the diffusion of hate crime laws across jurisdictions is clear. In 1981 only two US states had passed legislation responding to the problem of bias-motivated violence. Between 1981 and 1984 an additional ten states passed hate crime statutes into law. In the ensuing five years another fourteen states passed similar laws, and between 2000 and 2004 Hawaii, Indiana, Georgia, New Mexico, and South Carolina passed hate crime statutes. As of 2018, only five US states did not have any hate crime laws in effect, including Georgia, where legislators had passed a hate crime statute that was later declared unconstitutional. The
proliferation of hate crime laws across the nation is testament to the successful, sustained effort of a US anti–hate crime movement to generate public discourse about violence born of bigotry and to effectively demand legal change to remedy the problem (Grattet and Jenness 2001).

In addition to the proliferation of hate crime laws across jurisdictions, Grattet and Jenness (2001) note a trend toward convergence—that is, regardless of jurisdiction, over time, state statutes designed to address bias-motivated crime have become increasingly similar in their conceptualization of hate crime. This trend is especially discernable in the language these laws have employed with regard to motivation or intent. For example, hate crime laws have employed four different ways of characterizing the motivational requirement for conviction under the statute (Grattet and Jenness 2001). Some have used language requiring prosecutors to show that an act was precipitated by “animus, hostility, maliciousness, or hatred” while others require that perpetrators be shown to have had an intent to “maliciously and with specific intent to harass” the victim. Similarly, a third type requires an intent to “harass and intimidate” the victim. Each of these requires a particular subjective state on the part of the perpetrator. A fourth motivational requirement requires prosecutors to show that the offense was committed simply “because of” race, religion, and so on—a far easier standard to prove. Prior to 1987 there was little consensus among states on motivational language. By 1990, however, the latter two examples had emerged as the dominant forms, and finally, after 1993, about half of state laws had adopted the “because of” phrasing (Grattet and Jenness 2001). This convergence around motivational language over time suggests that, following a period of experimentation when legislatures had no clear models to guide them, policy making is increasingly informed by mimicry of early innovators and their experience of what works (Grattet and Jenness 2001). The result has been a reconceptualization, or narrowing, of the concept of hate crime as the “because of” motivation is institutionalized.

**Concept Expansion** As bias-motivated violence has become a legal and policy issue, the term *hate crime* has been refocused and specified in the legislative arena, resulting in changes to its fundamental nature (Grattet and Jenness 2001). Jenness notes a trend among legislators toward extending the legal protections of hate crime law beyond the taken-for-granted core status groups defined by race, religion, and ethnic origin to recognize the lived reality of women, gays and lesbians, and people with disabilities as potential victims of bias-motivated violence (Jenness 1999). In addition, as hate crime law has increasingly become a fact of legal life in the United States, the experiences of prosecutors and judges have led to further concept expansion as their understanding of hate crime extends beyond stereotypical hate-based incidents such as gay bashings and modern-day lynchings to include more subtle and complex forms of violence.

**Meaning Making and Settling**
At any given moment in time, legal rules and categories exist on a continuum from controversial to settled (Friedman 1967). Although lawmakers are responsible for writing legislation that articulates broad legal concepts, rules, and guidelines, laws are not really meaningful as they exist in statute books. Instead, they take on meaning as they are applied in practice. The making of legal meaning occurs in multiple sites inside and outside of the formal legal system (Mertz 1994); courts are correctly understood to play a central role in determining the meaning of new laws. When hate crime entered the US appellate courtroom, it did so as an ambiguous legal category accompanied by a set of attendant, equally ambiguous legal rules. Scott Phillips and Grattet (2000) have documented the process through which hate crime has been transformed in judicial opinions into a relatively settled legal construct that is generally accepted as legitimate. Tracking judicial rhetoric across thirty-eight appellate opinions considering the constitutionality of hate crime laws between 1984 and 1999, these researchers found that hate crime emerged from these challenges a far richer, more nuanced, and more settled concept than the collection of words contained in legislation would suggest, and that it had undergone construct expansion to include a broadened range of behaviors and mental precursors. Moreover, in the process, judges developed a specific rhetoric for responding to constitutional challenges to hate crime statutes and had begun to converge around formulaic sets of arguments to negotiate future constitutional challenges.

SEE ALSO Gendered Violence and Feminicide in Latin America; Human Rights Campaign; ISIS Gay Trials; Military Law and Policy in the United States

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Helem

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The first official LGBTQ+ rights organization in the Middle East.

Helem, which in Arabic is an acronym for “Lebanese Protection for LGBTs,” was founded in Beirut, Lebanon, on 4 September 2004 as a nonprofit organization committed to improving the legal and social status of LGBTQ individuals. Helem is also the Arabic word for “dream,” symbolizing the organization’s vision and commitment to engage in the peaceful struggle to end all forms of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in Lebanon and the Middle East.

Helem was conceived as the institutional evolution of the underground association known as “Club Free,” a collective of young queer activists united by the internet and their desire for equality with the aim of protecting and improving the lives of at-risk LGBTQ+ individuals. Helem focuses its advocacy on providing legal and social services, building community, delivering health services including HIV awareness and prevention, and engaging in grassroots activism. One of Helem’s principal goals is to abolish Article 534 of the Lebanese penal code, which criminalizes “sexual acts against the order of nature,” with penalties of up to one year in prison, and is frequently used to arrest, detain, abuse, and incarcerate vulnerable LGBTQ+ individuals, especially refugees, migrant workers, and sex workers. Helem devotes most of its resources toward securing the release of these individuals, providing them with legal advice and representation, documenting abuses against their human rights, and providing them with a safe space.

Helem also created and still maintains the first LGBTQ community center in the region of the Middle East and North Africa, which over the years has evolved into a major hub for grassroots initiatives and community-led activism. The center works on engaging the Lebanese public through highly visible campaigning, including holding the first LGBTQ rights protest in the region in February 2009 and promoting queer causes in the media. It has published numerous pioneering reports and research on issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity in Lebanon, including the first book on homophobia, Rihab al-mithliya (2006; Homophobia). Helem has also successfully lobbied to end rectal examinations as a method for determining sexual orientation by the Beirut police and to remove homosexuality from the list of disorders recognized by the Lebanese Psychological Association and Lebanese Psychiatric Society (which occurred in 2013). Helem’s legal team
has been involved in some of the most important cases involving queer individuals, including a landmark case in 2017 where a Lebanese court, for the first time, ruled against Article 534 by affirming homosexuality as a natural right. Helem’s services also focus heavily on supporting the transgender community in Lebanon, with special emphasis on providing protection against police harassment and arbitrary detention through sensitization and awareness programming.

Activists from Helem have gone on to found organizations of their own, including Meem, the first community organization for lesbian, bisexual, and queer women in the region; al-Mou’assasa al-Arabiya li al-Hurriyat wa al-Musawat (Arab Foundation for Freedom and Equality), a regional organization dedicated to capacity building and activist empowerment; Helem Montreal and Helem Paris, sister organizations dedicated to serving the Lebanese and Arab queer diaspora; and Marsa, an award-winning Lebanese sexual health center that evolved to focus on sexual and reproductive services independently. Since 2012, Helem has reoriented its advocacy to include legal and policy reform, engaging directly with the Lebanese government, judiciary, and security institutions to end state-sponsored discrimination. Helem seeks to expand its fight for equality by building coalitions and engaging with networks in the Global South to learn from and benefit other LGBTQ+ movements in postcolonial and postconflict societies.

SEE ALSO  
[alQaws; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Meem]

BIBLIOGRAPHY


In 1998 Professors Diana Taylor (New York University), Zeca Ligiéro (Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Brazil), and Javier Serna (Universidad Autonóma de Nuevo León, Mexico) founded the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics, seeking to expand and to share approaches for analyzing embodied practices. Housed within the Department of Performance Studies at New York University’s Tisch School of the Arts, the Hemispheric Institute generated a network of institutions, scholars, art practitioners, and activists that work at the intersection of performance and politics throughout the Americas. Since its inception, the Hemispheric Institute has been instrumental in the archiving of LGBTQ performances, given that its philosophical structure and methodologies place the body at the center of theoretical, artistic, and activist interventions. This theoretical and practical vision is in tune with the work of a community disenfranchised because of normative constrictions on the body; at the same time, the LGBTQ artistic and activist response to these challenges transforms the marginalized body into a site of political self-affirmation. In this way, the Hemispheric Institute has enabled a collaborative and inclusive environment while developing expertise in information technologies. Currently, its website hosts e-misférica, an online trilingual scholarly journal; an archive of team-taught courses that promote transnational collaborations; and HemiPress, an innovative digital press, among other initiatives. These digital platforms have enormously increased the network’s scope and ability to make its resources accessible worldwide.

Following its commitment to inclusivity and to theoretical/practical artivism, in 2005 the Hemispheric Institute, in collaboration with New York University Libraries, received funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to create a publicly accessible online collection of digital video. Both institutions devoted themselves to developing the production and institutional repository systems needed to support such an archive. This initiative launched the Hemispheric Institute Digital Video Library (HIDVL, which can be viewed at hidvl.nyu.edu) with the objective of rescuing and preserving hundreds of hours of video documenting the artistic expression of social and political life in the Americas. Understanding “performance” in a multilayered way, this archive includes theatrical
performances, body art, multimedia art installations, lectures, dance pieces, street art, and activist interventions, among an expanding range of cultural expressions.

A pioneering web platform, HIDVL guarantees that these digital video materials will be made available and preserved for at least 500 years—a timeline envisioned taking into consideration the dynamics of current technological developments. At the same time, continuing management of the video collections foresees potential migrations to new digital and web formats in the future. This enduring commitment is made possible through both the technological support of New York University Libraries and the networked practices of the Hemispheric Institute. The fragility of certain video formats led librarians like Jerome McDonough, New York University’s Digital Library Development team leader at the beginning of this project, to incorporate technologies that capture data in the highest-quality possible in order to preserve tapes that were in danger of disintegration. New York University and the Hemispheric Institute worked closely with artists throughout the Americas to collect these tapes, digitize their content, render both preservation-quality and streaming-quality video files, and make them available around the world for present and future generations.

As of 2018, HIDVL offered more than 900 hours of video documentation accompanied by a trilingual artist profile (in English, Spanish, and Portuguese) that provides context, including production information, photo galleries, interviews, and a comprehensive bibliography. The web platform is available to a growing number of scholars, educators, artists, and activists whose work depends on video documentation. Continuing with its founders’ vision, HIDVL seeks to promote dialogue and a deeper understanding of performance and politics in the Americas, featuring artistic works that discuss topics such as state-sponsored violence, social movements, feminism, race relations, and migration, among others. Gender and sexuality, and the response from LGBTQ communities to the policing of the body, continue to be key topics for this digital archive. The works of the various artists and activists preserved in HIDVL offer insights to understanding queer studies as theory, methodology, and practice.

**Archiving the Repertoire**

HIDVL collections are curated and showcased following the understanding of “performance” in a broad sense as a repertoire of embodied practices. Diana Taylor (2003) studies how these bodily behaviors function as “acts of transfer” that transmit knowledge, memory, and a sense of identity. The repertoire challenges and expands the limits of the written archive, offering alternative ways of thinking and doing. The contribution of HIDVL lies in its focus on video documentation of “live” embodied practices; in this sense, it is a new form of archiving that dwells in-between the archive and the repertoire’s dynamic interaction. By broadening the archive beyond the realm of the textual, HIDVL expands the corpus available for research and teaching, and promotes and enables critical reflection.
about the sources upon which scholarship in the humanities is based.

The scope of HIDVL encompasses the work of artists that might seem disparate at first glance. For example, one of the first HIDVL collections corresponds to the Colectivo de Acciones de Arte (CADA; Collective for Art Actions), an activist group of artists in Chile who used performance between 1979 and 1985 to challenge the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1915–2006). CADA incorporated strategies of theatricality and performance in all of its “art actions,” conceiving art as a necessary social practice that blurred the traditional distance between the artist and the spectator. Their “interventions in everyday life” intended to disrupt the normalized routines of daily urban life in a context where civil and human rights were under open attack by the state. CADA’s members were the avant-garde of political performance art in the Americas, and they remain respected voices on social resistance.

Moving forward, in 2016 HIDVL featured the work of Alina Troyano, also known as Carmelita Tropicana, a Cuban-born performance artist, playwright, and actor who has presented her work internationally. In Tropicana’s work, humor, irony, and playful eroticism become subversive tools to question issues of gender, sexuality, and national identity. One of the best examples of her work is her Pingalito Betancourt persona, portrayed as the stereotypical Latin macho who at the same time longs for lost affective ties. Carmelita Tropicana brings together migration, bilingualism, and transculturation in her cabaret-style performances, generating a space of intimacy with her audiences.

Initially, these two collections might not seem mutually coherent. Whereas CADA’s strategies of resistance operate in a larger social context of authoritarianism, Carmelita Tropicana reveals the intimate struggles of subjects that inhabit in-between worlds and gender identities. However, reading these artists’ work together, it is possible to see their convergences as spaces that are open to imagining utopian possibilities for survival, which starts with creatively opening spaces from and for diverse identities (Muñoz 1999). The details of their performances could have faded into oblivion given that the occurrence of embodied practices happens in an unrepeatable contingent time and space. Captured on video, the documentary traces of these performances are available to be experienced in new ways and to keep challenging colonialism, authoritarianism, classism, masculinism, and heterosexism (Jones 1997).

Mapping New Knowledges

In addition to rescuing artists’ and activists’ work, the digital archive activates the political potential of the interactions between web users and video documentation given that “the televisual image is not only a reproduction or repetition of a performance, but a performance in itself” (Auslander 1999, 44). This medium challenges the idea of artwork as a mere object of analysis: the artwork and its documentation both demand an active
engagement from audiences. The connections that emerge between different works can ignite new ways of thinking and understanding the role of embodied art in contemporary society. Accordingly, by making artists’ work accessible, HIDVL contributes to articulating new sites of knowledge production. This project is particularly groundbreaking when taking into consideration LGBTQ artists and activists of color, whose work has been marginalized from the canon due to prejudices on gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. LGBTQ communities reflect upon and from the peripheral space to which their bodies have been marginalized, and in so doing, they challenge normative conventions regarding ways of being and knowing. In this sense, embodied practices produce new knowledge, and new knowledge requires new archives. In a dynamic and productive interrelation, the digital archive preserves and potentiates the repertoire, and the repertoire animates and expands the digital archive.

These interconnections become more relevant when talking about the digital archive of embodied practices by artists whose proposals intersect art, scholarship, and activism. This is the case with La Pocha Nostra, a transdisciplinary arts organization, founded in 1993 by Guillermo Gómez-Peña, Roberto Sifuentes, and Nola Mariano in California. La Pocha Nostra comprises a network of artists from various generations and ethnic backgrounds whose common denominator is the desire to cross and erase borders between art and politics, practice and theory, artist and spectator. Their artistic proposals range from performance solos and duets to large-scale performance installations including video, photography, audio, and cyberart. These projects challenge constructed binaries and barriers around culture, ethnicity, gender, and language. Interestingly, La Pocha Nostra constantly performs the very theoretical-political concept that appeals to scholars and activists alike: learning to cross borders of all types on stage might bring about the possibility of learning how to do so in larger social spheres. Gómez-Peña and Sifuentes have systematized part of the findings that come from their artistic work through scholarly essays and books sharing the theory and practice of being a “rebel artist.”

In the southern side of the Americas, the feminist anarchist movement Mujeres Creando (Women Creating) also has produced new forms of knowledge through art and activism. Created in 1990 in La Paz, Bolivia, Mujeres Creando comprises women of different cultural, social, and ethnic origins and explores art as an instrument of resistance and social participation. The three women who founded this communitarian proposal (María Galindo, Julieta Paredes, and Mónica Mendoza) worked together to recover the public space that the patriarchal system appropriated. In this sense, the group not only struggles for women’s rights and issues that affect women but also stands up against a system that disenfranchises a large part of Bolivian society. Mujeres Creando’s means of expression are graffiti, ongoing public debates, and public performance art along with a constant presence in the streets to reclaim a voice and participation in the public sphere. In April 2001, due to ethical and political disagreements, the group divided, which brought the necessity to differentiate names. After this divergence, Galindo continued working with
Mujeres Creando in Bolivia while Paredes founded another collective, Mujeres Creando Comunidad (Women Creating Community).

Both Galindo and Paredes have published scholarly and political writings discussing the marginalization of women in society and the struggle to overcome being stigmatized based on sexual orientation. In one of their early street performances (or acciones), during the first cycle of Mujeres Creando, Galindo and Paredes took over a public square, drew a red heart on the pavement, set a mattress and sheets in the middle of the heart, and lay in that improvised bed, holding hands and kissing, while their collaborators handed flowers to the passersby. The expressions of disgust and negative judgment from some members of this audience, even when listening to the words of love and acceptance that accompanied the acción, demonstrate that the struggle for the right to freely choose gender and sexual identity intensifies within a patriarchal, neoliberal, and neocolonial political system. In later works, Paredes has explored Aymara sociopolitical systems in search of alternative knowledges that offer ways to achieve social justice, which is part of her proposal of “communitarian feminism.”

Queering Latinx America

© PEDRO GONZALEZ/LATINCONTENT/GETTY IMAGES
Astrid Hadad Performing in Her Show Tierra Misteriosa (Mysterious Land) in Mexico City, Mexico, 2011. The queer, Mexican-themed work of singer and performance artist Astrid Hadad is archived online in the Hemispheric Institute Digital Video Library, which brings the role of women artists to the forefront in remapping the Americas’ knowledges and political practices.
HIDVL brings the role of women artists to the forefront in remapping the knowledges and political practices of the Americas. Among Latin American and Latinx (a gender-neutral way to express Latina/o identity) artists, women have not shied away from the task of queering pervasive normative assumptions—understanding *queer* as an active verb instead of a passive adjective. The act of *queering* the world is a political one in the sense that it challenges the norm and turns it upside down in order to imagine and to think otherwise (Muñoz 1999). Mexican singer and performance artist Astrid Hadad queers the female/male binary and its prevalence in her country's history. Hadad’s own body becomes a human, mobile stage, an altar and a life sculpture. Mexico’s iconography, like the cactus, the pyramid, and the tequila bottle, as well as several iterations of the Virgin of Guadalupe and guns, appear as common places to be subverted and reconfigured. Like those of Carmelita Tropicana, her shows follow the format of a cabaret, in which Hadad and her band, Los Tarzanes, create a space of intimacy while at the same time showcasing a diva-persona with stunning vocals and elaborate costumes. Through her voice and her body, Hadad challenges the audience to accompany her in the performance of queering social expectations. Most of her work challenges cultural norms pertaining to gender roles in Mexican society, and she also addresses issues related to US neo-imperialism.

Multiple artists from the United States have been included in HIDVL, in accordance with its hemispheric approach. Among these artists, the work of Latinx subjects reveals the complexities of being part of a minority group from where challenge and resistance can be performed. For example, Nao Bustamante is an internationally known performance artist from California. Her work often contests traditional roles for women and questions what it means to be a US American in relation with Latinx heritage. She also interrogates the assumptions around the “Latina” body, putting the audience, and often her own body, in vulnerable positions. In her piece *America, the Beautiful*, Bustamante cinches her entire body with cling wrap while balancing in high heels on a folding ladder. Donning a blond wig and wearing heavy makeup, her presence on stage fluctuates in-between what is laughable and admirable, thus transforming precariousness into defiance. Bustamante demands extreme tasks from her body on stage in the same manner as society demands gendered and racialized bodies to overperform in terms of labor, physical appearance, and sexual desire.

Another artist who explores issues related to being Latinx in the United States is Susana Cook, a New York–based Argentine theater and performance artist whose work tackles sexuality, gender, homophobia, racism, nationalism, and dictatorship. Mainly directed to queer and Latinx communities in New York City, Cook’s work also encompasses a passionate response to state policies that oppress communities identified in the intersection of race, gender, and class. In her shows, Cook parodies discourses of power drawing attention to the close ties between religious and political conservatism and the military. In *The Fury of the Gods*, Cook brings the figure of the evangelical fundamentalist preacher to its most extreme expression dismantling the contradictory logics of a discourse
that predicates love while attacking the LGBTQ community. Humor is at the center of this political satire, which is described in the HIDVL site as an “exercise in Pop Blasphemy,” as well as amusing absurdity on stage that highlights the power of comedy to contest prejudice and authoritarianism. Her plays usually feature all-women casts that defy normative stereotypes of gender, race, and sexuality.

Both Bustamante and Cook are examples of artists who rewrite recent political history from the narratives that surface from their bodily presence on stage. Their relation with Latin American and Latinx history comes from and invites bodily responses that are themselves a form of understanding that history and their place within it. They perform a form of what Elizabeth Freeman calls “erotohistoriography” that “sees the body as a method, and historical consciousness as something intimately involved with corporeal sensations” (2010, 95–96). The digital archive of their performances contributes to this form of approaching recent historical events and reaffirms the political potential of the act of queering.

**Performing Art and Resistance**

The artists’ work featured in the HIDVL platform is innovative, challenging, and visionary. This work is a reminder that the very definition of the virtual implies that everything is possible (Case 2007). Whereas the virtual, as opposed to the “actual,” presents the potentiality of political imagination, the digital has become the most effective tool to access the virtual. In the case of the video collections archived in HIDVL, this accessibility functions on two levels: on the one hand, digital videography records and documents performances that outline better ways to live in society; on the other hand, these video materials reach out to a broader audience by being accessible worldwide through internet connections. This combination plays a relevant role in present times when digital networks and social media are already reshaping modes of political participation.

One of HIDVL’s best-known video collections is El Hábito, which comprises fifteen years of a political cabaret run by Mexican artist Jesusa Rodríguez and her partner Liliana Felipe. Rodríguez is a director, actress, playwright, performance artist, set designer, entrepreneur, and social activist. Her shows challenge traditional classification, as well as traditional gender roles. Humor, satire, linguistic puns, and the political potential of the body are constants in her productions. Felipe, one of Latin America’s leading singers and composers, was born in Argentina. She left for Mexico just before the outbreak of the “Dirty War” in 1976, but part of her family remains “disappeared” as victims of the military dictatorship's criminal politics. She continues working with human rights organizations in Argentina, especially H.I.J.O.S. (Hijos e Hijas por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio [Sons and Daughters for Identity and Justice against Oblivion and Silence], the organization of the children of the disappeared). Together, Rodríguez and Felipe created two performance spaces, El Cuervo and El Hábito in Coyoacán, Mexico City, which they ran until
2005 when their collaborators, Las Reinas Chulas, took it over and renamed the cabaret El Vicio. El Hábito/El Vicio is a cultural hub for intellectuals, feminists, gay rights activists, and all sorts of people who are open to understanding that critical humor can also be a form of knowledge and political resistance.

As of 2018, Rodríguez and Felipe continue working on live performances while also recording and archiving their work in HIDVL and the Hemispheric Institute's multiple digital platforms. Both their bodily work and its rendering into new visual and digital technologies are part of a larger set of practices that are generating new epistemologies, new forms of being in the world, and new ways of embracing the productive challenges ignited by LGBTQ artists and activists. Digital video archives are ultimately rooted in the body, and the existence of physical spaces of encounter like El Hábito cabaret is a reminder that there is always a return to that body. HIDVL suggests that performance and politics as acts of resistance remain in those in-between spaces of the digital, the embodied, the virtual, and the actual.

**New Cultural Maps in the Digital Humanities**

HIDVL video collections are linked to HemiPress, the Hemispheric Institute's digital publications imprint that centralizes the institute’s diverse publication initiatives. HemiPress uses a variety of customized open-source digital humanities platforms keeping the original goal of connecting communities of readers, scholars, artists, and activists across the Americas. These platforms are generating new cultural maps through networked relations and associations. In other words, through bodily performance and its digital archiving and consequent dissemination, these digital humanities projects are “remapping the Americas” (Taylor 2007). Moreover, their interconnections offer a possible integration of virtual communities, becoming a “public space in gestation” (Barbero 2000).

HIDVL unceasingly grows, expands, and produces new relational links. Digital archives engender an expandable scope of virtual cross-references—a rhizomatic activity that might contain in itself productive and reproductive dynamics that strengthen and expand the scope of performance and politics. Interestingly, these prospects of political freedom rely on the model of the rhizome that different networks are currently acquiring (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). A rhizomatic model is expandable and nonpredictable; in this sense, this same system would be able to shelter multiple, unexpected, and extensive acts of resistance against global trends of authoritarianism. In other words, digital archives generate new “constellations” of performance, art, and activism— all spaces that interconnect and collaborate to create acts of resistance (Fuentes 2015).

In HIDVL, various epistemic systems—the written, the performed, the digital—work together in the transmission of knowledge. HIDVL makes accessible the bodily practices of minoritarian communities, artists, and activists. Digital technologies both serve and
challenge the humanities and political responses to current times while expanding artistic and cultural/academic archives. The embodied knowledge associated with performance and the sanctioned knowledge of the written archive have, in the digital format, a new space to keep rewriting and queering history.

SEE ALSO Archives in Latin America; Cabaret Theater in Latin America and the Caribbean; Digital Cultures in Latin America; Performance Artists in Latin America; Pornoterrorismo and Post-Porn

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Hena Maysara (2007; Khaled Youssef)

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Egyptian film that shocked many with its depiction of a lesbian encounter.

_Hena maysara_ is an Egyptian social and political film directed by Khaled Youssef, written by Nasser Abdel Rahman, and produced by Albatrous Film Production in 2007. The film was awarded the prize for best film at the 14th Cairo National Festival for Egyptian Cinema. The film discusses the state of and the morality in Egypt's slum city (Manatiq al-‘Ashwa’iyya), which consists of those poor areas on the outskirts of Cairo lacking the most basic infrastructure services and means of livelihood. Those areas are occupied by poor families who suffer social and economic marginalization. According to the Egypt-based journalist Mariam Musa (2015), “Slum areas started to crop up in Cairo in the 1950s, for a variety of reasons, including the internal migration of Egyptians seeking better living conditions, the expansion of the capitalist economy, overpopulation, and high birth rates.” Poor houses and inefficiently constructed, crowded rooms compose these informal settlements, where most residents are unemployed or work in very low-wage jobs and suffer a state of total or near-total economic and social exclusion. Slums create an environment leading to the occurrence of many crimes, such as violence, burglary, and sexual abuse of women and children, along with a high incidence of drug addiction. Because of the lawlessness and lack of security in these areas, these slums have also been centers of police brutality. According to David Sims (2010), Cairo’s slum areas have developed only since 1960. Not until the second decade of the twenty-first century, however, did the nature and dynamics of the poverty and social deprivation in slum areas become central to many in-depth studies, particularly given their correlation with the rise of the Arab Spring (a series of popular uprisings that occurred in the Middle East and North Africa starting in late 2010).

_Hena maysara_ broke the silence surrounding these communities, tackling systemic violence—sexual harassment, rape, prostitution, and human trafficking—along with street children, incest, and other social problems, including drug smuggling and terrorist activities of extremist groups among Cairo's marginalized communities. The movie presents a realistic portrayal of the disintegrating social dynamics and moral states that result from living in such excluded areas, dealing with the agony, poverty, and economic and social pressures of life in slums. It also daringly deals with untold problematic issues, such as psychological and sexual deviations, that Egyptian cinema did not previously broach, zooming into the
slum areas to highlight the correlations between living (surviving) below the poverty line and risky sexual behaviors, with particular attention to homosexual prostitution as one of the many sexual services found in slums.

**The Film’s Plot**

The stories depicted in *Hena maysara* revolve around two main characters. The first is Nahed, who runs away from her home to escape her stepfather’s sexual harassment. She is exposed to harassment in her escape, too, and is even raped. She meets the second main character, Adel Hashisha, and falls in love with him. Adel is unemployed and doing odd jobs to support his mother and his brother's children. His brother, Reda, traveled to Iraq for work but has since gone missing in the chaos of the Persian Gulf War (1990–1991). The family is therefore forever awaiting his return. Adel's brother represents the hope that this family's dreams will come true with his return. However, he returns only in his mother’s dreams. Adel shoulders all responsibilities of his family; he cannot give up his role of providing for this large family, as they are totally dependent on him. He therefore cannot marry Nahed. The emotional and sexual relationship continues between them until she gets pregnant. She asks him to marry her and acknowledge paternity, but under the pressures of unemployment, poverty, and lack of proper shelter, he cannot be responsible for a wife. He tells her that he will marry her *hena maysara*, which means “when things get better” in Arabic. This phrase, which is also the title of the film, carries the connotation that poor people are forever waiting for the realization of their deferred dreams. For slum people, all dreams are postponed, whether drinking clean water or working and finding a place to live. All hopes are postponed to the future.

Although Adel makes this promise to Nahed, he fails to fulfill it, leaving her alone with the child. She therefore abandons their child on public transportation, feeling guilty and remorseful for leaving him to the streets but seeing no alternative. She then attempts to survive by looking for a job and a shelter, but as a woman she is always subject to sexual exploitation by the men she meets and trusts and even by some women. She is raped, harassed, and exposed to physical violence and finds no way forward but to become an exotic dancer, or stripper, and, finally, a professional prostitute, which brings with it other troubles connected to sex work. Her journey ends with her escaping from police officers as they chase her; simultaneously, her homeless child, now a street kid, also lives his life escaping from the police and the sexual violence of his fellow street kids. As for Adel, he, too, is transformed out of necessity from doing odd jobs to being a drug smuggler and becoming one of his neighborhood’s top thugs. He also becomes a police informant and an accomplice to religious extremist groups that have been on the rise in his slum area. At the end of the movie, Adel is forced, under brutality from police officers who targeted his family while looking for him, to flee these affiliations by running to catch a train. That train is physically and metaphorically where all their lives reconnect: Nahed is in another car on
that same train, also being chased; and their son, by then a young man, also sits atop that same train as it departs to nowhere in particular. In this way, father, mother, and son each escape their tragic past but still lack any clear destination away from the slum.

**Varied Reactions from Film Critics**

Controversy arose among film critics around this movie’s artistic value and perspective, especially addressing homosexuality and other risky sexual behaviors occurring in slum areas. Some considered it an important, daring film that addresses problems Egyptian society suffers under; critics praised its boldness, arguing that *Hena maysara* presents a reality that must be dealt with, even though the film presented not even a fraction of the complete picture of slum communities (*Warwārī 2008*). Additionally, they considered it a precursor to the 2011 Egyptian uprising against Hosni Mubarak’s regime popularly known as the 25 January Revolution, arguing that the movie shed light on the state’s preoccupation with regime security measures, the corruption within the security apparatus, the wide gap between social classes, and a general sense of destitution (*El Shimi 2016*).

On the other side, some critics accused the film of using homosexuality and other sexual references for crude commercial ends, pointing out its failure in terms of the weakness of its screenplay and its many plot loopholes, including disconnected time jumps, weak links between events, and mediocre dialogue (*Baba 2008*). These critics judged the film from both artistic and moralistic points of view, noting its destruction of social values and focus on sexual scenes (*al-Wirr 2016*).

These same critics claim that the film approaches too superficially the circumstances that push the protagonist, a simple country girl, toward immorality and same-sex prostitution. They note that the film is full of melodrama and tries to raise too many issues, relying on sweeping generalizations and superficial approaches. The main characters do not have sufficient opportunity to develop and become relatable in context; their transformations are abrupt, confusing, and sometimes artificial, superficially treating social reality. They also point out that the screenplay relies, on the one hand, on stereotypical images of women living in poverty and of risky sexual behaviors (including homosexuality as a form of prostitution) and, on the other, depicts brutality at the hands of the security apparatus when portraying the relationship between corruption, thuggery, and the growth of power within terrorist Islamic groups.

**Controversial Scene Involving Lesbian Encounter**

On a different level, the film stirred a lot of anger among al-Azhar University scholars in Egypt about one homosexual scene featuring a brief kiss between two women. It showed how the main character, Nahed, was seduced by an upperclass woman interested in a homosexual relationship with her, exploiting Nahed’s body in return for giving her shelter.
The scene is marginal within the dramatic structure of the film, but it aroused a lot of social controversy. Although it was not the first time homosexuality was tackled in Egyptian cinema, previous depictions had been between men, as for example in the 2006 film *Imarat Ya'qubian* (*The Yacoubian Building*). *Hena maysara's* depiction of lesbianism, however, constituted a shock to viewers. The film's lead actress, Sumaya al Khashab, defended how the lesbian scene was filmed, saying, “The scene was not obscene or indecent. On the contrary, it was very realistic and crucial in the film's dramatic context… Whoever watches the film will perceive the scene as natural in the context of the film's plotline and … not placed artificially for mere eroticism” (*al-Arabiya* 2008).

Accusations reached a boiling point when some Al-Azhari scholars called for the director and actresses to be prosecuted. The director was accused of tarnishing the image of Egyptian society and spreading vice and obscenity. For instance, Abdel-Sabour Shahin, a preacher and Islamic studies professor at Cairo University, called on authorities to prosecute the director and the two actresses, Ghada Abdel Razek and Sumaya al Khashab, for enacting the lesbian encounter, which he claimed was moral depravity on the big screen. He publicly claimed that “a Zionist and American conspiracy” is behind such degenerate films as part of a scheme to destroy social morality (*al-Arabiya* 2008). Elwi Amin, a professor of Islamic law at Al-Azhar University, also claimed that the film's sexual and lesbian scenes open the door to sin and moral corruption, that lesbianism does not exist in Egyptian society, and that “presenting sexual and lesbian scenes on TV and in the cinema is a sin. Watching them is also a sin” (*al-Arabiya* 2008).
Women Walk Past a Movie Poster for Hena Maysara at a Movie Theater in Cairo, Egypt, 2008. When
Hena maysara was released in 2007, some critics praised it for its daring depiction of the problems faced by
marginalized groups in Egyptian society. The movie also drew the ire of religious scholars, who claimed that
it spread vice and obscenity in its portrayal of a lesbian encounter.

Khaled Youssef, the film’s director, defended *Hena maysara* by denying this accusation. He
claimed that homosexuality was not his main concern and that his intention was to present
the realities facing marginalized groups and describe the life of slum residents, including
risky sexual behaviors that are part of that reality. The film’s focus was the social problem:
how to portray these people’s lives in full without distortion or misrepresentation. Youssef
said that the homosexual scenes of the film at the center of the controversy are simply a
reflection of reality and that the reality behind this portrayal could, in fact, be even more
shocking. In the film, he calls for a redressing of the situation, not spreading homosexuality
or thuggery. He is drawing attention to a time bomb present in Egyptian society. He asked
those objecting to the film to watch it first, then discuss its story line and scenes, because he
would not respond to criticisms leveled against the film by those who did not watch it. In a
newspaper interview, Youssef said that some people accuse him of being an infidel and
filming sinful scenes, although they never watched his films in the first place. Instead, they
judge only from what they see on the film’s poster (*Marus and Gafur 2009*).

**Female Homosexuality and Class Issues**

Regardless of the degree of eroticism in the scene, the way the script tackles homosexual
desire comes in the context of class: same-sex desire is depicted as an exploitation of the
heroine’s need for shelter. After Nahed is kicked out of the place where she used to work as
a cleaning lady, she finds herself on the train with no money to pay for the ticket. At this
point, a rich woman offers to pay for her ticket and then empathizes with her, offering to
give her shelter at her home. At the house, the woman becomes aroused at the sight of
Nahed exiting a shower nearly naked and starts to approach her sexually. Nahed does not
seem to mind or reject these approaches but is responsive to them and even enjoys them,
until the two women get to bed. For a few moments, they seem to be continuing the
foreplay, but Nahed suddenly gets up, blurtling out, “You all desire my flesh, men or
women,” to which the woman responds vehemently, “Do you have anything else worth
desiring?” The scene ends here, and Nahed leaves for the street again, looking for shelter.

A wealthy woman who enjoys many pleasures of life desires the body of the broken woman
living on the street and leverages her financial need to selfish ends. The paradox is that
Nahed’s rejection of this shameful, immoral, and exploitative sexual relationship
contradicts her approval of selling her body and using it for paid sex. In the latter case,
however, she bargains with and exploits others just as she is exploited, acquiescing to the
rules of being taken advantage of. It would seem that, in fact, the film’s presentation of
lesbianism is in harmony with social values that deem homosexuality a forbidden and
deviant desire. Moreover, the script does not highlight the character of this lady who makes
sexual advances toward Nahed. It does not depict any psychological or sexual aspects to the woman’s desire for Nahed. The woman is even outspoken about her exploitation of Nahed in stating that Nahed does not own anything but her body, which she sells as she looks for shelter away from the cruelty of the streets.

In *Hena maysara*, female homosexuality is characterized by and limited to class exploitation rooted in economic disparity: it is not about desire but about commodity. The lower class is used by the bourgeoisie for homosexual relationships in encounters that clearly portray sex and sexual services as the only thing of value that a poor girl has to offer to a member of the upper class. It is financial need that pushes Nahed to accept her role as a sexual servant, where her body is exploited at her will or against it, which inevitably leads her to be a victim of violent rape by a client, a reality facing those with no choice besides prostitution. In the end, when Nahed finally accepts becoming a stripper and a sex worker, she accepts that selling her body and allowing it to be used by those seeking paid sex means that, like any businesswoman, she trades in supply and demand. In the script, the lesbian scene is simply part of a series of sexual assaults that this village girl, who owns nothing but her body, is subjected to. But ironically, the only things that Nahed rejects of all this violence are group rape and lesbian sex, both of which represent forced encounters in the context of violence and deep shame, which Nahed violently resists.

Regardless of the superficial and stereotypical ways in which the director highlighted critical issues, including sexual violence, sex trafficking, and homosexual prostitution in connection with poverty and human needs, *Hena maysara* brings into clearer view that sexual exploitation is inherent in Egypt and systemic within the Middle East in general. In fact, the film’s use of sexual issues raises awareness of deeply embedded economic and political realities, as well as how volatile they can be within slum areas. The film also makes it clearer to the audience that slum areas are great crucibles and indicators of the fertile intersection of terrorist activity, drug trafficking, and same-sex prostitution, as well as social and economic indicators predictive of conflicts that would feed a deeply rooted anger and the 2011 Egyptian uprising that was part of the Arab Spring while clarifying from whence they came.

SEE ALSO *HIV/AIDS in Egyptian Cinema; Imarat Ya’kubian (2002; Alaa al-Aswany); Iskandariyya … Leh? (1979; Youssef Chahine); Jannāt wa-Iblīs (1992; Nawal El Saadawi)*

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Higher Education and LGBTQ+ Communities in the United States

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The relationship between US institutions of higher learning and their LGBTQ+ students and staff, both historically and in the twenty-first century.

While many American colleges and universities provide at least some support to their LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty today, institutions of higher education were initially resistant if not antagonistic to the needs of the LGBTQ+ people on their campuses. Only after persistent advocacy from LGBTQ+ communities and cisgender (nontransgender), heterosexual supporters did colleges begin to establish LGBTQ+ centers and studies programs, recognize LGBTQ+ people in programming and services, and make institutional policies more inclusive. But, in spite of this progress, the environment at many colleges remains largely hostile to LGBTQ+ people, and no institution can honestly be said to be doing enough to recognize, involve, and provide for its LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty.

LGB/LGBT Student Groups

Until the late 1960s, same-sex sexuality, which was often regarded as immoral behavior or a psychiatric disorder in the dominant society, was grounds for expulsion from many colleges. The students who were not dismissed for being known or thought to have engaged in same-sex sexual relationships were often sanctioned in other ways, particularly by being forced to receive counseling to be “cured.” For example, students at the University of Florida who were caught up in an antigay witch hunt carried out by a secret Florida legislative committee in the late 1950s and early 1960s were told that they could remain at the university only if they submitted to regular psychiatric treatments at the campus health clinic (Schnur 1997).

The rise of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) activism on college campuses in the late 1960s and early 1970s provided the students with greater opportunities to meet, develop communities, and advocate for an end to discrimination from administrators. But most institution officials were unmoved, and colleges often sought to prevent LGB student groups from being recognized, funded, or from holding events. The first LGB college student group in the United States, the Student Homophile League (SHL), was started in 1966 by Stephen Donaldson (1946–1996), an openly bisexual student at Columbia
University. He had been involved in the New York City chapter of the Mattachine Society and wanted to create a similar homophile organization on campus. Columbia initially refused to recognize the SHL, and only did so the following year when the university administration could find no legal reason to deny chartering the group. Following this breakthrough, other chapters of the SHL were formed at Cornell University and New York University in 1968 and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the spring of 1969. Similar groups not affiliated with SHL were organized in early 1969 at the City University of New York and the University of Minnesota (Beemyn 2003).

In the aftermath of the Stonewall riots in New York City in June 1969 and the subsequent growth of LGB activism nationally, the number of LGB student organizations proliferated. In a front-page article in 1971, the New York Times alerted its readers that “thousands of college students are proclaiming their homosexuality and openly organizing ‘gay’ groups on large and small campuses across the country” (Reinhold 1971, 1). Such groups were estimated to exist at 150 colleges and universities.

At the same time, other colleges refused to recognize, fund, or provide equal treatment for their LGB student groups, which, in some instances, led the students to file lawsuits to gain their rights. The courts have consistently held that colleges cannot treat LGB student groups differently from other recognized student groups (Dilley 2002). Even institutions affiliated with conservative religions have been found to have an obligation not to discriminate against their LGB student organizations. For example, after a protracted legal struggle, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals ruled in 1987 that Georgetown University had to grant campus LGB groups the same privileges as other registered student groups, even if the institution chose not to recognize the groups officially because of traditional Catholic beliefs opposing same-sex sexuality. Since then, Georgetown, like many other Catholic colleges, has granted full, formal recognition to its LGBTQ+ student groups. But most evangelical Christian and Orthodox Jewish colleges still have codes of conduct that prohibit same-sex sexual relationships, which can result in students being disciplined or expelled if they are known or thought to have violated the bans. Religiously conservative institutions have also cited school doctrine to dismiss or openly discriminate against trans students (Marine 2011; New Ways Ministry 2017).

The first LGB student groups to formally include trans people in their names and mission statements and the first trans-specific student groups were formed on college campuses in the late 1990s and early in the next decade, as more trans students began to disclose their gender identities and sought to create institutional spaces for themselves. However, some of the newly named LGBTQ student groups marginalized their trans members by misgendering them and continuing to focus exclusively on sexuality-related issues. Not until the 2010s did many LGBTQ campus organizations become truly trans-inclusive, due to the growing number of trans students in these groups and a growing awareness of trans experiences among cisgender LGB youth (Beemyn and Rankin 2018).
LGBTQ+ Support Services

Beginning in the 1970s, some colleges started to offer visible support to their LGB students, most notably the University of Michigan, which, in response to student advocacy, established a Human Sexuality Office in 1971. It became the first LGB-focused campus office in the country, followed by the Alternative Lifestyles Office at Minnesota State University, Mankato, in 1977. Three other professionally staffed LGB college offices were created in the 1980s: at the University of Pennsylvania (1982), the University of Massachusetts Amherst (1985), and Princeton University (1989). In the 1990s, as LGBTQ+ students became more visible on campuses throughout the country and organized to have their needs met, significantly more colleges began to provide LGBTQ+-specific administrative support services (Beemyn 2002). As of 2018, more than 260 US colleges and universities have established LGBTQ+ centers or offices with at least a half-time director, and more than 800 individuals belong to the Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals, the organization for people working in LGBTQ+ student services, which was formed in 1997 (Campus LGBTQ Centers Directory; Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals).

LGBTQ+ Studies Programs

The establishment of LGBT or queer studies courses and programs followed a pattern similar to the creation of LGBTQ+ student groups. While “homosexuality” had long been a subject of classroom discussion, colleges and universities did not begin to offer courses specifically focused on the lives of LGBTQ+ people until the early 1970s, when students started to demand such courses and some younger faculty and graduate students took an interest in teaching the subject. At some colleges, the introduction of LGBTQ+ courses was impeded by conservative administrators and faculty members who questioned their legitimacy and academic rigor. But as scholarly research in LGBT studies steadily increased in the 1970s and 1980s, challenges to its worthiness as an area of study waned, and more and more courses were developed based on the growing body of literature in the field.

By the 1990s, institutions with an extensive number of LGBT courses began to offer a program of study. The first lesbian, gay, and bisexual studies department was established at the City College of San Francisco in 1989. Other early programs included the Lesbian and Gay Studies Center at Yale University, begun in 1986, and the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies at the City University of New York, founded in 1991. In addition to the City College of San Francisco, Hobart and William Smith Colleges and San Diego State University offer an undergraduate degree in LGBT studies, and dozens of other colleges, including the State University of New York Purchase, the University of Chicago, and New York University, offer a major in gender and sexuality studies. Many more institutions offer a minor, certificate, or concentration in the field (Younger 2017).
In the early twenty-first century, transgender studies emerged as its own discipline, fueled by the publication of critical texts in the field, including Joanne Meyerowitz’s *How Sex Changed: A History of Transsexuality in the United States* (2002), Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle’s *The Transgender Studies Reader* (2006), and Stryker’s *Transgender History* (2008), as well as a rapidly growing number of journal articles. In 2013 the University of Arizona hired the first group of faculty in trans studies as part of its Transgender Studies Initiative, and in 2014 Duke University Press began *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*, the first nonmedical academic journal in the field, edited by Stryker and Paisley Currah. Today, studies on trans issues are common in journals and at conferences in the arts and humanities, social sciences, and education; expertise in trans studies is a desired qualification for many new faculty hires in these disciplines; and most LGBT studies and gender and sexuality studies programs offer at least one course on trans experiences (Stryker 2017).

**Creating LGB-Supportive Campus Climate: The 1990s and First Decade of the Twenty-First Century**

Beginning in the 1990s and accelerating in the next decade, colleges began to make institutional changes to improve their climates for LGB students, staff, and faculty, such as adding “sexual orientation” to their nondiscrimination policies, starting to offer LGB-related training sessions, and, in the absence of a right to same-sex marriage, providing domestic partnership benefits to the same-sex partners of students and employees. For example, in the early 1990s, only about 250 colleges explicitly prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation, and by 2001, that number had risen to only about 336 institutions. But over the following decade, hundreds of colleges added “sexual orientation” to their nondiscrimination policies (HRC Foundation 2001; Watkins 1998).

**Allyship Training Programs** Similarly, in the early 1990s, a few colleges, including Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, started offering safe zone or safe space ally programs to educate members of their campus communities about the lives of LGBTQ+ people in an effort to improve their institutional climates. By 2000, at least sixty colleges had ally training programs as a result of a greater awareness of hate crimes against LGBTQ+ youth following the widespread coverage of the hate-related murder of Matthew Shepard (a gay student at the University of Wyoming) in 1998 and the rise in the number of LGBTQ+ campus centers, which often created and administered the training. Many more ally programs were developed in the first decade of the twenty-first century, as even more centers were established and as having such a program became a best practice for supporting LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty on college campuses (Poynter and Tubbs 2007; Tubbs 2000).

**Domestic Partnership Benefits** With popular opinion today strongly in favor of equal
marriage rights, and with same-sex marriage having become legal in every state following the US Supreme Court’s 2015 decision in Obergefell v. Hodges, younger readers may have difficulty understanding that even extending medical and dental insurance, tuition assistance, and other benefits to the same-sex partners of campus employees was extremely controversial in the 1980s and 1990s. Opponents of domestic partnership benefits often objected to what they saw as institutions of higher education endorsing homosexuality by recognizing and rewarding same-sex sexual relationships. But as general public support for equal rights for lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals grew, this argument became harder to make outside of religiously affiliated schools and public universities that were overseen by conservative trustees and state legislatures. After the City College of San Francisco became the first school to extend spousal coverage to its LGB employees in 1991, the number of institutions offering domestic partnership benefits grew rapidly. Before states began legalizing same-sex marriage in the first decade of the twenty-first century, approximately 30 percent of colleges and universities offered domestic partnership benefits, including the school systems of the State University of New York, the City University of New York, the University of California, the University of Michigan, and the University of Maine.

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LGBTQ-Focused Housing at the University of Vermont (UVM). UVM offered this suite-style dorm as the first housing at the university designed specifically to build community among LGBTQ students and allies.

Creating a Trans-Supportive Campus Climate
Colleges were much slower to recognize and address the needs of their trans students, staff, and faculty. Prior to the twenty-first century, few trans people were out on college campuses and in a position to challenge the hostile climates they experienced at their institutions and advocate for trans supportive policies. It was because the environment at most colleges was so negative, of course, that most trans students, staff, and faculty did not disclose their gender identities. Moreover, most cisgender campus community members failed to recognize, much less address, institutional genderism because they were not directly affected by it.

It was not until late in the first decade of the twenty-first century and early 2010s that more than a handful of colleges started to take steps to support their trans populations, primarily in response to a growing number of students beginning to identify, be out as trans, and request that their institutions become more trans inclusive. In 2005 fewer than twenty colleges had “gender identity” in their nondiscrimination policy (starting with the University of Iowa in 1996); only one college, Wesleyan University, provided a gender-inclusive housing option; and no college allowed trans students to use a name other than their legal name on campus records and documents, or covered hormones and gender-affirming surgeries under student health insurance (Beemyn 2019).

More than a dozen years later, the policy landscape has shifted significantly. For example, more than 1,000 colleges now specifically include “gender identity” in their nondiscrimination policy; more than 250 have some form of gender-inclusive housing; about the same number enable students to use a chosen name instead of their “dead name” (the name they were given at birth) on campus records and documents; and at least seventy-five cover hormone-replacement therapy and gender-affirming surgeries under student health insurance (Campus Pride Trans Policy Clearinghouse 2017). The growing number of colleges that are addressing the needs of their trans students is also reflected on the Campus Pride Index, a tool for measuring the extent to which colleges have LGBTQ+-inclusive policies and practices. In 2017, twenty-five colleges, a record number, earned the index's highest rating of five stars.

**Restroom Access** Another way that some colleges have responded to advocacy by members of their trans communities is by creating gender-inclusive restrooms (single-user and sometimes multiple-user facilities that are available to individuals of all genders) across their campuses. For example, the University of Massachusetts Amherst has established more than 150 gender-inclusive restrooms in academic buildings, and the University of Oregon has more than 100 such restrooms. In addition, the University of Massachusetts Amherst, the University of Arizona, Gettysburg College, and a handful of other institutions have enacted formal policies stating that students, staff, faculty, and guests have the right to use gendered campus restrooms in keeping with their gender identity. These policies represent an important institutional commitment to trans people at a time when the federal executive branch is allowing discrimination against trans students
Trans Students in Athletics Along with gender-inclusive restrooms, some colleges are creating gender-inclusive locker rooms (i.e., individual changing and shower areas), and by 2017 at least seventeen institutions had enacted guidelines for supporting trans students in campus athletics (Campus Pride Trans Policy Clearinghouse 2017). Colleges that do not have such guidelines must still follow the trans athlete policies of national athletic associations and college sport governing bodies that dictate the conditions under which a trans student can participate on a women’s, men’s, or mixed-gender team. For example, the guidelines of the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA), which were published in 2011, require a trans man who decides to have hormone replacement therapy to compete on a men’s team as soon as he begins hormones and a trans woman who decides to have hormone replacement therapy to take hormones for one year before she competes on a women’s team (Griffin and Carroll 2011). Openly trans college athletes have included Kye Allums, a trans man who played women’s basketball at George Washington University before medically transitioning, and Schuyler Bailar, a trans male swimmer at Harvard University.

The Continued Exclusion of Trans People in Higher Education The ability of trans women and trans men to play collegiate athletics shows how higher education is becoming more trans inclusive, but also how it remains mired in a gender binary. Just as nonbinary trans students cannot compete as themselves when teams are limited to women and men, they continue to be marginalized and invisible in other gender-segregated spaces, such as in fraternities and sororities, in some student groups, and in college traditions that make gender distinctions (e.g., having a homecoming “king” and “queen”). Nonbinary trans students are also invisible in the classroom, as only about fifteen colleges currently give students the ability to indicate their pronouns of choice on course rosters; in the absence of this information, relatively few instructors ask students to share their pronouns (Campus Pride Trans Policy Clearinghouse 2017). As a result, nonbinary trans students and some trans women and men are regularly misgendered in classes, which can adversely affect both their academic performance and their emotional and mental health (Beemyn 2019; Pryor 2015).

The negative experiences of nonbinary students demonstrate the extent to which all colleges still have a long way to go to become truly trans supportive. This is especially the case for institutions affiliated with evangelical religions, community and for-profit colleges, and smaller colleges and universities in conservative states. Despite more students being out today as trans than ever before, the majority of the more than 4,700 postsecondary institutions in the United States still provide no support to their trans students, much less to their trans staff and faculty. Moreover, with the decision by the executive branch of the federal government in 2017 to withdraw its guidance that trans students are covered
under Title IX, the colleges that have always ignored and discriminated against their trans community members no longer have an incentive to stop doing so.

![Image](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

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**Gender-Inclusive Restroom on the Campus of the University of California, Irvine.** Some colleges have responded to advocacy by members of their trans communities by creating gender inclusive restrooms across their campuses.

## Conclusion

Much has changed about the higher education landscape since the first LGB college student group was established more than fifty years ago. Today, probably all but the most religiously conservative colleges have out LGBTQ+ students and at least one LGBTQ+ student organization. And while most LGBTQ+ students were afraid to be out back then for fear of being expelled or otherwise disciplined, many colleges today see LGBTQ+ students, as well as LGBTQ+ staff and faculty, as an asset to the institution, adding to its richness and diversity. The desire to be more inclusive of LGBTQ+ students has led a number of colleges in the last decade to add questions about sexual orientation and gender identity to their admissions forms ([Campus Pride Trans Policy Clearinghouse 2017](https://www.campuspride.org/trans-policy-clearinghouse)). Some colleges now also offer scholarships to LGBTQ+ students or to students who are engaged in LGBTQ+ activism or academic work, and some market their LGBTQ+ inclusiveness to prospective students. There is no denying that tremendous progress has been made when institutions today compete for LGBTQ+ students, rather than ignoring or excluding them.

But research indicates that LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty, especially trans community members, continue to encounter hostile climates on many campuses and feel that their
identities are often invalidated and marginalized by their institutions (Dugan, Kusel, and Simounet 2012; Pitcher 2018; Rankin et al. 2010). Thus, while history shows that LGBTQ+ people have relatively more positive experiences on campuses today than in the past, the present demonstrates that all colleges need to do more to make their campuses thoroughly and consistently LGBTQ+ supportive if future generations of LGBTQ+ students, staff, and faculty are to have an even better experience.

SEE ALSO Mattachine Society; Sexperts and Sex Education in the West

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Hijras

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A fluid term used on the Indian subcontinent to reference iconic figures of sexual and gendered difference.

The word *hijra* is a masculine Hindi/Urdu noun, with roots in the Arabic term *hjr*, meaning to “renounce,” “migrate,” or “flee.” It has many regional variants in the Indian subcontinent that sometimes map differentially on to this term: *aravani* or *thirunangai* in Tamil Nadu, *kojja* in Andhra Pradesh, *khusra* in Punjab, and *khwaja sera* in Pakistan, among many others. Historically, *hijra* has been translated as “eunuch” or “hermaphrodite,” predating itself largely on a male model of embodiment, whereby hijras are represented as sexually anomalous transvestite “men” who have renounced sex and desire, especially for women. This is most dramatically embodied in the ideal—but not always actualized—imperative to “emasculate” oneself, that is, sacrifice one's genitalia to the Hindu goddess Bedhraj Mata (or her incarnations) in return for the divine power to bless or curse with fertility or infertility, an act interpreted as a “rebirth” from male to hijra (*Cohen 1995*). But more recently, the term has been expanded beyond this binary sexual/gender schema and employed to signify both a quintessential “third gender” and membership in a global “queer” community as a native trans woman category.

This entry charts these shifts in the terrain of gender and sexual meaning signified by the term—from a more circumscribed and embodied *asli/naqli* (real/false or authentic/inauthentic) *hijra* paradigm, through its relationship with an indigenous *kothi* category and community, and more recently, to the expansion of this terrain transnationally through its instantiation as transgender. Through these mappings, one can see the fraught and labile nature of sexual and gendered meaning and practice, the politics of self-and-other labeling, and the play of trans/national social movements in marking the legibility of hijras in legal and public domains.

**Authenticity and the Gendered Hijra Body**

Although there is some evidence of a range of expressions and interpretations of gender and sexual difference in premodern India (*O’Flaherty 1980; Vanita and Kidwai 2000; Zwilling and Sweet 1996*), the interpretation of such variance remains fraught. Nevertheless, what is clear is that representations of such difference were significantly
truncated in the modern era, especially in British colonial contexts, which cast hijras as one among the several castes and tribes of India legitimately under the purview of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871 (Arondekar 2009; Kitts 1885; Preston 1987; Thurston 1909; Russell 1916). The dominant frame at this time was grounded in a binary and reductive model of “authentic” bodily difference—whether hijras were “born” or “made,” asli (real) or naqli (false) “eunuchs”—even as authenticity did not necessarily guarantee a positive representation. This framing—through embodied alterity often mapped on to pathology—continued in much of the early postindependence literature (Sharma 1984; Vyas and Shingala 1987), with some variance in representations of hijra “perversions” (Carstairs 1956; Opler 1960; A. M. Shah 1961). It was not until 1990, when Serena Nanda’s ethnography Neither Man nor Woman was published, that this negative framing was firmly dislodged in favor of an explicit framing through gender and sexuality; hijras were represented, positively, as an “alternative gender,” with members of this community engaging in a range of asexual and sexual practices. Countenancing the view that Western binary sex/gender systems were neither innate nor universal, Nanda’s book set the stage for hijras’ instantiation as the quintessential “third gender,” a construction that inaugurated their inclusion as the authentic Indian “transgender native” in compendia of global sex/gender formations (Agrawal 1997; Arondekar 2009; Towle and Morgan 2002).

The ensuing decade—framed and prodded by popular texts like Nanda’s, as well as broader social, economic, and political changes—was a period when processes of sexual subjectification were beginning to shift and crystallize in different ways, with profound implications for hijra social and political formations. Not only did the 1990s signal the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS, but it also marked the growth of the Hindu right, with the escalation of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement that signaled the rebirth of religious politics and the establishment of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on the national front. This was also the decade that the Mandal Commission (the commission set up to redress caste discrimination in India) issued its report, where the question of “reservations” or affirmative-action policies cleaved open raw wounds in terms of caste privilege and politics and laid the foundation for battle lines regarding “minority” rights that had been building in the previous decade. Importantly, it was also a decade that saw the “liberalization” of the economy, which marked the intensification of policies exacerbating class inequalities. In short, it was a decade that brought to the fore simmering social tensions among groups differently located along hierarchies of privilege, even as it simultaneously energized the formation of social movements and underscored the need to rethink categories of the nation, “women,” and religious communities as stable or homogeneous entities, setting the stage for the political recognition of entanglements of gender and sexuality with class, religious, and caste dynamics that have continued to animate and fracture current social movements.

The “AIDS Enterprise” and the Arrival of the Kothis
One important development impacting the discursive production of hijra subjectivities/polities was its growing entanglements with the “AIDS enterprise” (Cohen 2005). Responding to the global panic about the spread of HIV/AIDS, the Indian government, with the help of international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), began to outline the unique pathways of its transmission in India; this included a delineation of high-risk groups, such as “homosexuals.” The government was helped in this endeavor by a partial reconceptualization of the epidemiological categories through which the public health community addressed the issue. In a bid to be more “culturally sensitive”—that is, partly in response to acknowledging the existing cross-cultural variation in constructions of sexual subjectivity and the recognition that labels do not always map seamlessly to identity or behavior in contexts outside of their production—these international NGOs adopted the category of MSM, or “men who have sex with men,” to replace the earlier category “homosexual,” or gay. However, as Tom Boellstorff (2011) notes, the binarism that produced the category in the first place—namely, behavior (anal sex between men who do not necessarily identify as gay) versus identity (gay)—shifted through its deployment in the Global South, such that the behavioral category eventually became a subject position, first as a characterization of a population, an epidemiological “risk group,” and eventually—to the culturally specific members of this risk group—local MSM identities, including hijras.

As Lawrence Cohen (2005) points out, extending the need to identify local MSM identities, at least partly in pursuit of the capital tethered to AIDS work, there was a “war” raging in India in the early 1990s on how to further recognize and name gender and sexual variance. While *hijra* was one such “indigenous” category, its relationship to the MSM category remained fraught, marked as it was by multiple forms of abjection. The subsequent discursive (and material) tussle to map male-gendered sexual desire and behavior that Cohen charts in his article “The Kothi Wars” played out largely along lines of class and cultural authenticity. As he characterizes it, the “war” resembled a family feud between two giant personalities dominating the “sexual” landscape at the time: Shivananda Khan (1948–2013), a UK-born, gay-identified man, who was searching for an indigenous “South Asian” classificatory system that authentically opposed the white Euro-American “gay” label while refracting the MSM category in India; and Ashok Row Kavi (1947–), a Bombay-born-and-bred gay man with working-class roots and reputed ties to the right-wing Hindu party, who saw Khan’s attempts to discern and map such “local” knowledge as yet another neocolonial and class-specific imposition.

Ultimately, as Cohen complexly lays out, Khan won this battle, and the MSM category was refracted through the lens of gender to produce the *kothi-panthi* model (effeminate men who have sex with more masculine men, their *panthi* partners), which became the dominant frame through and by which to read “Indian” gender and sexual difference. Although this story of the “kothi wars” is obviously more complicated (compare Boyce 2007; Cohen 2005; Dutta 2013), nevertheless, by the mid-1990s, *kothis* as a term for “males who show varying degrees of femininity” was firmly lodged as one of the primary
subcategories of MSM in National AIDS Control Organisation statistics. For better or for worse, within the schemas of government and NGO recognition, kothi had emerged as an authentic South Asian variant of an MSM identity in India, with hijras as one subcategory in this broader conceptualization.

By 1995, fieldwork conducted by Gayatri Reddy (2005) with hijras in Hyderabad revealed that hijras not only used the terms kothi and panthi but, in fact, claimed they derived from hijra discourse and practice—a world where hijras asserted their occupation at the “authentic” apex of this loosely knit kothi “family,” borne through differences in religion, visibility, respect, bodily integrity, class, and sexual desire. Kothis, as an indigenous MSM family of identities, each claiming their own sexual-health organization, their individual and collective sexual rights, and AIDS capital, were here to stay, indelibly tethered to hijras in the conceptual landscape of sexual and gender variance in India. In other words, it was at least partly with the emergence of the HIV/AIDS epidemic and “anthroqueer productions” at the time, to use Paola Bacchetta’s (2002) term, that hijras were reconceptualized in this cartography as an indigenous MSM category, as metonymic figures of “sexual difference” in compendia of LGBT studies on the one hand, and as an integral part of the MSM or kothi sexual community on the other. As such, they were actively targeted by government and public health interventions in the 1990s and early in the next decade (Boyce 2007; Khanna 2009).

Shifts in the Social/Sexual Landscape: Legal Reform and the Arrival of the TGs

A decade later, the sexual landscape in India began to look slightly different. While the expression of “sexuality” in India was never “silent,” as Mary John and Janaki Nair (1998) remind us, the first decade of the twenty-first century saw an expansion of this terrain. There was a greater public visibility of nonnormative sexuality in print and visual media, as well as in art, theater, and politics, all of which fractured and questioned the normalization of heterosexuality and allowed for the emergence of new social movements, some premised explicitly on sexuality. Such movements allowed for previously marginalized individuals and groups to call for inclusion, and, like most social movements of the time, they privileged activism centering on the law.

Hijras were already beginning to publicly call for recognition early in the first decade of the twenty-first century, using their positioning ambiguously, both as sexual figures within the kothi community and as asexual figures to contest politics (the ostensible lack of sexual desire, as well as family-mediated kinship ties, ostensibly freeing hijras from potential greed and nepotism). What appears to have shifted marginally in the second half of the first decade of the twenty-first century is the seeming expansion and institutionalization of the category “transgender” (TG) in public discourse, expressly using the rights discourse and
language to stake its claim for inclusion, with hijras firmly lodged within this global category (see Hossain [2017] and Khan [2016] for similar shifts in other South Asian countries).

With the increasing transnational influence of transgender activist networks and the growing schisms within the "queer" movement, Indian transgender activists began to demand official recognition of the category “transgender” in order to garner visibility and resources, with the result that, in the first decade of the twenty-first century, transgender emerged as a funding category separate from MSM. As Aniruddha Dutta states, this institutionalization of transgender identities “forged a bifurcated schema of identification such that the government, funders, and NGOs increasingly distinguish between transgender and same-sex desiring persons not just as distinct individual identities, but also as segregated populations” (2013, 502). Importantly, at this time the transgender community, while still made up largely of hijras, was also expanding to include trans men, as well as trans women, who did not necessarily identify as hijras. Meanwhile, reductive semantic framings continued to manifest themselves, truncating the gender, embodied, and linguistic variance of the trans-feminine category, as well as playing into existing tropes of authenticity and excluding trans men from its purview—exclusions and reductive usages that linger to this day.

The second shift in this era is in the domain of the law, the horizon of most recent activism in relation to sexual rights. The legal activism that has had the most press has been the movement to repeal, or more recently, “read down” Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (which holds that whoever has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal commits an “unnatural” offense) and its instantiation in the Koushal v. Naz Foundation (2013) Supreme Court case, as well as the more recent efforts of the transgender movement to gain recognition as a “third gender” and access public services in the 2014 Supreme Court case National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) v. Union of India.

**Movements to Repeal or Read Down Section 377** To summarize the first development: it began in 1992 with a call by ABVA (AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan, or AIDS Antidiscrimination Movement), a grassroots collective in Delhi, to repeal Section 377, an effort that did not get any traction at the time. A second effort, led by the Naz Foundation (a New Delhi–based NGO that works on HIV/AIDS and sexual health) early in the first decade of the twenty-first century, called for the law to be read down, decriminalizing private consensual sex between same-sex adults. This effort was supported in the Delhi High Court in 2009, when private same-sex sex was decriminalized.

On appeal by right-wing Hindu, Muslim, and Christian activists, it was re-criminalized in 2013 by the Supreme Court, which overturned the Delhi High Court decision, claiming, among other specious arguments, that the LGBT community was a “miniscule minority”
and that there were not enough arrests under Section 377 to warrant a reading down of the law. The court put the onus on the Indian Parliament; if the law was to be repealed, this was a matter for the Parliament to determine, not the courts. As scholars and activists have pointed out, the shift in the platform for action between the early 1992 ABVA call to repeal Section 377 and the more recent efforts by the Naz Foundation and others in the 2011 call to read down Section 377—the latter with a strategic focus on privacy—says as much about the state and its expansion of governance in recent times as it does about the nature of social movements and the “sexual” communities that spearheaded these efforts: namely, that they are dominated by upper-caste and class agendas (Khanna 2014; Semmalar 2014; S. P. Shah 2015).

In September 2018 India’s High Court ruled that Section 377 could no longer be used to prosecute same-sex sexual activity.

**Movements for Transgender Rights and Recognition** Interestingly, at the same time that the Supreme Court was deliberating the Section 377 case, it was also petitioned by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA), a state-constituted body that works on behalf of marginalized groups, to support recognition for the transgender community, including hijras within this category. Four months after the Supreme Court delivered its Section 377 judgment, in April 2014, the two-judge bench of Justices K. S. Radhakrishnan and A. K. Sikri delivered a landmark ruling giving legal recognition to transgender people, allowing them to self-identify as man, woman, or transgender irrespective of their operative status. The ruling also provided a range of socioeconomic rights to members of these communities through affirmative action policies. In addition, it directed that the recommendations of the Expert Committee Report prepared by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment through extensive consultation with the civil society organizations and individuals be implemented within six months. These recommendations provided the mechanism for the implementation of affirmative-action policies, among other provisions. Justices Radhakrishnan and Sikri ended their ruling by calling on the state to implement the various provisions of its ruling. As of 2018, there was still no clear process by which transgender persons can avail themselves of the right to self-identify. In those states where some of the recommendations have begun to be implemented, the process remains incomplete and is often undercut by a lack of political and economic support.

At the same time, building on the momentum of the Supreme Court judgment, in December 2014 Tiruchi Siva, a member of the South Indian political party Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, introduced a transgender rights bill in the Rajya Sabha (India’s Upper House of Parliament). Despite pressure to withdraw the bill, Siva resisted, and, in a surprise turn of events, the bill was passed unanimously in April 2015. For reasons that remain unclear, the bill never made it to the floor of India’s Lower House, the Lok Sabha.

Instead, in December of that year, the government drafted its own bill, the Rights of
Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill 2015, apparently informed by the NALSA ruling, the 2014 bill, and consultations with members of civil society convened by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment. While the new bill hewed closely to the earlier bill, it made some changes that were not progressive, such as removing the provision for transgender rights courts and national and state-level transgender welfare commissions to oversee the implementation of some of the programs. The 2015 bill slowly made its way through the labyrinth of bureaucracy and, in August 2016, it was introduced in the Lok Sabha.

To most people’s surprise, the bill that was introduced on the floor of the house was nothing like what was originally proposed, limited as that was. The bill that came up for debate in Parliament was extremely problematically worded, confusing definitions of transgender with intersex and using reductive language that drew from a binary classification (individuals are “partly male or female, a combination of male and female, or neither male or female”). The bill also removed the ability to self-identify by calling for district screening committees to “certify” transgender persons. In addition, the bill removed all provisions for affirmative action or reservations in educational institutions and employment, something that the NALSA judgment explicitly called for. As of 2018, there were protests and movements throughout the country vigorously challenging this bill and its provisions.

Caution in the Face of Progress Ultimately, whatever the outcome of these legislative and legal efforts at reform, some caution is warranted. First, the norms by which such legibility ends up consolidating and institutionalizing forms of gender and sexual variance, often delimiting the terms of inclusion and exclusion, are noteworthy. Ironically, much like the MSM and kothi labels in the previous decade, what seems to have occurred in the first two decades of the twenty-first century is a consolidation and institutionalization of the category “transgender” in state and institutional logics of development and governance, creating an overly bounded understanding of this category as well as a deepening schism between “transgender” (often or only focusing on trans women) and “homosexual” or MSM grids of intelligibility, merely generating new forms of surveillance for marking “authentic” gendered difference and delineating norms of legibility for one community against its class and sexual others.

Second, the above issue raises questions about the potential and limits of the law as the horizon of mobilization for redistributive justice. Progressive as the NALSA judgment is, ultimately, it appears to recognize community rights without providing a mechanism to redistribute power, merely expanding the reach of the state in many instances. And often, these processes of recognition make minority subjects—in this case, hijras—constantly mark their abjection and reinscribe their marginality in order to claim entitlements from the state. In a pattern reminiscent of the past, they often reify preexisting hierarchies of authenticity and low caste/class status in this process. “Progress,” it appears, is often more
circular than we would like to believe.

SEE ALSO Asia Pacific Transgender Network; HIV/AIDS in South and Southeast Asia; Kathoey; MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia; Naz Foundation International; Roopbaan; Section 377 and Section 377A; Section 377 in South Asia; Third Genders

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This article considers the origins of scholarly practices of historicizing the sexes, the theoretical problems involved in distinguishing sex from gender across time and place, and some of the major thinkers who have advanced the field of inquiry. It also surveys several important topic areas that have been studied within the field, including the history of genital anatomical description; the history of ideas about sex differences; the history of hermaphrodites and eunuchs; the history of nonbinary, third, or many sexes (both in transcultural historical anthropology and in the history of modern sexology); and the history of recent biological thought about sexed differentiation. For much of human recorded history, sex has been determined by genital observation of infants who are then socialized as boys or girls or categorized as hermaphrodites or a third sex. Sex has also been subject to revision on the basis of genital ambiguity, castration, or comportment and sexual orientation, producing widespread patterns of counting the sexes in multiples greater than two.

Since the late twentieth century, a new Western, English-language intellectual trend emerged distinguishing sex (as biological) from gender (as social or cultural), in contrast to historical views and extant non-Western views, which have not always distinguished between these terms. These modern Western categories are now widely used to translate terms in other languages and applied to past cultures where no such distinction appears to exist. This creates a problem of potential reductionism in which past forms of ambiguity that produced notions of third or multiple sexes are now described anachronistically as forms of “gender.”

Historiography of the Sexes

The modern historical university discipline emerged in western European contexts of the nineteenth century, reflecting norms of perceiving the sexes according to the man-woman binary and of over privileging men as the primary, indeed only, subjects of history (Smith 1998). The inclusion of women as subjects of historical understanding since the 1970s introduced ideas about sex difference into the norms of historical scholarship (J. Alberti 2002). However, much of women's history and gender history, like the larger fields of
women studies or gender studies, has defined its object as "gender," reflecting the modern dichotomous view of "the sexes" as referring to biology and of "gender" as referring to cultural norms and discourses about the sexes, with a focus only on the latter (Fuss 1989).

In current transgender studies, referring to the "sexes" is generally taken to imply the reduction of individuals to the two-sex biological norm, while the term gender has been favored precisely in order to draw attention to the way in which nothing is ever automatically given by biology (Butler 1990; Halberstam 1998). In this field of study, intersex individuals are instead often considered under the banner-term of "transgender" studies, referring to all those who do not fit the man-woman binary (Stryker 2006). However, recently many intersex activists and individuals have specifically rejected this designation, as it can also be taken to imply that genital morphology is not crucial to intersex recognition (IHRA 2011; Ray 2016). However, such debates pertain to the current politics of nonbinary thinking; when considering past cultures where no distinction is made between sex and gender, historians must instead look closely at the unique categories of meaning through which historical cultures have understood differing bodies.

Use of the term gender to refer only to the behavioral aspects and social norms of the sexes emerged in English-language texts in the second half of the twentieth century (Dreger 2000). It remains difficult still to translate precisely into most other extant languages. When examining past cultures that do not have either concepts of biology or of gender, including both premodern European and most non-European cultures, it makes little sense to distinguish between "sex" and "gender" as we do in current English-language conventions. If we look only for two sexes (men and women) in history, we might overlook other sexes or account for anomalies to this binary anachronistically as transgender, transvestite, homosexual, androgynous, or ambiguous, reflecting the "general prejudice of our dimorphic classification system" (Herdt 1994, 12).

The perception of a need for more comprehensive histories of the sexes has been further stimulated by several recent cultural pressures acting upon historical inquiry.

First, there is a growing corpus of comparative anthropological evidence, relating to numerous extant cultures, of individuals who have traditionally occupied a specific social reality that is neither that of a man nor a woman. This evidence suggests the need to be more attuned to the possibility of multiple sexes in historical observation and to consider that the sexes are not generally counted according to the modern Western binary of male-female. Second, the increased visibility and legal status of transgender, queer, nonbinary, and intersex individuals in contemporary cultures has also primed more scholars in the humanities and social sciences to look beyond the man-woman binary. Finally, the growing complexification of current biological understandings of the mechanisms of sexed differentiation now permits the scientific possibility of recognizing multiple biological sexes, suggesting the sex-gender dichotomy to be less clearly distinguishable than has often
How Many Sexes in History?

Throughout history, in many different cultures, we find examples of individuals deemed to belong to a third or fourth sex, to have fused the sexes, or to exist outside of the sexes, including (but not limited to) the two-spirit people in Native American cultures, such as the Navajo, Lakota, and Athapaskan (Jacobs et al. 1997); the kathoey of Thailand (Jackson 2000); various ambiguous sexes in Borneo and Malay communities of Southeast Asia (Peletz 2009); the fa’afafine in Samoa (Bartlett and Vasey 2006); the hijras of the Indian subcontinent (Agrawal 1997); the mukhannathin of the Arabian Peninsula (Rowson 1991); hermaphrodite deities in Mesoamerican cosmoligies (Stockett 2005); hermaphrodites of ancient Greece, early modern, and nineteenth-century medical descriptions (Dreger 2000; Mak 2012); and the transformed “sworn virgins” of Albania (Young 2000). While it may be tempting to categorize each of these examples separately according to current linguistic conventions (transgender versus transsexual versus intersex versus homosexual), it has been noted by many of the scholars cited here that most cultures do not themselves refer to individuals in this way, instead categorizing all variations as third or more “sexes.”

Historical inquiry always involves a tension between the historian’s own categories of meaning and those of the past that may be fundamentally different from our own. But in reducing past sexes to modern categories, we overlook the way in which meaning was uniquely structured by past cultures.

Throughout history, we find a great variety of ways the difference between sexes is described—at times as if they are all variations on a singular model (Laqueur 1990), at times as if any variation to the man-woman binary is monstrous (Foucault 2003), at times as if women were not even fully human (Hart 1998), and at times with reference to the mutability of the sexes or their capacity to transform (King 2013). This variability suggests a powerful role for historians in elaborating the many contextualities, contingencies, and intercultural transmissions in how the sexes have been counted, differentiated, described in relation to one another, and described according to their own internal properties throughout history.

Views of Difference Based on Sexual Anatomy Understanding how Western cultures developed a strong dichotomous and binary view of the sexes has been the subject of much research among medical and sexuality historians. The 1990 work Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud by Thomas Laqueur famously proposed that Western cultures, from ancient times until the late eighteenth century, only considered there to be a single sex, of which man and woman were mirror reflections: the “one-sex model,” following Galen of Pergamon (129–c. 200 CE), whose influence on both European and Islamicate medicine endured for over eighteen centuries. In this model, women’s reproductive organs were viewed as merely an inverted (and lesser) form of the more
perfect masculine structures; thus, the vagina was an inside-out penis and the ovaries were internal testicles (Laqueur 1990). With the rise of modern science from the end of the eighteenth century, there developed the idea of two radically distinct sexes grounded in the biological categories of “male” and “female.”

However, several historians have proposed that Laqueur’s characterization of ancient to early modern European ideas about men's and women's sexual anatomy may be too reductive. Elizabeth Harvey (2002) has questioned whether the one-sex model could adequately account for the array of seventeenth-century ideas that appeared to discuss both the similarities and the differences between men’s and women’s genital structures. Joan Cadden (1993) also found a much wider diversity of medical views about sex difference in medieval sources, and Fay Bound Alberti (2016) has suggested that early modern literary sources on women’s sexuality refer both to homology and to radical difference. Michael Stolberg (2003) has shown that throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Aristotelians viewed women as imperfect men, while those following Galen emphasized the complementarity of men and women for coitus, and those following Hippocrates insisted on the radical otherness of women's bodies. By these accounts, the formation of a man-woman binary view of the sexes has been developing over a much longer period in the Western medical tradition but has never been the subject of medical consensus.

Helen King (2013) has also shown the importance of medical visions of sex transformation derived from ancient Hippocratic texts and disseminated throughout early modern Europe, such as the frequently recounted story of Phaethousa the sex-changing woman who was described as having menstruated and borne children before growing a beard and becoming a man. Such stories show that premodern European views of men and women did indeed distinguish between them but also saw them as potentially mutable. Large clitorises that resembled penises and small penises that resembled clitorises created much debate in early modern medical sources about the ubiquity of hermaphrodites and the number of possible sexes (Traub 2002). Alison Moore (2018) has shown that the one-sex model as a feminine passive mirroring of men's genital structures was only one idea present both in early modern and in twentieth-century medicine, with an alternative anatomical model throughout world history consistently drawing attention to the sexual agency of the clitoris and its likeness to the penis.

Scholars of premodern Islamicate cultures have also demonstrated the limits of Laqueur’s one-sex model when looking beyond European medical traditions. In Arabic and Persian sources, sexes have often been counted in multiples greater than either one or two, the mutability between them was often considered, and individuals of apparently indeterminate sex were documented in numerous historical contexts (Ragab 2015). The tenth-century Persian physician al-Razi (Rhazes) theorized multiple sexes on the basis of differing quantities of masculine or feminine seed contributing to the fetus (Ragab 2015).
The considerable early modern Islamicate poetic traditions focused on “beardless youths,” specifically categorized teenage and prepubescent boys as unique objects of either platonic or homoerotic desire with reference to their feminine traits. This made men’s desire for boys clearly distinguishable from the desire for other adult men, resulting in fully divided categories of meaning relating to the different forms of eroticism (El-Rouayheb 2005).

Several scholars have also shown how the sexes were understood in early modern European societies in ways that make our current assumption of a gender-sex dichotomy problematic in historical analysis. Without the modern medical concept of biological sex, comportment mattered much more for defining sex roles in premodern European cultures. In medieval France, even individuals suspected of being women but who dressed and acted like men were sometimes treated as men, and in some cases were even affirmed to be entitled to matrimony with a woman (Phillips and Reay 2011).

**Hermaphrodites and Eunuchs** Histories of hermaphrodites and of intersex people have also problematized views of the sexes in history as being only two in number, while also helping to show how Western cultures historically derived the binary view of the sexes that still predominates today. Michel Foucault’s *Abnormal* lectures at the Collège de France in the 1970s provided one of the first historical descriptions of early modern hermaphrodites, such as Herculine Barbin (1838–1868), detailing how hermaphroditism became a site of monstrosity in European medicine (Foucault 2003). From the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries in Europe, numerous doctors denied that hermaphrodites existed at all, treating individuals with both a penis and a vagina as women with enlarged clitorises, which were often excised (Park 1997).

However, in non-European contexts of the same period, there are documented cases of individuals being recognized as neither man nor woman. Juana Aguilar (Juana La Larga) was acquitted of charges of sodomy in Guatemala in 1803 following a medical inspection that confirmed Aguilar’s hermaphroditism. The court concluded that since Juana was both man and woman herself, she was not the same as either sex and therefore could not be charged with any crime as a result of her sexual acts (Few 2007). Several other major histories of hermaphrodites have documented cases of ambiguous and sex-changing individuals in early modern Iberia (Cleminson and Názquez García 2013), and in nineteenth-century France, England, and the United States (Reis 2009; Mak 2012). Medical texts in late Ming China documented examples of both hermaphroditism and of spontaneous sex-changing individuals, referring to different sexes as varying combinations of yin and yang properties (Furth 1988).

In the modern era, documented cases of reproductive-organ ambiguity have often been medically described as a form of birth defect, and large clitorises have often been excised in the belief that they indicated hermaphroditism (Rodriguez 2014). In the 1960s, infant corrective surgeries to resolve genital ambiguities and assign either a male or female sex
became ubiquitous in the United States, culminating in the Harvard protocols of John Money who proposed the term *gender* now to refer to these social dimensions of sexed identity (Downing et al. 2014). Prior to Money’s novel use of the word *gender*, it had existed in English texts from the early eighteenth century, derived from the Old French *gendre*, itself derived from the Latin *genus*. It was rarely used in any language to refer to matters of sex-difference but only to refer to kind, sort, or genre in general. The Harvard protocols assigned sex in older children according to how the child had hitherto been socialized (their “gender”), while generally favoring feminization over masculinization due to the greater surgical ease of constructing vaginal orifices than penises (Dreger 2000). The attempts to force intersex children into one of only two recognized sexes produced severe psychological and physiological trauma in many individuals. Judith Butler has described these protocols as a “violent attempt to implement the norm” (2004, 68) through the institutionalization of power.

Intersex “correction” is not the only form of genital surgery that has been aimed at altering the expression of sexual traits in individuals. Throughout several ancient and early modern civilizations, including ancient Greece, Byzantium, late Imperial Rome (Ringrose 2003; Campbell et al. 2009), in the Ottoman Empire, and the Qin and Han dynasties of China (Tsai 1996; Chiang 2018), the castration of infant boys was commonly used to create a liminal figure in the form of eunuchs. Eunuchs were first described in sixth-century BCE Greece and were last created under the Manchu emperor Pu Yi in 1910 (Chatterton and Bultitude 2008). In infant castration, the loss of the testes prior to puberty results in the total inhibition of masculine-specific traits (facial and body hair, lowered voice), creating adult individuals of noticeable androgyny. Eunuchs were created for use as royal servants and were typically considered to be either outside the sexes or to be another sex that was neither man nor woman. There was, however, much cultural variation in ideas about which of the sexes eunuchs were seen as most resembling, which does not correlate with the extent of genital surgery. In the Chinese context, where eunuchs sometimes had both penis and testicles removed, they nonetheless occupied distinctly masculine social roles as civil servants of the emperor. In ancient Greece, in Roman antiquity, and under the Ottoman Empire, where eunuchs generally retained a penis, they were more often assigned roles similar to those of women, in domestic care and in personal grooming of the elites.

**Nonbinary, Third, or Many Sexes** In the twentieth century, voluntary genital surgery in the form of sex reconstruction (or gender confirmation) has produced further possibilities for additional sexes beyond the manwoman binary. The earliest described successful surgery of this kind was that of Dora Richter, who underwent orchiectomy, penectomy, and vaginoplasty between 1922 and 1931 while working at Magnus Hirschfeld’s Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Science) in Germany (Mancini 2010). From the 1970s, male-to-female surgeries were considerably advanced, particularly by surgeons in Thailand, which, over the last thirty years of the twentieth century, became a major provider of vaginoplasty (Chokrungvaranont et al. 2014). The first successful phalloplasty
was performed by Dr. Harold Gillies on the British physician Laurence Michael Dillon in 1946 (P. Kennedy 2007). A less complicated female-to-male surgery, that of metoidioplasty, entails separation of the clitoris from the labia minora and severing of the suspensory ligament to lower the clitoris to the normal pelvic location of a penis. Ironically, a similar surgery was originally developed in the 1920s by the Austrian gynecologist Joseph von Halban for the purpose of encouraging “vaginal orgasm” in women. It was the surgery to which the Freudian psychoanalyst Marie Bonaparte subjected herself in the attempt to cure her perceived unfeminine “clitoridism” (Cryle and Moore 2011, 232).

A number of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sexologists, such as Edward Carpenter (1908), Hirschfeld, Havelock Ellis (Leng 2012), and Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (H. C. Kennedy 1981), considered homosexual men to be examples of a “third sex,” while others theorized that both effeminate men and masculine women were psychologically “intersexual” (Marañon 1932). The idea of individuals belonging to a third sex has often appeared in modern sexology as an explanation of same-sex desire based on the notion of its impossibility in “normally” sexed bodies. However, Ulrichs, Carpenter, and Hirschfeld also appear to have sought biological explanations for homosexual desire, based on the assumption that homosexuals would attract legal rights and greater public sympathy if they could be seen as biologically determined and, therefore, not “at fault” in relation to their desire.

The insistence then that there are only two sexes appears to be uncommon across time and place and to be particularly concentrated in modern Western cultures, where it is asserted with reference to a biological touchstone. However, this touchstone has shifted throughout the twentieth- and twenty-first-century history of biology, at times emphasizing genitalia, at times chromosomes, at time sex hormones, and at times genes (Ha 2011). The International Olympic Committee, for example, shifted its methods of demanding proof that athletes competing as women were biologically female from nude inspection in the 1960s, to testing for the XX chromosome in the 1970s, to testing for the absence of the SRY gene on chromosome seventeen in the 1990s (Rupert 2011). However, both of the latter testing methods have found individuals who, despite being chromosomally or genetically male, have female phenotypic expression of sexed traits, with or without ambiguous genitalia (Fausto-Sterling 2000). It is estimated that approximately one in one hundred births entails some level of sex-ambiguity, with one in one thousand births producing fully intersex individuals (Chase 2006). What we take to be the sex of the individual, it now seems, is merely an external impression of multiple levels of biology, including chromosomes, hormones, genital morphology, internal organs of reproduction, and external sex traits, such as facial hair, hip-waist ratio, vocal pitch, and breasts. When all these variables are taken into account, it is clear that the sexes can indeed be counted in variations greater than two (Stryker 2006).
Twenty-First-century Scientific Thought about Sexed Differentiation

In the late twentieth century, several neuroscientists presented evidence of behaviorally important differences in male and female brains due to the natural hormonal cocktails to which fetuses are exposed in utero. However, these studies have been much criticized both by other scientists and by humanistic scholars as overreaching their evidence and displaying nonscientific biases (Fausto-Sterling 2012; Jordan-Young 2010; Fine 2010). Despite the still dominant scientific view of the sexes following a male-female binary, another strand, both in cognitive affective neuroscience and in comparative biology, has recognized multiple possible sexes along a spectrum of seven variations (Panksepp 1998; Carlson 2013). Twenty-first-century studies of sex differentiation have confirmed the bipotential character of fetal sex expression, suggesting that the notion of a “default plan” as female that informed much sex-differentiation research in the twentieth century is not accurate and that specific hormonal effects are also needed to produce full female phenotype expression. By our most current understanding, then, the biological developmental default of all humans is intersex (Fausto-Sterling 2012).

SEE ALSO Barbin, Herculine (1838–1868): Biological Essentialism; Cisgender or Cis: Clitoris; Eunuchs; Intersex Identities; Penis; Third Genders; Transvestites/Transsexuals

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In the roughly decade and a half following the first official reports of its discovery in the United States in June 1981, what would become known as HIV/AIDS became nearly ubiquitous in Western popular culture, first in news accounts in gay and lesbian and (later) mainstream media, and eventually in television, theater, art, film, advertising, and publishing. Politically, it was just as significant, prompting a new wave in queer organizing and activism, as well as the rise of the phenomenon of involuntary disclosure of minority sexualities among celebrities and political figures (commonly known as “outing”). The nexus of politics and popular culture also tended to stigmatize people with AIDS early on, to varying degrees depending on the behaviors that led to their infections: gay men, men who had sex with other men, Haitians, and intravenous drug users were considered blameworthy, while hemophiliacs and spouses of the infected were deemed innocent. Cultural visibility of HIV/AIDS began to wane in the mid-1990s, owing in part to popular fatigue, but also to the introduction of combination drug therapies that in most cases meant seropositivity no longer meant a premature death. This entry examines the history of HIV/AIDS (including its “prehistory” before the purported date of its arrival in North America) and three dozen years of its influence on Western politics and culture.

Prehistory

Looking back, the first signs of the coming epidemic and the resulting intense stigmatization of gay men arose in the 1970s, ironically partly because of the success of gay activism and the consequent recognition of the “gay community” as a quasi-ethnic group (Altman 1982, 10; Epstein 1988, 13–14). As Steven Epstein notes, the new medical discourse around gay male sexuality “asserted that male homosexual sex practices were medically problematic and therefore, by implication, gays as a group were diseased” (1988, 14). In what Michael Scarce conceptualizes as an important “harbinger of plague,” accounts of “gay bowel syndrome” began to appear in the late 1970s (Scarce 1999). A 1976 study first reported on this supposed constellation of anorectal and colon diseases diagnosed among homosexual men, including infection with what were thought to be tropical parasites (Kazal et al. 1976). Accounts of this syndrome hinged on the presumed
differentiation between the “gay bowel” and the “straight bowel” (Epstein 1988, 18); they also reinforced long-standing patterns of stigmatizing homosexual men by association with anal sex/sodomy. In addition, these accounts applied the word syndrome to gay men in ways analogous to the later naming of the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS). Once doctors became aware of what was initially called “the gay plague” or gay-related immunodeficiency (GRID) in 1981, this codification of gay men as a quasi-ethnic group with pathological bodies reached fruition. Newspaper reports linked AIDS with “gay bowel syndrome”; in positing AIDS as the invasion of a foreign contagion, they also treated gay men and gay neighborhoods as “tropical” and, thus, outside of normal American society (Scarce 1999, 29–30).

The first cases of what would become AIDS were recognized in the United States by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in June 1981 after reports of unexplained opportunistic infections, particularly the previously rare skin disease Kaposi’s sarcoma and the equally rare pneumocystis carinii pneumonia (PCP), began appearing in otherwise healthy gay men in several urban areas (Centers for Disease Control 1981). It was not until 1982 that the CDC began to use the term AIDS. Investigators from the CDC surmised that AIDS was caused by an infectious agent and they suspected that it was transmitted through sex. With the consent of gay Air Canada flight attendant Gaëtan Dugas, who estimated that he had had 250 sexual partners a year from 1979 to 1981 and who named seventy-two of them, the CDC researchers were able to link forty AIDS patients by sexual contact to at least one other patient; this cluster of patients strongly suggested that an infectious agent was responsible (Auerbach et al. 1984). This infectious agent was isolated in 1983; the term human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) was officially adopted in 1986. The CDC’s 1981 study, written by David M. Auerbach and colleagues, was published in 1984 and mistakenly referred to Dugas as “Patient 0”; the authors had misinterpreted the original designator for him, “Patient O” (outside California), as “Patient 0” (zero). The study did not name Dugas, nor did it claim, as is commonly believed, that the CDC had traced the arrival of the virus in North America or the United States to him. It was subsequent media accounts, mostly surrounding the publication of Randy Shilts’s book And the Band Played On in late 1987, that “outed” Dugas as “Patient Zero” and vilified him. Shilts, a gay man himself, referred to Dugas as “the Quebeçois [sic] version of Typhoid Mary” (quoted in McKay 2014, 163). An October 1987 New York Post headline, for instance, dubbed Dugas “The Man Who Gave Us AIDS” (McKay 2014, 182). The reproduction of the Patient Zero designator in the “Patient Zero” segment of the popular CBS-TV newsmagazine 60 Minutes in 1987 also fueled the erroneous legend.

The entire Patient Zero hypothesis eventually was disproven, though its onetime widespread circulation continues to influence public perceptions of the history of the epidemic. In 2016 the journal Nature published an article showing that a reexamination of blood samples taken from Dugas “found neither biological nor historical evidence that he was the primary case in the US or for subtype B as a whole” (Worobey et al. 2016, 98).
(Subtype B was the form of the virus largely found among men who acquired HIV through same-sex activities.) Even in 1987, the hypothesis was controversial. For instance, a report in the Chicago Tribune and other newspapers in October 1987 revealed that a young man from St. Louis (identified only as "Robert R.") had died in 1969 from multiple opportunistic infections linked to HIV/AIDS and that tests of tissue samples confirmed he had been infected (Crewdson 1987). There also was evidence that he had engaged in anal intercourse, though it was not clear whether it was consensual (McMichael 2007).

HIV is closely related to the simian immunodeficiency virus (SIV), which can be dated to at least 30,000 years ago, and perhaps as long as 6 million to 10 million years ago if the assumption is correct that it dates to when the lineages of African and Asian monkeys became distinct (Sharp and Hahn 2011). Because evidence of deaths from a human variant prior to the early twentieth century has yet to be uncovered, the leading assumption among epidemiologists and other researchers has been that SIV somehow made the jump to humans in the first half of the twentieth century. The traditional conjecture was that the jump occurred either when an infected chimpanzee bit a human, or when a blood-to-blood transfer from chimpanzee to human occurred when a human was cut while preparing chimpanzee meat for eating. Edward Hooper (1999) dismissed those theories, arguing instead that the virus inadvertently was created by scientists who synthesized an oral polio vaccine using cells from an SIV-infected chimpanzee. That theory, however, failed to account for earlier reports of AIDS-like illnesses in Europeans working in Africa.

Jacques Pépin (2011) rejected Hooper's assumptions and instead focused on the possibility of an incidental transfer of SIV to a human through a bite or other bodily fluid transmission from an infected chimpanzee. Pépin argued that colonial health practices in what was the Belgian Congo (present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo), including repeated use of the same syringes on multiple patients, facilitated the rapid spread of the now human variant of SIV among humans in Central Africa. When the Belgians withdrew from the country in the 1960s and took with them most of the French-language educators who had formed the core of the country's education system, teachers from Haiti, who were black and Francophone like the Congolese, filled the breach. From there, it is assumed that HIV was transmitted to the Haitian educators, perhaps through sexual contact with local populations, and then was carried back to Haiti when the educators repatriated.

Because Haiti had a thriving sex trade, particularly with North American and French tourists, it was inevitable that HIV would follow that vector to the United States and Canada. The timing explains both the seropositive status of Robert R. and the involvement of Gaëten Dugas in the early spread of the virus, because Dugas reportedly had visited Haiti as a sex tourist. It does not, however, necessarily account for reports of sporadic AIDS-like symptoms reported in several European populations as early as the 1920s and 1930s. In addition, by the late 1990s it was known that one of the strains of HIV was found in blood samples of an African man who died in 1959 (Zhu et al. 1998). More recent research on
tissue samples taken in Kinshasa (the capital of the Belgian Congo) from 1958 to 1960 also confirmed HIV in lymph node tissue taken from a woman in 1960 (Worobey et al. 2008). These reports have led most scientists to conclude that HIV likely began spreading in humans around 1920. Recent genetic analysis using statistical approaches has indicated that from the 1920s, Kinshasa was the focus of early transmission and the source of pre-1960 viral strains (Faria et al. 2014). Railway networks are thought to have been crucial to the spread within Central Africa, reaching Brazzaville (the capital of French Congo, now the Republic of Congo) by 1937. Nino R. Faria and colleagues also found genetic evidence for pandemic expansion of HIV from 1960 and correlated this rise to public health data, providing further support for claims that the use of unsterilized needles and/or subsequent changes in the nature of commercial sex work in Kinshasa fueled the spread of the virus.

Conspiracies and Other False Leads

Perhaps not surprisingly, given the sparse information available early in the 1980s epidemic in the West, conspiracy theories and accusations that HIV was created intentionally abounded well into the twenty-first century. Among them were claims that HIV/AIDS was developed to reduce the populations of blacks, Latinos, and gay men (Carroll 2003), that the virus was surreptitiously introduced to the population through experiments on gay and bisexual men in major US cities (Cantwell 1993), and that the virus was created as a bioweapon by US government defense contractors, partly for the purpose of population control. Though some of the theories were endorsed by otherwise respected scientists, all eventually were discredited. In 2002 the US General Accounting Office (now the Government Accountability Office) responded to a request from Congress with a report that concluded there was no evidence that HIV was the result of work by National Cancer Institute’s Special Virus Cancer Program (SVCP). However, these conspiracy theories persist in the public arena. For example, in a 2014 article Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan referred to AIDS as a “race targeting weapon” that will “kill only the Black and spare the White, because it is a genotype weapon that is designed for your genes, your race, for your kind” (Farrakhan 2014).

Early Coverage in the West

In the months following the CDC’s bulletin documenting the deaths of primarily young gay men in urban centers in the United States in 1981, most press accounts of the mysterious illness were found in local media, many of them specific to gay and lesbian communities. Television networks and major daily newspapers outside of New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco by and large ignored the story until 1982. By the mid-1980s, most newspapers were publishing multiple articles addressing various angles of the HIV/AIDS story, and television and radio newscasts provided daily coverage. In his content study of Associated Press coverage from 1986, Bruce Drushel (1991) found little evidence of
sensational or homophobic language in reporters' articles, although he conceded that this did not necessarily extend to headlines, choice of angle of sourcing, or to the broader framing of stories.

However, prominent gay intellectuals in the late 1980s would have disagreed with a positive assessment of the media overall. They noted the paucity of coverage of gay men, the largest group of victims of the disease in the West, versus the more widespread coverage of heterosexuals in minimally at-risk groups, as well as the intensely homophobic reporting by many major news outlets when the crisis among men who had sex with men was covered ([Watney 1987], [1987] 1996). They also decried the lack of coverage of the slow pace of drug testing. When the more overwhelming epidemic in Africa and the Caribbean was not completely ignored in Western media outlets (itself a function of racism), racist coverage was common. Activists and scholars also complained about such biased government outreach as Britain's “AIDS: Don't Die of Ignorance” campaign (1987), which involved television and billboard advertising and a leaflet distributed to every
household in the country. Simon Watney noted, "This campaign has still found itself unable to address one single word to British gay men, who constitute almost ninety percent of people with AIDS in Britain" (1987, 73). In his pioneering queer studies essay "Is the Rectum a Grave?" Leo Bersani detailed the hostility toward homosexuality that he and many others believed the AIDS crisis had legitimated. He also framed this hostility in terms of race, in terms of its intersection with misogyny, and in terms of the gay man’s own relationship to sex, sexuality, and politics (1987).

**World AIDS Day**

A day recognizing the impact that the HIV/AIDS pandemic was having on the world’s population was first proposed by public information officers with the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Programme on AIDS (now known as UNAIDS and cosponsored by multiple United Nations [UN] agencies and programs, as well as the World Bank). The director of the program recommended the first observance be 2 December 1988. The date was chosen because it was midway between the US elections and the Christmas holiday and therefore, it was hoped, Western media would give it maximum exposure.

Each World AIDS Day since the first has had a theme. In 1988 and 1989 the themes focused on the impact of HIV on communication and on young people, respectively, largely to ease public discomfort at its association with gay and bisexual men, intravenous drug users, and Haitian immigrants. In the ensuing years, themes have included women and AIDS, community commitment, AIDS and the family, stigma and discrimination, human rights, hope, shared rights and responsibilities, leadership, and accountability. Each year’s theme now is chosen by the World AIDS Campaign’s Global Steering Committee.

World leaders promoting World AIDS Day have included Pope John Paul II (1920–2005) and Pope Benedict XVI (1927–), as well as US presidents Bill Clinton (1946–), George W. Bush (1946–), and Barack Obama (1961–). The day is one of eight official observances supported by the WHO (the other focus on general health, blood donation, immunizations, tuberculosis, tobacco use cessation, malaria, and hepatitis).

**International AIDS Conference**

Another initiative is the International AIDS Conference, which claims to be the largest conference on any global health and development issue. The first meeting was held in Atlanta in 1985, with around 2,000 scientists and researchers attending. Since 1988 it has been organized by the International AIDS Society (IAS). The conference was controversial from the beginning because of issues such as its initial refusal to allow activists to participate and its choice to convene in countries (including the United States) that at the time barred HIV-positive people from entering. The 1985 and the related 1986 meeting convened in Paris by the WHO and various French scientific and governmental bodies were
also marred by a dispute between US National Institutes of Health scientist Robert Gallo (1937–) and France’s Pasteur Institute’s virologist Luc Montagnier (1932–) over credit for the discovery and naming of the HIV virus (Bliss 2012; France 2016).

On the eve of the 1987 conference in Washington, DC—and six years after AIDS began to be a public health issue—US president Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) delivered his first-ever public comments on AIDS at a fund-raiser chaired by actress Elizabeth Taylor (1932–2011) for the newly founded American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR). Reagan announced mandatory HIV testing for prison inmates, immigrants seeking permanent residence in the United States, and people seeking marriage licenses (Bliss 2012). Vice President George H. W. Bush (1924–) repeated these points in a speech at the opening of the conference the next day, sparking protest and booing. Protests at the San Francisco conference in 1990 around US legislation introduced in 1987 requiring visa applicants over fourteen years old to be tested for HIV and around a rarely enforced 1950s law barring homosexuals as “sexual deviants” from entering the United States led to the 1992 meeting being moved from Boston to Amsterdam (Bliss 2012).

The 1988 conference in Stockholm marked a turning point, with greater recognition of the impact of AIDS in Africa south of the Sahara and closer cooperation with the UN. The 1994 conference was held in Yokohama, partly to raise awareness of the impact of AIDS on Asia (Bliss 2012). In 2000, in the face of the rejection by the South African government and its scientific advisory panel of the causal link between HIV and AIDS, over 5,000 scientists signed the Durban Declaration declaring that HIV is the cause of AIDS. The declaration was published in the journal Nature shortly before the International AIDS Conference in Durban, South Africa (van Rijn 2006).

The Red Ribbon

Though HIV/AIDS had captured the consciousness of much of the global population through public information campaigns, press accounts, and entertainment content, some activists still saw the need for a visual symbol that would keep awareness of the health and social crisis prominent in culture. In 1991 a group called the Visual AIDS Artists Caucus launched what it called the Red Ribbon Project, introducing a simple loop of red ribbon as what it hoped would become a universal symbol. Its first documented use at a public event occurred when actor Jeremy Irons (1948–) wore one on his jacket during the 1991 Tony Awards (Kniel and Wright 2008). The symbol soon became near ubiquitous as a celebrity fashion accessory and inspired jewelers to create elaborate pins and brooches. As Sarah E. H. Moore has observed, the cultural meanings attached to the ribbon soon exceeded the original intent: “The ribbon is, for example, both a kitsch fashion accessory as well as an emblem that expresses empathy; it is a symbol that represents awareness, yet requires no knowledge of the cause it represents; it appears to signal concern for others, but in fact prioritizes self-expression” (2008, 2). Beginning in 2007, a 28-foot red ribbon was
suspended at the north portico of the White House on 1 December every year (Phillips 2009).

The Visual AIDS Artists Caucus was not the first to employ a red ribbon in popular symbology. Five years earlier, Mothers Against Drunk Driving introduced it as a visual marker for its Tie One on for Safety holiday campaign, which was designed to encourage revelers to identify designated drivers before beginning their Thanksgiving, Christmas, or New Year’s Eve celebrations (Lee’s Summit [Missouri] Tribune 2017). Nor was the red ribbon the first use of a strip of fabric to promote awareness of a social issue. Yellow ribbons, inspired by either the popular 1970s song “Tie a Yellow Ribbon (‘Round the Old Oak Tree)” or the 1949 John Ford film She Wore a Yellow Ribbon, were used to remind Americans and the rest of the world of the hostages held at the US embassy in Tehran from 1979 to 1981. Before that, lapel pins and red poppies had been worn to commemorate Flag Day and the 1918 World War I armistice, respectively.

In the years since, colored ribbons became a popular way to visually “brand” a variety of health conditions and societal maladies, including hunger, homelessness, and various forms of cancer. Nicholas Kniel and Timothy Wright have documented twenty-four distinct ribbon colors that have been used to promote awareness of eighty-six causes (2008). Perhaps because of the proliferation of ribbons, or because of medical advances that have made HIV/AIDS more survivable and manageable, displays of red ribbons have become considerably less common since the late 1990s, replaced by wristbands embossed with the ribbon symbol or with messages about HIV testing.

**HIV/AIDS Metaphors**

As coverage of the burgeoning epidemic continued throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, metaphors that created meaning for audiences began to proliferate. According to Katherine Cummings (1993), AIDS is a metaphor “that replaces the private language of human bodies with a public language whose purpose is to explain human suffering and death” (353). The meanings attached to the metaphor have changed, even since Cummings’s observation. Author and social critic Susan Sontag, who in an earlier work had examined the metaphors that attached to cancer, pointed out that HIV/AIDS had been represented as, variously, militaristic aggression and defenses, pollution, and a judgment. At the time, she said that the metaphor by which HIV/AIDS had become best known was “the Plague,” a reference to a series of fatal rodent-borne illnesses that ravaged Europe in the fourteenth century (1989). One might well argue, however, that given both the lessened inevitability of death since the introduction of modern drug therapies and the official discourse in a number of societies that has persisted since the 1980s, a better image was invasion (i.e., a threat that comes from elsewhere—not here). As Sontag noted, HIV/AIDS was constructed from the start as coming from somewhere else, from either outside mainstream culture or from a despised adversary. Just as syphilis in the fifteenth century was known variously as the
“French pox,” “Chinese disease,” “German death,” and the “Naples sickness” (47), so was HIV/AIDS originally called the “gay cancer” and gay-related immunodeficiency syndrome. The connection to gay men has persisted in some quarters, and well into the epidemic, some authoritarian leaders continued to deny that HIV/AIDS could have had origins in their nations because, of course, none of their citizens are homosexual. As late as 1985, the leadership of the Soviet Union continued to argue that HIV/AIDS was a decadent Western disease that had yet to affect its people (Williams 1994).

Summarizing studies published in the early 1990s, Richard L. Sowell and Kenneth D. Phillips observed that the stigma associated with homosexuality has allowed cultural majorities an excuse for their failures to fully engage with the crisis (2013). In South Africa, blacks blamed whites and whites blamed blacks for bringing HIV/AIDS to the country, and some South Africans blamed Mozambique, Botswana, and Zimbabwe for its introduction (Petros et al. 2006). In addition, during his term as South African president from 1999 to 2008, Thabo Mbeki (1942–) made controversial public statements doubting the connection between infection with HIV and AIDS, leading to equally controversial policies for treating the mainly heterosexual population affected. Mbeki’s evolving rhetoric pointed to the complicity of poverty and “the West” in fueling the epidemic and condemned pharmaceutical companies for their profiteering (Sheckels 2004).

But it was Cindy Patton (1985) who arguably made the best case for an enduring HIV/AIDS metaphor—“the Bomb”—if only for its descriptive power and enduring relevance. First, just as nuclear weapons had evolved from the most devastating tool in the World War II–era Pentagon arsenal to a catalyst for global Armageddon (itself a potent and potential AIDS metaphor), HIV (as noted earlier) was thought to have evolved from a simian virus. And just as the Bomb could indiscriminately decimate entire metropolitan areas in an instant, so too had HIV/AIDS torn through neighborhoods, communities, and personal social circles, albeit in weeks and months, not seconds. Finally, just as the fear of destruction by nuclear weapons could be characterized as imminent at the end of the war, omnipresent during the Cold War, and finally (until very recently) a mere specter with the collapse of the Soviet Union, HIV/AIDS was a preoccupation and a seeming inevitability in the 1980s, a lingering concern in the 1990s, and a nearly invisible, manageable condition in the twenty-first century.

Two other sets of metaphors assumed tangible forms. One was the Names Project, conceived by longtime gay political activist Cleve Jones (1954–). The Names Project, often referred to colloquially as the “AIDS Quilt,” had its origin in a 1985 candlelight procession to honor gay San Francisco supervisor Harvey Milk and mayor George Moscone, both of whom had been assassinated in 1978. Jones encouraged marchers to carry placards on which they had written the names of friends and relatives who had died from complications from HIV/AIDS; after the march, these were taped to the facade of the San Francisco Federal Building. Inspired by the thought that the wall of placards resembled a
large patchwork quilt, over the succeeding two years, Jones and other volunteers set to
work collecting and sewing together 3-by-6-foot fabric panels representing the lives of the
deceased. The resulting quilt has been displayed on the Capitol Mall in Washington, DC,
multiple times, most recently in 2012. By 2017 it had grown to more than 48,000 panels
and weighed 56 tons.

The quilt can be thought of metaphorically in several ways. First, quilts usually are a
patchwork, comprising varied types of fabric, just as the community of HIV/AIDS casualties
represents people of different genders, ages, ethnicities, and social strata. Second, it
functions as a remembrance that survives not only those whose lives it represents, but also
those who knew the individuals, just as quilts frequently are heirlooms handed down from
generation to generation or bestowed as gifts to family members from those who made
them. Finally, quilts have a comforting function. The AIDS quilt provides warm
remembrances, if not literal warmth.

The other set is a pair of events begun on World AIDS Day, 1 December 1989. Day without
Art was intended to demonstrate the unmistakable loss to the arts community from the
deaths of artists and their supporters from AIDS-related complications. By suspending
performances of stage productions, shutting the doors of art galleries, and covering works
of art in museums and galleries that did remain open, organizers from the group Visual
AIDS hoped to underscore the cultural contributions of a small group of people by
effectively depriving society of those contributions for a brief period—in this case, one day.
That temporary and strategic deprivation was intended as a metaphor for the more
permanent and ongoing loss to society of creative people who succumbed to opportunistic
illnesses.

Similarly, in a Moment without Television, signals from thirty-one US cable/satellite
television channels went dark for 60 seconds at 8:00 eastern standard time that evening in
1989 as a metaphor for the missing contributions of writers, performers, designers, and
production crew members whose lives were cut short by HIV/AIDS. A year later, on 2
December 1990, a group of cable executives, who eventually took the name Cable Positive,
organized the event and “eschewed the blank screen in favor of shots of human eyes and
digital clocks and a voice-over that informed audiences, ‘Every eight minutes, a life is lost to
AIDS’” (Stuart 1992). Unlike Day without Art, which as of 2017 was continuing, a Moment
without Television effectively ended after its second year.

**HIV/AIDS and Media**

Such scholars as Paula Treichler (1988) and Cindy Patton (1990) have argued that
individuals also construct the meaning of HIV/AIDS through discourse, particularly in the
languages of medicine and science. Those discourses persist in the medical and scientific
communities, of course, but also among the specialized media, such as *Poz* magazine, whose
target audience is people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHAs). But the focus of discussions also has evolved, in media targeting that community and broader ones, from protest and body counts to drug therapies and their side effects, quality of life, survivability, financial planning, and social relationships.

Following research on “gay bowel disease,” the first documented story about possible markers of what would become the HIV/AIDS crisis was published by the Advocate in April 1977. In that article, Randy Shilts (1951–1994), who later succumbed to complications of HIV/AIDS, described an alarming increase in a trio of gastrointestinal conditions—amebiasis, shigellosis, and salmonellosis—among gay-identified men in New York and San Francisco. None of the diseases was particularly rare, though their concentration among young, otherwise healthy men and their apparent transmission through sexual activity was considered unusual and a source of concern. Five years later, the Advocate published its first cover story on what was still known as GRID (McQueen 1982). In the intervening years, local publications serving the LGBTQ communities in New York, Los Angeles, and San Francisco provided coverage, including a disturbingly growing list of obituaries.

As noted above, after a slow start, the mainstream media in the West and particularly the United States were addressing the HIV/AIDS crisis by the early 1980s. Some of the first attention was on television, which covered it not only as an unfolding news story but also,
eventually, as a topic for prime-time entertainment, mostly drama, and in one-off episodes. Even so, critics accused the networks of deliberately avoiding HIV/AIDS themes in their programming because such story lines might run counter to the marketing efforts embedded in commercials that alluded to libertine behavior. In fact, it was commercial-free public television that brought viewers the most complex insights into the impact of the epidemic, in broadcasts of the award-winning film *Longtime Companion* (1989) and a documentary about the stage production *The AIDS Show: Artists Involved with Death and Survival* (1986). The film industry is notable for the sheer number of HIV/AIDS-themed works it has produced and for the longevity of its commitment to the theme. The first movies to prominently feature HIV/AIDS in their story lines were released in the mid-1980s; they included *Parting Glances* (1986) in cinemas and *As Is* (1986) and *An Early Frost* (1985) on television. At first blush, these debuts four or five years after the first reports recognized by the CDC seem to reflect belated interest in the topic, but it must be remembered that the film industry in particular has a long production schedule, typically requiring two to three years to reach exhibitors—longer if projects must run the film festival circuit to secure distribution agreements. As of 2018, more than sixty feature films with HIV-positive characters as leads had been released. Included among them are Rosa von Praunheim’s *Ein Virus kennt keine Moral* (1986; A virus knows no morals), Ryū Murakami’s *Kyoko* (1996), Pedro Almodóvar’s *Todo sobre mi madre* (1999; All about my mother), Darrell Roodt’s *Yesterday* (2004), and at least nine Bollywood films, beginning with V. P. Mohammed’s 1987 *Aids*. Robin Campillo’s *120 battements par minute* (2017; *BPM [Beats per Minute]*) chronicles the ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) movement in Paris in the 1990s.

A large number of countries initiated their own media campaigns to disseminate information about ways to prevent transmission of HIV and the need to seek testing and treatment. In particular, Australia’s use of television to convey very frank messages has been credited with keeping its incidence rates low (McGregor et al. 2016). While the continent recorded its first documented case of HIV infection relatively early, in 1982, and its first death from HIV/AIDS complications a year later (Bowtell 2005), as of 2005, just 26,000 people there were thought to have the virus and just 10 percent of them were thought to be unaware of their status. Relatively early in the pandemic, in 1989, the Latino community in Los Angeles, dedicated its Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) celebration to the memory of those who had died from HIV/AIDS complications (“Latino Tribute” 1989). In China, where studies have shown social stigma against PLWHAs to be especially widespread (Hong et al. 2008), National Basketball Association player Yao Ming (1980–) and film star and HIV/AIDS activist Pu Cunxin (1953–) agreed to appear on posters with PLWHAs as part of the We Are Friends campaign, which planned to distribute more than 200,000 posters (Nichols 2007).

**Recent Years**
Whether because of audience fatigue or the impact of drug regimens (where they are accessible and/or tolerated by those with the virus) that have made HIV/AIDS, once a fatal condition, into what Western media represent as a manageable condition akin to diabetes, the illness has retreated into near cultural invisibility. With few new developments to report, the news media largely ignore the sheer numbers: according to the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), as of 2017 more than 76 million people worldwide had been infected with HIV/AIDS since record keeping began in the early 1980s. Of those, 36.7 million were living with the virus and nearly 57 percent were receiving treatment (UNAIDS 2017a).

Infection rates remain high: 1.8 million new infections were reported in 2016 alone, according to UN figures. While new infection rates are down in most of the world—by 9 percent in Western Europe, western Africa, and North America; 5 percent in Latin America and the Caribbean; 13 percent in southern and eastern Asia; 4 percent in northern Africa and the Middle East; and a dramatic 29 percent in southern and eastern Africa—they are up 60 percent in eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union. In addition, 59 percent of new infections worldwide occur in people born in the late 1990s and early in the next decade—long after AIDS became less visible culturally.

**Risk Populations**

Globally, 18 percent of the newly infected are clients of sex workers and the sexual partners of other key population groups; 12 percent are gay men and men who have sex with men; 8 percent are injectable drug users; 5 percent are sex workers; and 1 percent are transgender people (although all of these percentages double when data from Africa south of the Sahara are excluded, given the low infection rates there among normally higher-risk populations). The groups with the highest HIV prevalence vary significantly from region to region and from country to country. Close to 60 percent of infections are among female sex workers in Zimbabwe, 27 percent among injectable drug users in Myanmar and Pakistan, and 20 percent or higher among gay men and other men who have sex with men in the Central African Republic (UNAIDS 2017b).

Transgender women are among the populations most heavily affected by HIV/AIDS; transgender men to date have been much less studied. According to a 2013 meta-analysis, compared to all adults of reproductive age, transgender women are forty-nine times more likely to be seropositive (Baral et al. 2013). In Bolivia’s largest city, Santa Cruz, HIV/AIDS incidence among transgender women is nearly 100 times that of the general population (UNAIDS 2014). Overall, 10 percent of the world’s transgender women are estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS. While a host of contexts associated with social stigma (e.g., interpersonal exclusion, economic vulnerability, difficulty locating employment) may be partly responsible, evidence suggests that at least in some settings, the primary cause may be the involvement of particularly young transgender women in the sex trade (Van
In El Salvador, 47 percent of transgender women reported that selling sex is their main source of income (Hivos Guatemala 2010). Sex work has been found to be significantly associated with homelessness, drug use, and perceived lack of social support (Wilson 2009).

The status of lesbians as a population at risk of HIV/AIDS is complex. Two decades into the epidemic, the CDC claimed that lesbians were a group at low risk of infection even though it was unable to verify that claim empirically (Montcalm and Myer 2000). In fact, many groups have “complicated crossover degrees of risk,” according to American feminist activist Amber Hollibaugh (quoted in Pechman 2009), and that appears to be particularly true for lesbians. Although some in both the health care and lesbian communities persist in the belief that lesbians are at very low risk for transmission, and although woman-to-woman sex is thought not to be a vector for transmission, women who identify as homosexual may have intersectional identities that place them at risk: they may be injectable drug users who share needles; their socioeconomic status may mean they have sex with men in exchange for housing and food, or to care for their children; or they may have substance addictions that affect sexual behaviors and partners. Failure to accurately account for lesbians as a percentage of seropositive women and the consequent mythos surrounding lesbians and HIV/AIDS have been blamed for their reluctance to be tested for exposure to the virus or to employ barriers to transmission during sex (i.e., dental dams) in order to minimize risk.

Some higher-risk populations are largely situational. Those in the transportation sector, particularly long-haul truck drivers, in some parts of the world have been identified as having a high incidence of HIV/AIDS. According to the International Organization for Migration, up to 56 percent of both truckers and sex workers along a major South African trucking route were seropositive (International Organization for Migration 2005). In Paraguay the majority of HIV-positive transport workers were in Asunción, in the central part of the country, and near the borders with Argentina and Brazil (Ilaria-Mayrhofer 2012). In both cases, the high incidence of HIV/AIDS was associated with prolonged waits for the loading and unloading of goods and the processing of documents.

Politics and Social Practices

Eventually, predictably, the threat posed by the persistence and pervasiveness of HIV/AIDS extended beyond the domains of health care, medicine, and popular culture to politics, commerce, and social practices. As the virus spread unchecked in the 1980s, a number of countries imposed immigration bans on persons testing positive for HIV. In response, both the UN and the WHO issued statements discouraging the practice, arguing that bans were ineffective at controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS and contravened long-standing UN policies on human rights and discrimination. Neither organization, however, approved binding declarations or treaties forbidding the practice. As a result, would-be immigrants
to countries with such bans were forced to undergo HIV antibody testing at the border, or to produce proof of negative test results (MacFarlane 2007).

Eventually, most of the world’s approximately 195 nations rescinded their entry bans, including the United States, which lifted its twenty-two-year-old ban in 2009 (Preston 2009). But according to the International AIDS Society, as of 2015, 13 countries continued to impose total entry bans on PLWHAs, 24 deported noncitizens found to be seropositive, 17 countries placed restrictions of stays of 90 days or fewer, and 58 countries placed restrictions on stays greater than 90 days. Generally, the countries with the most restrictive policies tended to be in the Middle East, although they also included Russia and Equatorial Guinea (Lemmen 2015).

The antiretroviral therapies (ARTs) introduced beginning in the mid-1990s were intended to hinder the ability of HIV to reproduce and infect. For PLWHAs who could access and afford ARTs and tolerate their side effects, and for whom they continued to be effective, HIV/AIDS became predictively survivable. Yet, ARTs are not a cure in that they do not eliminate HIV from the body once infection has occurred, and so the pharmacological quest for a vaccine to prevent infection continues.

In the meantime, studies suggest that at least one of the drug therapies proven effective at “taming” the virus might also prevent infection in HIV-negative persons exposed to the virus during unprotected sexual intercourse with a seropositive partner. In 2012 the US Food and Drug Administration approved the combination of tenofovir and emtricitabine, marketed by pharmaceutical company Gilead as Truvada, as a daily-use pre-exposure prophylaxis, or PrEP. The CDC also began recommending a short course of ARTs within seventy-two hours of potential exposure as postexposure prophylaxis, or PEP (Dominguez et al. 2016). Because of the dual roles of online social media platforms as sites for initiating social and sexual encounters and vehicles for advertising, it was perhaps inevitable that Gilead would begin advertising Truvada as PrEP on Snapchat, Tumblr, and a variety of online dating sites. Gender and cultural studies researcher Kane Race has argued that PrEP may represent a radical change in the ways HIV-negative individuals view their sexuality, leading them “to identify themselves as subject of risk in the mode of precalculation and intentionality” (Race 2016, 24).

SEE ALSO ACT UP; AIDS Memorial Quilt—The NAMES Project; HIV/AIDS in Africa; HIV/AIDS in Egyptian Cinema; HIV/AIDS in Europe; HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean; HIV/AIDS in South and Southeast Asia; HIV/AIDS in the United States; MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia

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HIV/AIDS in Africa

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The status of HIV/AIDS prevention strategies and activism in Africa as they relate to LGBTQ communities, with a particular focus on South Africa, Malawi, and Uganda.

HIV/AIDS is among Africa’s foremost public health crises, with the highest volume of cases having occurred in Southern and East Africa, from which this entry’s three country case studies (South Africa, Malawi, and Uganda) are derived. Men who have sex with men (MSM), young women (including those who are LGBTQ), and gender-nonconforming and transgender individuals are particularly vulnerable to infection on account of transphobic, homophobic, and sexist HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination. Members of all these groups require, and have demanded and codesigned, accessible, empowering, and specialized HIV prevention and treatment services and policies tailored to suit their needs. Decriminalization of LGBTQ practices and criminalization of homophobic hate crimes have been key sites of HIV/AIDS-related human rights advocacy on the continent. Both public health researchers and LGBTQI advocates continue to challenge and address HIV-related homophobia, transphobia, and sexism, which remain barriers to effective HIV treatment, care, and support interventions on the continent.

MOST-AT-RISK POPULATIONS (MARPS)

Most-at-risk populations (MARPs) is a term used in global HIV and AIDS response programs to identify populations in need of surveillance for targeted prevention, treatment, care, and support interventions. The term refers to those populations at highest risk of acquiring or transmitting HIV. The risk of HIV infection increases with behaviors such as engaging in unprotected sex with multiple partners, engaging in unprotected anal sex, and sharing hypodermic needles. HIV prevalence among people who engage in these behaviors is often extremely high. They are usually the first to become infected, and their risk of being infected is higher than the general population.

The key groups usually associated with most-at-risk behavior include sex workers, clients of sex workers, injecting drug users, women who receive unprotected anal sex, and men who have sex with other men. The lists of those populations referred to as MARPs vary depending on geographical contexts and the regional or local HIV and AIDS programs. For example, long-distance truck drivers have been identified as a
critical population in the spread of HIV and therefore in need of targeted intervention. There are other terms that have been used to refer to specific most-at-risk groups, such as *most-at-risk adolescents* and *most-at-risk young people*. Other HIV and AIDS programs use the term *key populations*. There are other groups that are not ordinarily referred to as MARPs but also bear a high risk of HIV infection, such as the sexual partners of sex workers. All MARPs in relation to HIV and AIDS include people living with HIV. Terminologies describing MARPs are not unique to HIV and AIDS, as they have also been used in the surveillance of malaria and tuberculosis epidemics.

In HIV and AIDS surveillance, MARPs are not identifiable as a distinct social group. They are instead identified as proxy populations based on characteristics associated with people engaging in risky behaviors. For example, a person who engages in same-sex sex is not a risk for acquiring or transmitting HIV, but a person who engages in unprotected same-sex sex with a person infected with HIV is at risk. Behaviors that put MARPs at risk of HIV infection are usually tabooed, stigmatized, or criminalized. Individuals associated with such behaviors are driven underground, unlikely to seek HIV-related health services, and have no recourse against various human rights violations. Interventions targeting MARPs are encouraged to adopt a human rights approach aimed at averting taboos through the use of a strategic euphemism aimed at promoting human dignity.

MARPs-related terminology has opened a bottom-up approach for local communities to identify and name risky behavior. They have also been misconceived, however, as a donor conspiracy to promote tabooed identities and behavior, such as homosexuality, especially in Africa.

The terms have been widely used in HIV and AIDS education messaging to sensitize the masses on how they can protect themselves from all possible risks of HIV infection, including protection from behaviors that are taboo. Repetitive references to and usage of the terms have led to MARPs proxy populations being labeled as distinct groups. However, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) advises against using such terms to refer to a person to avoid individuals facing stigma from their community members (*UNAIDS 2015*).

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Explanation of Terms and Concepts

AIDS in Africa has disproportionately affected the LGBTQ community since its initial identification as gay-related immunodeficiency in 1981. In diverse African socioeconomic, cultural, and political contexts, AIDS has shaped, and been shaped by, diverse erotic identities, ideas, and practices. In this context, great care must be taken to ethically and accurately define and name the lifeworlds, experiences, and representations of same-sex–practicing and gender-nonconforming individuals and groups. The approach adopted in this entry is that such individuals and groups will mostly be referred to according to their self-descriptions in the past and present. When referring to homophobic, transphobic, and sexist stereotyping or framings of such sexual and gender diversity, the first usage of such stigmatizing terms will be placed in quotation marks to indicate the author’s opposition to the deployment of such terms. References to activist and social coalitions—such as lesbian and gay, men who have sex with men (MSM), women who have sex with women (WSW), LGBT, LGBTI, and LGBTQIA++—also shift in places depending on their self-definition as expressed in each case/example offered. Finally, the term queer is used to describe “queer history” or “queer studies”: this is not to intellectually privilege the term over others but
merely to indicate that this entry engages in places with concepts and debates developed within these established and highly relevant areas of scholarship.

Similarly, the entry concentrates on three country case studies (South Africa, Malawi, and Uganda) because it aims to provide detailed sociohistorical descriptions of LGBTQ-relevant aspects of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the continent. Such longer descriptions can both shed light on LGBTI people’s lived experiences of the disease and pandemic and illuminate the scientific rationale behind using human rights to tackle sexist, transphobic, and homophobic HIV-related stigma and discrimination. This focus on these three country case studies is certainly not aimed at understating LGBTI people’s experiences and engagements with HIV/AIDS in other African countries. With all this in mind, the entry discusses studies of HIV incidence (the number of new cases) and prevalence in other LGBTI populations in all African countries. It also discusses continent-wide advocacy projects to show the ways in which LGBTI Africans have collaboratively and creatively responded to the pandemic.

**Men Who Have Sex with Men (MSM)** The term *men who have sex with men* (MSM) is of particular importance in the history of AIDS on the continent. As in many other parts of the world, in Africa many people who have sex with people of the same sex, or who do not express dominant sex and/or gender identities, do not identify themselves as “gay,” “homosexual,” “lesbian,” “bisexual,” “transgender,” “intersex,” or “queer.” It was against this backdrop that public health scholars and practitioners created the term *MSM* in the 1990s, with the idea being that this would encourage those rejecting these labels to make use of and participate in HIV prevention and treatment programs designed to meet their needs. As of 2017, MSM remained one of the most-at-risk populations—or key populations—for HIV infection in Africa: studies indicate that they are twenty times more likely to contract the virus than the general population in several African countries. In 2015 gay men and MSM made up 6 percent of all new infections in sub-Saharan Africa (*UNAIDS 2017*). Here it must also be noted that, as with MSM, women who have sex with women (WSW) evolved as a term to identify same-sex–practicing women who do not necessarily self-describe as lesbian or bisexual.

The term *MSM*, in turn, quickly became one of self-identification for those who were uncomfortable with using conventional, Western LGBTI nomenclature. In a South African context, in particular, the term *MSM* has been used as a term of self-identification for men who wish to avoid the homophobia associated with being seen, or self-presenting, as “effeminate” or *moffies* (a derogatory South African term for gay men who are deemed to act in a more feminine fashion). In this way, AIDS profoundly shaped the self-described sexual identities of many Africans. However, although the term *MSM* has been experienced as empowering by some, it has also attracted homophobic stigma and discrimination in Africa. For instance, an unintended consequence of the introduction of the concept of MSM is that, on occasion, it has been used in a prejudicial way to cast these individuals and groups as a silent driver of the epidemic, and has been understood more in the sense of the
harm they can cause to “heterosexual” women.

MSM have also frequently wished to avoid what some of them view as being an excessive focus on their sex lives to the detriment of their wider emotional experiences and other aspects of their identities. As opposed to simplistic notions of MSM as “failing to come out of the closet,” it is important to understand their sexuality as shaped by a complex mosaic of social factors. In many instances, MSM experience culturally diverse kinds of homophobia that often articulate with multiple facets of structural inequality. Their choices not to see their sexual practices as determinate of their identities must be understood in the context of such social factors.

Studies of LGBTI HIV Prevalence in Africa

Most studies pertaining to HIV prevalence among LGBTI people in Africa have exclusively focused on MSM. The reasons for this are manifold and include the homophobic and sexist belief that lesbian women cannot get AIDS and the relative invisibility of bisexual, trans, and intersex people. While these lacunae in the literature are important to acknowledge and need to be addressed, there is, in the meantime, still merit in examining studies of MSM to obtain a picture of regional differences on the continent.

There are some important differences in HIV prevalence among MSM in the diverse regions of Africa (Southern Africa, Central Africa, West Africa, East Africa, and North Africa). In terms of general HIV epidemics, it is clear that as a subcontinent taken as a whole, sub-Saharan Africa is where most people are living with HIV and most new infections take place. By contrast, according to Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) estimates, HIV prevalence is markedly lower in North Africa considered in combination with the Middle East (known as the MENA region) compared to other regions of the continent (UNAIDS 2017). While there are 19.4 million people living with HIV in East and Southern Africa, there are only 230,000 people living with HIV in the MENA region (UNAIDS 2017). This has been linked in some existing scholarship to the fact that Islam is the dominant religion in the latter region; here, one must note that the hypothesis has been presented that HIV prevalence is lower among Muslims as a group, in general, for religious reasons.

Peter B. Gray’s 2004 survey of literature answering this hypothesis in sub-Saharan Africa found that countries within this part of Africa with higher Muslim populations had lower HIV prevalence compared to those with lower Muslim populations. In addition, this review article pointed out that research has shown that within the countries studied HIV prevalence was lower among Muslims. The same review concluded that practices of reduced alcohol consumption (which may reduce sexual engagement in behavior increasing HIV risk) and male circumcision appeared to reduce HIV transmission.
That said, the diverse countries of North Africa have different socioeconomic, political, and cultural realities, which have a bearing on HIV transmission. For instance, civil society groups and the media have documented the ways in which male rape has been used as a weapon of war and political domination by the various factions in the civil war in Libya that began in 2014 (Allegra 2017). Many of the sexual assaults that men have been subjected to in wartorn Libya have included anal rape using such objects as rockets and broom handles, and male inmates have been coerced into raping each other. Male rape in prisons is a risk factor in terms of HIV transmission. There is an almost total absence of data on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Libya, including that relating to MSM (UNAIDS 2017). Public health studies of the quantitative impact of these war crimes on HIV transmission must be produced in order to design appropriate interventions. Overall, this anecdotal evidence suggests the importance of disaggregating HIV incidence and prevalence data both between and within countries in the region. In this regard, MSM prevalence in this region is particularly deserving of further study.

**AIDS-Related Homo- and Transphobia in Society** In order to understand homo and transphobic HIV/AIDSrelated stigma and discrimination, one must also grasp that such sexual-orientation and gender-identity-based discrimination must be viewed intersectionally and be situated in wider socioeconomic and political contexts. The concept of intersectionality was developed by African American feminists in the 1980s and 1990s to describe the ways in which multiple forms of oppression intersect with each other (Crenshaw 1991; Collins 2009). Homophobia and transphobia are intersectional in that they are enmeshed with racism, sexism, socioeconomic status, xenophobia, tribalism, ableism, and urban/rural inequalities. What this means is that some members of sexual and gender-identity minorities also occupy a lower social status than others on two or more of these additional grounds. To offer AIDS-relevant examples of this, a wealthy white South
African gay male living in an affluent urban area in a city such as Cape Town typically has more access to LGBTQ-appropriate HIV-related information (especially that delivered via the internet) and health and social services than a poor African trans woman who is an undocumented migrant and is living in a shack settlement on the outskirts of the same city.

In many instances, young, poor MSM have been confronted with HIV prevention programs emphasizing “abstinence-only” or heteronormative approaches and/or fee-based health-care services. African LGBTQI HIV/AIDS activists have addressed both types of inequality, tackling both homophobia and transphobia and lack of access to affordable medicines and health-care services. This must be understood in cultural, socioeconomic, and political contexts. In many African countries, there is intractable and rising transphobia, homophobia, and sexism as a result of the deployment of conservative ideologies in the context of extreme global and national structural inequalities. These ideologies are frequently promoted by conservative evangelical Christian and Islamist religious leaders—prejudices that are also mirrored in inflammatory rhetoric adopted by many government leaders and often written into law. Contrary to many popular depictions of the phenomena on the continent in the Global North, there is no unitary African homophobia; instead, just as there has been a myriad of diverse nonnormative gender identities and expressions of same-sex sexuality, many oppressive counter-discourses, identities, and practices have emerged and changed over time (Epprecht 2013).

These developments must also be viewed in the historical context of the colonial introduction of modern Western homophobic concepts, models, and laws onto the continent. In addition, slavery and colonialism entrenched patterns of racism, tribalism, economic exploitation, and extraction of wealth to the Global North. In postcolonial Africa, global inequality has continued to hamper democratization and democratic consolidation, whether expressed in the structural adjustment programs introduced by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the 1980s and 1990s or in more recent “free trade” agreements and neoliberal conditionalities attached to aid and debt relief. The poverty and lack of access to health care that many HIV-positive LGBTI people in Africa have to endure relate to global economic injustice—something African activists have prioritized in their struggles for sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender equality.

**Criminalization of LGBTQ Practices and AIDS** The decriminalization of same-sex activities is absolutely critical in achieving three global goals: ending new HIV infections, ending the stigma and discrimination associated with the disease, and ending AIDS-related deaths through the universal provision of antiretroviral (ARV) treatment. These goals are interrelated: same-sex–practicing people will not be able to codevelop, disseminate, and access relevant information about HIV prevention without ending the stigma and discrimination; they will not feel safe in coming forward for testing or treatment; and testing is needed to access treatment, which must be taken consistently for life. Without such decriminalization, Africa’s AIDS response will remain significantly hampered, with
HIV-positive LGBTQ people disproportionately bearing the psychosocial, economic, and political burdens of preventable HIV infections and deaths.

At the level of a clinic or hospital, criminalization of same-sex practices discourages and actively blocks MSM from safely and nonjudgmentally accessing condoms and water-based lubrication, engaging in voluntary counseling and testing for HIV and sexually transmitted infections (STIs), having direct and frank discussions of their sexual activities with health professionals, consenting to anal examinations by health professionals, disclosing their HIV status, and adhering to combination ARV treatment. Similarly, lack of HIV prevention services in prisons is a key driver of new infections among MSM. Since the earliest days of the epidemic there has been clear public-health evidence of the benefits of effective, targeted HIV interventions expressly designed for MSM. The reality, however, is that African MSM who suffer under homophobic climates of silence, fear, and denial do not feel comfortable accessing appropriate services in the relatively few instances where they exist. For these reasons, UNAIDS (2014) has called for universal law reform ending the criminalization of same-sex practices and all other legislation discriminating against people based on their sexual orientation, as part of its “zero discrimination” target. Similarly, the Global Commission on HIV and the Law (2012) recommended both decriminalization of same-sex sexuality and the creation of laws to protect the rights of MSM.

Furthermore, in 2015, the International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Infections in Africa (ICASA) was held in Harare, Zimbabwe, and, for the first time, in a declaration issued there, the ICASA called for the end of stigma and discrimination against “minorities of every type.” While the statement did not explicitly name LGBTI people as a minority, it provided scope for further advocacy for their needs to be addressed. In addition, the potential of such conferences with regard to LGBT equality advocacy was demonstrated by the fact that ICASA in 2015 published a statement from Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe, an LGBTI rights organization, on the ICASA website.

As of 2018, South Africa had the most comprehensive laws on sexual orientation equality on the continent. In the twenty-first century, there has, however, been some progress in African countries’ laws pertaining to the rights of same-sex–practicing people: same-sex sexual activity has become legal in Lesotho (2012), Mozambique (2015), and São Tomé and Príncipe (2012); similarly, some forms of antigay discrimination have been outlawed in Botswana (in employment in 2010, and in registration of nongovernmental organizations [NGOs] in 2016) and Mozambique (in employment in 2007) (Carroll and Mendes 2017). These significant gains were a consequence of successful African LGBTI legal activism (Carroll and Mendes 2017).

**Global Health Injustice and Access to ARVs and PrEP**

In 1996 highly active antiretroviral therapy (HAART; hereafter, combination ARV
treatment) was introduced by scientists in the United States. This treatment was revolutionary in the history of AIDS in that it could successfully suppress HIV and allow immune-system recovery in people living with the disease. Initially, this HIV treatment was available only to people living with the disease in the Global North and those who were affluent in the Global South. Since then, issues of global equity of access to ARVs have continued to be raised by AIDS activists, including those who are LGBTQ.

In particular, in East and Southern Africa as a whole, only 79 percent of people living with HIV are on ARV treatment. With regard to the three case studies, only 66 percent of people living with HIV in Malawi are on ARVs; 67 percent in Uganda; and 56 percent in South Africa (UNAIDS 2017). The barriers to ARV access across Africa include high levels of stigma (including homophobic and transphobic stigma); health systems issues, such as underfunding and suboptimal management of health systems, as well as shortages of health professionals; and the high price of ARVs (especially in relation to the newest drugs).

Similar challenges exist related to access to Truvada (an ARV) for pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). PrEP involves taking Truvada daily to radically reduce the chances of acquiring HIV infection. It has been widely recognized as a breakthrough in terms of HIV prevention, especially in relation to key populations (including MSM and transgender people). However, effective provision of PrEP requires more than physicians simply giving patients the pills: ideally, they should also be tested for STIs in addition to the required regular HIV testing, and they should be provided with a safe environment in which to discuss their overall sexual health needs with their doctors. Universal provision of PrEP is, however, far from a reality across Africa. Members of the African LGBTQ community face the same barriers to access to PrEP as they do with ARVs.

In an African context of relative scarcity, gay rights activists have argued for PrEP to be provided as part of a continuum of HIV prevention and treatment services (AVAC 2016). In addition, they have pushed back against the notion of PrEP being a luxury, as opposed to a necessity, for key populations and young women (also a heavily affected social group). They have also addressed the need to explain the science around PrEP and avoid PrEP exceptionalism (the idea that the intervention exists purely for the benefit of gay men). Instead, they have made the case that PrEP should be provided to all who deem themselves to be at risk of HIV infection.

Although reliable and fast internet access in Africa is far from universal, there is extensive cell phone and social media penetration on the continent, and both types of platforms have been a key means of disseminating information on HIV among LGBTQ people. This is especially the case in relation to sharing information on PrEP, which is still a relatively new intervention. For example, African Men for Sexual Health and Rights, a Pan-African coalition of LGBT organizations for the promotion of human rights and access to quality health services, also includes information on provision of PrEP in an African context on its
website. Here it must also be noted that African LGBTQ and AIDS activists, both national and transnational, have been expanding their web presence. For example, NGOs and such community-based organizations as Sexual Minorities Uganda, the Treatment Action Campaign, and the Uganda Health and Science Press Association all have websites.

**South Africa**

It can be argued that South Africa is, in many ways, exceptional in the LGBTQ history of AIDS on the continent and, indeed, in the world. In terms of its history, the disease was quickly identified as disproportionately affecting gay men in the early period of the country’s epidemic. South African gay rights activists were among the first to conduct effective campaigning for an end to AIDS stigma and discrimination, and for a comprehensive, global approach to the prevention, care, and treatment of the disease; the latter was in alliance with gay AIDS activists in the United States.

**The Early Years of the Gay AIDS Epidemic in South Africa** The country’s first two cases of AIDS were reported in 1982, one year after AIDS was officially identified by the US Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta, Georgia, in two white gay male flight attendants. Early on, scientists in South Africa identified two clades (or strains) of the virus in the country, which they framed as largely having affected two different groups: clade B, which came from North America and Europe and mostly affected what physicians and scientists referred to as “homosexual men”; and clade C, which they characterized as predominantly having affected “heterosexual” people, and which originated in countries to the north of the continent.

From 1948 to 1994, South Africa’s National Party government adhered to apartheid policies, which aimed to keep the racial “population groups” separate, with whites as the prime beneficiaries of institutionalized discrimination against Africans, coloureds, and Indians. Racism, homophobia, transphobia, and sexism were inscribed by the socially conservative and segregationist state into law and key social institutions. Queer history in this period, including that of HIV/AIDS, was deeply influenced by the racially authoritarian state and the attending Calvinist-dominated social climate.

In this context, early government policy and media articles on the disease were vague and/or nonexistent on how gay and bisexual men could prevent HIV infection and on the care options available to those living with the disease. This created a climate of silence and fear around AIDS, not only among gay and lesbian persons but also within the wider society. In this context, it is noteworthy that, as in other countries around the world, gay and lesbian persons developed their own information, education, and psychosocial support programs and networks, including, for example, the work of GASA 6010 and the Triangle Project in Cape Town and that of the Township AIDS Project in Johannesburg.
In this period, physicians, activists, and public health specialists emphasized efforts to prevent the spread of the “gay” AIDS epidemic. There were also a few pioneering mental health professionals who called for interventions to be based on a comprehensive understanding of gay men’s psychosexual history and for their receiving adequate counseling as part of a community health–based approach to the disease (Isaacs and Miller 1985; Isaacs and McKendrick 1992). Gay organizations worked to widen same-sex practicing men’s access to condoms and to increase education about their usage and HIV testing. They also developed their own networks for the provision of care that were frequently designed according to the “buddy” system, whereby gay men cooked, visited, and provided companionship to others living with HIV and AIDS.

By contrast, there were many profound silences and gaps in knowledge and intervention around lesbian and bisexual women’s risk of HIV infection. This can also be linked to a more generalized worldwide silence about AIDS in women in biomedical and public health disciplines in the late 1980s and early 1990s. HIV infection in women was often stereotyped in medical and scientific literature as being confined to “prostitutes.” In addition, the triple (race, class, and gender) or quadruple (race, class, gender, and sexual orientation) oppression of black women affected by AIDS was often overlooked. Lesbians’ risk of infection and their HIV prevention needs would be only slightly more substantively examined and acted on by some public health agencies and scholars and LGBTI rights activists in the country following pressure from the latter at a much later stage.

Gay Rights Law Reform Campaigning and AIDS The emergence of multiracial, antiapartheid gay rights activism in the late 1980s and early 1990s proved to be pivotal in both South African queer history and the country’s political, social, and legal history more broadly. During the transition from apartheid and the early postapartheid era, activists such as Simon Tseko Nkoli, Zackie Achmat, Edwin Cameron, Bev Ditsie, and Kevin Botha successfully campaigned for the inclusion of the right to nondiscrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in the country’s constitution. The National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality and its successor, the Lesbian and Gay Equality Project, were noteworthy in using advocacy, including legal activism, to win an impressive array of reforms in the area of sexual orientation equality. This provided a basis for effective advocacy for decriminalization of “sodomy,” equality in adoption and marriage, and the outlawing of housing and employment discrimination; these activists also advanced equality in many other important areas of LGBTQ people’s lives.

In this postapartheid context, some lesbian and gay AIDS activists were able to dedicate themselves to activism to address the ongoing and intensifying AIDS crisis with special understandings of, and experiences in, policy oriented and legal activism. In this regard, a few gay AIDS activists are deserving of particular mention: Achmat, Jack Lewis, Nkoli, and Cameron. The gains these activists obtained for LGBTQ people in this period were signal in enabling effective AIDS education and advocacy: all individuals were legally free to engage
in same-sex sexual partnerships and practices, which, among other things, further enabled
the distribution of frank and gay-appropriate sex-education materials, as well as public
disclosures of being gay and HIV positive. However, many disadvantaged (e.g., black, poor,
rural, adolescent) LGBTQ individuals remained especially hindered in expressing their
sexuality and gender identities in health-optimizing ways in the context of the HIV
epidemic for two reasons: first, state support for appropriate health services for them was
extremely constrained; second, widespread societal homophobic, transphobic, and sexist
stigma and discrimination remained barriers to access to health-care services.

ZACKIE ACHMAT AND THE TREATMENT ACTION CAMPAIGN

Zackie Achmat (1962–) is an internationally recognized gay rights, AIDS, human rights,
and social justice activist. He has played a vital role in struggles for LGBTQ equality in
postapartheid South Africa. He is, however, most famous around the world for his
advocacy in the global movement for universal access to HIV treatment.

Achmat, who grew up in Cape Town, began his activism against South Africa’s system
of apartheid at the young age of fourteen and spent time in prison. As South Africa
dismantled apartheid in the 1990s, his activism expanded to lesbian and gay rights.
Alongside such activists as Simon Tseko Nkoli, he saw the need for black-led,
multiracial lesbian and gay rights organizations. South Africa’s most prominent
national gay advocacy organization in the 1980s and early 1990s, the Gay Association
of South Africa, was white-dominated and failed to view struggles for both gay rights
and an end to apartheid as linked forms of human rights activism. It was in this context
that Achmat cofounded the multiracial Association for Bisexuals, Gays, and Lesbians
(ABIGALE) in 1992. As a leader of both ABIGALE and later the National Coalition for
Gay and Lesbian Equality (NCGLE), Achmat was a critical player in the effort to
constitutionally enshrine sexual orientation equality. This advocacy resulted in South
Africa having one of the most progressive constitutions in the world in terms of LGBTQ
rights (Croucher 2002; Thoreson 2008).

Achmat linked the struggle for sexual-orientation equality with access to HIV-related
health-care services. In an August 1998 letter to members of the NCGLE, Achmat
pointed to the irony of South African gay rights activists having obtained sexual-
orientation equality yet dying in numbers from AIDS, which was by then treatable with
combination antiretrovirals (ARVs). This reality was tragically illustrated by the
November 1998 AIDS-related death of Nkoli, in whose memory the Treatment Action
Campaign (TAC) was founded that same month. Under Achmat’s leadership, the TAC
waged its struggle for universal access to HIV treatment on two fronts. Firstly, it was
opposed to then-president Thabo Mbeki’s AIDS denialism. Secondly, it campaigned
against global health injustice as expressed in international free-trade agreements and
a lack of donor funding for developing countries to provide effective HIV treatment.
In a series of public pronouncements from 1999 to 2008, Mbeki cast doubt on HIV as the cause of AIDS, HIV testing as a means to diagnose the disease, and the efficacy of ARV treatment. In response to this, the TAC designed treatment literacy programs and engaged in groundbreaking constitutional litigation. The treatment literacy programs were aimed at clarifying the science around AIDS by using locally appropriate metaphors and terms designed to address popular audiences (Hodes 2014; Robins 2008; Mbali 2013; MacGregor 2009). On the domestic front, the TAC won constitutional litigation forcing the South African government to roll out ARVs for prevention of mother-to-child-transmission. The movement, led by Achmat, then forced the government to develop an ARV program preventing millions of infants from dying from AIDS-related illnesses.

Another issue the TAC addressed was the unaffordability of ARVs due to intellectual property law and global free-trade agreements. In the early postapartheid era, forty multinational pharmaceutical companies litigated against the government of South Africa to block the passage of the Medicines and Related Substances Amendment Act, which aimed to facilitate access to generic and branded medicines imported at cheaper prices from other countries. Achmat famously smuggled generic AIDS drugs from Thailand into South Africa to highlight the dramatically inflated cost of the branded version in his country. He then became the widely celebrated international leader and spokesperson for a transnational coalition to defeat the litigation that successfully pressured the companies to drop their case. In 2003 the TAC was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, which demonstrated the South African movement’s global moral stature.

The TAC then stepped up its advocacy for the South African government to provide universal access to ARVs for the chronic treatment of HIV. Achmat, himself HIV positive, refused to take ARVs until the South African government made them available to all who needed them in the country, although it almost cost him his life (Tilley 2001). His drug fast inspired TAC to embark on a peaceful and successful civil disobedience campaign. On 8 August 2003 the South African cabinet ordered the Mbeki administration to begin a rollout of ARVs. The TAC’s advocacy had placed the government on an irrevocable path toward universal provision of ARVs, leading to a significant reduction in new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths.

In 2008 Achmat passed the leadership of the TAC to a new generation of leaders, such as Nonkosi Khumalo and Vuyiseka Dubula. Subsequently, Achmat cofounded such movements as the Social Justice Coalition (for access to sanitation in informal settlements), Equal Education (for universal access to quality education and adequate school infrastructure), and Reclaim the City (for wider access to urban land). He has
also been an active participant in the Palestine solidarity movement calling for South Africans to boycott and divest from Israel.

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**LGBTI Visibility in the Postapartheid Era** Despite South Africa’s progressive constitution, in the early postapartheid era LGBTI people still faced stigma, discrimination, and the denial of the existence of same-sex sexuality. Compounding this was the lack of large-scale epidemiological research showing the scale of HIV incidence and prevalence among LGBTI people. As the preceding makes clear, public health research is vital to ensuring adequate access to HIV-related health services and social services in general. This was also the case in South Africa, where the lack of crucial public health data on MSM was linked to HIV/AIDS policies that were unresponsive to the needs of MSM (*Rispel and Metcalf 2009*).

In the first years of the twenty-first century, such NGOs as OUT (in Pretoria) and the Triangle Project (in Cape Town) persistently critiqued the government’s failure to produce a national sero-prevalence survey to test the extent of HIV infection among South African
MSM. It was only as a result of persistent and focused scholarship and advocacy that further studies were produced. A signal moment in the LGBTI-led research and advocacy was a 2007 Pretoria conference on the theme of same-sex sexuality and gender that was organized by Vasu Reddy, Theo G. M. Sandfort, and Laetitia C. Rispel. This conference gave rise to an influential edited collection of essays titled *From Social Silence to Social Science: Same-Sex Sexuality, HIV and AIDS, and Gender in South Africa* (2009). Since then, the needs and experiences of LGBT youth in South African schools has been an important and emerging area of HIV-relevant research. As the map dealing with HIV prevalence among MSM indicates, studies have shown that young same-sex-practicing men are at a substantially higher risk of infection in comparison with the overall male population.

It has been shown that LGBT issues are not explicitly included in the life orientation curriculum (a compulsory high-school guidance subject) and that teachers most often either remain silent on such issues or convey homophobic and biphobic ideas in lessons (Francis 2017a, 2017b). LGBT- and HIV-relevant topics that should be covered in lessons include puberty, sexual activities and health, contraception, and relationships. An outstanding issue is that LGBT-appropriate sexual- and reproductive-health services are not available in schools. Here it must also be noted that in postapartheid South Africa, provision of condoms has, in general, proven to be a lightning rod for concerns about youth sexuality (Jewkes, Morrell, and Christofides 2009). This relates to the fallacious idea that all youths’ sexuality is “out of control” and that condom provision encourages young people to engage in sex (MacPhail and Campbell 2001).

Institutionalized homophobia in schools, in turn, renders such young people vulnerable to ill health caused by HIV and STI infection, drug and alcohol abuse, eating disorders, depression, and anxiety (Meyer 2003; Richardson 2009). It is, however, important not to overlook the agency and resilience of LGBT young people in school settings: this could be capitalized on to develop empowering curricula and school environments to entrench and promote their human rights both within schools and more generally in the wider society (Francis 2017a, 2017b).

In June 2017 Steve Letsike, the chairperson of the South African National AIDS Council, announced that it had launched its first LGBTI HIV plan in Durban. In 2006 it was revealed that there was no LGBTI sector representation in the body, and the 2017 development needs to be seen as an outcome of focused advocacy by civil society organizations and activists. The program is part of the country’s 2017 National Strategic Plan on HIV, tuberculosis, and STIs, and includes bold targets around health, empowerment, psychosocial support, human rights, and evaluation.
The eleven-year time lag between the identification of the need for LGBTI sector representation on the South African National AIDS Council and the inclusion of a program in the national strategic plan addressing their needs in relation to HIV is noteworthy. It points to the wider social reality that, even following the country’s outlawing of sexual orientation and gender discrimination in its postapartheid constitution of 1996, LGBTI activists have still had to engage in policy advocacy to see its implementation by the state. This has even been the case in relation to HIV—a severe national health crisis—which has disproportionally affected LGBTI people.

This policy has, however, been criticized as inadequate in addressing the needs of trans men. In 2017 the Center of Excellence for Transgender Health (at the University of California, San Francisco) demonstrated that testosterone hormone therapy causes the thinning of the vaginal wall and vaginal dryness and inflammation in trans men who have not undergone surgery. In turn, these clinical outcomes heighten their risk of contracting HIV. Again, the limited data on HIV incidence in this group has hampered the development of appropriate HIV prevention policies and programs addressing their needs.

In the postapartheid era as a whole, stigma and discrimination have, however, remained significant barriers to LGBTI people’s access to services, especially if they are black and live in townships. Many LGBTQ people have hidden their gender and sexual-orientation identities, same-sex exchanges, and relationships so as to prevent becoming vulnerable to public exposure and ostracism. These social realities have affected their ability to adopt HIV prevention measures and to access HIV treatment.

Lesbians' and Women's AIDS Activism As discussed above, LGBT AIDS-related issues need to be viewed through an intersectional lens. This certainly applies to analyzing the experiences of lesbian and bisexual women and WSW. An overarching theme in relation to same-sex–practicing women is their struggle for recognition of the factors that enhance their risk of contracting HIV. They have, therefore, undertaken research and pressed for the development of government policies and programs to address their needs.

In the 1980s AIDS was identified by public health specialists and physicians as primarily affecting gay men. Here it is important to also mention that the gaps and silences in relation to HIV in same-sex–practicing women must be linked to generalized patriarchy in medicine. This lack of research has, in turn, shaped, and been shaped by, the dangerous sexist and homophobic myth that lesbians are at no risk of HIV infection. Lesbian AIDS activists and scholars have instead argued for women who have had sex with women to gain and spread in-depth understandings of the relevant HIV risk factors involved in each sexual practice in which they have engaged, many of which are of limited risk, but some of which do significantly render them vulnerable to infection.

In addition to severely hampering lesbian women's adoption of HIV prevention techniques,
this myth also drove sexist and homophobic health-worker discrimination in access to—and in some instances denial of—HIV-related health services. LGBT organizations have been at the forefront of developing community-based surveys of HIV prevalence, and this has also informed advocacy for LGBT-focused and LGBT-led policies and programs to address the disease. Importantly, in terms of addressing the “lesbians no-risk” myth, this research-driven activism has also focused on the interests and needs of lesbian and bisexual women and WSW.

Such activists as Vicci Tallis, Nonhlanhla Mkhize, and Zanele Muholi have been at the forefront of the development of HIV campaigns, the dissemination of information in various media, and participation in community-based research around these issues. A 2012 epidemiological study showed that the only independent predictor of lesbian women being HIV positive was their having been subjected to nonconsensual sex perpetrated by either men or women, or both men and women (Sandfort et al. 2012). It must also be noted that the same study found that HIV-positive lesbians, WSW, and bisexual women were more likely to have engaged in transactional sex with men and women (Sandfort et al. 2012). Furthermore, it needs be acknowledged that homophobic hate crimes, especially “corrective rape” against black lesbians, have rendered them at risk of HIV infection. Corrective rape refers to males sexually assaulting lesbians under the homophobic assumption that it will render them heterosexual (Mkhize et al. 2010). The same study found that lesbian women were less likely to go for an HIV test. Similarly, research conducted by Ruth Morgan and Saskia E. Wieringa found that, despite widespread awareness of HIV and AIDS, few were practicing safe sex, apart from those living with HIV (2006). They found that lesbian women’s frequent denial of HIV risk was often rooted in their belief in the faithfulness of their partners, even when they knew that their partners had had sex with men.
As Tallis has argued, since the 1980s, lesbian AIDS activists have promoted the idea that “low risk is not no risk” (2009, 222). She has also pointed to the limited availability of devices to promote both penetrative and nonpenetrative safer sex, such as dental dams, finger cots, and female condoms. Lesbian AIDS activists have called for the diverse, lived realities of lesbians—the rich array of their identities, relationships, and experiences—to be used to develop HIV programs addressing their needs and interests.

**South African HIV Treatment and Global Health Activism** Gay and LGBTQ activists such as Achmat were absolutely critical in showing leadership in the postapartheid-era development of the TAC, an innovative and influential social movement that argued for universal access to HIV treatment in South Africa. The TAC’s development must be understood as having been facilitated by the success of legal activism in the area of sexual orientation equality (Mbali 2013). The TAC’s activism used antiapartheid rhetoric, treatment literacy, and the socioeconomic right to health care to argue for universal access to ARVs for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission and the chronic treatment of
HIV. This intersecting of gay rights and AIDS activism shows that LGBTI advocacy in postapartheid South Africa has not been merely confined to “identity politics,” or merely to addressing the concerns of privileged, white, cisgendered (referring to those whose gender identity matches their assigned gender at birth) males, but that it has also directly tackled the HIV-related social injustices experienced by all poor and marginalized people affected by the disease. Furthermore, such HIV treatment activism has affected the politics of global health in relation to the disease at an international level.

Under Achmat’s leadership, the TAC successfully campaigned for universal access to ARVs based on three sets of demands: an end to the pseudoscientific policies guided by the South African president Mbeki’s AIDS obfuscation; reduced medicine prices via increased access to generics and the alteration of international free-trade agreements to facilitate this; and the provision of adequate foreign aid from donor countries to roll out ARVs (Mbali 2013). In terms of Mbeki’s AIDS denialism, from 1999 to 2003 he made bizarre statements in support of AIDS dissidence in relation to the diagnostic reliability of HIV tests, HIV as the viral cause of AIDS, and the safety and efficacy of ARVs used for the prevention and treatment of the virus. Even after he had largely stopped his strange pronouncements on the disease and epidemic, AIDS denialism continued to inform health policy on the issue, especially under the aegis of Manto Tshabalala-Msimang, his minister of health (Geffen 2010). In 2006 she infamously recommended HIV treatment consisting of a diet of lemons, beets, garlic, and African potatoes instead of combination ARV. The South African government was subjected to international ridicule when these vegetables were placed on display as HIV treatments at the International AIDS Conference held that year in Toronto. The TAC combated this through carefully designed HIV treatment literacy programs where the science of HIV and ARVs were explained to its membership, members of the public, and journalists.

At the international level, the TAC and its allies in the Health Global Access Project, the Consumer Project on Technology, and Médecins Sans Frontières (also known as Doctors without Borders) successfully pressured over forty multinational corporations to drop a court case trying to block the administration of South African president Nelson Mandela from passing a law enabling wider access to affordable and generic medicines. Finally, their advocacy also played a role in catalyzing substantial increases in foreign aid to provide wider access to ARVs, as evidenced in the creation of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria and the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, a US governmental initiative.

Emerging HIV-Related Trans and Intersex Issues In this section, it is necessary to first note that individuals who are trans, gender nonbinary, or intersex have different sexual orientations, so it is only in some instances that their identities, interests, and needs will overlap with those of same-sex–practicing people. With this reality in mind, it can be noted that, as of 2017, research and advocacy with regard to gender identity equality in relation
to HIV in South Africa remained relatively new and dynamic. This is reflected in the fact that governmental efforts to develop policies and programs to address the HIV-related needs of trans people are still extremely new. This can be attributed to two sets of issues.

First, it can be argued that organizationally based, policy-oriented civil society trans activism emerged only in the first years of the twenty-first century. In terms of legal activism, trans and intersex activists, such as Simone Heradien and Estian Smit (Morgan, Marais, and Wellbeloved 2009) of the transgender support group of the Triangle Project (which later became the independent Cape Town Transsexual/Transgender Support Group), are worthy of special mention. Their law reform advocacy was particularly effective in pushing for the passage of the Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act of 2003.

Second, in terms of research and policy making, HIV policies to address the needs of trans and intersex persons were only just formulated as of 2017. A vital issue here is a denial of the interests, visibility, agency, and voice of trans people in HIV-related health services, academia, policy making, and activism. A key example of this is an HIV-positive trans woman who was denied access to sexual realignment surgery at a public-sector health facility on account of her living with the disease. AIDS-related civil society activists have, on occasion, provided vital social support to trans individuals. An instance of this is Charlie, who reported that a social worker from the TAC assisted her in explaining her sexual orientation to her mother (Morgan, Marais, and Wellbeloved 2009).

Malawi

This small Southern and Central African country is also heavily affected by HIV/AIDS, with a significant proportion of the people living with HIV being MSM. In contrast to South Africa, MSM in Malawi face legalized and institutionalized homophobia that severely hampers the country’s response to HIV/AIDS. The extent of the problem is indicated by a study showing that 21.6 percent of MSM in Blantyre and Lilongwe are living with HIV (Baral et al. 2009); by comparison, 9.6 percent of all males over the age of fifteen are living with HIV (UNAIDS 2017).

History of “Homosexual” AIDS in Malawi Malawi is a low-income, developing country with both a significant generalized HIV epidemic and an MSM population that has a higher rate of HIV prevalence than that of the overall population. The criminalization of same-sex sexual activity, stigma, and the existence of only limited MSM-focused community-based HIV prevention interventions all serve to hinder the reduction of new HIV infections and AIDS-related deaths among this population.

In terms of the epidemic's history in Malawi, the country's miners were identified as among the early cases of AIDS in mid-1980s South Africa. Like many other Southern African
countries, Malawi was a major source of male migrant labor for South Africa's mines. At the time, epidemiologists and physicians typically presented AIDS in African males as "heterosexual" in character. This typology rested on gaps and silences about Africans' same-sex sexuality in South Africa at the time.

It is extremely important to situate homophobic AIDS-related stigma and discrimination in Malawi in the context of the history of same-sex male sexuality and homophobia in the country in general. It has been well documented by historians that men living together in single-sex hostels near the South African mines from the late nineteenth century onward often engaged in sex with other men (van Onselen 1982; Harries 1994; Epprecht 2014). Historians have also documented that "mine marriages" (inkotshane), while situationally shaped, were also often mutually erotic in that they involved desire on the part of each member of the couple. Contrary to common contemporary claims that homosexuality is "un-Malawian," the criminalization of male same-sex sexuality (especially sodomy) occurred with the British imposition of their criminal law to Nyasaland (present-day Malawi) during the colonial period.

When AIDS emerged in Malawi in 1985, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, the country's president at the time, did not want to draw public attention to the epidemic owing to his reticence to spark an uptick in public discussions of sexuality. Despite growing governmental efforts to engage in public AIDS awareness campaigns in the first decade of the twenty-first century, more rigorous AIDS interventions were introduced only with the influx of foreign aid to widen access to antiretroviral drugs. In the context of the ongoing criminalization of homosexuality, these growing policy interventions have continued to fail to adequately, explicitly, and appropriately address the HIV-related needs of LGBTQ Malawians (Mwakasungula 2013).
Tiwonge Chimbalanga (at Back) with a Gender Dynamix Outreach Officer in Cape Town, South Africa, 2012. Chimbalanga, a trans woman from Malawi, was convicted of sodomy and indecency in her native Malawi after authorities learned of her engagement ceremony to another man. Under international pressure, she received a presidential pardon, after which she moved to the relatively more tolerant environment of South Africa. Her case is just one example of the social stigma and legal persecution endured by Malawi’s LGBTQ population, which results in fewer members of that population seeking HIV prevention or treatment options.

The Impact of the Criminalization of Same-Sex Activities Sections 153 and 156 of the Malawian penal code criminalize same-sex practices. More precisely, Section 153 makes it illegal for any person to have “carnal knowledge of any other person against the order of nature,” including sodomy, and Section 156 deals with “public decency” and enables the punishment of “homosexual acts” with imprisonment and corporal punishment (Price 2010). Civil society campaigns against these unjust laws have been led by such figures as the human rights activist Daveson Nyadani of the Centre for the Development of People, a community-based NGO that addresses minority groups’ needs in the context of health and development. Nyadani (2009) has argued that Malawi’s penal code mirrors sociocultural stigmas around same-sex intimacy. Furthermore, he has pointed to the possibility of interpreting the Malawian constitution’s chapter on human rights in a way that could include the outlawing of sexual orientation discrimination. The constitution prohibits discrimination on the “grounds of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, disability, property, birth, or other status”; using this section, Nyadani (2009) has argued that sexual orientation could be deemed to fall under the umbrella of “other status.” In terms of repealing this piece of legislation, legal
scholars have, moreover, pointed to the relevance of other sections of the constitution dealing with equality, dignity, and informed consent for participation in medical and scientific experimentation and personal privacy (Price 2010). Furthermore, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights has been interpreted by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights as ensuring equal treatment “irrespective” of sexual orientation (Price 2010).

However, such human rights defenders’ demands for reform of the country’s penal code have yet to be met, with parliament having failed to adopt proposals to amend the code on several occasions. Donor governments, in their provision of foreign aid to address AIDS, have largely provided almost no direct input on law reform. An example of this is the 2012 declaration by Malawian president Joyce Banda that there would be a moratorium on arrests of people for violating the country’s antigay laws pending debate on their legislative repeal (Mapondera and Smith 2012). As of mid-2018, there had been no further progress in actually repealing the laws themselves.

**MSM Debates** In Malawi, the category of MSM has provided both public health researchers and human rights activists with a vehicle for researching, documenting, and advocating for recognition of the extent of HIV infection among same-sex–practicing men. Yet, this still relatively marginal increase in recognition of the scope of HIV infection among MSM has generally not resulted in adequate government provision of appropriate and empowering health and social services for such individuals.

Queer studies by such academics as Marc Epprecht (2013) have argued that African LGBTQ and human rights advocates have strategically used discourses of MSM and AIDS to promote broader rights for sexual minorities. It is, however, important not to overstate the impact of this approach in challenging homophobia in government or society more broadly. For instance, in 2009 Mary Shawa, then serving as the Malawian secretary for nutrition, HIV, and AIDS, argued that MSM who had not “come out” threatened the country’s population. Similarly, despite the mention of MSM in the country’s national AIDS strategic plan since 2003, NGOs promoting their rights and interests in relation to the epidemic had, as late as 2011, still not been allocated funds by the National AIDS Commission.

It is impossible to understand the disproportionate effect of HIV/AIDS epidemics on MSM without examining the broader societal and governmental homophobia in the country. A key idea behind this stigma and discrimination is that to be gay, bisexual, transgender, or MSM, or to engage in same-sex sexual practices, is outside, or “alien to,” a timeless, unchanging “Malawian culture.” A particularly high-profile 2010 case involved the arrest and prosecution of an anatomically male couple (Steven Monjeza and Tiwonge Chimbalanga), one of whom self-identified as a woman, for arranging and participating in a traditional engagement ceremony. The couple was convicted of sodomy and indecency and sentenced to fourteen years’ hard labor. Although Bingu wa Mutharika, the Malawian
president at the time, pardoned them shortly thereafter, following intense international diplomatic pressure, the case has remained important in animating debates in Malawi about the promotion of sexual orientation equality in foreign aid and in society more generally. The extent to which homophobic discrimination can influence MSM's ability to self-identify as such is indicated by the fact that Monjeza later left Chimbalanga, denied he was gay, and married a woman (Face of Malawi 2012). His relationship with his wife was short-lived; he turned to a life of theft, was imprisoned, and later died of unknown causes.

Public health research has shown that, in contexts where MSM are regularly physically abused, sexually assaulted, and blackmailed, they experience challenges in discussing their gender identity, sexuality, and sexual history with health professionals, even on a "confidential" basis. This prevents them from accessing appropriate male condoms and lubrication, HIV testing, and access to PrEP (although the latter is seldom available because of wider LGBTQ, AIDS, and global health injustices). Furthermore, when pointing out the scope of the issue and appropriate policy and programmatic responses, human rights and LGBTQ activists also face charges that there are "no gays" in Malawi. Policy makers, health professionals, and civil society have frequently been silent on and resistant to addressing issues of homophobic and transphobic HIV-related stigma and discrimination, as well as on pointing out or the need for further research and interventions in relation to these phenomena.

It is in this context that community-based services have been provided by NGOs in Lilongwe and Blantyre focusing on the provision of condoms, lubrication, and risk-reduction counseling (Beyrer et al. 2011). Owing to LGBTQ individuals' disproportionate vulnerability to HIV infection, there have been pilot intervention projects collaboratively run by researchers and LGBTQ and human rights activists. In particular, researchers based at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Public Health and Human Rights collaborated with the Centre for the Development of People to promote the adoption of appropriate prevention methods (Wirtz et al. 2013). However, such projects have shed further light on the need for decriminalization of same-sex sexuality to be viewed as an urgent public health priority in order to maximize Malawian MSM's access to HIV prevention services (Wirtz et al. 2013).

**Uganda**

AIDS became recognized as a crisis in Uganda in the 1980s, when the country was ruled by President Yoweri Museveni, a military leader who had emerged victorious from a civil war in that country. It is widely recognized that the social mobilization catalyzed by both his administration and civil society organizations such as the AIDS Support Organisation did lead to a reduction in HIV infections in the country in the 1980s and 1990s. The approaches of “Abstain,” “Be faithful,” and “use Condoms” (ABC) in relationships were heavily promoted. Moreover, the metaphor of “zero grazing” was successfully deployed by
Museveni and his administration in order to encourage a reduction in the number of partners in ways that disrupted the sexual networks driving HIV incidence in Uganda (*Thornton 2008*).

However, the Ugandan government’s track record in addressing the HIV-related needs of MSM has been severely marred by state-entrenched legal, social, and political discrimination. This has had severe health implications for MSM in Uganda. A study conducted in Kampala found that 13.7 percent of MSM overall were living with HIV, with MSM over age twenty-five having a higher infection rate of 22.4 percent (*Hladik et al. 2012*). A particularly significant finding was that men over age twenty-five and those who reported homophobic abuse were significantly more likely to be living with HIV.

In common with such other East African nations as Tanzania, Kenya, Malawi, and Zambia, in Uganda it is illegal to have “carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature.” Moreover, it is not allowed for any person to permit another male person to have such “carnal knowledge” of another male, making even those who are simply aware of others’ same-sex sexual activity subject to prosecution. In addition to causing stigma and discrimination that prevents same-sex–practicing people from accessing services, this law has blocked research on HIV in this population. For example, a police raid of a US-funded Walter Reed HIV research and treatment center at Makerere University was based on fallacious claims that it was causing people to become homosexual (*Hagopian et al. 2017*).

**The Impact of the Criminalization of Same-Sex Activities** As noted above, the criminalization of same-sex sexuality increases HIV incidence and deaths. The introduction of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill in the Ugandan parliament in 2009 represented an important moment in the history of the criminalization of same-sex sexuality in Uganda: this bill allowed for life imprisonment as punishment for gay sex. It also included the offenses of “aggravated” cases, among which were cases in which a person living with HIV had engaged in gay sex. In addition to the imposition of life imprisonment as punishment for “offenders,” the bill mandated that those in all categories be forced to undergo HIV tests.

Alongside fifteen other low-income countries, Uganda received funding from the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief legislation promulgated by the administration of US president George W. Bush in 2003. Uganda’s ABC model was noted in the legislation as having successfully prevented HIV infections in the country; however, both this and later models under the administration of US president Barack Obama have been critiqued as not having effectively addressed the issue of criminalization of homosexual activity (*Hagopian et al. 2017*). It must be noted, however, that, Museveni’s signing of this bill into law in 2014 occasioned a US government spokesperson to announce a decision to suspend aid to the country; yet, this decision was not announced on US government websites, indicating a lack of policy commitment on the part of this donor nation to implement such a decision.
As in other African countries, the criminalization of same-sex sexuality has been promoted and heavily funded by the US Christian right. The US Christian right has been influential in Museveni’s Uganda since 1986; however, Museveni began to vocally criticize same-sex sexuality only in the late 1990s. In this context of religiously inspired, state-promoted homophobia, the 2011 murder of the gay rights activist David Kato marked an especially low ebb in terms of the promotion and protection of human rights in the country. Kato, a co-founder of Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG), was murdered after the Ugandan newspaper *Rolling Stone* published an article purporting to reveal “homosexuals” and calling for them to be hanged (Gettleman 2011). Kato’s admitted killer claimed that he had committed the crime in response to sexual advances from Kato (BBC 2011).

The history of activism for sexual orientation and gender identity equality in Africa is not, however, purely one of enforced passivity, silence, and defeat on the part of LGBTQ people. It is important to recognize that organizations such as SMUG and the Uganda Health and Science Press Association (UHSPA) adopted consistent and internationally effective opposition to the Anti-Homosexuality Bill and other forms of legislative and social discrimination. Although Museveni signed the Anti-Homosexuality Bill into law in February 2014 following its earlier passage by the Ugandan parliament, activists, journalists, and academics launched a successful bid against the act in the nation’s constitutional court. In particular, in August 2014, the court struck down the law on the grounds that it had been passed without the constitutionally mandated quorum in parliament. Subsequently, the attorney general announced that he had no plans to appeal the ruling, possibly owing to pressure from Museveni, who wished to avoid further ruining international relations with donor countries.

**MSM Debates** As has been shown above, LGBTQ and human rights advocates in Southern and East Africa have been strategic in their deployment of the concept of MSM in relation to AIDS to push for sexual orientation equality in general. For instance, the UHSPA, a self-identified LGBTI organization created in 2006, offered a public health and human rights critique of the government’s proposal to render HIV transmission a form of “aggravated homosexuality.” In particular, the UHSPA argued that it would also lead to MSM avoiding HIV testing and disclosure on account of fear of prosecution (UHSPA 2010).

HIV/AIDS remains one of Africa’s most pressing public health problems today, with the largest number of cases having been concentrated in Southern and East Africa. This entry has, therefore, focused on three country case studies in these regions—namely, South Africa, Malawi, and Uganda. These examples can be used to magnify sociohistorical aspects of the ways in which HIV/AIDS has both shaped the lifeworlds of LGBTI people and been a site of activist demands for recognition of the voice and visibility of advocates for sexual orientation and gender equality.

LGBTQ people are a key population in the HIV epidemic whose rights and needs must be
addressed in order for the epidemic to be brought under control and, ultimately, ended. In particular, MSM, young women (including those who are LBTQ), and gender-nonconforming and transgender individuals experience transphobic, homophobic, and sexist stigma and discrimination that must be comprehensively eliminated in order to effectively tackle HIV on the continent.

LGBTQ activists have challenged their invisibility and stereotyping in relation to HIV-related research, policy, and practice. As opposed to being helpless victims of such invidious social attitudes and discrimination, members of these groups in Africa have been active in advocacy for and codesign of effective, equitable, accessible, and human rights–based HIV prevention and treatment services and policies. In concert with public health researchers, journalists, and other human rights NGOs, they have demanded and continue to demand the decriminalization of LGBTQ identities, NGOs, and practices, as well as the criminalization of trans- and homophobic hate crimes in the context of the continent’s pandemic. They also continue to highlight important remaining gaps in relation to future research on prevention and treatment in LGBTQ people in Africa, especially that dealing with transgender people, LGBTQ people in North Africa, and WSW. In addition, their ongoing role in challenging national and global health injustices in relation to access to ARVs for PrEP and the chronic treatment of HIV has been pivotal in expanding access to medical innovations for the world’s poor as a whole. Most importantly, their activist responses to HIV-related stigma, discrimination, and social injustices are important examples of the influence LGBTQ advocates have had and can have in advancing human rights and development for all.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; HIV/AIDS; HIV/AIDS in Egyptian Cinema; HIV/AIDS in Europe; HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean; HIV/AIDS in South and Southeast Asia; HIV/AIDS in the United States; Language in Africa; Rape, Corrective, in Africa; South Africa; Trans Issues in Africa; Uganda

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**FILMOGRAPHY**

HIV/AIDS in Egyptian Cinema

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The various ways in which Egyptian film has dealt with the topic of HIV/AIDS and how these reflect Middle Eastern cultural views of the disease.

According to a report issued by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) in 2017, an estimated 11,000 Egyptians over fifteen years of age had HIV in 2016, yet only 6,500 people (approximately 59%) knew their HIV status. The report also estimates that approximately 230,000 people (with a possible range of 160,000 to 380,000) are living with HIV in the Middle East and North Africa.

At the outset of the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s, homosexuality was perhaps the strongest of the many associations attached to HIV/AIDS, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom (Watney 1996; Treichler 1999; Crimp 2002). In the United States, AIDS was incorrectly and publicly attacked as a gay disease, and it was initially dubbed gay-related immunodeficiency (Treichler 1999). Many scholars have written at length about the implications of HIV/AIDS and homophobia, and how they affected the lives of thousands of gay men—in addition to other marginalized groups whose exposure to HIV meant that they were suddenly subject to homophobia as well. It is perhaps the Western influence on the Middle East that has solidified the idea of HIV/AIDS as a homosexual illness. Citing the Palestinian American scholar Edward W. Said (1935–2003), Paula A. Treichler explains how the “Third World” media—and consequently the media in the Arab world—often perpetuates information (whether misleading or not) from “First World” sources and becomes, symbiotically, a source of information for First World countries about the Third World, and for Third World countries about themselves:

As Edward Said argues, modern representation in the decolonized world depends increasingly on a concentration of media power in metropolitan centers; this contributes to the monolithic nature of Third World representations, which are in turn a major source of information about Third World populations not only for the “outside world” but also for those populations themselves.

(1999, 109)
As reductive as Treichler’s argument may sound, it can be useful when considering prevalent attitudes toward HIV/AIDS in the Arab world. The social imaginary of the state(s) can be summed up as follows: HIV/AIDS is a disease resulting from homosexuality and drug use, both of which are forbidden by Islam. Thus, HIV/AIDS is perceived as a moral problem—specifically, an invasion of Western (i.e., non-Islamic) immorality into the Islamic moral sphere—rather than a health issue.

The discrimination faced by people living with HIV/AIDS in the Arab world is often life threatening, which helps explain why the official numbers of HIV infection issued by Egypt and other Arab states are incredibly—unbelievably—low. In some cases, such as that of Egypt, the statistics that UNAIDS provides are remarkably different from the official numbers provided by the Egyptian government (Khamis 2015). The appalling lack of present treatment options in the Arab world is reminiscent of what queer, black, and Latino communities in the United States and the United Kingdom faced during the outbreak of AIDS in the 1980s and early 1990s. Although testing for the HIV antibody was never mandatory in those countries, the mainstream press and certain public figures repeatedly called for the publication of test results, as well as quarantine and isolation for those carrying the virus. People were reluctant to get tested for HIV out of fear of job discrimination, the loss of access to health care, and so on. This only exacerbated the risk of becoming unknowingly infected because people shied away from learning their serostatus. A similar situation can be found in the Arab world today, where people are reluctant to get tested because of the lack of anonymity and the probable loss of employment.

Despite the social taboos associated with HIV/AIDS, there have been many filmic, television, and web productions that address the pandemic in the Arab world. Particularly significant is Amr Salama’s highly acclaimed film Asmaa (2011). Asmaa is unique as it is the only feature-length film from the Arab world that focuses on HIV/AIDS as a central theme in a way that is not disparaging or didactic. In earlier films—also from Egypt—HIV/AIDS was a metaphor for perversity, excess, deviant behavior, and Western foreignness, propagated through the shock factor and the allure of the abject, horrifying, or diseased subject. A contextual analysis of these films further illustrates how Asmaa adopts new ways of looking at HIV/AIDS, serving to redeem Egyptian cinema from the horrifying perspective it adopted in the 1980s and 1990s.

Ightisab (1989)

The earliest of the films addressing the pandemic in the Arab world, Ightisab (Rape), was directed by Ali Abdel-Khalek and produced in 1989, shortly after the first case of HIV was reported in Egypt. The plot, as ominous as the title, follows three men in their attempt to
rape a nurse. She momentarily escapes them and finds shelter in an army barrack, but when the three men spread the rumor that she has AIDS, the soldiers kick her out, afraid to even touch her. After watching *Ightisab*, an otherwise-uninformed audience would certainly believe that HIV/AIDS is a life-threatening and highly contagious disease that should be avoided at all costs.

**Al-Hub fi Taba (1992)**

In 1992 two films were made in Egypt about AIDS: Ahmed Fouad's *Al-hub fi Taba* (Love in Taba) and Karim Diaeddin's *Al-hub wa al-ruʿb* (Love and terror). In *Al-hub fi Taba*, three friends vacation in Sharm al-Shaykh, a popular tourism spot in Egypt. There they meet three European women, who convince them to go on a joint road trip to Taba, a small resort town on the Sinai Peninsula in northeastern Egypt, along the Gulf of Aqaba. During their time in Taba, all three men engage in sexual activity with the women. When the women leave, they leave individual letters to the men in which they disclose to each of the men that they have AIDS. Upon their return to Cairo, the men get tested and learn that they are all HIV positive. Sheer terror grips them, and they all see their lives fall apart before their eyes. The audience is led to believe that engaging in sexual activity (especially with a foreign woman) guarantees life-threatening repercussions, almost immediately. The film reinforces many of the misconceptions about the ways that HIV can be transmitted: one of the men not only refuses to sleep with his wife, he will not even touch her and eventually divorces her. Another man commits suicide because of his inability to cope with depression and isolation. The third breaks down in a restaurant and tells people around him not to drink or eat on the table where he sat, and he refuses to touch anything belonging to another person. In another scene, a doctor tells one of the characters that isolation is the best option for him because, even though HIV is transmitted only by blood (a bit of misinformation that omits other modes of HIV transmission), he might get injuries or cuts that could cause him to bleed and “spread [HIV] to the country, including his wife and son.”

*Al-hub fi Taba* communicates two central messages to its audience: First, the protagonists' responses to learning that they are HIV positive—suicide and self-isolation—imply that HIV/AIDS should be feared, avoided, and by no means tolerated. Second, foreign women—symbols of the abject and dangerous—should also be feared and avoided. The film uses the clichéd imagery of the woman as viral carrier. Both the foreignness of the women and their HIV status can also be seen as metaphors for the external threat posed by Israel, which directly borders Taba to the east. Indeed, Taba was the last portion of the Sinai Peninsula to be demilitarized and returned to Egypt following the 1979 Egypt-Israel Peace Treaty. Egyptian media has often depicted the peninsula as a wild and dangerous frontier that is susceptible to Israeli corruption (*Swedenburg 2000*).

**Al-Hub wa al-Ruʿb (1992)**
Al-hub wa al-ru‘b is a similar film, albeit with a blunter title. The plot revolves around a beautiful single mother named Hind, who contracted HIV from her now-dead husband. After a night of heavy drinking at bars, Hind is raped. Unable to go back to her parents’ house, she seeks refuge at the apartment of a former lover, Ahmad. Although she is visibly very intoxicated, Ahmad has sex with her. The next morning, she tells him that she has AIDS, and he immediately gets tested. The doctor informs him that he is HIV positive and, moreover, obligated to “turn in” Hind, for a woman like her is a menace to society. The state police track her down, and she is quarantined for some time. The narrative takes an even darker turn when the head of a drug cartel hears about “the woman with AIDS.” He finds out that she is quarantined at a hospital and makes contact with a nurse who works there, who explains how HIV can be transmitted: through sexual activity, blood transfusions, or sharing needles. The cartel then kidnaps Hind and forces her to “infect” their rival, who is secretly sleeping with the wife of the cartel’s head. The rival gets infected, he infects the wife, and then she infects her husband. Hind eventually turns herself, as well as the drug cartel, in to the police.
Another problematic depiction of HIV/AIDS can be found in Inas El-Degheidy’s *Disco Disco* (1993). Featuring two major figures in Arab pop culture, Naglaa Fathy and Mahmoud Hemida, the film briefly mentions HIV/AIDS. When the main character tries to donate blood to help his father, he discovers that he has contracted HIV, presumably from a younger man with whom he had been in a sexual relationship. The only message about HIV/AIDS that this film provides for the audience is that it results from homosexuality.

*Disco Disco* and the other films discussed above did not fare well in theaters. According to one article, audiences found these films morose, depressing, and depraved. At several screenings, audiences simply walked out of the theater (al-Mahdi 2014). At the time that these films were released, fear and paranoia gripped the media and, in turn, the public. Cinematic presentations of HIV/AIDS only solidified this fear and perpetuated misinformed ideas as common knowledge, thereby creating deeply entrenched stigmas against people living with HIV/AIDS, pitting “innocent victims” against “guilty victims,” and inciting widespread fear of contagion in public spaces.

**Asmaa (2011)**

In 2011 Amr Salama released *Asmaa*, a film that signified a major break with earlier depictions of people living with HIV/AIDS. Inspired by true events, *Asmaa* explores the traumatic ordeals that Asmaa, a woman living with HIV, has to contend with in contemporary Egypt. When she develops an acute gallbladder infection, she finds that no doctor is willing to operate on her because of misinformed fears of contamination and cultural contempt. Over the course of the film, Asmaa is forced to confront the stigma of having HIV in Muslim/Arab society, as well as her own fears of familial rejection. Played by the prominent Tunisian actress Hend Sabry, Asmaa hides her HIVpositive status from nearly everyone, including her daughter and employers, with the sole exception being her father. Unable to live normally, in constant fear of being exposed, Asmaa lives in self-imposed isolation, cut off from any friends or family. When a friend from her past approaches her on an extremely crowded street, Asmaa pretends she cannot hear her.

The only social activity Asmaa engages in is a regular meeting group hosted by the Friends of Life Society, a vaguely titled organization for people living with HIV/AIDS. When the administrator of the group learns of Asmaa’s gallbladder condition, he puts her in touch with Ayten, the programmer of a popular and sensationalistic television show called *Hot Tin Plate*, which deals with everyday events in Egypt. Ayten (Samia Asaad) and Mohsen (Maged El Kedwany), the obnoxious and largerthan-life host of the show, offer to expose the difficulties and harassment that Asmaa continuously faces, in the hope of appealing to a doctor or an official who will intervene in her seemingly simple situation. The proposed episode would focus entirely on HIV/AIDS in Egypt, but Asmaa finds herself conflicted when they demand that she reveal her face on air, rather than have it blurred to protect her identity. Ayten tries to persuade Asmaa to comply by telling her that revealing her identity
will help give HIV/AIDS a “personal face,” thus making it easier for the average viewer to relate to people living with HIV/AIDS. Asmaa refuses, however, appearing initially on the show with her face blurred, but when her daughter realizes that her mother is on the show—she recognizes her voice—she calls the show and asks Mohsen to help her mother find the treatment she needs. Once Asmaa hears her daughter, she reveals her face on live television, addressing the audience in a heartfelt plea that she is not dying from a disease that she has but, rather, a disease that they have. The ending scene delivers an optimistic image: Asmaa walks home defiantly amid passersby who seem to recognize her from the show; she directly addresses the viewer, saying that if she did not fear pain, medicine, and stigmatization, she would truly be able to live. This scene invites the spectator to occupy Asmaa’s position, in order to feel—for a few long seconds—the social stigma and compromised anonymity of having HIV/AIDS.

From the beginning of the film, the spectator witnesses the discrimination that Asmaa faces on a day-to-day basis, from being denied basic health care to the loss of employment, to a continued sense of isolation. But because the narrative focuses on Asmaa’s painful personal experiences, the spectator is able to identify with her, an HIV-positive single mother struggling to make ends meet in contemporary Cairo. The portrayal of Asmaa as a victim/hero, which grants the film moral legibility, is central to the theme and message of Asmaa. By positioning Asmaa as a victim of stigma and the state’s legal bias, the film effectively invites the audience to recognize and feel Asmaa’s victimhood—a drastic change in identification in comparison with earlier films where the female protagonists were depicted as dangerous and infectious carriers of the disease.

Although the narrative of Asmaa does not focus on homosexuality (perhaps on account of censorship laws) it effectively dispels the idea that HIV/AIDS is a “gay” disease, as opposed to the common rhetoric of health campaigns. The fact that all the people living with HIV/AIDS in the film who speak about how they became infected are heterosexual is not an instance of respectability politics, but rather a clear attempt to steer away from homophobic narratives by emphasizing the many different ways that one can contract HIV. The media in the Arab world has fueled homophobia by linking it to HIV/AIDS, but in Asmaa, heterosexual sex and transfusions are posited as ways of contracting HIV. This is especially relevant for audiences in the Arab world, and specifically Egypt, where most of the new HIV cases are women who have been infected unknowingly by their husbands (UNAIDS 2012).

Yet Asmaa was still considered controversial simply by virtue of being a film about HIV/AIDS and, thus, automatically invoking associations with homosexuality and promiscuity. Many locations refused the film crew access to their premises, and the actors and actresses had to consider the likelihood that they would be less marketable in the future. Despite this, Asmaa has been awarded eighteen Egyptian, Arab, and international awards since its world premiere at the 2011 Abu Dhabi Film Festival, where it won the
award for Best Director from the Arab World in the New Horizons competition; it also garnered the audience award at the 2012 Fribourg International Film Festival. More importantly, the film has been received very positively in the Middle East, indicating at the very least a general interest in HIV and AIDS discourse. In fact, a small UNAIDS study of Asmaa’s effects on Egyptian audiences shows that 61 percent of respondents to an online questionnaire would positively accept Asmaa in all the listed scenarios of social interactions that the study poses, whereas they would not have done so before (El Beih et al. 2012). In Egypt, television represents the main source of information on HIV/AIDS for more than 90 percent of men and women (UNAIDS 2012). Thus, it is highly likely that Asmaa will be instrumental in changing the public’s opinions on the topic for the better—unlike earlier Arab films about HIV/AIDS, which were instrumental in misinforming and horrifying audiences.

More recently, television serials have also discussed the issue of AIDS in the Arab context. One example is the popular Syrian show Hajez al-samt (Silence barrier), which was released in 2005 and is available in its entirety on YouTube. Even more recent is the Egyptian television show Zawaj bil ikrah (Forced to marry), released during Ramadan in 2015. Despite the producers’ attempt to establish a so-called neutral depiction of people living with HIV/AIDS, both television shows rely on tropes of fear and contagion that were evident in the films discussed above.

SEE ALSO Asrar ’Ailiyyah (2013; Hany Fawzy); HIV/AIDS; HIV/AIDS in Africa; HIV/AIDS in Europe; HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean; HIV/AIDS in South and Southeast Asia; HIV/AIDS in the United States; Imarat Ya’kubian (2002; Alaa al-Aswany); Iskandariyya ... Leh? (1979; Youssef Chahine)

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**FILMOGRAPHY**


In 2012 pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) became available. This HIV-prevention tool offers a pharmaceutical mode of reducing the risk of infection. The method involves prescribing HIV medication to people with a negative HIV status but who are considered, or indeed consider themselves, to be at high risk of infection with HIV. If the daily course of oral tenofovir is taken properly and continued, the drug promises a significant protective quality against infection, five days after starting. With PrEP, an easy, affordable, and reasonably reliable mode of prevention was introduced with the hope of overcoming the weaknesses of common barrier methods of HIV prevention. Although the implementation of PrEP continues to raise critical questions about treatment access in the global arena, and although the profiling of high-risk populations remains a difficult task, it seems as if the old paradigm of prevention is being replaced.

PrEP has been greeted with mixed feelings from communities, activists, insurance companies, and national health systems. Certainly there is enthusiasm about a reliable pharmaceutical mode of prevention, and PrEP seems like it could be an essential and feasible steppingstone to a much-anticipated goal: the end of AIDS. But critics point to the potential dilution of a potent and reliable politics of prevention, built on social, cultural, political, and behavioral change that was long believed to be the gold standard for containing the epidemic: changing the public’s attitudes to the disease; addressing stigma as both a social and private issue; introducing safer sex practices; educating about possible and plausible transmission routes; distributing condoms; and sustaining a community of self-help and support groups in a more or less consolidated partnership with public institutions and state departments. But do these responses constitute a model of AIDS prevention that is now at risk? Or is it only through a retrospective view on a set of potentially endangered routines and practices that the many histories of battling the impacts of the epidemic, both immediate and prolonged, on queer communities across Europe appear to have constituted a characteristically European model of AIDS prevention?

Another key feature of PrEP’s introduction is that responses have not fallen into the same
trenches that characterized many of the conflicts in AIDS history. Activist communities are split; some activist voices are aligned—some intentionally, others accidentally—with pharmaceutical marketing strategies. Medical professionals, policy makers, and public health institutions across Europe have responded with mixed sentiments to the successful outcomes of PrEP clinical trials (Spieldenner 2016). These new alliances between industry, state, and activists, as well as the new fault lines within communities, escape familiar pathways of AIDS history to date. The opposition between narratives of activism from below versus official historical records of the progressive scientific overcoming of the epidemic has ceased to dominate the scholarship.

But some questions remain the same: Who was it that changed the face of AIDS? Who was responsible for turning the once-inescapable death sentence of an HIV infection into a manageable chronic condition to live with? Who changed the shape of the accelerating case registries and brought about the reduction of infection rates in Europe? It may be tempting to assign successes to queer communities and their manifold inspiring stories of resistance, survival, and care provision. But in doing so, one risks overlooking the pervasive capacity of the AIDS epidemic to have transformed so many certainties of Western separations between medicine, activism, and both social and sexual identity (Treichler 1999; Yingling 1997).

Looking to the history of AIDS activism in Europe and elsewhere, historians will always have to ask who counted and who counts in today’s record as an “activist.” When Peter Staley at the Sixth International AIDS Conference, held in San Francisco in 1990, asked an audience of over 1,000 attendants to stand up with ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and join the ranks of AIDS activists, the activist category was generously extended to biologists, geneticists, epidemiologists, public health officers, politicians, and journalists, as well as cultural analysts, social scientists, and historians (France 2016). Such a gesture subsequently caused conflict within ACT UP and has since been seen as an end to a particular AIDS activist history in the United States. For the case of AIDS history in Europe, such overarching symbolic and controversial gestures are hard to find. The reason might be that such invitations to reconciliation required a preexisting history of conflict, strong opposition, and deep-felt mistrust toward both state-sponsored institutions and the medical research community—a story that to a certain extent remains exclusively an American experience.
AIDS in Europe

There are still, however, many parameters that characterize this epidemic's exceptionalism and that have remained the same across the Atlantic. In advance of HIV's emergence in the early 1980s, the era of infectious diseases was hubristically thought to be over. Smallpox had been eradicated, and polio cases were dwindling. After AIDS arrived, medical institutions—especially in clinical medicine—found themselves overwhelmed and largely powerless in dealing with the opportunistic infections and cancers that brought about the untimely deaths of thousands of previously healthy young patients. While it quickly became clear that specific pathways of transmission structured the dissemination of AIDS among particular risk groups, uncertainty about the virus itself and the clinical picture of AIDS prevailed despite mounting pressure on public health to “solve” the epidemic. It was painfully clear that traditional public health strategies of prevention were ineffective. At the same time, new strategies were emerging out of the young, male, homosexual, and other minority communities affected. The adaption of concepts of sexual education, introducing large-scale social and behavioral change, eventually brought about new alliances between queer communities, states, and public health institutions. These bonds transformed the shape and impact of the epidemic from “exceptionalism to normalization” (Rosenbrock et al. 1999, 20).

But AIDS history in Europe was not uniform. With the final chapter of the Cold War dominating the epidemic’s first decade, policy and the public visibility of AIDS and the policies relating to it differed drastically from East to West. Most of the policies of eastern European states followed doctrines from Russia, but the stories differ when one looks at the situation on the ground across eastern Europe. For most western European states,
there are different versions of how the emerging epidemic affected ongoing processes of gay liberation. Rarely was this an isolated national process; rather, it was a story of outstanding international and global networks, which—especially when confronting AIDS—showcased impressive supranational infrastructures, reaching from South Africa to Norway, the United States, and beyond (Mbali 2013; Woods 2016).

This overview begins with the cases of France and the United Kingdom, which provide a productive comparison for introduction. Each subsequent cluster is showcased through one or two national case studies to illuminate particular characteristics of how the AIDS crisis was encountered. This outline of Europe’s AIDS activism is predominantly focused on the first decade—the formative years—of the epidemic, but it occasionally looks at later developments.

**A General Approach: France and the United Kingdom**

Despite many differences, the stories of France and the United Kingdom share a common motif. Initial responses to the epidemic were shouldered by small volunteer organizations, made up of a largely gay constituency but characterized by approaches to a politics of prevention that addressed the general public. But the stories of both countries are also structured by a secondary response that developed in the later 1980s, one that encouraged and emphasized an explicitly gay angle to the epidemic that, in turn, renewed a sense of politicized gay identity.

The historian Virginia Berridge (1996) has emphasized that AIDS in the United Kingdom was always a small epidemic compared to other countries. With twenty-nine registered cases by 1983 and just over 2,000 by April 1989, this history deserves attention not despite but because of its low mortality. Specific to the United Kingdom, infectious diseases were tackled through long-established routines of the National Health Service. But with AIDS came a “period of incoherence, of absence of knowledge, of ‘groping in the dark’” (Berridge 1996, 13). Controlling the epidemic required following advice from groups outside of the health service. Listening to the affected communities, who had in turn learned from experiences in the United States, led to an AIDS policy driven from below. Self-help practices presented in a steady stream of literature and leaflets were imported from the United States through what Berridge has called “AIDS missionaries.” The initially scattered developments of help lines, self-help groups, and information meetings to disseminate research news were eventually transformed into the Terry (later, Terrence) Higgins Trust. The trust, named after one of the first persons who died of AIDS (in 1982) in the United Kingdom, had the aim of humanizing the perception of the disease. After a few years the organization centralized both professional policy advice to the National Health Service and community counseling through a successful buddy scheme that paired persons with new infections to people who had learned to more or less cope with AIDS. By comparison, the most visible response in the epidemic’s first decade in France was shouldered by AIDES (a
play on words, referring both to AIDS and to the plural form of the French word for “help,” *aides*), founded in 1984. The Terrence Higgins Trust and AIDES were groups that addressed AIDS as a subject of general interest that had implications for the whole population. Both groups relied on public subsidies for 30 to 40 percent of their operating costs, as well as on fund-raising and volunteer work that was carried out overwhelmingly by gay men.

**AIDS Doctors as Activists** In both the United Kingdom and France, however, the story of AIDS activism would be incomplete without another group of advocates and experts who had a decisive impact on the course of the epidemic: the AIDS doctors. For one thing, the epidemic posed very specific challenges to clinical practice and in particular its impact on the previously marginalized field of infectious diseases. HIV gave birth to a new kind of medical specialist. As the medical anthropologist Jamie L. Feldman (*1995*) has argued, AIDS doctors came to epitomize the change AIDS brought to the doctor-patient relationship, eventually integrating patients’ expertise into every level of decision-making.

In France, the historian Stuart Elden (*2017*) recalled a group of AIDS doctors that originated in the Groupe Information Santé (GIS; Health Information Group). The GIS was a highly politicized health professional body that had formed in the early 1970s around pro-choice struggles regarding abortion. These AIDS doctors had been close associates and collaborators of the French historian and social theorist Michel Foucault, who died in 1984 of AIDS. It was on the initiative of Foucault’s partner, Daniel Defert (1937–), that the same group of doctors formed AIDES in 1984 (*Elden 2017*). A similar group of AIDS doctors in the United Kingdom emerged from the Gay Medical Association, which had been founded in 1980 (as the Gay Medical Information Society) to address various health issues specific to the gay community. In 1983 this collective set up an AIDS working group that developed into the first dedicated AIDS clinic in London.

In both countries, gay men involved in the earliest responses were not in continuity with the history of gay militancy from the 1970s (*Pollak 1992*). In fact, in France, gay groups initially denied the threat of AIDS. Perhaps influenced by the legacy of Foucault and the French queer theorist Guy Hocquenghem (1946–1988), a reluctance to take on a sexual identity with limiting parameters defined in pathological terms certainly contributed to widespread hesitation about accepting the existence of a gay group at risk to a new disease. Dissemination of information was resisted by such influential groups as the Association des Médecins Gais (AMG; Association of Gay Doctors) up until 1984, and only very few, entirely local initiatives began to organize bottom-up self-help structures in the early years. Patrice Meyer, a member of the AMG who had been involved in gay health programs, was among the first to organize community structures such as Vaincre Le Sida (Defeat AIDS), which was founded in 1983 and began setting up self-help groups and translating information material from the United States and the United Kingdom (*Fillieule 1998*).

**Repolitization of AIDS** Yet, as the sociologist Claire E. Ernst (*1997*) has argued, the
practice of generalizing AIDS through the policies of AIDES came into crisis in France at the end of the 1980s and was publicly and militantly challenged by the newly founded ACT UP–Paris. The latter group, patterned after the New York model, embraced links between AIDS and homosexuality to renew the discourse of gay politics in France. With a new focus on making audible previously inaudible voices from marginalized groups such as trans activists and LGBT migrants, ACT UP–Paris used direct action and practices of militant involvement to politicize AIDS. As the celebrated 2017 docufiction 120 battements par minute (120 beats per minute) shows, the group came to symbolize a turning point in French history, when the concept of AIDS as a generalized public health threat led to the mobilization and subsequent politicization of France's gay community (Barbot 2006). The writer Hervé Guibert (1955–1991) has encapsulated many of the community's complex relations to the intellectual heritage of Foucault in his reinvented genre of the patient diary in times of AIDS (Guibert 2015).

On a very different scale, similar conflicts characterized the landscape of activist response in the United Kingdom. The UK government had sent out a leaflet to every household in 1986 as part of a larger campaign to educate the public about the epidemic under the catchy slogan “AIDS: Don’t Die of Ignorance.” But with the government’s decision (under Margaret Thatcher, the nation’s then prime minister) to ban promotion of homosexuality through the Local Government Act of 1988, many believed the previously established politics of consensus had been canceled. The result was a wave of renewed politicized responses. The activist, writer, and art historian Simon Watney (2000) has emphasized the outstanding role of an energetic gay and lesbian press. In the 1990s it was in these forums that the professionalization of AIDS service and the generalized outlook of the Terrence Higgins Trust were increasingly criticized as “de-gaying AIDS.” For Watney, denying the epidemiological significance of gay lifestyle and forgetting about the specific instruments of education to achieve behavioral change amounted to “genocide-by-negligence” (2000, 84). One of the consequences can be found in the formation of Gay Men Fighting AIDS (now known as GMFA) in 1992 as a community-based group with a strong focus on peer education within the gay community.

The trajectories of both France and the United Kingdom showcase the pitfalls of both the community’s and the medical institutions’ efforts to frame AIDS as an issue of concern to everyone. Perhaps driven by resistance to the risks of stigmatization and segregation, both cases also show the vulnerability of such strategies to fall prey to antigay sentiments.

Collaboration and Integration: AIDS in Germany and Switzerland

In his 1993 book Uneins mit Aids: Wie über einen Virus nachgedacht und geredet wird (At Odds with AIDS: Thinking and Talking about a Virus [1996]), the German philosopher
Alexander García Düttmann argued that AIDS would eventually be seen as a turning point; the distribution of the virus would indicate that an era of sexual politics had come to an end. In Germany, as well as in Austria and Switzerland, there had been legal reforms related to sexuality in the 1960s and 1970s and the gay community had found a renewed political consciousness that was scattered among anarchist, socialist, Marxist, and Trotskyist leanings. In West Berlin, the Homosexuelle Aktion WestBerlin (Gay Action Group of West Berlin) shifted its revolutionary vision to the development of a gay community center (opened in 1977); under the name of SchuZ, it now remains the acclaimed heart of the capital’s political gay community. An emerging gay culture led to the opening of the first gay bookstore, Prinz Eisenherz, in 1978, and the founding of publishing houses and magazines gave rise to a rich variety of informal and formal networks, projects, groups, and initiatives that connected the gay community with women’s and student movements at the end of the 1970s.

The first three cases of AIDS were diagnosed among West Berlin gay men in 1983, at which time the epidemic was still widely considered an American problem (if it was considered at all). But searching for the beginnings of a gay response to the disease in Germany, Michael Bochow (2009) points to a remarkable series of meetings in 1983 between a group of gay men with a prolific nurse in Berlin. Here, as in many other European cities, the meeting had arisen from collaboration between health professionals and members of the gay community addressing the surge of infectious diseases such as hepatitis B among gay men in the late 1970s (Bochow 2009). Largely disconnected from the sprawling and scattered political gay community, this group then went on to found Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe (DAH; German AIDS Assistance), which rapidly became the largest and most visible AIDS service organization in Germany.

These first AIDS activists were viewed with mistrust and suspicion by many gay political activists. AIDS was seen as a potentially dangerous instrument with which the tentative advances of gay movements could be undone by conservative governments and antigay media alike. Of course, specific to Germany was the specter of the past—both the memory of how fascism treated homosexuals and the long post-World War II period of continued persecution under the German chancellor Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967). Martin Dannecker (1987), an activist and keen observer of the gay movement in Germany, characterized these early years of AIDS in West Germany as marked by a growing fear of an unknown emerging disease, coupled with concern about a new form of discrimination based on the connection between gay identity and AIDS. Despite the initial mistrust, the DAH managed to maintain its predominant position as an umbrella organization that organized and connected both national and regional activities ranging from self-help groups to advertising campaigns specifically tailored to gay communities, as well as to the general public.

The transfer of knowledge about HIV prevention and safer sex was a focus, but so too were
new ways of community organization. Inspiration was taken again from the United States. The director Rosa von Praunheim (1942–), known for his groundbreaking film *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt* [1971; It is not the homosexual who is perverse, but the society in which he lives], produced haunting documentaries about AIDS activism in New York (*Silence = Death* and *Positive* [both 1990]), which became influential references in and around the DAH. The films portrayed artists such as Keith Haring living with AIDS in New York; they brought the perspectives of activists and patients to the screen and transmitted images both of devastation and of self-help, outrage, and political consolidation around homosexuality and AIDS. Rolf Rosenbrock (1987), a Berlin-based social scientist who was actively involved in the West German AIDS movement, speaks of a drastic transformation of gay life in the late 1980s, as safer sex and the constant visibility of DAH materials led to a significantly reduced diffusion of the epidemic even in the absence of successful clinical interventions.

**Unlikely and Likely Alliances** Important to the success of German AIDS policy was the development of unlikely alliances. While Bavaria remained the only part of Germany in which discussion of coercion and detention of patients was introduced (by the far-right politician Peter Gauweiler), a member of the national conservative government under Helmut Kohl by the name of Rita Süssmuth took on a crucial role in the development of a unique and laudably open health policy in response to AIDS. Süssmuth not only proposed progressive and outspoken campaigns of education and information, but she also encouraged the government’s reliance on advice and perspectives formulated in the DAH. This exceptional alliance led, by the end of the 1980s, to almost all DAH activities being financed through public subsidiaries and accompanied by a constantly growing landscape of social research. Political engagement was carried out by the gay community but largely characterized through popular sex education for a general public audience.

Switzerland had followed the lead of German integration and actively encouraged the integration of gay activists in the development of the state’s response to the epidemic. As a matter of pride, the state showcased its liberal attitude to the epidemic and encouraged the Swiss model of AIDS prevention to be recognized as a successful implementation of community-based activism leading to behavioral change in those communities at risk. It also crucially contributed to the absence of hostility in Swiss society. Friendly relations between members of the DAH in Germany and of the similarly modeled AIDS-Hilfe Schweiz (Swiss AIDS Federation) had facilitated the collaboration between the two groups ([Staub 2005](#)). But already in 1989, the epidemiological focus of the epidemic moved away from gay men and onto the heroin crisis in Zurich. Advocacy for translation of the existing strategies of prevention into a newly emerging field was largely unsuccessful, but eventually one of the most liberal drug prevention policies across Europe emerged. Many of the gay activists who had formed the AIDS policy in close collaboration with German and international collaborators continued to invest in the professionalization of AIDS prevention in Switzerland, as a dedicated condom company (Hot Rubber) was founded, and
many activists embarked on a career in the nation’s health services.

**Pragmatism and Cooperation: The Netherlands and Scandinavia**

A story of remarkable consensus around AIDS and AIDS prevention began in the Netherlands with the national blood bank’s decision to ban gay men from donating blood in 1983. After a short upheaval, a coalition of the Amsterdam public health authorities (the Nederlandse Vereniging tot Integratie van Homoseksualiteit—Cultuuren Ontspanningscentrum [Dutch Association for the Integration of Homosexuality—Culture and Recreation Center] and Stichting Aanvullende Dienstverlening [SAD; Ancillary Service Department; initially an Amsterdambased STD clinic for gay men run by gay physicians]) organized a thorough information campaign together with the national government. This alliance quickly transitioned into an AIDS task force, which was fully financed by government funds but controlled through advocacy from the LGBT community. As in Germany and Switzerland, the main focus in the Netherlands was targeting gay men with tailored messages about safer sex. Shelves of informational material were installed in the majority of gay bars and clubs in the vibrant and renowned gay communities of Amsterdam.

The SAD was particularly engaged in forceful promotion of safer sex practices. Promotion kits containing condoms and lubricants were assembled and distributed by volunteers; workshops to enhance positive attitudes on safer sex were copied from the New York group Gay Men’s Health Crisis and offered from 1987 onward. An infamous safe-sex video was played in bars around the country and, from 1988 to 1990, was shown to 156 different groups, reaching over 3,000 participants (Hospers and Blom 1998).

Similar stories mark the AIDS experience in Sweden and Norway. Small case numbers met a robust background of sexual reform movements dating from the 1960s onward that had contributed to the marked liberal attitude of northern European countries. Gay doctors were involved in the state’s response from the beginning of the epidemic in 1983, and from 1985 onward the central Swedish government aimed to design a progressive and open AIDS policy. Conflicts over whether the disease should be classified as a venereal disease were carried out in public, and both gay groups and feminist activists raised concerns about the impact of coercive reporting. An official AIDS committee was put in place to shape consensus, which included the acceptance of semilegal anonymous testing (Fox, Day, and Klein 1989).

**Outnumbered: The European South**

Southern Europe, especially Greece, Spain, and Italy, appear in a quite different epidemiological light than the rest of Europe. The epidemic started small, with just a
handful of cases in Spain by 1983 and amounting to just fourteen cases in Italy by December 1984. But later there was an unexpected surge. In the early 1990s Spain reported the highest incidence across Europe, and Italy had 3,235 cases by 1988, second only to France in the tallies across the continent (Moss 1990). The reason for both countries suffering an overwhelming epidemic related to intravenous drug users. In Italy, already by 1985 drug users were the dominant risk group. As a result, Italy and Spain both saw a much more variegated demography of patients than elsewhere in Europe. Governments failed to address the epidemic appropriately, and the development of political strategies, the rollout of effective preventive measures, and the introduction of educational instruments happened at an alarmingly slow pace.

A reason for this can be found in the absence of visible national AIDS service organizations, which could have catalyzed the urgency of the patients and people who experienced AIDS firsthand. Without such centralized organs, Italy's and Spain's gay communities did not become legitimate interlocutors in the formation of national AIDS strategies and politics (Moss 1990). A common misunderstanding attributes these developments to institutionalized homophobia in these two largely Catholic countries. But Italy had decriminalized homosexual acts already in 1890, and the 1970s saw a number of highly controversial biopolitical issues dragged out into the streets, reaching from divorce legalization in the early 1970s to the referendum securing a woman's right to abortion in 1981. As a result, the political infrastructures of the gay community had grown to be structurally integrated with leftist movements and parties. The largest national gay organization FUORI! (Out!) had been associated with the Partito Radicale (Radical Party) (Barilli 1999) and was dissolved in 1982 as a result of internal political quarrels.

The second gay national association, Arcigay (Associazione LGBTI Italiana; Lesbian and Gay Association of Italy), was established in 1985, perhaps as a response to the increasing need to rearticulate gay political identity in the face of the emerging epidemic. Calls for a unified voice among the gay community attempted to overcome traditional political fault lines within the community but remained largely unsuccessful. Arcigay continued the community’s traditional association with the radical left, and consequently the influence of Arcigay on the development of national strategies against AIDS was scattered and often contested by local and regional authorities. Given the epidemiological dominance of drug users by 1985, gay voices remained peripheral to such government programs as the Associazione Nazionale per la Lotta contro l’AIDS (National Association for the Fight against AIDS; popularly known by its acronym ANLAIDS) and the Lega Italiana per la Lotta Contro l’AIDS (Italian League for the Fight against AIDS; popularly known by its acronym LILA) (Moss 1990). Instead, the community's contribution found force on a local scale, especially in Rome, Bologna, and Milan, where self-help groups and initiatives emerged in an informal response to the epidemic.

It is remarkable that, despite this unique trajectory of the response to the epidemic, Italy's
population repeatedly demonstrated a significantly less hostile attitude to people with AIDS than that of many other European countries in the 1980s. Whether this is attributable to the large-scale distribution of generalized AIDS information from 1988 onward or to the impact of a very different demography of drug-related AIDS cases among adolescent heterosexuals remains an open question.

**Neglect and Criminalization: AIDS in Eastern Europe**

AIDS histories in eastern Europe are structured by the historical transformation of the Soviet Union into diverging and, at times, vehement nationalist states. The historical record of the epidemic often follows the established narrative of liberalization and democratic transformation after 1990 that separated each national narrative into two distinct stories: the censored and tainted records of the Soviet past and the more or less progressive ways of addressing the developing health crisis around AIDS in the 1990s. Such narratives risk losing sight of the many challenges that were posed to official AIDS policy before 1990, as much as they risk overlooking the continued stigmatization and criminalization in the successor states. This section begins with the history of Russia's principal policy and attitudes regarding AIDS in the 1980s, with the case of eastern Europe then illuminated and exemplified in the national trajectory of Poland.

The official Russian account of AIDS and the development of the epidemic on the ground were incongruous. The denial of promiscuity, homosexuality, drug use, and commercial sex work in the doctrines of the state furthered ignorance as much as it contributed to an increased invisibility of the epidemic (Feshbach 2006). AIDS was seen as a problem of the West, as its modes of infection and transmission were considered foreign values. The explosive result of imposed silence and scapegoating is perhaps best illustrated when the state’s organ, Pravda, had to oppose and publicly reject a widely supported and distributed 1984 letter by graduates of the Moscow medical school demanding that AIDS sufferers be left untreated in order to purge the Russian nation of what they saw as the deserving victims of the illness.

Much of the public and medical attention regarding AIDS was given to cases of so-called innocent victims, such as the very first officially registered case in the Soviet Union: a fourteen-year-old girl who had contracted the disease after receiving a blood transfusion in 1975. But after the first mortality—a female sex worker who died in 1988—propaganda focused on punitive rhetoric supported by legislative initiatives to encourage mass screenings and to criminalize any behavior that could cause infection.

A reported scarcity of disposable needles, coupled with an atmosphere of intimidation and neglect, led to localized outbreaks. In one rural hospital “it only took one infected child, whose father had contracted the disease through a blood transfusion or homosexual contact while living in Africa (although this information is somewhat suspect), to result in
The initial infection of 27 others” (Feshbach 2006, 22). Medical mistakes and faulty equipment counted for an estimated 50 percent of all recorded cases of AIDS in Russia for the period from 1987 to 1990. These estimates remain unreliable as the actual numbers would not only exceed the official record but probably suggest a very different epidemiological picture.

Historians generally assume that Russian authorities knew little about the behavior of risk groups. Homosexuality was forbidden and condemned to the shadows of urban centers. Prostitution, too, went unacknowledged and was widely illegal. Educational information about transmission risk was scarce and distributed only via informal networks. A seropositive diagnosis was often kept a personal secret, and safer sex practices remained the exception up until the early 1990s. Only then did communities speak out publicly; groups of patients, along with LGBT activists, raised their voices to establish fragments of a precarious state strategy against the epidemic, while hostile antigay sentiment and politics continued to be an opposing force into the twenty-first century.

The Case of Poland The Polish historical arc follows a similar trajectory. But Poland showed a comparably lower incidence of AIDS, and the background of the relaxing effects of the Solidarność (Solidarity) movement since 1980 allowed for a slightly different picture to emerge. Despite the newfound freedom to engage in public controversies around social problems, the issue of homosexuality remained taboo. The state’s reaction to the first AIDS cases in Poland was driven by testing regimens with inflated risk definitions. A mass testing campaign in mid-1988 of 1.7 million Poles revealed 88 cases, of which 60 percent were attributed to homosexual transmission. In 1985 the state brought forward an official AIDS council that introduced large-scale education campaigns and legislation that included a punishment of up to three years of imprisonment for vaguely defined “infectious behavior.”

The situation for Polish citizens affected by AIDS was dire: Barbara A. Misztal reported in 1990 that “members of the three currently most significant risk groups—homosexuals, intravenous drug users, and prostitutes—are in any case unable to identify themselves as part of distinct communities due to a characteristic mix of legal prohibition and deep social disapproval” (167). But on a smaller scale, AIDS was also a catalyst that led to formulations of legal rights for marginalized sexual identities and helped articulate a gay Polish consciousness. In 1987, when state police began to use AIDS as a pretext in the infamous “Hyacinth” operation to raid queer spaces and establish invasive surveillance measures with the aim of creating a comprehensive gay registry, the Warszawski Ruch Homoseksualny (Warsaw Homosexual Movement) formed an organized response. Denied government approval, the movement continued a semi-clandestine existence until the early 1990s, organized both through increasing participation of Polish gay activists in international LGBT conferences and a large international network of gay Poles living in Vienna, Berlin, London, and Paris. In Poland, AIDS had facilitated an accelerated organization among Polish gay men.
Over the course of the 1990s, AIDS began to disappear across Europe and was replaced with an ethic of care for people with HIV. The epidemic became a chronic condition, manageable through pharmaceutical interventions and curbed in its distribution through well-established practices of safer sex, supported by an increased capacity in societies to engage openly with matters of sexual practice and the politics of sexual identity. Inescapably, the success of gay liberation across Europe is intimately tied to the history of AIDS and HIV. The epidemic consolidated transnational gay politics and installed the queer community as an authority for a new kind of public health.

SEE ALSO ACT UP; HIV/AIDS; HIV/AIDS in Africa; HIV/AIDS in Egyptian Cinema; HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean; HIV/AIDS in South and Southeast Asia; HIV/AIDS in the United States

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HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean

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The social and government response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in this region, including the close relationship between AIDS-related activism and LGBT activism.

When the HIV/AIDS epidemic reached Latin America in the early 1980s, sex between men was by far the principal risk category. But for the most part, gay men in the region, unlike their counterparts in Europe and North America, did not have the benefit of a decade of vigorous agitation and organization to build upon. Instead, LGBT rights promotion largely emerged from the HIV epidemic itself as individuals joined together to address the needs of their peers, pushed the topic into public consciousness, and tapped an unexpected vein of resources, both material and intangible. The early linkage of HIV and LGBT advocacy and the ambiguous relationship between the two causes continue to affect public perceptions, state responses, and organizational realities in the region to the present day.

The social response to HIV/AIDS in Latin America was different in a number of ways that also affected the movement for LGBT rights. HIV appeared throughout the continent in tandem with the restoration of democratic rule after lengthy periods of dictatorship. For example, Brazil’s first case was diagnosed in 1982; military rule there ended in 1985 after twenty-one years. Coups led to military regimes in Bolivia (1964–1982), Argentina (1976–1983), Uruguay (1973–1985), and Chile (1973–1990); these dictatorships were ceding power to civilian governments just as the first HIV cases were being discovered (Chile, 1984; Uruguay, 1984; Argentina, 1985; Bolivia, 1985). While students and workers around the continent filled the streets denouncing military rule and opposition magazines began to appear in kiosks, independent unions, opposition parties, women, students, ethnic minorities, the unemployed, and even sexual minorities demanded a hearing. AIDS activism came of age in the 1980s and 1990s alongside a renewed sense of people’s rights as citizens with individuals and groups of all sorts beginning to press for change.

The discourse of human rights struck an especially profound chord in the many Latin American countries that were awakening to the horrors of state-sponsored torture, murder, and forced disappearance that had suppressed dissent for decades. In this dynamic atmosphere, LGBT claims for full equality could also get a hearing, intermingled with demands for a humane response to the HIV epidemic that respected personal dignity.
Women's demands for reproductive rights also gained new prominence, and activists from these interrelated issues often allied.

In certain parts of Latin America, both the response to HIV/AIDS and the movement around LGBT demands also were influenced by civil warfare, such as the Salvadoran and Nicaraguan civil wars of the 1980s and Guatemala’s forty-year conflict starting in the 1950s. This context of extreme violence continues to affect the two issues throughout Central America and in Colombia where hundreds of thousands of citizens were displaced by the fighting. Colombia’s civil conflict officially ended only with a 2016 peace agreement. LGBT and HIV activism in these nations is more frequently combined into a single entity, especially where the public sector is so fragile that independent agencies often fill the gap with direct services ranging from telephone hotlines and support for HIVpositive persons to clinical treatment offered as an alternative to overburdened public-health facilities.

At the same time, the strong cultural presence of religious institutions—especially of the Catholic Church and a growing evangelical movement—influenced the political and social debates that inevitably sprang up around the epidemic and reflected contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, Catholic criticism of sexual liberalism was often relentless and was taken up by the burgeoning non-Catholic evangelical sector in even harsher terms. However, Catholic tradition also includes a strong role for charity and compassion, especially toward the weak, sick, and vulnerable, and this strand of belief was influential. These debates, ostensibly about how to address a public-health issue, strongly marked the ways in which Latin American societies understood the phenomena of HIV/AIDS, homosexuality, and gender variance and how they were incorporated into the region’s persistent ideological, cultural, and political battles.
Now that the AIDS epidemic is well into its third decade in Latin America, new factors have come into play, and the interplay between HIV and LGBT rights has evolved in diverse ways. Governments have, in some cases, cooperated with grassroots groups and nonprofits and incorporated the voluntary sector—including a strong LGBT presence—into their overall response to HIV, encouraged by multilateral agencies such as the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria (Global Fund). In other cases, governments have pulled back from engagement with LGBT-dominated HIV/AIDS nonprofits, favoring a more traditional public-health approach, accelerated by the advent of effective antiretroviral (ARV) treatments that refocused the epidemic to the clinical setting. Legal changes in the status of LGBT persons and their rights to adoption and marriage also have evolved rapidly, though unevenly, across Latin America.

Activism in Latin America also benefited from one important advantage, a shared language (Spanish, with some exceptions) that makes regional exchanges and cooperation fluid. Newsletters, policy statements, government awareness campaigns, continent-wide calls for solidarity, and the like are easily shared allowing groups to compare program ideas and political strategies boosted by the contributions of Brazilian colleagues in Portuguese
Regional meetings flourished, and a series of coordinating bodies sprang up to unite fledgling Latin American HIV/AIDS grassroots groups along with alliances among entities promoting LGBT rights.

**Visibility**

HIV/AIDS put the notion of different sexual orientations into public consciousness in Latin America in large part because the earliest cases were so heavily concentrated among gay men. Although health authorities were quick to emphasize that the risk of HIV infection involved all sexually active persons and often focused their concern on the “general population,” the male/female ratio of the first wave of infections was in the range of thirty to one in many countries. Early media reports took note of the heavy disease burden among gay men, sometimes in crude or derogatory terms. Involuntary outing was common as HIV-positive men facing deterioration in their health could not conceal their illness or the probable source of the infection.


Herbert Eustáquio de Carvalho, known as Herbert Daniel (a name he assumed while operating underground as a radical opponent of the Brazilian military dictatorship), was a pioneering Brazilian AIDS activist, writer, and revolutionary. He entered medical school in 1965, the year after the armed forces overthrew Brazil’s legally constituted government. Although he had had furtive sexual encounters with other men, he decided to repress his homosexual desires when two years later he joined a revolutionary organization that sought to topple the dictatorship by organizing Cuban-inspired rural guerrilla activities. Feeling that his sexuality was incompatible with the Left’s conservative attitudes, which mirrored conservative religious and social notions of appropriate gender behavior and heteronormativity, he remained celibate for the next four years.

In 1970 Daniel participated in rural guerrilla training in the Atlantic rain forest of the state of São Paulo. Later that year, with the arrest and torture of many comrades, he helped abduct the German ambassador in Rio de Janeiro to obtain the freedom of forty political prisoners. A second kidnapping, of the Swiss ambassador in the same city, resulted in the release of an additional seventy political prisoners. Soon thereafter, his organization collapsed.

After living six years underground, Daniel slipped out of the country with Cláudio Mesquita, who had hidden him. While in European exile, the two became lifetime partners. Daniel returned to Brazil in 1981. Two years later he wrote “A síndrome do preconceito” (The syndrome of prejudice), the first in-depth critical analysis about AIDS produced in Brazil. His essay contains two revolutionary ideas, which became
core concepts behind his AIDS activism in Brazil. The first argued that the best way to
combat the exclusive focus on the medical aspects of the disease is through a solidarity
network to support people living with AIDS. Second, he called on homosexuals and
others to participate actively with medical professionals and government officials in
finding ways to prevent new infections and, eventually, in finding a cure.

Daniel ran unsuccessfully for the Rio de Janeiro state legislature in 1986 as an openly
gay candidate. He organized a colorful campaign that defended gay and lesbian rights,
among many issues. He later worked as a writer for the Associação Brasileira
Interdisciplinar de AIDS (Brazilian Interdisciplinary AIDS Association), the first major
organization working on HIV/AIDS education and prevention in Latin America. In
1989 Daniel discovered he had AIDS. Almost immediately, he founded Grupo pela
VIDDA (Grupo pela Valorização, Integração e Dignidade do Doente de AIDS [Group for
the Appreciation, Integration, and Dignity of those with AIDS]), the first
nongovernmental organization for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Within the AIDS movement, Daniel criticized Luiz Mott, the leader of the Grupo Gay da
Bahia (Gay Group of Bahia), who argued that the slogan “AIDS Kills” had an
educational value because it scared misinformed and uneducated people into learning
about the virus and taking precautions. Daniel countered by calling for AIDS education
and prevention while humanizing those infected, arguing that discrimination was
deadlier than the disease itself. Prejudice, he insisted, condemned people to a “civil
death” (*morte civil*), or the loss of all rights to exist, to be, to be alive.

Daniel died in 1992 with his partner by his side. Jonathan M. Mann, the former head of
the World Health Organization’s AIDS program, who paid particular attention to
addressing the impact of the disease in the Global South, dedicated *AIDS in the World*
(*1992*) to Daniel, quoting him as follows: “I hope that one day, when death finally
comes by chance or by any infection caused by the virus, nobody says that I was
defeated by AIDS. I have succeeded in living with AIDS. AIDS has not defeated me.”

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The increased visibility of homosexuality arising from HIV was therefore a mixed blessing. In countries where police raids on semi-clandestine gay nightspots were common, the HIV-homosexual link reinforced repressive tendencies, such as in the notorious 1989 roundup of 300 revelers at the gay club Piccolo Mondo in Valparaíso, Chile, a year before the end of the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship. The detainees were transported at gunpoint to a local STD (sexually transmitted disease) clinic in the predawn hours for forced HIV and syphilis tests, which resulted in the diagnosis of three HIV cases. When a newly formed AIDS education group protested the police action, activists discovered that the head of the Valparaíso public-health service, a physician, had ordered the raid herself.

Widespread scapegoating of gay men (as well as sex workers, intravenous drug users, and transgender women) as “carriers” of the dreaded new disease afflicted gay and trans populations throughout the continent and indeed the entire world. HIV tests as prerequisites for employment, firings of those discovered to be HIV positive, social ostracism, mockery, and blaming were rife. On the other hand, dramatic and somewhat sensationalistic accounts of the devastating progression of the disease struck a sympathetic chord among many citizens. Friendly media coverage tended to highlight monogamous women who had acquired HIV through the extramarital conduct of their spouses, a reinforcement of the “innocent victim” theme. In fact, continued neglect of the prevention needs of homosexually active men despite the epidemiological evidence led a prominent researcher to speak of a “hidden epidemic” well into its second decade (Cáceres 2002).

The Surge in LGBT Activism Nonetheless, gay men became more and more visible as many of them went public to demand improved health services and to combat the stigma related to both the disease and to homosexual behavior. For example, gay activists pushed the São Paulo State Secretariat of Health to respond to the burgeoning epidemic in Brazil’s largest city, leading to the establishment of the first governmental AIDS program in the country in 1983. Throughout the region, television reporters covering the alarming new disease eagerly sought first-person testimony from individuals facing an HIV diagnosis, and...
many of these witnesses were frank about their gay or trans identity. An important early role for these militants was education about transmission routes in an attempt to allay the widespread panic about sharing public spaces, schoolrooms, job sites, and the like with HIV-positive persons, fears that caused direct harm to the individuals diagnosed earliest. When health ministries institutionalized such educational outreach projects, these courageous pioneers often provided the testimonials. Whatever the mixed messages people received about homosexuality, gay men and soon lesbians and transgender persons were now visible in the HIV era in ways that diverged markedly from the discreet silence that enveloped same-sex behavior prior to the advent of the disease (Pecheny 2003).

LGBT activism in a few Latin American countries had begun well before the advent of HIV, establishing links with allies in key US and European cities. In Brazil, for example, homophile groups had early successes in igniting a movement, suffered setbacks, and later reemerged in force as the dictatorship of 1964 to 1985 crumbled. Although activists were unable to get sexual orientation added to the list of protected categories in Brazil’s new 1988 constitution, the HIV epidemic catapulted LGBT leaders into a strategic alliance with sympathetic medical personnel to mobilize a response to the public-health emergency (Galvão 2000; Pecheny and Corrales 2010). Brazil’s national AIDS program supported gay-oriented HIV advocacy organizations, and the country’s success in keeping new infections below early projections added prestige to the gay-friendly “Brazilian model” of fighting AIDS.

Similarly, in Argentina, the Comunidad Homosexual Argentina (CHA; Argentine Homosexual Community) sprang from a 1984 mass meeting in a gay Buenos Aires disco that had suffered a police raid at a time when patrons were no longer resigned to accepting them—a striking parallel with the Stonewall uprising fifteen years earlier in New York City. CHA reflected the spirit of the times with its slogan “Sexuality is a human right.” Its first newspaper ad denounced “discrimination and repression” as inconsistent with democracy, thus explicitly linking LGBT rights with the emergence from dictatorship. This posture dovetailed neatly with the human rights focus soon promoted by HIV/AIDS activists, which drew on emphatic support from the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Programme on AIDS and its successors.

Even where LGBT rights had a pre-AIDS head start, HIV provided these groups—especially those led by gay men—with a new focus based on concrete demands for better health-care services and educational programs tailored to their sexual practices. Their HIV-related work attracted resources that enabled them to establish headquarters, fund activities, and even pay staff. Media interest in the epidemic provided a steady flow of coverage of attempts to combat stigma and discrimination in which fear of HIV and prejudice against homosexuality were inextricably mixed. The publicity brought the existence of the organizations into the spotlight, attracting new adherents.
Prevention campaigns sometimes included references to the risks of homosexual encounters, although explicit discussion of anal intercourse was usually avoided. However, the emphasis on condom use as a protective measure meant that educators could hardly avoid touching upon the varieties of sexual practice that required such a barrier. In fact, LGBT citizens benefited from the growing realization that all sexuality should be dealt with more openly if society were to be successful in addressing an epidemic transmitted through sex. Transgender populations also benefited from increased notice, and advocacy groups of transgender women sprung up in many cities.

At the same time, the new demands for more open discussion of sex and for sex education for young people sparked heated ideological debates, and opponents of liberalizing tendencies quickly mobilized to resist change. Catholic groups such Opus Dei and evangelical Protestant pastors were (and remain) prominent in resisting everything related to reproductive and sexual rights, including comprehensive HIV/AIDS education and later expansion of LGBT citizenship and legal rights.

**The Rise in Trans Advocacy** Activism among trans populations also got a boost from the social response to the epidemic as the early HIV/AIDS-related nonprofits often provided an organizing space and helpful connections. Though trans groups often placed higher priorities on issues like violence and police harassment, HIV quickly became a major problem as incidence rates among trans persons skyrocketed (Poteat et al. 2016). For example, activists in one of the earliest HIV/AIDS nonprofits to form in Brazil, the Grupo de Apoio à Prevencão de AIDS/Rio Grande do Sul (GAPA/RS; Group for AIDS Support and Prevention/Rio Grande do Sul) in the southern city of Porto Alegre, quickly established contacts within the commercial sex trade by distributing condoms in prostitution zones. This outreach put them in touch with trans sex workers, who participated in a historic Encontro de Prostitutas (Prostitutes’ Gathering) in 1989. GAPA/RS later sponsored a discussion group for trans sex workers, which was rocked by the 1994 murder of a nineteen-year-old participant by a client. The incident led to a march against anti-trans violence in downtown Porto Alegre joined by feminist and human rights groups, as well as to a new level of public consciousness about this highly vulnerable population.

In Argentina, trans advocacy groups, such as the Transsexuales por el Derecho a la Vida y la Identidad (TRANSDEVI; Transsexuals for the Right to Life and Identity) and the Asociación de Travestis Argentinas (ATA; Argentine Transvestite Association), began with a similar focus on legal demands, including opposition to laws against cross-dressing, homosexuality, and prostitution, which were decriminalized in the Buenos Aires municipality in 1996. Further achievements followed with the 2012 passage of the country’s Ley de Identidad de Género (Gender Identity Law), which granted all citizens the automatic right to change their name and sex on their national identity cards as well as access to gender reassignment surgery without prior medical, psychiatric, or judicial intervention. Social and political sympathy for the trans cause was boosted by the steady
increase in visibility of LGBT groups and their role in the HIV/AIDS epidemic, which also led Argentina to establish marriage equality for same-sex couples in 2010.

**Legality**

The appearance of HIV/AIDS across Latin America had a marked impact on the legal status first of homosexual behavior and eventually on the civil rights and protections accorded to LGBT persons and same-sex unions. Conditions for LGBT populations in Latin America in the pre-AIDS era were generally bleak. Some antisodomy laws were repealed in the nineteenth century, but in 1999 half the region still criminalized sodomy. Other statutes for acts “against public morality” were not systematically enforced, but their existence made it easy for police to raid gay nightspots arbitrarily; most of these venues existed in a state of semiofficial tolerance facilitated by bribes. Legislators might sympathize with those advocating repeal, but attempts to do so attracted hostile attention from religious fundamentalists ready to denounce what they saw as a weakening of moral standards, and politicians were reluctant to act in favor of a stigmatized and unorganized community.

**Liberalization of LGBT-Related Laws** That changed with the consolidation of HIV-focused and LGBT rights groups whose rhetorical rallying cries echoed each other. The pace of change, although uneven in the region, has been remarkable since the 1990s. The epidemic provided a powerful argument for doing away with such laws. As early as 1989, WHO and other United Nations bodies began to link human rights and public health, and by the 1990s were urging countries to remove antisodomy laws from statute books, arguing that decriminalizing homosexual behavior and reducing stigma were key elements of sound HIV policy ([OHCHR/UNAIDS 2006](#)). By 2008, all Latin American (though not Caribbean) countries had done so.

Easing the legal ban on homosexual conduct as a public-health measure brought the debate about other discriminatory laws into public view. As in the United States and the developed world, the tragedies related to AIDS deaths led Latin American societies to rethink civil unions or marriage equality. Anecdotes of bereft gay partners losing their shared patrimony or being excluded from the bedside at crucial moments by disapproving relatives awakened many in the region to the practical consequences of leaving LGBT persons without the protections afforded by recognized unions. Marriage equality was later enshrined into law, with the Federal District of Mexico City ([2009](#)) and Argentina ([2010](#)) leading the way (Uruguay had formalized same-sex civil unions in 2008). In legislation that outstrips that of many US states, Argentina added full recognition of transgender identity in permitting citizens to select their gender description for identity documents and offering hormone therapy in public-health facilities—often supplied in transformed HIV testing sites dubbed “LGBT-friendly clinics.”

The liberalization of LGBT-related laws routinely proceeded by means of a combination of
internal and external pressure. An example is that of the CHA, which failed to obtain legal recognition as a nonprofit despite appeals all the way to the Argentine Supreme Court. Gay activists surprised Argentine president Carlos Menem during a visit to the United States in 1992 and pressed him on the issue. In response, Menem announced that he would use his discretionary powers to grant the group its charter.

**Opposition from Religious Groups** But even limited progress in this area was not linear, and weak LGBT groups, especially in Central American countries with well-connected, ideologically hostile, evangelical movements, could find themselves outmaneuvered by political operators, often based in religious groups, with links to powerful state actors. Ecuador's constitution of 1988 surprisingly included sexual orientation among its list of prohibited discrimination categories along with race, ethnicity, sex, religion, and so on—the first country in the Western Hemisphere to do so. But the victory was partially overturned a decade later when church groups campaigned intensely against enshrining LGBT and abortion rights in a new version of the constitution in which same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples were both prohibited. Similarly, LGBT gains in Venezuela's 1999 constitutional process, initiated by President Hugo Chávez, were undermined when sexual orientation was quietly dropped from the protected-group language after last-minute visits by religious figures to the main parliamentarian responsible for producing the new constitution's text ([Pecheny and Corrales 2010](#)).

Violence against LGBT persons, still widespread throughout the region, stimulated legal advances in at least one case. When a gay youth was murdered by neo-Nazis in Santiago, Chile, in 2012, the Chilean legislature dusted off an antidiscrimination bill that had lain dormant for years and hurriedly enacted it as the “Zamudio Law” in memory of the victim.

**The Fight for Access to Medical Treatment** The arrival of effective ARV medication in the mid-1990s was another key area for legal activism, especially after the 1996 Vancouver International AIDS Society conference unveiled the highly effective triple therapy “cocktail.” Legal action in this area was nearly universal throughout the region and gave LGBT-friendly advocates important experience in driving their demands through judicial or legislative channels. Most governments in Latin America refused to provide the costly new pharmaceuticals until forced to do so by the courts, and HIV/AIDS nonprofits were quick to use the judiciary to this end.

Brazil's HIV/AIDS advocates successfully pushed for coverage through lawsuits, and the country soon established the principle of universal coverage, as this was consistent with the postdictatorship constitution of 1988. Another early success occurred in Costa Rica where the government initially avoided a commitment to drug purchases until activists sponsored a series of individual lawsuits demanding access to treatment. Faced with a steady barrage of demands and sensitive to the human rights–based appeal, Costa Rica in 1997 gave in after just four months of legal wrangling. In other cases, the legal route was
stymied, requiring action by the legislative and executive branches before treatment access was ensured. Chile's judicial system did not allow for class-action precedents, resulting in the tragic phenomenon of successful rulings after some plaintiffs already were deceased. Only with the reform of the Chilean health system in 2004 did ARVs enter the formulary of universally required medications.

In poorer and more polarized countries of Central America still affected by the years of violent internal warfare, governments did little to respond to treatment needs until external resources became available, either through the Global Fund, the Clinton Global Health Initiative, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), or the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). As of 2017, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua were all beneficiaries of drug purchasing support from one or more of these sources, but the Global Fund was moving steadily to close out its programs as the countries were now classed as “lower middle-income with low or moderate disease burden” (Global Fund 2018). In these countries, HIV activism has not spilled over into success for LGBT advocacy, in part due to hostility toward human rights discourse and the heavy influence of anti-LGBT evangelical groups.

**The Anomalous Case of Haiti** One somewhat anomalous case is that of Haiti, whose population was highly stigmatized as a “risk group” at the outset of the epidemic due to a cluster of HIV-positive Haitians who seemed to fit no other risk category. AIDS became mistakenly known as the disease of the “four Hs” (homosexuals, heroin users, hemophiliacs, and Haitians), eventually leading to systematic discrimination against Haitians, including the hundreds of HIV-positive Haitian refugees who were shipped to the US naval base at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba, its inaugural use as a “no-rights” zone that later expanded for suspects linked to the events of 9/11 in the United States (Ratner 1998). HIV infection quickly spread among the impoverished Haitian population with prevalence at one point reaching 10.9 percent among pregnant women in a Port-au-Prince slum (Koenig et al. 2010).
But a strong partnership quickly arose in Haiti between local nonprofits and international partners. Haitian providers showed through key demonstration projects that ARV therapy could be delivered successfully in the poorest country in the hemisphere (Farmer et al., 2001), an important stimulus to ambitious treatment programs launched later. After building a successful community-based strategy for treating endemic tuberculosis in the country, health agencies could transition smoothly to HIV care based on a strong role for lay health educators known as accompagnateurs. Given that 40 percent of newly diagnosed HIV patients in Haiti presented with a concurrent tuberculosis diagnosis, the model was quickly adapted and extended, and Haiti built a remarkably successful HIV/AIDS prevention and care program. However, the role of LGBT advocates in the epidemic in Haiti was more marginal than elsewhere in Latin America given the predominant role of heterosexual transmission there, a trend closer to the African epidemiological pattern.

**Partnership with Health Authorities**

Some Latin American governments were quick to recognize the limits of traditional public-health approaches to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and embraced advocacy groups with a strong LGBT presence as collaborators in prevention efforts. Cooperation was encouraged by WHO, UNAIDS, and more recently the Global Fund, which wielded influence with health ministries in Latin America given the considerable resources available through them.
Where conservative governments resisted making LGBT groups into formal interlocutors, private foundation funds from entities in the United States and Europe would fill the gap and enable HIV/AIDS activists to sustain independent programs while monitoring the performance of the public sector. US charities such as the Ford Foundation and the Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR), Netherlands and British development funds, German and Scandinavian church agencies, and the Elton John AIDS Foundation, among many others, provided crucial support in the early years. While most of the work was HIV-focused, the heavy LGBT presence in these groups made a degree of overlap inevitable. Many of the foreign agencies already had experience supporting human rights defenders and other nongovernmental sectors during the years of military rule. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), USAID, and the World Bank also could leverage important donations for cooperative governments willing to work with the nongovernmental sector.

The logic of cooperation with LGBT-friendly organizations was compelling. With the epidemic heavily concentrated in the gay male population, peer education played a prominent role as groups developed their version of “safe-sex” workshops or encouraged condom use through social networks. The need for new approaches became clear because traditional public-health measures could backfire. Costa Rican health officials started to perform contact tracing in the early 1990s, as done for syphilis control, but found citizens furious at the potential breaches of privacy given the enormous stigma related to HIV as well as homosexuality. Cuba famously attempted to quarantine persons who acquired HIV infection from 1986 until 1994, at one point housing as many as ten thousand people. While the strategy was later abandoned as misguided, it drew cautious praise from conservatives who approved of the authoritarian approach and from others impressed by the favorable living conditions and medical care provided to residents.

Brazil played a special role given the historically progressive outlook of its public-health movement, which was prominent in the long struggle to end military rule there. Medical providers in São Paulo, the largest Brazilian city, promptly joined forces with LGBT leaders to promote a highly influential strategy involving community groups, academics, and the public-health apparatus, based on a human rights framework that permeated the popular discourse on HIV/AIDS worldwide. Nondiscrimination was fundamental to the strategy, including promoting sexual and gender diversity as essential rights. Brazil negotiated four quadrennial World Bank loans that injected hundreds of millions of dollars into the multifaceted program, boosting the prestige of the aforementioned “Brazilian model,” especially as the country defied predictions of a runaway epidemic rivaling the worst cases in Africa.

Cooperation with local LGBT-dominated nonprofits did not always coincide with a government’s political tendencies but rather often depended on the individual perspective of a health minister or key midlevel official. Nicaragua’s nonprofit sector had working
relations with the conservative governments in office from 1990 to 2006 and expected improvements when the Sandinista party returned to power given its revolutionary roots. But the Sandinistas proved hostile to the groups' independence and took drastic action against entities considered insufficiently loyal, such as the 2008 raid on eight nonprofits and the seizure of their computers accompanied by accusations of money laundering and spying for the United States (Human Rights Watch 2008). Brazil's nongovernmental sector flourished under the center-right government of Fernando Henrique Cardoso and the two terms of leftist Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (popularly known as “Lula”) of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT; Workers Party), but they fell out of favor under Lula’s PT successor, Dilma Rousseff.

**Religion**

The role of religious belief and religious institutions in the HIV/AIDS epidemic and by extension the LGBT movement in Latin America is multilayered. Although Catholicism is the majority tradition in the continent, evangelical Protestant groups are growing rapidly and often are influential with ruling elites, such as the military hierarchy and business conservatives.

Church rejection of homosexuality was particularly painful for HIV-positive persons who felt close to their religious traditions and actively participated in liturgical ceremonies. At the same time, religious organizations were at the forefront of many initiatives to aid those suffering from HIV-related illness in a nonjudgmental spirit. Caritas-Chile, a Catholic organization, was among the first entities to support persons with AIDS in the late 1980s, sparking virulent opposition from neighborhoods where the group intended to establish supportive housing. Caritas did not engage in prevention activities that would have led it into sensitive areas, but it offered a potent example of nondiscriminatory aid consistent with Christian belief, explicitly reminding Chileans of Gospel parables in the same vein. Thus, when the first cases appeared on the continent, it was often clergy who found ways to offer succor to persons living with HIV. This religious presence affected media treatments, which usually offered a modicum of sympathy, despite their tabloid-style approach, especially when showcasing HIV-positive children or parents of AIDS sufferers.

Furthermore, Catholic institutions are extremely varied and represent distinct theological tendencies. While Opus Dei’s sympathizers in the media or educational institutions in countries such as Peru and Chile fought to forbid condom promotion, other Catholic groups, such as Guatemala’s Pastoral Juvenil (Youth Mission), included condom education in their prevention workshops. Congregations such as the Jesuits, Franciscans, and others not part of diocesan hierarchies often acted independently to support LGBT populations and their efforts, especially where the influence of liberation theology or a tradition of defending human rights from repressive governments remained strong (Murray et al. 2011).
Leaders of Chile's first AIDS prevention nonprofit experienced the ambiguities within Catholic institutions in addressing HIV/AIDS directly. While the church hierarchy disapproved of government educational campaigns pushing condom use, and some conservative bishops denounced them in no uncertain terms, MISEREOR, a Catholic development agency in Germany, offered the organization a small stipend on the condition that it obtain a local bishop's recommendation. During an early 1990s meeting to discuss the request, a church functionary bluntly asked who constituted the group and was reassured that it had no political party affiliation and was mostly composed of gay men. The endorsement letter followed a week later.

The gradual easing of the sense of emergency about AIDS given the availability of treatment in the late 1990s has weakened the nonprofit HIV sector and its LGBT allies, and church-based conservatives who had never accepted the liberalization of social attitudes toward sex stand ready to reverse these trends. For example, Brazil's sex-friendly educational campaigns long combined appeals to caution around HIV with affirmations of sexual diversity and freedom, including the defense of sex workers (Parker 1999). But, in 2013, the evangelical bloc in the national legislature denounced a “No Shame” prevention campaign aimed at Brazilian sex workers to be launched on National Prostitute Day. The liberal PT government, reliant on the support of the evangelical bloc, pulled the advertisements.

**Conclusions**

While LGBT issues enjoyed a major boost from HIV/AIDS activism, progress against the epidemic has slowed as the social movement that arose to face it has faded. Estimated prevalence among gay and other men who have sex with men has held steady at around 10 to 17 percent throughout the region for years, and new infections reportedly are on the rise among younger gay/bisexual men (UNAIDS 2017). While activists pushed governments successfully on ARV provision, there has been little pressure to install point-of-care HIV diagnostic tests that do not require a return clinic visit, a standard procedure in the developed world.

In summary, grassroots efforts, especially those involving charitable care and assistance to ill or destitute persons, usually escaped the ire of conservative religious authorities. But attempts to institutionalize liberalized notions about sex remain sharply contested. In large part, religious conservatives have been successful in keeping comprehensive secular sex education out of national school curricula or public institutions, and the lack of preparation for sexually active youth remains a huge challenge for the region.

HIV/AIDS nonprofits and the social movement that emerged around the epidemic are in a very different environment today from the grim emergency period of the 1980s and 1990s when those infected had few treatment options and quickly fell victim to the disease. The
focus shifted back to the clinical setting once governments in the region provided physicians with powerful pharmaceuticals. ARV coverage for diagnosed persons living with HIV in Latin America was 64 percent as of 2017, a respectable figure in comparison with the developed world (De Boni et al. 2014). However, the early emphasis on understanding human sexuality and engaging with “key populations” (intravenous drug users, sex workers, and men who have sex with men) faded, partially severing the links between the epidemic and LGBT issues. Now, not all LGBT advocates accept the historical association of their cause with the HIV epidemic. Organizers of the 2010 gay pride celebrations in Porto Alegre in the south of Brazil, for example, discouraged AIDS-focused groups from participating.

The Global Fund, a major player in supporting government treatment purchases and keeping the HIV/AIDS nonprofit sector alive, has announced its intentions to pull out of most Latin American countries where per capita income is considered adequate for governments to take over the burden directly. Transitional grants intended to facilitate the transfer of responsibility to the respective governments are now being executed in several countries. But a 2017 consultant report on Panama predicted that the withdrawal could be fatal to that country’s nonprofits, which are “unlikely [to] survive” (Richardson 2017, 3).

Moreover, epidemiological monitoring reveals a persistent, even growing, epidemic reminding policy makers of the complexities of delivering lifelong treatment for a chronic disease. Undetected cases, late diagnosis, incomplete linkage to the health-care system, poor treatment adherence, and failures of viral suppression are all crucial elements in keeping the incidence curve under control— even in resource-rich settings. While partnership rights are on the agenda in some countries and demands for inclusion gain greater acceptance, HIV continues to take its toll among young—and especially poorer—gay and bisexual men. HIV will affect the movement for LGBT civil and political rights in Latin America for a long time to come.

Meanwhile, LGBT activism today in Latin America has made enormous strides, in part due to the boost provided by the HIV epidemic. But the contrasts among countries remain vast. In 2008 Brazil’s president, Lula da Silva, inaugurated the I Conferência Nacional de Gays, Lésbicas, Bissexuais, Travestis e Transexuais (First National Conference of Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transgendered, and Transsexuals) with a keynote speech. In 2016 Buenos Aires authorities named a subway station for gay rights pioneer Carlos Jáuregui.

At the same time, the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reported that 594 murders motivated by sexual orientation or gender expression occurred in the Western Hemisphere in a little over a year during the 2013 to 2014 period. Honduras has the unenviable distinction of being the most dangerous country in the hemisphere in general and for LGBT activism in particular, with many LGBT Hondurans forced into exile. Erick Martínez Ávila, a Honduran journalist and spokesperson for the LGBT group Asociación
Kukulcán (Kukulcán Association), was kidnapped by heavily armed men and assassinated in 2012. The murder remains unsolved.


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With 5 million infected people as of 2017, Asia has the second-largest continental population of people with HIV, after Africa (UNAIDS 2017). While most countries in Asia have an overall prevalence of around or below 0.5 percent, rates are as high as 30 percent in communities of men who have sex with men (MSM) in certain regions of South and Southeast Asia (SASEA) (van Griensven and de Lind van Wijngaarden 2010). Moreover, while rates of new infection dropped by 13 percent across Asia in 2016 (Avert 2017), they increased by as much as 60 percent in MSM communities in SASEA countries during the same period (van Griensven and de Lind van Wijngaarden 2010). Scholars of the epidemic point out that criminalization, social exclusion, stigma, lack of access to medication and interventions, exposure to risky environments, and substance use constitute a formidable set of challenges that have increased the vulnerability of MSM and transgender communities in this region (Cácares, Aggleton, and Galea 2008; S. Khan 2001).

Queer communities are embedded in cultural and legal environments that vary greatly across the region. (The use of the term queer here refers to the spectrum of gender- and sexually fluid communities subjected to categorization by the state, but whose lived experiences and political engagements often transgress those categories [Halperin 2008]). While countries like Bangladesh enforce strict legal bans on transgender communities and same-sex unions (S.I. Khan et al. 2009), Vietnam has no such legal restrictions in place (Horton, Rydstrøm, and Tonini 2015). India has witnessed recent legal battles around the ban on oral and anal sex, even while transgender (sometimes known as hijra) communities have enjoyed some level of visibility historically (S. Khan 2001; Misra 2009). In Thailand,
the transgender community has carved out a niche for itself in public life, but it continues to be stigmatized and rendered legally invisible (Jackson and Sullivan 2015).

With HIV initiatives increasingly focusing on sexually marginalized communities to stop the spread of the disease in the SASEA region, gay, transgender, and MSM communities have gained visibility as objects of intervention (Cácares, Aggleton, and Galea 2008; S. Khan 2001; Trapence et al. 2012). There is some question as to whether this attention has helped to animate a movement around sexuality in this region, as well as the question of whether state intervention has helped dismantle closets or instead has constructed new, segregated spaces for queer communities in SASEA countries. We examine these questions by reviewing the scholarship on HIV in this region, especially where queer communities enter the arena in the fight against the epidemic.

**Civil Society in the SASEA Region**

Unpacking the manner in which HIV initiatives have engaged with sexuality movements necessitates an examination of the role played by HIV/AIDS-related service organizations in the SASEA region. HIV scholars often (and perhaps loosely) refer to the field occupied by these service organizations as civil society (Trapence et al. 2012), assuming that these organizations enhance the voice and visibility of those they serve. The question remains, however, as to whether or not these organizations constitute a true civil society in the classical sense of the term, where the state responds to the needs and demands of the people. We explore this question further by interrogating the role of civil society in SASEA countries and the manner in which HIV service organizations operate in this type of space.

In the context of South Asia, conceptions of civil society have been concerned with the way inequality and poverty restrict access to civil society, as an associational space shaped by historically hierarchical familial and communitarian codes (Kaviraj 2001; Mahajan 1999).
Contemplating the different formulations of civil society that have emerged in the literature, Carolyn M. Elliott (2003) notes that in India arguments about civil society and its salience have focused on the extent to which it is able to extend democracy into the margins of society. She notes that political society—the space where claims are made and responded to by the state—is often not concurrent with a civil space that is inaccessible to most communities. Some commentators caution against the injection of political sensibilities into a civil society marked by democratic processes, worried about the possibility of illiberal and communal forces co-opting democratic apparatuses (Beteille 2003; Rudolph 2000; Varshney 2003). At times, civil society becomes the site for the implementation of state policies. Scholars studying civil society in Vietnam for instance, note that nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are closely monitored by both the state and its extension, the Communist Party (Gray 1999; Kerkvliet 1995). Civil society in these forms is seldom removed from the monitoring or the dictates of the state.

Seeking to recover the political from engagements with the state, Partha Chatterjee (2008) argues that marginalized communities in India make their claims in political society, a space that is distinct from civil society.

The latter, he argues, influenced by the vectors of development and the logics of the market, has lost the possibility of being the site where people engage politically and productively with the state. Chatterjee notes that political society—where claims are staked out by the poor and responded to by the state—is distinct and separate from civil society. Tracking the forces that create political society, he describes the manner in which the state uses technologies of surveillance to identify populations marked by dimensions of deprivation and risk. Populations, in turn, organize strategically around these “need” categories, engaging the state by making claims around their identified areas of deprivation. Often, this type of political identification (on the part of the state) and claims-making (on the part of populations) culminates in accommodations by the state, whereby quasi-legal arrangements are agreed to, so that members of a particular population can continue to survive.

However, Chatterjee’s formulation also delineates some limiting conditions for political possibilities. The needs around which the engagement between state and the people occurs are basic and simplistic categories of deprivation, and do not appear to take into account the interweaving tapestry of disparity that marks people living on the margins. As a result of this, and the strategies deployed by people to fit into these categories, political society is a statistically created community rather than one enunciated by deeply shared experiences and communitarian bonds. Finally, Chatterjee warns that political victories are often ephemeral, disappearing with a change in government or a reversal of quasi-formal policies.

Chatterjee’s concept of political society presents a useful analytical tool to examine the way
in which mobilization around HIV needs helped the LGBT community in South and Southeast Asia organize around sexuality issues. We review the scholarship on HIV and sexuality in this region by tracing the statistical surveillance state as described by Chatterjee, and then examining the way communities identified by this process organized around sexuality.

**HIV/AIDS and Surveillance Society**

The state focus on managing HIV, as enunciated by Chatterjee and other scholars, is evident in the scholarship on surveillance of the epidemic. Epidemiological studies from Vietnam to Nepal have tracked the disease, identifying communities at risk, those that pose risk, and those that act as bridges that enable the disease to jump between populations. These “sentinel” programs described a disease that spread very quickly in the early 1990s.

**Identifying Communities at Risk** In India, scholars have noted that the epidemic resides in gay communities, cautioning readers on the risk of spread of the disease because of the shame and stigma surrounding living with HIV and the maladaptive ways in which gay men cope with it (Jethwani et al. 2014). Alcohol and injection drug use are consistently identified as further risk factors, increasing the likelihood of unsafe sex and use of unclean drug paraphernalia (Yadav et al. 2014; Shaw et al. 2016).

Alix Adrien and his colleagues (2013) describe the establishment in Pakistan of a groundbreaking surveillance system to track the epidemic, one that has identified some of the same risk communities as in India: MSM, injection drug users (IDUs), and sex workers (Altaf, Zahidie, and Agha 2012; Emmanuel et al. 2013b; Emmanuel 2013a; S. Singh et al. 2014). As in India, transmission of the disease has been ascribed to risky sex, risky communities (such as sex workers and IDUs), and risky sex with risky communities (unprotected sex with IDUs and sex workers) (Collumbien et al. 2009; Khanani et al. 2011). The surveillance system has allowed researchers to identify where some of these communities are geographically located: Muhammad R. Khanani and colleagues (2011) note, for instance, that one of the highest risk communities of MSM and IDUs can ironically be found around the original Mohenjo Daro excavation sites in Pakistan: humanity’s cradle of early civilization.

Similar surveillance systems in Bangladesh, Nepal, and Vietnam have identified the same communities as being at particular risk. While HIV rates are generally low nationally in Bangladesh and Nepal, prevalence is high in sex worker, IDU, and transgender communities (Oldenburg et al. 2016; Chan and Khan 2007; Deuba et al. 2013; Oli, Onta, and Dhakal 2012).

Thailand, the country with the highest HIV prevalence in Southeast Asia, set up a system in the early 1990s that tracked the rapid increase in HIV rates among sex workers and IDUs.
According to the national sentinel system, and records maintained by the army, almost 2 percent of women presenting for prenatal care and 4 percent of male army recruits were testing positive for HIV by the early 1990s (Rojanapithayakorn and Hanenberg 1996). The surveys identified certain geographical regions with an even greater burden of the disease: almost 13 percent of army recruits and 5 percent of pregnant women in urban areas were infected with HIV. Recent scholarship highlights populations at even higher risk: Almost 21 percent of young men (between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four) who have sex with men were HIV positive in a 2006–2014 study (Thienkrua et al. 2017).

In Vietnam, almost 18 percent of women-identified transgender people are infected (Bao et al. 2016), with prevalence as high as 33 percent in sex-worker communities (Tuan et al. 2008). Injecting drugs, selling sex, being twenty to forty years old, having fewer than six years of education, and having more than five male anal sex partners in the past month were associated with being HIV-infected. MSM who had ever married, were exclusively or frequently receptive, sometimes consumed alcohol before sex, and/or frequently used condoms during anal sex in the past three months were less likely to be infected with HIV. Recreational drug use is strongly associated with HIV infection among MSM in southern Vietnam (T. V. Nguyen et al. 2016).

The scholarship on risky communities indicates at times certain practices in communities of MSM that render them at greater risk for infection. In India, for instance, identifying as a kothi (a person who predominantly has anal receptive sex) is associated with significantly higher rates of infection (Ramanathan et al. 2014; Saha et al. 2015; Setia 2009; Yadav et al. 2014). Unmarried men are more likely to identify as kothis among men who have sex with men (Hemmige et al. 2011; Mayer et al. 2015) and are at greater risk than men who have sex with both men and women (Ramakrishnan 2015).

In contrast, women-identified transgender people in Thailand appear to be at slightly lower risk of infection, with an HIV prevalence of 9 percent compared to 16 percent among gay-identified men (Chariyalertsak et al. 2011). Similarly, receptive anal sex appears to be a protective factor with respect to HIV infection among MSM in Vietnam, possibly because they have higher rates of condom use during sex (T. A. Nguyen et al. 2007).

** Parsing Out Risk: “At” Risk and “Being” Risky ** In addition to identifying the gay and transgender community as being at-risk of infection, this scholarship identifies the factors that make these communities “risky” in terms of their potential to transmit the disease to others. Studying the community of MSM in Nepal, Keshab Deuba and his coauthors (2013) note that the absence of condom use was significantly associated with nonparticipation in HIV interventions, experience of physical and sexual violence, depression, repeated suicidal thoughts, a small social support network, and dissatisfaction with social support. In Vietnam, mental illness and alcohol use are associated with transgender people not getting tested for HIV (Bao 2016). These psychosocial variables and behaviors are identified as
factors fueling the spread of the epidemic.

A considerable portion of the scholarship on transmission of the disease focuses on “bridge” populations: groups of HIV-infected people who act as vectors of transmission from one community to another. At times, this entails the physical transport of the disease across geographical areas. Studying the way the disease has spread in Pakistan, Jan Willem de Lind van Wijngaarden and Bettina T. Schunter (2014) identify truck routes as highways for the disease itself, with young men who serve as assistants to truck drivers being engaged as sex workers traveling these routes. The authors note that these young men, often coerced into sex with male drivers initially, are highly vulnerable to the infection and at risk of spreading it. Similarly, in Bangladesh, Akm Masud Rana and coauthors (2016) identify cross-border mobility among sex workers as a way in which the infection is transported across countries.

Other bridging acts highlighted in the surveillance literature involve those who have sex with different communities simultaneously. In India, scholars have documented the manner in which bisexual men connect MSM and women, transporting the infection from one community to the other (Godbole et al. 2014; Ramakrishnan et al. 2015). Martine Collumbien and her coauthors (2009) note that in Pakistan, MSM who are married to women and also have sex with male IDUs who are infected are responsible for the spread of the infection between these two populations. In Nepal, almost a third of men under the age of twenty who have sex with men also have multiple women sexual partners (S. K. Singh et al. 2013), while in Vietnam the same proportion of MSM report having sex with women partners (Garcia et al. 2014).

The surveillance regime described above adheres to the tenets of the initial stages of Chatterjee’s political society. The question remains as to whether states and HIV agencies in the SASEA region complete the configuration by negotiating around basic survival needs when they engage with these risk group categories. Moreover, as they do so, the crucial question that emerges is whether these negotiations open the door for a voice and a substantive social movement for LGBT communities.

Deepening Democracy through HIV Service Organizations

Proponents of the view that NGOs in civil society help to deepen democracy and inclusion point to the support these agencies have received to engage in precisely this process from institutions such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, the United Nations (UN), and the US government. Enunciating the effective manner in which this has happened in the HIV/AIDS field, Gift Trapence and his coauthors (2012) note that the WHO issued guidelines that “health services should be made inclusive of MSM and transgender people, based on the principles of medical ethics and the right to health.” Similarly, the World Bank and President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the US
government’s initiative to battle the epidemic globally, have issued important stipulations to include local organizations of MSM in HIV intervention efforts (Beyrer et al. 2011; PEPFAR 2011). Trapence and his coauthors (2012) note that the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria, the initiative of Western governments to fight infectious diseases in the Global South, stipulates the enunciation of the role of community-based organizations in proposals submitted by countries (see also Csete 2011).

Trapence and his coauthors (2012) argue that these state-led initiatives, with muscular support from institutions of the Global North, have helped to cement the role of community-based agencies that work with gay and transgender communities. In India, for instance, they note that an organization called Pehchan (or “recognition”) is working with seventeen state governments to develop 200 community-based organizations to provide HIV services to 453,000 members of the MSM and transgender communities. Similarly, the Avahan initiative, a partnership between the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Indian government, utilized peers from at-risk communities to engage people around safe-sex practices (Ramanathan et al. 2014). In Maharashtra, one of the states in India with the highest prevalence of HIV, especially in MSM and transgender communities, the initiative was able to showcase the effectiveness of utilizing community members by reaching 90 percent of the community and significantly raising the frequency of condom use during sex. In recent years, this state-based approach has been supplemented by some of the top companies in the corporate sector allocating funds to support HIV initiatives under the banner of engaging in corporate social responsibility (Gautam and Singh 2010).

Partnerships between the state and local organizations allowed organizations working with gay communities to gain a voice in Nepal and the Philippines. The Blue Diamond Society gained prominence for protesting discriminatory state practices against LGBT communities in Nepal, while in the Philippines the TLF Sexuality, Health, and Rights Educators Collective helped to extend HIV services to sexual minority communities (Trapence et al. 2012). At times however, even highly effective HIV programs initiated by the state appear to have no effect on queer rights in a country. Thailand’s “100% condom use” program has been touted as a model state intervention that has effectively engaged a wide range of vulnerable communities in the country (Rojanapithayakorn and Hanenberg 1996). However, Peter A. Jackson and Gerard Sullivan (2015) note that, despite enjoying a fair measure of visibility and tolerance in Thai culture, transgender and MSM communities have no sociopolitical standing and are systematically segregated into exoticized and therefore “othered” spaces.

Interventions like the ones described above, implemented as they are by governments, mark a type of civil society that develops out of support from the state and international entities such as the UN and the World Bank. Nancy L. Rosenblum (2003) notes that this is a particularly statist brand of civil society, with NGOs becoming instruments of the state, and she wonders to what extent it is actually inclusive of communities living on the margins. In
order to shed further light on the way queer voices emerge in the encounter between the
state and medically at-risk communities, we examine more closely, the trajectory of HIV
management in two countries: Vietnam and India.

**HIV Management and Queer Mobilization in Vietnam** The lineage of civil society
institutions in Vietnam traces back to French colonial times, when the government sought
to curb anticolonial mobilization by allowing only monitored associations to establish
themselves. Postindependence, the communist state sought to make these associations a
central mechanism of engagement with the public. Encouraged by the state, NGOs
proliferated and were well supported by the government, as long as they were officially
registered. Whereas undesired social practices were made public and brought into the
ambit of the law in India, in Vietnam they were indicted as corrupt influences infiltrating
from foreign (and presumably capitalist) sources (Horton, Rydstrøm, and Tonini 2015).
Tarnished ideologically as corrupt social evils and relegated to spaces extraneous to that
inhabited by the state and society, practices such as men having sex with men did not need
to be combatted through law. However, the Vietnamese state's emergent efforts to manage
these practices look strikingly similar to those in India. As predicted by Chatterjee (2008),
there is an intense level of statistical surveillance to identify “at-risk,” “risky,” and “bridge”
populations, as described in the previous section. International agencies and NGOs funded
by the government engage with these populations, seeking to reduce behaviors that are
deemed to be risky. In the course of these initiatives, a community of MSM starts to emerge
into visibility, but only as subjects of HIV management.

Paul Horton, Helle Rydstrøm, and Maria Tonini (2015) note that organizations engaging
with issues of sexuality had to strategically fit into this management regime, simplifying
identities in order to shoehorn themselves into HIV-focused agencies working with
gayidentified “risky” populations. Alternatively, LGBT collectives and associations had to
link themselves to registered NGOs working on HIV, subject to that agency's stipulations in
order to share in resources. Both formulations have had a constraining effect on the
potential emergence of a true sexuality movement focused on the complex issues and rights
of a sexual minority community.

**HIV Management and Social Movements in India** The intersection of HIV care and the
fight for rights for sexually marginalized communities came to a head in India around the
movement to resist Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. A statute brought forward from
colonial times, Section 377 sought to impose Victorian values by criminalizing “carnal acts
against the order of nature.” Scholars note that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender
communities, as well as sex workers, were disproportionately targeted by the act over the
years prior to the Indian Supreme Court ruling that it could no longer be used to prosecute
same-sex sexual activity. (Misra 2009; Kotiswaran 2011). In essence, the statute created
two types of sexual acts: those that are left unmonitored, and those that are brought out of
the privacy of the home and under the purview of the law. In this, Section 377 enunciated a
juridical process established by the British in India: “making public” certain acts in order to monitor them (Chatterjee 2013; Kotiswaran 2011), while creating exceptions for other acts that were left untouched in the realm of the private. Such a distinction left actually violent acts, such as domestic battery and domestic rape, undismantled. However, in targeting the LGBT community as criminal subjects, Section 377 eventually clashed with the surveillance goals of another intervention: the need to manage the HIV-related risk behaviors of men who had sex with men.

In 1992, animated by the threat of the HIV epidemic, the Indian government established the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO), the department charged with fighting the epidemic (Horton, Rydstrøm, and Tonini 2015). In 1999, fueled by funding from the UN and other international NGOs, the government embarked on a national program to intervene in the activities of some high-risk groups identified in the surveillance systems discussed in the previous section. This was a time marked by a profusion of HIV-related NGOs that sprang up all over the country to engage with communities at risk of HIV infection. It bears noting that the tradition of NGOs engaging with local populations traces back to colonial times in India, with the British government maintaining control over these organizations through mandated registering and monitoring procedures. Current governance in the postcolonial Indian nation-state has continued to rely on registered local agencies to engage with populations in need. In this, we see Chatterjee's (2008) notion of governmentality enunciating the way the state engages with the community.

Around this time, Naz Foundation International, a British-based (and British-funded) NGO, started targeting HIV risk among MSM in India (S. Khan 2001; Misra 2009). Fueled by the surveillance data that demonstrated the vulnerability of the MSM community, Naz was setting up various posts in Delhi and other parts of the country to distribute condoms and engage MSM in the fight against the epidemic. In 2001 Naz staff members who were working in concert with the state AIDS agency to engage MSM were arrested for running a gay sex club, in contravention of Section 377. The arrests sparked nationwide protests, fueling the fight against Section 377. Rejuvenating a legal initiative that had faltered, Naz teamed up with a legal agency called the Lawyers Collective to file a petition against 377 on behalf of the LGBT community, arguing that it violated the right to equality, to be free of sex discrimination, to fundamental liberties, and to life and privacy (Puri 2009). In September 2018 the Indian Supreme Court struck down the criminalization of same-sex sexual activity under Section 377.

Around the same time that Naz was mobilizing to engage the MSM community in the mid-1990s, the surveillance strategies identified in the previous section had uncovered another risky community: sex workers, or prostitutes as they were commonly referred to at the time. In Calcutta (now Kolkata), the state health department engaged women sex workers in Sonagachi, one of Asia’s largest red-light districts, to collaborate on an educational project to reduce risky sex (Basu et al. 2004). Soon thereafter, the sex workers formed the
Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (DMSC), a collective that engaged the state around other issues pertinent to the community. In time, DMSC became one of the world’s leading voices in the movement to decriminalize sex work. Arguing that sex work is legitimate labor, DMSC established its own microbanking cooperative, primary health-care and legal aid services, schools for the children in the community, and a printing press (Ghose et al. 2008). Counting 65,000 members as part of its union, DMSC was appointed to a committee to protect the rights of sex workers by the Indian Supreme Court in 2011 (Ghose 2012). It has since extended its advocacy to include other marginalized people, including the LGBT community. In 2016 DMSC established an LGBT parliament that brought together sexual minority groups from across the spectrum and across the state of West Bengal. Given its prominence in the national and international spheres, DMSC’s advocacy has the potential to transform the political environment surrounding sexuality in India.

**Assessing the Statist Brand of HIV Intervention in SASEA**

The surveillance machinery that was activated by the HIV epidemic identified various risk communities in SASEA countries. They were remarkably similar across the region, and turned the spotlight—in some cases for the first time—on queer communities. As Chatterjee (2008) notes, this was the first step in creating a space for political society—one where queer communities were engaged with the state. This essay identifies three types of engagement that developed from that initial encounter: a statist intervention narrowly focused on managing the HIV epidemic; an intervention program that identifies categories of need, which allows sexuality to strategically (if narrowly) enter the conversation; and finally, an intervention environment that is powerfully utilized by queer social movements to transcend the boundaries of political society and shape the institutions of civil society.

The Thai “100% condom use” program and the Avahan initiative in India are perhaps the best examples of the statist brand of HIV intervention. While enjoying comprehensive coverage, and at times targeting high-risk transgender communities, there is no room for local NGOs to mobilize around sexuality. State funding for these initiatives has not been channeled into human rights–based movements as outgrowths of the original initiative. While future research needs to unpack this process, we speculate that such a single-minded focus is a result of heightened involvement of the state and strict monitoring of the HIV programs.

In certain parts of the SASEA region, HIV initiatives have incorporated community-based organizations and given them more leeway to operate around the management of the epidemic. This has allowed MSM- and transgender-based service organizations to turn the spotlight on issues of sexuality and human rights. HIV management programs in Vietnam are the prime example of this process, with funding being siphoned off to sexuality-based organizations that strategically position themselves in the disease-management regime. This maneuvering of the medical initiative process has even allowed queer communities in
very repressive environments like Pakistan and Bangladesh to gain some measure of foothold in the national consciousness, putting them in the line to receive services from the state. In certain situations, the nuanced gender and sexuality differences within queer communities have gained attention, making visible such communities as the kothi and hijra in India, the meti in Nepal, the kathoey in Thailand, and the bakla and badin in the Philippines.

This second strand of HIV initiatives that subsequently allow queer communities to mobilize around sexuality is a classic example of Chatterjee's (2008) political society. Risk communities are statistically identified by the state, allowing transgender and MSM populations to be invited to the table in risk-management efforts. These populations then strategically utilize this visibility to add claims around sexuality rights into the equation. At times, political society is effective in establishing the legitimacy and visibility of queer groups to the state, at the least, persuading it to turn a blind eye to previously criminalized sexual acts.

For all its effectiveness though, these strategies are constrained by the same boundaries that rein in political society: They demand a shoehorning of complex sexual identities into simplistic categories, with victories being temporary and dependent on vanguard organizations paving the way (Horton, Rydstrøm, and Tonini 2015). Moreover, cisgendered (identified as female at birth) lesbian women almost never get a voice in these political accommodations, since they are seldom the focus of HIV risk-management efforts.

The final trajectory of the development of HIV management efforts holds out some promise for a full-blown social movement being animated by state initiatives. Naz and DMSC started out in classical political society in India and then skipped over the wall, keeping the political away from institutional civil society. Both these collectives were able to transcend the limiting conditions of political society and are reshaping the laws and policies around sexuality in the country. While future research needs to delve into these processes, we call attention to the strategic manner in which these organizations became what Ashutosh Varshney (2003) describes as civically integrated organizations, bringing together queer communities (and their complex issues) with those targeted by state management efforts. If they continue to be successful “civic bridges,” avoiding the pitfall of becoming oppressive or co-opted regimes in their new capacity as vanguard organizations, they will continue to uncover effective strategies to mobilize around sexuality.

**SEE ALSO** HIV/AIDS; HIV/AIDS in Africa; HIV/AIDS in Egyptian Cinema; HIV/AIDS in Europe; HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean; HIV/AIDS in the United States; MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia; Naz Foundation International; Section 377 in South Asia; Sex Work in Asia

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Doctors first recognized AIDS as a cluster of rare infections among gay men in the summer of 1981. These men lived in cities such as New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, which had large gay communities. Many were young and otherwise apparently healthy, so doctors were confused when they showed up in the hospital with infections that usually affect people with compromised immune systems. These were the first cases in an as-yet-unnamed epidemic, which would be referred to as GRID (gay-related immunodeficiency) before the Centers for Disease Control settled on the name AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) in 1982. By 2016 the disease had claimed 35 million lives worldwide, and another 36.7 million were living with HIV, the retrovirus that causes AIDS.

The epidemic has affected various LGBTQ groups differently. Gay and bisexual men, transgender women, and intravenous drug users have been hit the hardest by HIV/AIDS. Bisexual men have furthermore been stigmatized as the source of a possible widespread outbreak among heterosexuals. On the whole, lesbians experience relatively low rates of HIV infection but serve as caretakers for infected gay friends. Black, Latino, and poor LGBTQ people have also been affected by HIV/AIDS at greater rates than their white counterparts.

AIDS nearly wiped out an entire generation of gay and bisexual men and transgender women, robbing the LGBTQ rights movement of vital and challenging voices. At the same time, AIDS brought a new cohort of gay activists “out of the closets and into the streets” ([Queer Resources Directory 1994](https://www.queerresourcesdirectory.com)). The advent of a deadly sexually transmitted disease seemed to spell the end of gay liberation but also engendered a new gay sexual ethic. AIDS exposed widespread enmity toward gay life but also aroused popular sympathy for the sick and dying. The epidemic resulted in laws that limited the freedom of HIV-positive people but also arguably fueled public acceptance of gays and lesbians, leading to widespread support for openly gay military service and same-sex marriage.

**Early Responses**
In the early years of the epidemic, medical researchers worked to find the cause of AIDS and to map its spread. However, little public money was available for education and prevention programs in the communities most affected. The onset of the epidemic followed closely on the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980, and conservative players in the new administration opposed any response to AIDS that condoned sex outside of marriage, much less sex between gay men. The lack of an effective federal response to the epidemic shaped grassroots responses to the disease and in later years would fuel the growth of a direct-action AIDS movement.

**AIDS Service Organizations** As more and more cases of the mysterious new disease emerged, gay men created their own organizations to confront the growing crisis. In some cities they formed entirely new groups, such as the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and Gay Men’s Health Crisis in New York City. Elsewhere they worked through existing gay and lesbian health groups, such as Philadelphia Community Health Alternatives and the Whitman-Walker Clinic in Washington, DC.

These groups educated local gay communities about the new disease. Many groups established AIDS hotlines to answer questions, distributed condoms and educational literature to gay bars, and designed ad campaigns to encourage safe sex. They also brought comfort and assistance to the sick. People with AIDS faced the loss of independence and financial ruin, as the disease left many unable to work and care for themselves. AIDS organizations thus established “buddy” programs that paired people with AIDS with volunteers who could help with basic chores while offering friendship and emotional support. Some groups also offered small grants to help people with AIDS pay medical or utility bills, and others established housing facilities where people with AIDS could find shelter and receive medical care.

While the first AIDS service organizations began as grassroots efforts to confront a new and terrifying disease, they soon grew into large nonprofit groups with paid staff, outside funding, and contracts with local and state governments. By the mid-1980s these groups began to draw criticism for their alleged reluctance to upset major funders by challenging the political status quo. As the demographics of the epidemic shifted toward communities of color and the poor, established AIDS organizations also came under fire for their orientation toward predominantly white and well-off gay communities.

**Safe Sex** The onset of the AIDS epidemic sparked a contentious debate within gay communities about their sexual culture. In the early days of the crisis, no one knew what caused the disease or how it was transmitted, but the exchange of bodily fluids during sex seemed to play a role. Some, such as the writer and Gay Men’s Health Crisis cofounder Larry Kramer (1935–), saw the epidemic as the result of the sexual excesses of the 1970s. He warned that if gay men did not significantly curtail their sex lives, they could be wiped out altogether. Others accused men such as Kramer of playing into the conservative
argument that AIDS was a punishment for gay men’s sinful lifestyles.

Some looked for ways that gay men could reduce their risk of getting sick while continuing to have sex. In 1983 Richard Berkowitz (1955–) and Michael Callen (1955–1993) published their booklet *How to Have Sex in an Epidemic*, in which they advised gay men on how to alter their sexual practices in order to reduce their risk of contracting AIDS. Among other things, they advised gay men to use condoms during intercourse, limit their number of sexual partners, and form “jerk-off clubs” where men could masturbate together without exchanging bodily fluids.

AIDS also took a toll on the health of gay men who did not exhibit symptoms. Researchers and service providers referred to them as the “worried well”—otherwise healthy men suffering from anxiety and grief because of the epidemic. For some, antigay stigma surrounding the epidemic dredged up feelings of shame and internalized homophobia. Others felt isolated by the end of the public sexual culture, as well as the loss of scores of friends.

In response, in the mid-1980s Michael Shernoff (1951–2008) and Luis Palacios-Jiménez (1952–1989) developed “Hot, Horny and Healthy!,” a workshop to help gay men work through their sense of loss while learning safe-sex techniques. They took a sex-positive approach, emphasizing that different sexual practices carried different levels of risk for HIV transmission. Shernoff claimed to have presented the workshop to tens of thousands of men across North America. “Hot, Horny and Healthy!” was also adapted for specific use with gay men of color by Phill Wilson (1956–) for the National Task Force on AIDS Prevention. Such programs, however, drew the ire of conservatives such as the Republican senator Jesse Helms (1921–2008), who opposed the use of federal funds for programs that would “promote, encourage, and condone homosexual sexual activities” (quoted in Petro 2015, 74).

**Self-Determination** People with AIDS also fought to determine how the disease was talked about and treated. The movement for self-determination began simultaneously in New York and San Francisco but crystallized at the Second National AIDS Forum, held in Denver in 1983. There, activists, including Callen and San Francisco nurse Bobbi Campbell (1952–1984), met in a hotel suite to discuss their concerns. They produced the Denver Principles, a set of demands for the treatment of people with AIDS.

These principles owed much to the feminist health movement of the 1970s. They rejected the labels “victim” and “patient,” which suggested “passivity, helplessness, and dependence upon the care of others,” in favor of “people with AIDS” (Advisory Committee of People with AIDS 1983). They also set forth recommendations for compassionate medical treatment and encouraged people with AIDS to become their own advocates in dealing with the media and AIDS service groups.
Upon returning home Callen, Campbell, and others formed the National Association of People with AIDS (NAPWA) to advocate for the empowerment of HIV positive people. They took their slogan, “Fighting for Our Lives,” from a banner carried during the first candlelight vigil for AIDS in San Francisco. The Denver Principles influenced later AIDS activism, including demands by the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) for greater involvement of people with AIDS in HIV research. Although the NAPWA shut down in 2013 on account of bankruptcy, the Denver Principles continue to guide AIDS activists and policy makers.

**AIDS and Civil Liberties**

AIDS engendered a political crisis, as well as a medical one. While gay activists pressed for a federal response geared toward research, education, and prevention, their opponents pressed for very different forms of governmental action, including quarantine, criminalization, and censorship. This, combined with the conservatism of the Reagan administration, raised fears of a widespread crackdown on gay civil liberties.

**Bathhouse Closures** Early on in the AIDS crisis, policy makers and gay leaders alike focused their attention on bathhouses, commercial establishments where men went to have sex with other men. They debated whether these establishments should be regulated or closed down altogether. For gay activists, the fight over bathhouses raised questions about the future of the gay community. Advocates for closure pointed to the growing numbers of sick and dying and argued that gay men were putting “careless sex” ahead of collective survival. Their opponents defended the baths as a key part of the sexually liberated gay culture that had emerged during the 1970s. In their view, closure would betray gains made in the fight for gay cultural autonomy.

The bathhouse issue also raised questions about the balance between public health and civil liberties. In the middle decades of the twentieth century, the US Supreme Court had enshrined the right to privacy through a series of landmark decisions. Did that right extend to commercial establishments where people engaged in intimate behavior? Some public health officials and gay activists argued that it did and that regulating the bathhouses would invite further state intervention in gay men’s private lives. Some of those who advocated closure were also wary of state power and instead advocated for voluntary self-regulation.

Local officials tried to close at least some establishments. After being initially opposed to closure, Mervyn Silverman, San Francisco’s director of health, decided to shut down the city’s baths in 1984. His decision was rejected by a local judge, who allowed the baths to remain open but required them to educate patrons about safe sex. In contrast, the New York Supreme Court upheld New York City’s decision to close the New St. Marks Baths in Manhattan.
The Threat of Quarantine Some also worried that people showing AIDS symptoms would be isolated under the aegis of public health. Such fears were not mere fantasy. In 1986 California voters considered a proposal that would have empowered health authorities to quarantine people with HIV and AIDS. The ballot measure ultimately failed but only after an expensive and high-profile campaign. In addition, polling at times showed widespread public support for the isolation of people with AIDS, as well as other repressive measures.

Such proposals, combined with the growing number of deaths from AIDS, invited comparisons between the conservative response to the epidemic and the Holocaust. AIDS activists seized on the parallels. In 1987 a group of New York artists plastered the city with posters featuring a pink triangle, which authorities in Nazi Germany had used to identify gay men, and the words “Silence = Death” in white block letters. The posters warned that political apathy might lead to the mass imprisonment of people with AIDS and that government inaction on the disease constituted genocide.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SIGNIFYIN' WORKS

Marlon Riggs (front) with the Cast of Tongues Untied (1989). Filmmaker Marlon Riggs explored the impact of AIDS on black gay men in his documentary Tongues Untied.

The New York chapter of ACT UP, which would adopt “Silence = Death” as a movement image, dramatized these arguments with their float in the 1987 New York City Gay/Lesbian
Pride Parade. Members rode on a truck made up to look like a concentration camp, with barbed wire and marchers dressed as prison guards. Some AIDS activists objected to this use of Holocaust imagery, but the group’s theatrical tactics proved effective at drawing attention to the crisis.

**HIV Criminalization** Many states have passed laws criminalizing HIV transmission. These laws remain on the books even though the science of HIV prevention and treatment has evolved significantly. Public health professionals also argue that these laws increase HIV stigma, making people less likely to seek out testing and treatment.

Laws that criminalize HIV exposure and transmission vary from state to state. Some impose harsher penalties for certain crimes if the person convicted is HIV positive. Others specifically criminalize *intentional* exposure of another person to HIV or make it illegal merely not to disclose one’s HIV-positive status before having sex or sharing needles. A significant number of people have also been convicted under HIV criminalization laws for actions—such as biting or spitting—that carry virtually no risk of HIV transmission.

People of color, gay and bisexual men, and transgender women are overrepresented among people with HIV and are also disproportionately affected by HIV criminalization. Studies suggest, however, that racial biases exacerbate the impact of such laws. Blacks and Latinos are more likely to come into contact with the criminal justice system because of their HIV status, and they receive significantly harsher sentences under HIV criminalization statutes than their white counterparts.

**Art and Censorship** The art world was especially affected by AIDS, and gay artists such as Keith Haring (1958–1990) and Félix González-Torres (1957–1996) created arresting responses to the epidemic. However, as with Helms’s antipathy toward sexually explicit AIDS prevention, this work drew criticism from conservatives who objected to the use of federal funds to support “obscene” art.

David Wojnarowicz (1954–1992), who died of AIDS complications, used art to explore the devastation of the epidemic, as well as his own illness. His work first drew the attention of social conservatives in the late 1980s as part of the broader “culture wars.” Wojnarowicz’s use of a crucifix in the short film *A Fire in My Belly* again sparked an outcry in 2010 when it was included in an exhibit at the National Portrait Gallery. In response, the museum’s curator removed the work from the exhibit.

Similarly, the documentary filmmaker Marlon Riggs (1957–1994) explored the impact of AIDS on black gay men in his 1989 film *Tongues Untied*. When the sexually explicit film aired on the Public Broadcasting Service series *P.O.V.*, some local affiliates declined to show it. Republicans in the US Congress also criticized the National Endowment for the Arts, which funded the series, for having awarded Riggs a $5,000 grant. Riggs died from AIDS
complications in 1994.

AIDS and Communities of Color

By the mid-1980s it was becoming clear that AIDS disproportionately affected people of color, and especially minority gay and bisexual men. However, the first AIDS service organizations had emerged from urban gay communities in which racial discrimination was common. For this reason, gay and bisexual men of color were often suspicious of existing AIDS groups. At the same time, the disease was also spreading among heterosexuals of color, many of whom were unwilling to seek out services from organizations identified with gay men. As established AIDS groups struggled to connect their prevention efforts to communities of color, minority activists formed their own service and advocacy organizations.

Challenges to Existing Groups The first AIDS service organizations arose from communities of predominantly white gay men. As such, they tended to have white staff and volunteers and a largely white clientele. This reinforced the idea, prevalent among people of color, that AIDS was a “white gay disease.” However, reports from as early as 1983 showed that AIDS disproportionately affected people of color, especially Latinos and African Americans. In response, minority activists pressured existing AIDS groups to diversify their staff and volunteers and to design culturally specific programs that would speak directly to communities of color.

Many established AIDS organizations developed such programs, but critics argued that they were underfunded or inappropriate for minority communities. They pointed out that programs designed for white gay men would be ineffective at reaching gay men of color, who might hold different attitudes about sex and frequent different social spaces than their white counterparts. Moreover, activists argued, minority women and children would not be reached by programs designed for gay men.

Meanwhile, some staff and volunteers within existing AIDS groups criticized minority outreach efforts for very different reasons. They saw sexuality, not race, as the chief factor that put people at risk for AIDS and feared that developing new programs would dilute their efforts. This resistance further complicated outreach to minority communities, who saw it as evidence of white gay men’s unwillingness to grapple with their own racial prejudice.

Minority AIDS Organizations Minority activists also started new organizations to bring information about the disease to communities of color. Some groups operated locally, whereas others worked on a national scale. Some directed their efforts toward specific minority communities, whereas others advocated for the needs of nonwhite people as a whole.
Groups such as the Minority AIDS Project in Los Angeles, Kupona Network in Chicago, and the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance in San Francisco worked to provide minority AIDS services and education at the local level. Kupona Network offered AIDS outreach to African Americans irrespective of gender or sexuality, whereas the Gay Asian Pacific Alliance focused its HIV prevention efforts on gay and bisexual men of Asian descent. By contrast, the Minority AIDS Project offered AIDS services to a cross-section of local black and Latino communities.

Working at the national level were such groups as the National Minority AIDS Council (NMAC). Since its founding in 1987, the NMAC has lobbied for funding for AIDS programs geared toward communities of color, offered training and technical assistance to AIDS groups across the country, and promoted AIDS awareness. Since 1997, the NMAC has also sponsored the United States Conference on AIDS, which brings together AIDS activists, researchers, and service providers to discuss the latest developments in HIV science and prevention.

**Ballroom Prevention** Since the beginning of the epidemic, people with AIDS have also been cared for by friends and family members outside of the formal systems set up by AIDS service organizations. This is perhaps especially true for people of color, who are less likely to have access to health care. Many people with AIDS—especially those who are gay, bisexual, or transgender—also have faced rejection from biological family members and instead rely on "chosen" kin.

The ballroom community is one place in which queer people of color have banded together for mutual support. They are largely black and Latino gay and bisexual men and transgender women, who are at highest risk of HIV infection. The ballroom community in any given place consists of multiple houses where members participate in elaborate stage shows ("balls") as they compete to see who can best embody any of a number of categories, such as "Butch Queen" and "Executive Realness." Houses also take on the structure and function of families. House members help to care for each other, providing food and shelter, as well as advice about safer sex and HIV treatment.

Some public health departments and AIDS service organizations have worked with the ballroom community to use balls as sites for HIV prevention and education. Since 1991, Gay Men's Health Crisis has staged the Latex Ball, which promotes condom use. Attendees can compete in the ball's categories, get tested for HIV, pick up some condoms, and learn about AIDS services. Such balls exist alongside the more informal networks of support that the ballroom community provides to its own.

**Treatment Activism**

People with AIDS took an active role in shaping knowledge about the disease. Many
transformed themselves into activist-experts by learning as much as they could about the
disease and by asserting their right to speak about issues of AIDS research and treatment.
In this way, they ushered in a new model of disease activism.

**Treatment and Autonomy** As the number of people diagnosed with AIDS grew, those
affected became increasingly anxious for treatment. With drugs to treat the disease
unavailable in the United States, people with AIDS took matters into their own hands. Some
began to smuggle unapproved drugs such as ribavirin and isoprinosine into the country for
distribution through “buyers clubs,” which sold contraband remedies to people with AIDS.
Others traveled abroad in search of treatment. Among these was the closeted Hollywood
actor Rock Hudson (1925–1985), who flew to Paris in July 1985 to be treated with the
experimental drug HPA-23.

In addition to medications, AIDS activists exchanged information about the disease. In 1986
San Francisco resident John S. James began publishing *AIDS Treatment News*, first as a
column in the *San Francisco Sentinel*, and later as an independent newsletter. James’s
newsletter compiled information from numerous sources and became an invaluable
resource for both people with AIDS and their doctors. Similarly, the Philadelphia AIDS
activist Kiyoshi Kuromiya (1943–2000) founded Critical Path, an advocacy group that
distributed information about AIDS treatments, as well as support groups and service
providers. As a member of ACT UP–Philadelphia, Kuromiya also helped create the first set
of guidelines for the treatment of HIV that was written by people living with AIDS.

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ACT UP Poster “Enjoy AZT” (1993). Playing off advertisements for Coke, this poster associates the
HIV/AIDS drug AZT with big-business profits, suggesting that other drug treatments for HIV/AIDS are being
deliberately delayed so the makers of AZT can increase their profits.

By seeking out experimental drugs, people with AIDS claimed the right to determine their own course of treatment. They reasoned that, because they were already dying, they should be allowed to decide for themselves whether or not to try out untested treatments, even if they risked their own health in doing so. In the spirit of the Denver Principles, they insisted on the right of people with AIDS to "make informed decisions about their lives," including choices about their medical care.

Clinical Trials Activists also sought to change the process by which medicines to treat AIDS were tested and approved in the United States. Groups such as ACT UP pushed for more “drugs into bodies,” and in October 1988 protesters gathered outside the headquarters of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in Rockville, Maryland, to demand that the agency speed up its drug approval process. Weeks later, FDA officials announced changes that would bring new medicines to market more quickly. This effort brought AIDS activists into an unlikely alliance with conservative politicians who favored deregulation of the pharmaceutical industry.

AIDS activists also intervened in the testing of new AIDS drugs. They objected to the use of placebos in AIDS clinical trials, which they saw as the inhumane denial of treatment to people who were already near death. Activists also sought to open up trials to more women and people of color, as well as to those who had been excluded from enrollment because of abnormal lab results or because they had previously been on medications that might confound research data. Moreover, they sought a “parallel track” structure for AIDS clinical trials, by which people with AIDS outside of controlled studies could get access to experimental treatments still under review.

While activists pushed for—and won—such changes at the federal agencies that oversaw the testing and approval of AIDS drugs, some took it upon themselves to conduct their own research. Groups such as Project Inform in San Francisco and Community Research Initiative in Boston provided information from their own community-based clinical trials to the FDA, which used the data to make decisions about the safety and efficacy of experimental drugs. In this way, activists gained the respect of research scientists and carved out a role for themselves as producers of knowledge about AIDS.

Changing Landscape of AIDS Politics

The politics of AIDS in the United States have changed significantly since the 1980s. New medicines have helped to change the meaning of HIV infection, while new federal programs have helped fight the disease. At the same time, American activists and policy makers have become increasingly concerned with AIDS in the developing world.

Ryan White CARE Act The passage of the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources
Emergency (CARE) Act in 1990 represented a turning point in the US AIDS epidemic. In the program's first year Congress appropriated $221 million in new funding for AIDS programs. The bill provided for AIDS funding at the local and state levels, as well as specific funding for groups dealing with vulnerable populations, women, youth, and children. It also created local HIV planning councils, which were to include people from communities affected by AIDS.

Although gay groups lobbied heavily for its passage, the Ryan White CARE Act’s supporters in Congress were careful not to frame it as one that would benefit gay men and intravenous drug users. During debates over the bill, supporters in Congress focused on the so-called innocent victims of AIDS: women, children, and people who had contracted HIV from blood products or medical procedures. The bill itself was named for a hemophiliac teenager from Kokomo, Indiana, who became nationally known after being turned away from his local public school because of his HIV diagnosis. Supporters also took care to frame the bill as a necessary response to a crisis, and not as a new welfare program.

The bill passed with bipartisan support but drew criticism from some corners of the AIDS services world. The program awarded cities such as San Francisco much more funding per AIDS case than many others. Critics also argued that Ryan White planning councils favored AIDS groups that had been around the longest—in short, the white gay organizations that had responded to the epidemic first.

Reauthorizations of the Ryan White CARE Act have accounted for the evolving epidemic. For example, the advent of new HIV treatments in the mid-1990s increased the importance of state-level AIDS Drug Assistance Programs, leading to a relative increase in funding to states. Appropriations have also been redistributed as the epidemic has grown in new places, particularly in the rural South. Finally, overall funding has increased dramatically, growing tenfold to over $2 billion annually in the first twenty years after the Ryan White CARE Act became law.

**Highly Active Antiretroviral Therapies** The advent in the mid-1990s of a new class of drugs—highly active antiretroviral therapies—to treat HIV dramatically altered the course of the epidemic. When used together in combination therapies, the new antiretroviral drugs brought the amount of HIV (viral load) in many patients’ systems down to very low levels. For those who responded well to the treatments, antiretrovirals offered a new lease on life. These drugs are very expensive, however, and affordability has been a significant barrier to widespread use. For some with access, antiretrovirals also brought unexpected emotional consequences. Many had spent years fighting for their lives, which were suddenly extended into the indefinite future. Some experienced “survivor’s guilt,” wondering why they had lived after watching so many friends and lovers die.

Antiretrovirals have also found a place in HIV prevention. In 2012 the FDA approved the
use of Truvada, a combination of two antiretrovirals, by HIV-negative people to prevent infection with the virus, a prevention method known as pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Meanwhile, a growing number of studies indicate that HIV-positive people with viral loads suppressed by treatment are virtually incapable of passing HIV along to their sexual partners. Both developments point to the potential for widespread access to antiretrovirals not only to extend the lives of people with HIV but to prevent new infections as well.

The advent of PrEP also reignited old battles around gay sexual culture. Critics claimed that the use of Truvada would lead gay men to abandon condoms. Kramer, who had been instrumental in the formation of both Gay Men's Health Crisis and ACT UP, accused PrEP users of being “cowardly” for choosing a pharmaceutical form of HIV prevention. Michael Weinstein (1953–) of the AIDS Healthcare Foundation similarly derided Truvada as a “party drug.” Nevertheless, the use of Truvada for PrEP rose quickly in the first few years following its approval, particularly in cities with large gay communities.

**Minority AIDS Initiative** The AIDS epidemic among African Americans continued to worsen during the 1990s. In 1994 the percentage of new AIDS diagnoses among African Americans surpassed that of those among white Americans for the first time. In this context, AIDS activists called for a greater response to the disease from black political elites.

AIDS activists had long sought greater involvement in the fight against AIDS by African American leaders. In 1991 a coalition of black, gay, and AIDS groups organized a hearing on AIDS in Black America for the Congressional Black Caucus. Only two members—Maxine Waters (1938–) and Mervyn Dymally (1926–2012)—attended. In 1996 Mario Cooper (1954–2015), a black gay politico who had served as manager of the 1992 Democratic National Convention, had better luck when he convened over 100 black community leaders at the Harvard AIDS Institute. Cooper, whose parents had been deeply involved in the civil rights movement while he was growing up in Alabama, wanted to bring the energy of that struggle to bear on AIDS in black America.
These efforts bore fruit in 1998, when community leaders worked closely with the Congressional Black Caucus to create the Minority AIDS Initiative (MAI), a $166 million federal program aimed at supporting minority AIDS groups. The MAI program has directed funds toward AIDS prevention and services among Latinos, Asian Americans, and Native Americans, as well as African Americans. Although allocations for the program quickly grew to around $400 million annually, funding has since flattened out; in 2015 the MAI received $425 million in federal funds, a modest increase over previous years.

**Global AIDS** By the late 1990s significant attention had turned to the fight against AIDS in the Global South, and especially in Africa south of the Sahara. Activists in the United States were concerned about the plight of people in poor countries, while some policy makers worried that the epidemic could destabilize affected regions around the globe.

Activists worked to make antiretrovirals, which had proved effective at treating HIV in the United States, available in the Global South as well. The high cost of the drugs made it nearly impossible for many governments to purchase them in sufficient quantities, and multinational pharmaceutical companies, with the backing of the US government, threatened legal action against any country that produced generic versions of the drugs.
Activists in Brazil, South Africa, and Thailand joined forces with their American counterparts to protest the high cost of brand-name drugs and to demand access to cheaper generic versions of the same. In late 1999 they won a major victory when US president Bill Clinton (1946–) issued an executive order allowing other countries to use generic AIDS drugs.

In 2003 US president George W. Bush (1946–) announced $15 billion in new funding for the fight against AIDS in Africa and the Caribbean through the President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. Activists claimed the new program as a victory but criticized the administration for its emphasis on abstinence-only HIV prevention programs. Nonetheless, the program represented a step forward in the fight against global AIDS, providing medical care and antiretrovirals to millions in need.

**The Affordable Care Act and National HIV/AIDS Strategy** The passage of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) in 2010 also proved to be a boon to the fight against HIV/AIDS. As a result of the law’s protections for people with preexisting conditions, people with HIV were newly able to purchase private health insurance. The expansion of Medicaid under the ACA also led to higher rates of insurance coverage for people with HIV. However, some states opted not to expand Medicaid; these tended to be in the Deep South, which also had some of the highest rates of new HIV infections at the time of the ACA’s passage.

In 2010 the administration of US president Barack Obama (1961–) also released the United States’ first National HIV/AIDS Strategy, a set of goals for improving nationwide access to HIV prevention, testing, and treatment. These included reducing new HIV infections among those hardest hit by the epidemic, including black and Latino gay and bisexual men and transgender women. The strategy was updated in 2015 to reflect advances in HIV prevention research, including the introduction of PrEP. Along with the ACA, the National HIV/AIDS Strategy represented a significant step toward a truly national response to AIDS in the United States.

**An Uncertain Future** The presidential election of 2016 ushered in a new era of uncertainty for people living with HIV. Many of the cabinet appointments of Donald Trump (1946–) were widely seen as hostile to both LGBTQ people and the ACA, the repeal of which seemed likely. On the day of Trump’s inauguration, the page for the Office of National AIDS Policy disappeared from the White House website, as did all mention of LGBTQ rights. In June 2017, six members of the Presidential Advisory Council on HIV/AIDS resigned in protest, saying that the president “simply does not care” about addressing the epidemic (Schoettes 2017). In December 2017 Trump summarily dismissed the remaining members of the council.

Meanwhile, opponents of the new administration looked to the history of AIDS activism for
models of political resistance. As Republicans in Congress planned to roll back the ACA, local activists confronted them at town hall events and staged die-ins to dramatize the deaths that they predicted would follow repeal. In the summer of 2017, veterans of ACT UP and other AIDS groups joined civil, disability, and women’s rights activists in acts of civil disobedience in congressional offices, demanding that lawmakers leave the ACA in place. When the repeal effort failed in the Senate by a single vote, many credited the months of direct action inspired and sustained by AIDS activists.

SEE ALSO ACT UP; Bathhouse Raids, Toronto (1981); HIV/AIDS; HIV/AIDS in Africa; HIV/AIDS in Egyptian Cinema; HIV/AIDS in Europe; HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean; HIV/AIDS in South and Southeast Asia; Two-Spirit

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**FILMOGRAPHY**

Homoerotic Poetry of Abū Nuwās

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Homoerotic works by the ninth-century Arabic poet.

Abū Nuwās (d. c. 814 CE) is viewed as one of the most important representatives of the movement of muhdath (renewed) Arabic poetry. He lived mainly in Basra and Baghdad. Abū Nuwās contributed to the development of dedicated poetry focusing on madh (praise), rithaʾ (elegy), ‘itab (censure), and hijaʾ (invective), often in the multithematic qasida form, which is monorhyme and written in one of a number of meters. He is best known for his poems about wine (khamriyya), love (ghazal), provocative obscenity (mujun), and hunting (tardiyya), most often in an undedicated, monothematic qitʿa form, which is also monorhyme and written in one of a number of meters, and he also composed poems about asceticism (zuhdiyya) in this form. Male homoerotic themes appear in his poems about love for a male beloved (ghazal mudhakkar), as well as poems about wine or provocative obscenity.

The Dīwān contains about 200 love poems classified as ghazal muʾannath, poems about a female beloved, and about 450 classified as ghazal mudhakkar. While the love poem genre focuses exclusively on the lover and the beloved, motifs in this genre and the circulation of love poetry in prose literature demonstrate the central issue of concealing love from and revealing it to the poet’s social circle, so that love is as much about sociability as it is a manifestation of individual subjectivity. Abū Nuwās’s erotic poetry combines several earlier traditions, including poems about chaste love, typically for a female beloved (‘Udhrī); poetry about love that is more open or explicit (ibahi); poems about the mostly inaccessible and typically female beloved of the love prelude in the dedicated qasida (nasib); and scenes of love in poems about provocative obscenity. Poetry by Abū Nuwās had a significant impact on the development of poetry in Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, and Spanish. His impact on poetry also contributed to the development of poetry used in Sufism. This entry discusses a range of love poems classified in the Dīwān as ghazal mudhakkar and the reception of poetry by Abū Nuwās, especially ghazal mudhakkar, in premodern Arabic literary sources and modern scholarship.

Poems

In the monothematic qitʿa form, poets felt free to incorporate motifs from (or that allude to)
other poetic themes. Where the tradition in European languages might use the term genre, a kind or category, the Arabic tradition tends to use the term gharad, an aim or goal. This term reflects the more prominent role of dedicated poetry, but it is also applied to undedicated poetry. In the following love poem about a male beloved, Abū Nuwās places the aim of his ghazal mudhakkar, which is evident in lines 6 to 9, in counterpoint to the nasib, which is often a prelude of the dedicated qasida, about love for an elite female beloved whose tribe has departed in a pastoral migration, which appears in lines 1 to 2.

And he said (meter: al-wafir, rhyme letter: mim)

1 I have left the abode—I do not cry
   For it, or for the ruins or the trace
2 Nor do I cry for Layla
   Or Suʿda or Salma
3 And that is because I am a man
   Who has learned something from love
4 Such as, how good union is!
   And how ugly it is to be cut off!
5 The one always requires praise
   And the other always requires blame
6 For I have fallen in love
   With a young gazelle who had made peace with me
7 Who turned benevolence into dislike
   And union became separation
8 My commander, you have only been unjust
   Because I appointed you to be my judge
9 Will you not deem justice good
   Just as you deem oppression good?

(ABŪ NUWĀS, DĪWĀN, 4:324; TRANSLATION BY JOCELYN SHARLET)

The loss of idealized joy in the past that defines the nasib is juxtaposed to the perceived injustice in the present. In between, the poet displays the conjunction between the aim of nasib and the aim of ghazal in lines 3 to 5, weaving allusions to aims of the dedicated qasida, praise (madh) and censure (ʿitab), into the experience of love, whether it is nasib or ghazal. In addition, the depiction of the beloved as “my commander” and the motif of injustice echo the aim of censure.

The following poem integrates the sensitivity and beauty of the beloved. The qualities of zarf (elegance) and adab (refined manners) may also be used for male companions who are peers in wine and hunting poetry, and they are augmented here by emotional sensitivity in line 1. Abū Nuwās juxtaposes sensitivity and beauty by repeating the formula “may I be your ransom,” an emphatic expression of commitment, in lines 1 and 4. The poet’s secrecy
in line 4 demonstrates his own competence in the sociable code of love. The reference to angelic plans places the code of love, including the poet’s “sin,” within the context of religion.

And he said (meter: *al-basít*, rhyme letter: *ba’*)

1 May I be the ransom for one in whom elegance and manners were perfected
   And who, when he is moved by music, becomes lost
2 My gaze did not come to discern his form
   But that wonder became entwined for me with its beauty
3 And his hips upon a fine sword topped by a moon
   From the light of whose cheeks the water of beauty pours forth
4 O you whom I shall not reveal, may my soul be your ransom!
   I have become attached to you with a rope that does not break
5 How many an hour mapped out by angels for you
   Do I lord it over the people with the sin that they wrote
6 [In which] I was not distracted from you by a flirtatious cupbearer with 
   One with rounded hips the flesh of whose belly is concave
7 It is as if the moon strides in his robe
   Toward the blond Greeks, revealing his lineage
8 He circulates wine whose father is the vine, whom he married to
   The son of a rainfall since her mother is the grapes
9 He turned aside and sang for us as the flute raised its plaintive cry:
   “A visitor, are you? No, but rather you are one who keeps his dista

(ABŪ NUWĀS, DĪWĀN, 4: 164 – 165; TRANSLATION BY JOCELYN SHARLET)

Abū Nuwās juxtaposes frivolous desire for an attractive young cupbearer to his more intense commitment to the beloved who is featured in this poem, and the two of them look similar. He and his beloved enjoy observing the cupbearer and drinking his wine together in lines 6 to 9, and the motif of circulation conjures a group scene. The family imagery of the wine-making process juxtaposes more ordinary life in a family to the extraordinary quality of love. The song features a visitor, an echo of the wine poem, which may depict refined revelers at a tavern or monastery run by non-Muslims. It also features one who remains distant like a beloved in nasib or ghazal. Abū Nuwās not infrequently uses citations of poetry/songs to close his wine poems, which has the effect of altering the poet's mediation between the scene and his audience.

The following love poem revolves around garden imagery. The idealized, lost joy of the nasib may evoke the Garden of Eden, and the realistic love in ghazal may be depicted through imagery of the garden, which is also featured in the wine poem.

He said (meter: *al-tawil*, rhyme letter: *lam*)
Censurers may be featured in nasib or ghazal, and they juxtapose the intimacy of love to an idea of social disapproval. In conventions of nasib the motif of departure suggests loss of a female beloved due to tribal migration, while in conventions of ghazal it refers to any beloved’s termination of a relationship. The garden imagery for the beginning, middle, and end of a relationship, as if it were all natural, implies joy and sadness about the vicissitudes of desire.

The ghazal may carry a connotation of elegance (zarf) that balances the earnest (jidd) and the comic (hazl), and a cultivation of such contrasts is important for the aesthetic, emotional, and ethical scope of the tradition of Arabic poetry. While the four poems discussed above seem mostly earnest, the two poems discussed below seem mostly comic.

The following poem playfully depicts a boy in school. His rejection in line 1 could be understood as a refusal to do schoolwork or a rejection of the lover’s advances; the worshippers in line 2 could be understood as the other people using the mosque or the boy’s admirers; and the glances in line 3 could be understood as the boy’s distraction from lessons or the lover’s perception of the boy’s flirtatious behavior. The poet ascribes his own view of the boy to the teacher in line 4, but the teacher, whose mind is on lessons, not love, dispels the attribution in lines 5 to 6.

And he said (meter: al-ramal, rhyme letter: dal)
5 Ḥafṣ said: take him away,
     For I find him stupid
6 And he continues ever since he started lessons to be a slacker
7 Silk robes were stripped off of him
     And beneath them striped garments
8 Then they terrified him with a strip of soft
   Leather, with what is in it of a rod
9 When it happened, my beloved cried,
   “O teacher, I won't come back!”
10 I said, “O Ḥafṣ, go easy on him—
     He will do well
11 In recitation of poetry and lessons and in whatever you may want!”

Abū Nuwās passed by the religious school of Ḥafṣ al-Kūfī and he was beating a
boy, and he said, “I observed a person.”

(ABŪ NUWĀS, DĪWĀN, 4:194–195; TRANSLATION BY JOCELYN SHARLET)

The beating at school in lines 8 to 9 and the poet’s intervention allude to the obscenity of
mujun. The poet’s reassurance that the boy will succeed in “poetry, lessons, and in
whatever you may want” depicts the connection between education and homoerotic desire
in this ghazal mudhakkar. The context of the mosque and the reference to poetry
demonstrate the intersection between religious and literary education, because both
involve literacy in Arabic. The brief anecdote that is appended to the poem in the Dīwān
reflects the way anecdotes that are historical or at least realistic developed alongside
poems, or in their wake, and functioned as a kind of commentary.

In the following poem, the poet’s beloved works in the market selling water (or just
wanders around), and his beauty makes him transgressive in terms of the market setting in
lines 1 to 2 because he steals glances. Abū Nuwās playfully engages with more earnest
nasib, in which a poet may insist that his travel companions stop at the traces of the
beloved’s abandoned abode in the desert, and earnest yet transient relationships in ghazal
in lines 3 to 6, where the beloved stops and then moves on due to the crowded pedestrian
traffic of the market. The lower status of the beloved and the poet’s description of him as
his master in line 1 is a convention of ghazal.

And he said (meter: al-khafīf, rhyme letter: ḥa’)

1 Indeed Ḥamdan my master
   Stays in the market and goes to and fro
2 And he had, because of his beauty
   And attractive appearance, stolen the glances [of all who see him]
3 I said, jokingly, one day
   “My love, stop for me!” and he did not stop
4 What would the problem be for him if he were to
   Accept affection and kindness
5 He stood by me for a little while
   Then he departed from me
6 If that one came to me, then my worries
   Would clear and be stripped away
7 Indeed he is a fitna for the worshippers and he is a pearl in its shell
8 And he is a sun when he appears
   And a crescent moon whenever he turns aside
9 Glorious is the king! What
   Is this ailment in my heart?
10 And this haughtiness and waywardness
    And vanity in my beloved?

(ABŪ NUWĀS, DĪWĀN, 4:4:259–260; TRANSLATION BY JOCELYN SHARLET)

The beloved is transgressive in terms of religion because he is a fitna in line 7, a source of social chaos in the context of Islamic culture. The lofty images of a pearl in its shell (pure because it is not yet harvested and pierced), a sun and crescent moon, and a glorious king in lines 7 to 9 are both earnest and comic, because they all correspond to nothing but the young beloved's haughtiness, waywardness (from the poet's desire), and vanity in line 10.

**Reception**

The poetry of Abū Nuwās, particularly his ghazal mudhakkar, is well represented in premodern Arabic sources. In his biography of the poet, Ibn Qutayba (d. 889) includes a selection of love poetry about a boy and another poem addressed to a boy (Ibn Qutayba 2001). Ibn al-Muʿtazz (d. 908) mentions at the beginning of his biography of Abū Nuwās that Wāliba b. al-Ḥubāb fell in love with him, and that this led the elder poet to mentor him in his education (Ibn al-Muʿtazz 1998). The longer biography by Abū Hiffān (d. 871) includes love, wine, and obscene poetry that features homoerotic themes as well as related anecdotes that are historical or realistic. Ibn Manẓūr (d. 1311) covers homoerotic themes in his longer biography and mentions that Abū Nuwās was rejected by three women that he loved, and “it was as if he was not making a serious effort [or: was not fortunate] with them like he was with boys” (Ibn Manẓūr 2002, 132–133; translation by Jocelyn Sharlet). Poetry by and anecdotes about Abū Nuwās are cited many times in numerous premodern Arabic literary works, including encyclopedic compilations, monographic compilations, and biographical dictionaries.

The modern scholarly reception of Abū Nuwās, and his love poetry and ghazal mudhakkar in particular, is also widespread. Muḥammad al-Nuwayhī insists that his readers come to terms with the importance of homosexuality in the life of Abū Nuwās in order to
understand much of his poetry, and also discusses selections of ghazal mudhakkar (al-Nuwayhī 1953). Al-ʿAqqād cites poems about slave women and poems about boys, explaining that the critic will find them to be similar in quality and would not prefer one over the other, just as he would not prefer poetry in one genre over another (al-ʿAqqād 1960). Ewald Wagner, editor of the most authoritative Dīwān of Abū Nuwās, observes that he was the first or one of the first poets to establish the ghazal mudhakkar in Arabic poetry, and explains that the depiction of the beloved and love are about the same in ghazal for males and females (Wagner 1965). Andras Hamori considers how ideas about love and virtue in Arabic love poetry relate to the European tradition (Hamori 1990). Muḥammad Ḥammūd discusses a poem that Abū Nuwās composed for his most famous female beloved in which he speaks of his commitment to a (male) cupbearer and other lovers, and also discusses his ghazal mudhakkar (Ḥammūd 1994). Jaakko Hämeen- Anttila points out that ghazal mudhakkar has more overlap with wine and obscene poetry than ghazal muʿannath does (Hämeen-Anttila 2005; see also Kennedy 1997; Szombathy 2013). Philip Kennedy discusses love poetry for males and females and demonstrates how “moods and themes coil around each other in diverse, sometimes antithetical configurations, managed with either abrupt or discreet transitions” (Kennedy 2005, 38); readers of English can find good translations of poetry by Abū Nuwās from all genres in Kennedy's book.

SEE ALSO Homoeroticism in the Plays of Ibn Daniyal; Literary Discourses in the Ottoman Middle East (1500–1900); Mufākharat al-Jawārī wa-al-Ghilmān (al-Jāḥiẓ); Sufi Treatment of Same-Sex Relations in Poetry and Prose

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Homoeroticism in the Plays of Ibn Daniyal

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Three farces by the thirteenth-century Egyptian court poet generally recognized as the first major writer in Arab culture to create works centrally concerned with homoerotic themes.

The first known dramatist of the Arab world is Ibn Daniyal, a thirteenth-century Egyptian court poet and popular entertainer who created plays of remarkable complexity and sophistication, unequaled by any drama produced in Europe for the next several centuries. Ibn Daniyal has sometimes been called the “Arab Aristophanes,” a characterization reflecting both the range of his poetic style and also his surprising reliance on scatological and erotic material. While such material is common in folk farce material around the world, its appearance in Islamic literature—which in the West is often considered opposed to theatrical representation and to any material of an erotic nature—is for most Western readers quite unexpected. Moreover, unlike the plays of the Greek comic playwright Aristophanes (c. 450–c. 388 BCE), as well as much of the folk farce tradition everywhere, these plays of Ibn Daniyal place a strong emphasis on homoerotic material.

Biography and Background

Ibn Daniyal was actually a native of Mosul, in present-day Iraq. Mosul for several centuries had been a major intellectual and commercial center on the trading routes between India, Persia, and the Mediterranean. In the mid-thirteenth century, however, this long-standing prosperity abruptly ended. The expansion of the Mongol Empire, begun earlier in the century by Genghis Khan (c. 1162–1227), led to the capture of Baghdad by the invaders in 1258 and of Mosul in 1262. Sometime between these two events, Ibn Daniyal, then in his teens, fled, with many of his countrymen, to seek refuge in Cairo, which with the fall of Baghdad had become the political and intellectual center of the Arab world. In Cairo he supported himself for a time as an eye doctor, but he soon established a reputation among that city’s bohemian population as a wit, a gifted poet, and the active pursuer of a libertine lifestyle. In the manner of young impecunious poets throughout the ages, Ibn Daniyal sought a degree of financial security by producing poems, often panegyrics, for influential and well-to-do sponsors.
At the top of Egypt's social and political pyramid was the sultan, who, at the time of Ibn Daniyal’s arrival in Cairo, was the powerful warrior Baybars (r. 1260–1277). In 1254 Baybars had defeated King Louis IX of France (1214–1270), ending the Seventh Crusade, and in 1260 he had finally stopped the advance of the Mongols in Syria. The system he founded ruled Egypt for the next several centuries. Baybars was a shrewd and powerful ruler with little sympathy for the bohemian life that existed in Cairo when he came to power. He put strong curbs on drinking and on the sex trade, so when Ibn Daniyal arrived, the general feeling among the artistic community he joined was one of living in a distinctly repressive society.

Baybars’ son Barakah (r. 1277–1279), who succeeded him, shared his father’s stern condemnation of physical pleasures, but he lacked his father’s authority and power. He was deposed after only two years by his father-in-law, Qalawun (r. 1279–1290), who returned an interest in entertainment and the arts to the city and the court. Ibn Daniyal was among the poets, painters, and musicians supported by this more pleasure-loving court, and he became quite celebrated in Cairo and abroad for his literary skill. Eventually, around 1290, he was made the official court poet, in which capacity he wrote a number of poems in celebration of significant battles and court festivals, which still survive and are considered among the outstanding literary works of the era. Although, like Arab literary figures in general, he had little if any interest in theatrical expression, toward the end of the century he was commissioned by a wealthy patron to create three puppet plays for private performance to entertain the patron’s guests.

Puppetry is a very ancient art in Egypt, dating back to pharaonic times. Shadow puppets are more recent, thought to have come to Egypt from China by way of India or Central Asia. They are first recorded in Egypt in the eleventh century, more than 200 years before the work of Ibn Daniyal, but they existed only as a folk or popular entertainment, similar to the more recent and doubtless related form, the Turkish karagoz. No texts survive of this form before those of Ibn Daniyal, and this is hardly surprising, because despite its popularity both in the markets and at court, the shadow theater was not considered a literary form, as were poetry and some narrative genres. Ibn Daniyal's patron, however, was well aware of the poet’s literary skills and requested that in these three plays he follow the general farce tradition of the form but compose the works in a style that would mark them as significant literary contributions. This Ibn Daniyal did, with such success that these three texts alone survive out of a puppet tradition that lasted for several centuries and surely produced many hundreds of works.

All three plays are distinctly farcical in tone, with exaggerated characters and situations often involving crude physical action, and all mix elevated poetic passages with constant use of explicit scatological and erotic (most frequently homoerotic) references. Yet, the actual structure of the three works is quite different. The second play, ‘Ajib wa gharib (The amazing preacher and the stranger), is the shortest and simplest, consisting only of a rather
lengthy introduction by the “Stranger,” a kind of master of ceremonies, and a series of monologues and short acts by a series of twenty-two street entertainers—jugglers, quack doctors, animal trainers, and the like—as might be encountered in Cairo of that time. There are occasional references to homoeroticism on the part of some of the performers, but the most extensive of such references come in the largely autobiographical opening comments of the Stranger himself, whose claimed sexual experience is extensive and highly varied. He cites his considerable experience as pimp, prostitute, and patron of brothels, lamenting the loss of both the "pretty dark women" and the "rosy-cheeked boys" in his past. He laments particularly the loss of “the effeminate Zimqar,” whom he “nearly split with my big penis when he was a kid” (Ibn Daniyal 2013, 94). It should be noted that most of the names in all three plays have distinct, often obscene, meanings in Arabic.

The First Play

While homoerotic references do occur in this second play, they are far more significant in both of the other longer and more complex works. The first, Tayf al-khayal (The shadow spirit), has a plot very close to that of many later folk farces. The basic premise, on which many digressions and elaborations are developed, is that Prince Wisal, an outrageous soldier-adventurer, has decided to give up his profligate life, marry a beautiful and respectable girl, and take up a pious existence. He employs the service of a grotesque marriage broker, Umm Rashid, who describes a luscious young woman who, when her veil is removed at the wedding, is revealed as a grotesque hag. Although the major plot is a heterosexual one, there are extensive homoerotic references in Prince Wisal’s extended descriptions of his sexual adventures in the past he is now trying to move beyond. Like those of the Stranger in the second play, these adventures are varied and imaginative, including encounters not only with men and women but with all manner of beasts from dogs to donkeys. Indeed, the prince claims to have “copulated with almost any easily-caught creature, whether walking or crawling on earth” (Ibn Daniyal 2013, 59).

The Third Play

By far the most extensive presentation of the homoerotic in these plays, however, appears in the third, which is also the most complex in its action. This is Al-Mutayyam wa al-daʾīʾ al-Yutayyim (The love-stricken one and the lost one who inspires passion). At the heart of this play is another story of a failed romantic quest, but this one is a homoerotic one. Al-Mutayyam, the “love-stricken one,” is a clownish pederast who has become obsessed with a beautiful youth, al-Yutayyim, whom he has seen naked in a doctor’s office and later in the public baths. The boy flirts with him but resists al-Mutayyam’s various attempts to consummate his passion.

The play begins with an extended monologue by the frustrated lover, which describes in detail the physical beauties of his new love, the conditions under which he first saw him,
and his lack of success in attracting the youth. Embedded in the monologue are several elegant love songs and poems praising the youth. Two parallel scenes and distinctly contrasting scenes follow this introduction. The first is a dialogue between al-Mutayyam and an ugly young man who was his former sex partner and who scoffs at al-Mutayyam for deserting a devoted lover for a green, indifferent boy. Al-Mutayyam, disgusted, asks, “What is the meat of an old ram compared to the meat of lamb” (Ibn Daniyal 2013, 155), and describes how he nearly expired of longing in the baths after gaining a brief caress of his beloved’s buttocks.

A sharply contrasting scene follows in which al-Mutayyam’s valet reports that he has been extolling his master’s virtues, his beauty, his elegance, and his sexual ability to the young man, and has brought him close to the point of yielding. Indeed, the young man shortly thereafter appears and is showered with praise and expressions of passion from the delighted al-Mutayyam. The boy, however, remains cautious, seemingly fearful of giving too easy a victory and of having his reputation darkened in that way. He proposes a contest on which he is willing to barter his consent to accept the advances of his older suitor. Al-Mutayyam’s fighting cock’s abilities are widely known, and the young man proposes to match him with his own rooster, giving in to al-Mutayyam's suit if his bird is the victor.

A contest is set up, and after elaborate descriptions from their owners of the physical prowess and appearance of the two birds, the battle is joined. Al-Yutayyim’s rooster flees from the ring, but he insists it has not been defeated but has simply retired for prayers as it always does at this hour. He proposes another contest with distinct homoerotic overtones —that his pet ram (a gift from another older male admirer) engage in a butting contest with that of al-Mutayyam. Al-Mutayyam agrees. Once again the young man's contestant is defeated, but again he has an excuse: someone put a curse on his ram so that it could not perform.

Al-Yutayyim, arguing his lack of attraction to al-Mutayyam, proposes one final contest, another butting competition, this time between the two bulls owned by the men. Finally, al-Yutayyim’s animal prevails, and as the young man departs in triumph, al-Mutayyam weeps over his defeated champion and the apparent dashing of his romantic dreams. Still, he has one hope left. He orders the bull to be slaughtered to provide meat for a great feast, hoping that this will at last inspire positive feelings in his young love object: “My beloved al-Yutayyim might hear of the public invitation for the banquet and might attend it.... If he behold me in this state of vitality and physical zeal, he might eventually have a sentimental yearning for me” (Ibn Daniyal 2013, 180).

The banquet takes up the last section of the play and, much in the style of an Aristophanic comedy such as The Birds, portrays a series of grotesque visitors, playing variations on the general theme of the work. Hardly surprisingly, the majority of the guests, and the first to arrive, are all characterized by their homoerotic propensities. The first is a homosexual
A hermaphrodite named Narcissus, who extols his lifestyle and that of his “brethren hermaphrodites” and their “studs,” fifteen of each, most of them with names suggesting their interests, such as Muwiza (Little Banana) and Dalal (Pampered) among the “brethren” and Ayn al-Dakar (Eye of Penis) and Khusa (Testes) among their “studs” (183). The geographical extent of their activities is suggested by their places of origin, including the Sudan, Aleppo, Rome, Tunisia, and Morocco. The major part of Narcissus’s presentation is a sensual and detailed account of the similarity between a bowel movement after copulation in men and the giving of birth in women.

Next appears a young man named Abu al-Sahl (Easy Penetration) who is described in the stage directions as resembling “a long, erect penis” (Ibn Daniyal 2013, 184), and who characterizes himself as among the most submissive of all creatures, and therefore a great delight to his many clients. He is followed by a man named Abu al-Buhaish (The Digger) from the region of Zallaqa (Slippery). This visitor comes to complain of the noise of the event, but remains when he becomes interested in al-Mutayyam’s erect penis. A matchmaker named Baddal appears next, offering either to aid al-Mutayyam in pursuing his suit or to himself substitute for the reluctant young man. Then comes a street thug, Dawoud al-Qabba (David the Grabber), who laments the bygone days when the streets were darker and sexual victims were more easily caught. The next guest, Omayr al-Jallad, discusses the pleasures of his solitary entertainment, which he brags of enjoying everywhere, even in the street under a loose robe, and of sexually harassing women and boys in public places. Not surprisingly, he advises al-Mutayyam to relieve his unreciprocated passion by imaginary copulation and masturbation, his inevitable solution to such matters. Finally, Nabham al-Dabbab (Clever Crawler) brags about how he sneaks into darkened houses and forces sex on those he discovers there.

Each of these guests receives the same treatment from their host. He welcomes them warmly, listens to their stories, and plies them with goblets of wine until they become unconscious and fall to the floor in an ever-increasing pile of inert bodies. Three final guests end this series. The first, a Mamluk slave, announces a change of tone by commenting on the now considerable pile of inebriated and senseless bodies, stretched out amid the garbage like corpses. Despite his repulsion, however, the slave gladly accepts the multiple glasses of wine al-Mutayyam offers and soon adds his own body to the pile. He is followed by a parasite, Salhab (Glutton), who brags of his ability to eat almost anything, almost like a medieval personification of this deadly sin. He has come hoping to find food but settles for drink, and in his turn joins the other debauched sleepers.

The final guest is the most unexpected, a pious and abstemious figure with a decorum “worthy of reverence” (Ibn Daniyal 2013, 195). He both awakens and sobers the guests with a loud shout and announces himself as Azrael, the Angel of Death. The cowed al-Mutayyam asks if repentance is still possible, and, being assured that it is, he renounces his sensual indulgence and appeals for mercy to Allah. He turns toward Mecca and dies, with
his guests departing “in horror at his exemplary punishment” (196). His corpse is then placed in a white coffin and carried off to the cemetery for burial.

This abrupt and unexpected religious turn, whether it reflects the honest feelings of the dramatist or, more likely, a necessary acknowledgment of official morality after a work abounding in questionable subject matter and activities, is clearly a part of the expectations of the genre. This is evident from the fact that all three of the preserved plays, although extremely different in structure, similarly end on a pious, religious note. At the end of Tayf al-khayal, the profligate Prince Wisal, frustrated in his plan to redeem his past through marriage, decides, in the final speech of the play, to depart instead on a pilgrimage to Mecca and its holy shrines, adding, strikingly and quite surprisingly, “I am telling the truth rather than narrating a story in a shadow play” (Ibn Daniyal 2013, 85).

The Second Play

In the second play, ‘Ajib wa gharib, as in the final play, a series of characters is terminated by one who introduces a strikingly different note—again, a religious one. The play, as previously noted, is essentially a series of Cairo street entertainers presenting their offerings. The series, however, ends with a representative of a different profession, a camel driver who has just returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca. His performance is not a display of skill, his camel is not offered as evidence of his ability with animals, and he has no goods, fraudulent or otherwise, to sell. He does present a kind of performance, the singing of a Sufi hymn of praise to the prophet Muhammad, so that the play, for all its cynicism and worldliness, ends on an upbeat note of piety, as do each of the other works.

These pious conclusions notwithstanding, there is no question that for the modern reader (and surely for the original audiences) the most striking feature of all these plays is their open and frank use of scatological and sexual, especially homoerotic, material. Such free expression of these subjects has been seen only a few times in world literature. The bold authors of such works who come most readily to mind are probably Aristophanes and the French Renaissance writer François Rabelais (c. 1483–1553). To them should be added the name of Ibn Daniyal, whose boldness in such matters, in addition to his significant literary and theatrical contributions, surely justify his inclusion in such company.

SEE ALSO Homoerotic Poetry of Abū Nuwās; Muḥākharat al-Jawāri wa-al-Ghilmān (al-Jāḥīz); Theater, Queer; A Thousand and One Nights; Tuqus al-Isharat wa-al-Tahawwulat (1994; Sa’dallah Wannous)

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Homonationalism in Africa

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A particular form of gay advocacy that frames gay rights in nationalistic terms that privilege American and European expressions over those of the Middle East and the Global South, particularly Africa.

Homonationalism, as first elaborated by Jasbir K. Puar (2007), refers to a nationalistic, patriotic gay-friendliness that branches out from American exceptionalism and European imperialism, claiming superiority over and rejecting religious and racial Others that it deems sexually illiberal or intolerant. It can more broadly encompass the commission of an otherwise “progressive” LGBT agenda toward less than progressive, xenophobic, Islamophobic, or racist ends. Momin Rahman (2014) coined a related term, homocolonialism, which describes how gay rights platforms are being used to mark a civilizational divide and denigrate societies that stand on the “wrong” side of it. Gay imperialism is a term created to describe the European context with its important Muslim minority in which, as a result of the activism of certain groups, the terms homophobic and Muslim seem to have become interchangeable, as have, by corollary, white and gay (Haritaworn, Tauqir, and Erdem 2008).

Homonationalism stems from the broader term sexual nationalism, which employs women’s rights discourses as arguments against immigration or as claims for civilizational superiority. Sexual nationalism can also be used to instill feelings of unbelonging in descendants of immigrants who have already become European citizens by condemning them back to cultural roots assumed to be sexually intolerant, even though these new Europeans have otherwise done everything else demanded of them for integration in Europe. Sexually nationalist or homonationalist positions are often adopted by political parties that otherwise would never endorse a pro-gay or pro-women agenda: in Europe and the Anglo-Saxon world, conservative parties have in bad faith sung the praises of women and homosexuals merely because they believe sexual tolerance is the best platform from which to pursue their more important policy goal of curtailing immigration (Mack 2017). Homonationalism coincides with otherwise progressive gestures of inclusion, such as the repeal of the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy in the United States that used to keep gay and lesbian servicepeople closeted in the military, or the promotion of gay and lesbian membership in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). As a result of this gesture of inclusion, the IDF is able to “pinkwash” the occupation of Palestinian lands via the formation of a public
relations image palatable to Euro-American audiences (Stern 2017). Critics have pointed out, however, that these measures of inclusion are conditioned on yet another exclusion: the gay or lesbian soldier is accepted only because he or she is conditionally and relatively superior to the current “enemy,” the projected figure of the sexually perverse brown terrorist, alternatively seen as too homosexual, in his sex-segregation practices and effusive emotional displays, and too heterosexual, in his belief in the radical difference between the sexes. Scholars have produced case studies detailing the operation of homonationalism and sexual nationalism as control mechanisms for keeping minorities in check—as seen in Germany’s relationship with its Turkish/Muslim communities (El-Tayeb 2011) and especially in France’s relationship with its residents of North and West African descent (Fassin 2010; Guénif-Souilamas and Macé 2004; Mack 2017; Cervulle and Rees-Roberts 2010; Fernando 2014).

The Concept of the Gay International

*Gay International* is a term that originates in Joseph A. Massad’s 2002 essay “Re-orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World,” later included in his 2007 book *Desiring Arabs*. Massad argues that an organized network of actors and institutions—spanning from nongovernmental organizations to journalists to scholars—has made it its work to identify (and make visible as “gay”) human subjects living in the Global South who do not adhere to the homo-hetero binary, even if they do practice same-sex sexuality. This identification from beyond does not take into account whether the subjects involved want to be made publicly visible or not. Ironically, the Gay International has much in common with the Islamist groups it criticizes: they both want to publicly identify homosexuals—the former to save them and the latter to condemn them.

Most problematic in the Gay International’s value system is the unquestioned primacy of visibility, transparency, and confession (of one’s sexuality). According to the principles put forth by Michel Foucault (1978), these values are particular to a time and place: the emergence of homosexual identity in Europe and the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Thus, a certain kind of gay universalism—based on gay pride and sexual liberation narratives—takes itself as the referent for all other possible homosexualities, extrapolating outward. Sexual alterity (otherness) in other countries that does not match these narratives is often deemed backward or primitive, no matter its comparative scope or age. This can include sexualities that have a different relationship to the public-private distinction, that dwell in clandestinity, that exist within traditional marriage arrangements, that are temporarily embraced or discarded or vary according to one’s age, and, especially, that do not determine one’s sense of self. While many Euro-American observers have pathologized this behavior using a variety of stigmatizing and medicalizing terminologies (e.g., “schizophrenia,” “internalized self-hatred”), one can also view in these nonhomonormative sexualities a sexual instability that cannot be assimilated
into gay universalism and, moreover, is indifferent to how it is portrayed in the foreign press.

While homosexual identity has not been historically prevalent in the region, Massad argues, neither has heterosexual identity, nor the homo-hetero binary for that matter. While *Desiring Arabs* contains a literary archive of the Arab literature of sexual dissidence in its fourth and fifth chapters, the Gay International essay, which is often read in isolation, has proven the most controversial, even netting accusations of homophobia and promulgating conspiracy theories. However, a number of notable scholars of postcolonial studies and gender studies (including Talal Asad, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Joan W. Scott [see University of Chicago Press 2007], as well as Jarrod Hayes [2016]) have cited the importance of Massad’s work. His findings have also been applied to diaspora contexts in Europe, where the rhetoric of sexual nationalism has been the most pervasive and the sexual demonization of Muslim immigrants and their descendants has been the most effective (Mack 2017). A French anti-racist activist group named the Movement of the Indigenous of the Republic made waves in 2012 when, citing Massad, one of its spokespersons claimed that the gay marriage campaign, which had succeeded in 2013, was not a priority for the African, North African, and Caribbean populations of the banlieues (multiethnic, working-class suburbs), even for those practicing same-sex sexuality (Bouteldja 2012).

The concept of the Gay International has many critics. It can approach victim blaming, as it seems to fault those in the Global South who adopt gay identity—and are public about it—for their own oppression. This argument has been met with a counterclaim: that it is the imperative of identification imposed by the Gay International that endangers visibly effeminate or nonpassing practitioners of same-sex sexuality, and that prior to the Gay International’s interventions and the globalization of sexual identity categories there was no moral panic triggering homosexual witch hunts (at least nowhere near the same extent). The debate around the Gay International also has a strong class component, with some seeing in Massad’s book the claim that it is only the elite, bourgeois classes—often educated abroad—in Arab and other Global South countries that express a need for public gay visibility (Makarem 2009). Others have pointed out that restricting one’s view of local sexual cultures in the Global South in terms of a “before” and “after” contact with the Gay International is problematic for two reasons: one, because it romanticizes a golden age of purity, authenticity, and isolation from cultural admixture; and two, because it presents the globalization of sexual identity categories as a kind of contagion (Abu-Odeh 2015; Kirchick 2007). One can retort that a critique of the Gay International actually protects sexual diversity: many local customs of same-sex sexuality have disappeared in the era of gay universalism, are currently under pressure of erasure, or have been actively suppressed from the historical record in postcolonial societies.
Euro-American Views on and Stigmatization of Africa and the Middle East

This forced amnesia with regard to homoerotic heritage manifests in the wake of a spreading Euro-American gay liberation movement that derives gay universalism from its own image, a movement that has at times steamrolled local sexual cultures that may not have the cultural capital, funding, or will to survive and promote themselves as feasible alternatives to gay universalism. This universalism threatens to supplant local sexual cultures in the public imagination as the only reference for same-sex sexuality. In the Arab world and Africa south of the Sahara, local sexual cultures have at times been erased by compatriot Africans and Arabs. In a complex historical process, indigenous populations, after encountering Europeans in the colonial arena, measured their own cultures against Europe’s and found their own morally lacking (Massad 2007): many were especially embarrassed about the ample traces of homosexuality that European explorers and travel writers had seized on and emphasized (Boone 1995). Thus, many countries “became” homophobic after contact with Europe, rewriting their own histories so as to erase any trace of same-sex eroticism. This mirrors a time line of reactions Neville Hoad has identified with regard to Africa. After a century of being faulted for their “primitivity,” Africans elaborated homophobic responses that could be taken as “reaction formation[s] in the psychoanalytic sense.” These reaction formations cause Africans to take what was in the past considered Europe’s civilized morality (in which same-sex eroticism must be eradicated) and assert it as organically local: “Anti-Western attacks on ‘homosexuality’ can be seen as responses to these prior attributions of primitiveness, and as reversals of the racist charge of retardation and/or degeneration.” At the same time, “imperial ‘civilized’ sexual norms can remain in place and can paradoxically be defended as authentically African” (Hoad 2007, 56–57).

Europe’s current stigmatization of Africa and the Middle East as the center of the homophobic world is historically ironic given that homophobic Europe historically sourced the malady of homosexuality in the regions from which it currently demands sexual tolerance. Up until the 1980s, North Africa was a shelter for Americans and Europeans fleeing the sexual intolerance of their home countries (Caraës and Fernandez 2003). Adding to the historical irony, laws criminalizing sexuality in the Middle East and North Africa region were often inherited from British and French legal codes (Massad 2007). Similarly, in Africa south of the Sahara, current official homophobic language echoes what was often heard during British control of Uganda (Hoad 2007). The nascent gay or homophile American press in the 1950s and 1960s portrayed Africa as more “liberal” in terms of sexual and gender variance than the United States (Thompson 2017).

At first, discussions of homonationalism focused on the dynamics between Europe/North America and the Middle East and North Africa region, but more recently they have
expanded to include the Global South and Africa south of the Sahara, in particular. In the face of aspersions that homophobia has always plagued the region, many African sexuality scholars and activists have insisted that homophobia, not homosexuality, is an import to the African continent. As with the Middle East and North Africa region, some scholars have stated that homophobic campaigns increased only after the infiltration of “Western” gay universalism, leading indigenous people to persecute their own sexual minorities and accuse them of being “Westernized,” even if they had never set foot abroad. In opposition to being represented as foreign additions, Africans practicing same-sex sexuality have stated their longtime connection to precolonial histories of homosexuality and traditional kinship structures, thus claiming their homosexuality and Africanness at the same time (Nyanzi 2013). Marc Epprecht (2008) has shown that “heterosexual Africa” is itself an invention, constructed over the last two centuries by a host of figures, from anthropologists, colonial administrators, and ethnopsychologists to, more recently, African elites and HIV/AIDS workers.

Uganda as Exemplar of Debates over Homonationalism

A country of central importance to these ongoing debates on the African continent has been Uganda. In 2009 David Bahati, a member of the Ugandan parliament, introduced the Anti-Homosexuality Bill, which sought to further criminalize consensual same-sex relations in the country that were already forbidden by the penal code. This legal push eventually culminated in the Anti-Homosexuality Act of 2014, which was invalidated in the same year it was signed, officially on procedural grounds but allegedly because of international pressure to cut off aid to the country. The tabloidesque Ugandan newspaper Rolling Stone (not to be confused with the American publication of the same title) had published the names of rumored homosexuals in a move that attracted strong outside condemnation. One prominent gay rights activist, David Kato (c. 1964–2011), who had led a victorious campaign against the newspaper, was assassinated, as recounted in the documentary film Call Me Kuchu (Wright and Zouhali-Worrall 2012). Kapya J. Kaoma (2013) has argued that the US Christian Right is responsible for homophobic violence in Africa. American Christian groups, after failing to stop the progress of the gay rights movement stateside, came to Africa south of the Sahara to preach against homosexuality, and some people contend that they are primarily to blame for the murderous campaigns of homophobic attacks that followed. The growing alarm around the “spread” of homosexuality in Africa south of the Sahara was fomented by American missionary and evangelical activity that sought to convince Ugandans that homosexuality was a threat to the traditional African family. The Anti-Homosexuality Bill was introduced only a couple of months after a prominent antihomosexuality conference organized by American evangelists. Scott Lively, an American evangelical pastor, was the target of a lawsuit alleging crimes against humanity as a direct result of his antigay activism in Uganda (Barry 2013).
Political speech invoking human rights also had a role to play in the escalation of homophobia in Uganda. In 2011 Hillary Rodham Clinton (1947–), then serving as US secretary of state, delivered an influential speech to the United Nations asserting that gay rights are human rights: though outwardly laudable, this equation actually imperiled humanitarian aid to certain impoverished countries by conditioning that aid on gay rights records. During Clinton’s tenure as secretary of state under US president Barack Obama (1961–), she called for foreign assistance to be used to “[promote] the protection of LGBT rights” (Clinton 2011; Obama 2011). David Cameron (1966–), the UK prime minister, threatened to stop aid to governments that ban homosexuality, while Sweden, Denmark, and Norway cut off or redirected aid to Uganda in the wake of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill’s passage (Wahab 2016). Indeed, personalities from Obama to Clinton to former Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper (1959–) were perceived as champions of gay rights in Uganda when they spoke out against homophobic legislation there, even though they had yet to express support for same-sex marriage in their own countries (2012 for Obama and 2013 for Clinton), and in Harper’s case, never did (Bowers 2012; Sherman 2015; Wahab 2016). This selective liberalism in which gay rights can be supported abroad while denied at home is a key feature of sexual nationalism (although some may say one cannot compare the denial of gay marriage with homophobic persecution).

While many queer activists have expressed dismay that a gay rights agenda would be used to perpetuate imperialist domination, the Euro-American gay press in its majority supported punitive measures against Uganda, notwithstanding calls from African activists for caution and restraint. According to thinkers such as Puar (2007), this turn is made possible by the notion that, in the era of homonationalism, gays and lesbians in general have been depoliticized by their very inclusion in the national mainstream and are thus more likely to support nationalistic measures and superpower displays of might. Even if successful in stopping homophobic legal measures, social change in Africa that is brought about by outside intervention and pressure does little to substantially alter homophobic beliefs. It is the average citizen who stands to see in such displays of force even more reasons to defend homophobia, not for its alignment with African customs but rather as a wedge of resistance against Western interference.

Some have argued that in Uganda and elsewhere on the continent the move to criminalize homosexuality was not purely motivated by homophobia. One version of events sees in the recourse to homophobia an attempt to salvage agency against neoimperialist forces that sought to impose ideal social constellations from without: thus, homophobia was merely the form a broader cultural anti-imperialism took. As scholars such as Meredith L. Weiss (2013) have argued, Ugandan members of parliament and journalists took part in a process of homophobic “countermobilization” that sought to stop the social change observed in Euro-America from being reproduced in Africa. This process was preemptive in nature because sexual minorities in Uganda had not yet massively campaigned for these rights prior to being persecuted. In this way, because of transnational networks of influence and
globalization—involving pressure from international nongovernmental organizations, politicians, and evangelists—a crisis around homosexuality erupted where none had existed before, making this not so much a Ugandan problem as an international reckoning between antigay and pro-gay forces in the United States. This escalation was fomented not just by politicians but by the European media as well, and in particular the BBC, which aired two stigmatizing programs in 2011: The World's Worst Place to Be Gay? (a profile of Uganda) and a debate titled Is Homosexuality Un-African? (Wahab 2016).

In a comprehensive summary of the Uganda controversy that recaps its major flashpoints, Amar Wahab (2016) identifies the dual prisms through which most commentators have conceptualized the escalation around same-sex desire in Africa, phrased in the form of statements ostensibly contradictory but actually quite alike: “homosexuality is un-African” versus “homophobia is un-African.” Both phrasings adopt viewpoints that themselves could be seen as un-African: the first because it reflects the evangelist-driven homophobia that had not existed prior to missionary intervention, the second because it ignores the way in which homophobia itself has become a favored African tool for signifying anti-imperialism. Using South Africa as an example, Jane Bennett (2015) asserts that viewing whatever happens in Africa as the result of entanglements with the United States causes one to ignore local contexts and happenings on the ground: she claims that US debates around same-sex marriage had less impact on attitudes in South Africa than one might think, and in the end she attributes more influence to controversies about marriage in South Africa itself. Finally, Robert W. Kuloba asks, after all the rhetorical posturing about homosexuality being a foreign import (despite its longtime implantation in African customs), whether the entire process of asking whether homosexuality or homophobia is African has instead fragilized African identities overall. Just “who is an African in the post-colonial cultural sense?” he wonders (Kuloba 2016, 6). In the end, one of the greatest casualties of homonationalism, on both the African continent and in the Arab world, is the innocence of identity formation, unrestricted and free from critical pressure or intervention.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara; Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Uganda

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Homosexual Acts in Shari`a

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Perspectives on same-sex sexual activity in Islamic sacred texts.

Despite some claims that homosexuality is a Western phenomenon (Abu Khalil 1997), same-sex relations of many varieties are an inherent part of Islamic history and culture (Murray and Roscoe 1997). In the 1990s and into the new century there was a rise in literature and academic works on Islam and homosexuality by activists, academics, and self-identified LGBTQ Muslims, which has contributed to the discussion on homosexuality among Muslims in diverse contexts (Habib 2010; Murray and Roscoe 1997; Kugle 2010). Contemporary Muslim scholars have argued that humans are heterosexual by nature; therefore, homosexuality is a sinful and perverse deviation from nature (Abu-Saud 1990). And although they differ in their methods of penalizing and punishing individuals who have taken part in homosexual acts, Islamic schools of thought and jurisprudence all consider homosexuality to be unlawful (Minwalla et al. 2005).

Medieval Arabic erotic writings contain a wealth of homosexual practices, descriptions, and precise sexual terminologies, such as sahq/sahiqat (lesbianism/lesbians), mutazarrifat (elegant courtly ladies-lovers), liwat/luti (active male homosexuality/homosexual), ubnah (passive male homosexuality), and ma`bun (passive male homosexual) (Amer 2009). However, no vocabularies that exist in these texts are attributed to bisexuality, heterosexuality, or sexuality specifically.

Homosexuality in the Qur`an and Hadiths

The story of Lut (Lot in Hebrew scriptures), which is referenced seven times in the Qur`an (Wafer 1997), is often used to justify Islam’s rejection of homosexuality (Minwalla et al. 2005). In this story, God sends two angels to Lut, who offers them shelter in his house, but others in the area surround Lut’s house and demand that the visitors come out so that they “might know them,” suggesting gang rape (de la Huerta 1999). God’s subsequent annihilation of the people of Lut is interpreted as a consequence of their sexual practices and homosexuality (Jamal 2001). Yet, the Qur`an, though it narrates this divine punishment for Sodom and Gomorrah, does not specify any earthly punishment for homosexuality (Akyol 2015). And while many Islamic thinkers deem homosexuality a form of adultery, and therefore punishable on Earth, others argue that homosexuality cannot be considered
adultery because the participants cannot produce offspring as a result, and therefore it must not be punishable (Akyol 2015). In addition, many contemporary scholars and theologians have questioned this traditional interpretation of the story of Lut and have put forth alternative renditions. For instance, scholars have argued that the sins of the people of Lut were numerous and that the Qurʾan does not identify specific sins in reference to their punishment (Jamal 2001). Some suggest that inhospitality to strangers, for instance, was a reason for the punishment (Kahn 1989; Jung and Smith 1993; de la Huerta 1999). Some also argue that what is condemned in the story of Lut is not sexual orientation but sexual aggression (Akyol 2015). It was the hadiths, scholars have argued, that influenced interpretations of the Qurʾan by making a correlation between the story of Lut and homosexuality exclusively (Jamal 2001).

Hadiths, which are collections of sayings attributed to the prophet Muhammad separate from the Qurʾan, declare as punishable any act deemed insulting to Islam, including apostasy, heresy, and homosexuality. But while the hadiths are clear in their condemnation of homosexual acts, many liberal Muslims challenge the authenticity in the chain of transmission (isnad) of the texts themselves (Minwalla et al. 2005). Although traditional orthodox Muslims view the hadiths as the true words of Muhammad, others argue that the texts were written down nearly two centuries after the death of the Prophet; therefore, their authenticity is questionable.

As for the Qurʾan itself, there are divergent understandings and interpretations of the text, and of Islam's position toward homosexuality. Conservative thinkers consider the Qurʾan to be "very explicit in its condemnation of homosexuality, leaving scarcely any loophole for a theological accommodation of homosexuals in Islam" (Duran 1993, 181), while others who have relied on a more semantic analysis of the Qurʾan posit that its objections to homosexuality are comparable to its objections to heterosexual activities and nonsexual indiscretions (Jamal 2001). According to Amreen Mohamed Jamal and Omar Minwalla and colleagues, the Qurʾan does not specify a clear stance on the matter of homosexuality and homosexual behavior and does not mention a specific punishment for homosexual acts or indicate that such behavior must be punished (Jamal 2001; Minwalla et al. 2005).

**Liwat vs. Sihaq in Shariʿa Punishment**

The Arabic terms for lesbianism (sahq, sihaq, and sihaqa) and lesbian (sahiqa, sahhaqa, and musahiqa) describe a behavior and an action primarily, not an identity or emotional attachment: "The root of these words (s-h-q) means ‘to pound’ (as in spices) or ‘to rub,’ so that lesbians (sahiqat), like the Greek tribades, are literally those who engage in a pounding or rubbing behavior or who make love by pounding or rubbing" (Amer 2009, 216). Lut, or liwat, on the other hand, is loosely translated as sodomy, and defined by some as the anal penetration of either a male or a female, and by others as the anal penetration of a male only (Omar 2012). In the Qurʾan, sihaq is not mentioned at all, while in medieval Arabic
literature, lesbians are not considered to be guilty of sin, and the act of lesbianism is not considered a crime and therefore not punishable (Amer 2009). Sahar Amer argues that the surprisingly positive and accepting attitude toward lesbianism in Islamic and medieval Arab literature is a result of the general commendation of heterosexual practice and eroticism in Arab and Islamicate discourses (discourses within which Muslims are culturally dominant but not specifically with the religion of Islam). Sexuality within Islamicate discourses is explicitly celebrated and positioned at the center of religious piety. Sex is not a sin in Islam, and sexual desire is considered “both licit and desirable” (Amer 2009, 222). Paradise is described in sexual terms in the Qur’an, which emphasizes the importance of physical pleasure (Bouhdiba 1985; Khatibi 1983, 2019).

Sihaq, unlike liwat, is barely discussed in Islamic juridical literature, and the Qur’an does not mention it at all. However, some consider the term al-fahisha (sin), present in the Qur’an (4:15–16), to be a reference to sihaq. For most jurists, however, sihaq does not fall under zina (adultery) “because the phallus is one of the necessary tools by which intercourse and zina are accomplished. Two females cannot be punished for an act that they are not physically capable of performing” (Omar 2012, 240). Therefore, because penetration is considered to take place only when the penis of a man penetrates the vagina or the anus of a partner, the act of sihaq is deemed unpunishable, at least with hadd (Qur’anic punishment), as in the case of zina. The couple engaged in sihaq must be disciplined, but not executed, for although the sinful act of sihaq violates God’s divine order to protect one’s private parts, the Qur’an does not indicate any specific punishment for this act, and therefore hadd punishment does not apply (Omar 2012). Instead, couples engaging in lesbian activities are subject to ta’zir and therefore are disciplined and made to repent.

The principal and most condemned sexual sins in theological Islamic discourse are adultery (zina) and homosexuality (liwat). Adultery in Islam is defined as vaginal intercourse between a man and a woman who is neither his wife by law nor his concubine (Amer 2009). Adultery is therefore firmly condemned in the Qur’an and the sunna (the early Islamic legal tradition) and has, to some extent, contributed to the acceptance of female homosexuality in Islamicate societies: “Know that lesbianism insures against social disgrace, while coition is forbidden except through marriage” (Ibn Falītah 1977, 19). Despite there being no specific punishment or condemnation of homosexuality in the Qur’an, Islamic jurisprudents all generally regard homosexuality as one of the major sins, kaba’ir (Adang 2003). There is disagreement, however, among the traditional schools of
Islamic legal thought \textit{(madhahib)} regarding the proper earthly punishment for homosexuality, or liwat \textit{(Adang 2003; Rowson 1991; Kugle 2010; El-Rouayheb 2005)}.

How are punishments determined, then, with regard to male homosexuality (liwat) and lesbianism (sihaq), given that punishment is severe for the former and more lenient for the latter? In hadiths, when it comes to punishing those who engage in sodomy, usually the main concern is public order, whether in regard to insubordination to God \textit{(fisq)} or disorder \textit{(fitna)} (Mezziane 2008). Sara Omar’s examination of the differences in legal treatment and severity of punishment of liwat and sihaq revealed complex factors that ultimately influence jurists’ legal determinations in punishing liwat and sihaq in Muslim countries: the punishment of illicit sex between a man and a woman (adultery and fornication) is used as a paradigm for punishing liwat and sihaq; sexual intercourse is perceived as an exclusively male act of phallic penetration; and the partner’s legal status within the social hierarchy affects the outcomes of jurisprudential discussions of illicit sexual intercourse and the severity of the punishments. Although these three factors Omar lists have contributed to the establishment of legal junctions in relation to liwat and sihaq, the legal treatment of the two issues in Muslim countries is rooted in the Qur’an’s story of Lut and in hadiths, both of which have become associated with the acts of liwat and sihaq: “Juristic disagreements over the semantics and definitions of these three factors extended to the treatment of liwät and sihaq and, ultimately, became normative doctrine” (2012, 225; emphasis added).

Zina is legally defined as strictly the act of sexual intercourse with a person who is not one's spouse or (a man's) lawfully acquired concubine, and it is usually punishable by flogging or lapidation, depending on the person's state of \textit{ihsan} (spiritual purity and good earthly standing). An individual’s ihsan is judged by the jurists; however, the details are contested and debated within various \textit{madhabs}, or different schools of thought within Islamic jurisprudence (Omar 2012). Hadith is as direct in its condemnation of zina, which constitutes illicit sexual intercourse, as of a male’s illicit vaginal intercourse with a woman. Punishment of zina is decided according to hadd, which are punishments of certain acts that have been sanctioned in the Qur’an and therefore forbidden for being crimes against religion. What remains contested, however, is whether zina also encompasses anal penetration, or whether it refers strictly to unlawful vaginal penetration. Among those who define zina as unlawful vaginal penetration and liwat as anal penetration of both the male-male and male-female type, some also conclude that male anal penetration is not zina and therefore does not require hadd punishment; instead, individuals who have engaged in liwat must be punished through \textit{ta’zir} (Shalakany 2008). Morally, however, and despite this distinction, homosexual acts remain reprehensible and prohibited. Some also ground in semantics the justification for the lack of punishment, or the reduction of the severity of the punishment, of female and male homosexuality, claiming that because two words are used to describe two different acts, these two acts must be distinct from each other: “The difference in words is proof of difference in meaning” (Omar 2012, 230). The jurists who
punish couples who have engaged in liwat with the hadd punishment because they view liwat as a type of zina often quote the following sentence from the hadiths: “If a man approaches [e.g., penetrates] another man, then both of them have committed zina” (quoted in Omar 2012, 236).

The Maliki school (followed especially in North Africa), which adopts a rather strict approach to hadith in its punishment of zina and liwat, considered male homosexuality an offense graver than zina and thus meriting the most severe penalty—namely, stoning to death for both partners (Amer 2009). This school, however, permitted homosexual practices between a man and his male slaves (Amer 2009). The Shafi’i school (followed especially in Egypt and Syria), in its punishments of zina, liwat, and sihaq, distinguishes between married and unmarried individuals and between active and passive partners. If married, the partners are stoned to death, and if unmarried, they receive a lashing. The Hanafi school (followed especially in Iraq and the Farsi and Turkish-speaking regions of the Islamic world) is considered one of the more liberal schools of Islamic thought. This school assigns a less severe ta’zir punishment, which is also meant to reform and discourage others. Ta’zir punishments usually take the form of ten lashes and incarceration for a short period until the partners repent (Amer 2009).

Almost all punishments distinguish between liwat and sihaq; the latter is generally deemed a less serious offense than the former, and the least serious form of zina. Like liwat, sihaq elicits various types of punishments: some theologians prescribe 100 lashes, others prescribe the least severe ta’zir punishment, or no punishment at all (Amer 2009). In most legal texts of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), sihaq is not consistently addressed. Kissing, caressing, intercrural intercourse (between the thighs), and similar acts are also considered dishonorable and punishable offenses but are not subject to the above-mentioned penalties.

**Homosexuality in Middle Eastern Countries Today**

Official state scholars from the Hanafi school of jurisprudence decriminalized homosexuality during the mid-nineteenth-century Tanzimat reforms of the Ottoman Empire (Kazi 2011), so punishment for homosexuality was abolished during that period. This is an example of how social contexts and the experiences of classical Muslim jurists have contributed to the hermeneutical analysis and understanding of the Qur’an and hadiths. It is as a result of such a cultural context that some jurists interpreted references to al-zaniya (a female adulterer) in the Qur’an metaphorically rather than literally, and interpreted zina in the hadiths as a metaphor for sin as opposed to a more literal reference to adultery or fornication (Omar 2012). Jurists’ differing readings of the legal processes, logic, and social contexts have helped to illuminate the methods of reasoning and the various debates and disagreements between scholars concerning the legal treatment of male and female homosexuality. Such an approach in turn impacts other issues where the
social and semantic shape the legal debate, such as issues of gender, feminism, and sexuality. Varying interpretations of homosexuality in Islamic religious and legal texts are also significant for the cross-cultural history of sexuality, for they also challenge contemporary Western and Eastern assumptions about gender and sexuality (Amer 2009).

There are ongoing debates about interpretation of the Qur’an and hadiths, as well as about the treatment of homosexuals in Middle Eastern countries today. As in other dominant religions, there are varying understandings and analyses of Islam’s position with regard to homosexuality. This demonstrates the extent of the ambiguity of the Qur’an’s stance on the topic of homosexuality, be it in terms of activity or lifestyle (Jamal 2001). Homosexuality as an act is condemned in the Qur’an in association with people of Lut, but its punishments are not specified. Representations and data on the social and legal conditions of lesbians in the Middle East are yet to be as consistently thematized and addressed as Arab male homosexual realities and rights have been. In the Middle East, homosexual acts remain illegal and punishable in many countries and territories, including Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya, Egypt, Sudan, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Gaza. Punishment for homosexuality can range from the death penalty—as in Saudi Arabia, Iran, Yemen, Sudan, and Afghanistan—to imprisonment, as in Bahrain, where the sentence can exceed ten years (Itaborahy and Zhu 2013).

Some jurists and thinkers, such as Abu Hanifa (699–767) and Ibn Hazm (994–1064), did not employ qiyas (a method of deducing laws on matters not explicitly covered by the Qur’an or sunna without relying on unsystematic opinion) in the realm of hudud, and refused to use zina as a model for liwat and sihaq. They concluded, as many others do today, that individuals who engage in male homosexual and lesbian acts must be punished not through hadd but through the less harsh form of punishment, ta’zir. Those who did draw an analogy between zina and liwat, and those who support this stance today, are unable to apply this parallelism to zina and sihaq. Therefore, Muslim male homosexuals continue to suffer severe hadd punishments, including execution by various means (Omar 2012). Young boys and individuals deemed intellectually disabled are not held legally accountable for homosexuality or sodomy, regardless of whether they were passive or active partners in the sexual acts (Omar 2012). As for women, although they receive a less severe punishment than the hadd inflicted on their male counterparts (mostly because they do not possess phalluses), their punishments are in many cases “contingent upon the legal position of her penetrator, rather than her own, based on the semantic argument that a woman is maznỳn bihà rather than zãniya,” meaning a woman is the defiled rather than the defiler (Omar 2012, 255).

Shahid Dossani contends that “the roots of gay intolerance seem to be more sociological and cultural than religious” (1997, 236). While contemporary mainstream Islam officially condemns homosexuality (Minwalla et al. 2005), there is a growing movement of progressive-minded Muslim individuals, scholars, and jurists who view Islam as an
evolving religion and who reinterpret the words of the Qur’an and repeatedly debate its application to modern events and laws affecting Muslims internationally.

SEE ALSO Queer Names and Identity Politics in the Arab World; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Islam

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In theory, LGBTQI persons have human rights simply because they are humans; they are born free and equal in dignity and rights (OHCHR 2012). Yet, reports from all regions of the world evidence violence, repression, exclusion, and stigmatization against individuals because of their sexual orientation, commonly grounded in discrimination (Lee and Ostergard 2017). Indeed, in 2013 the United Nations (UN) secretary-general Ban Kimoon stated that discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity is “one of the great, neglected human rights challenges of our time” (United Nations Secretary-General 2013). The explanation for this apparent divergence between theory and practice lies in the huge variance among states or regions on the broad question of whether homosexuality should be accepted or rejected by society (Pew Research Center 2013). Strong public opposition is particularly linked to tradition, culture, religiosity, and relative poverty. Claims of LGBTQI rights have confronted long-accepted assertions of freedom of religion and the autonomy of religious organizations (Johnson and Vanderbeck 2014). A large number of states from different regions do not accept that LGBTQI persons have the particular aspects of the human rights they claim. In addition, many states reject any suggestion of a prohibition on sexual orientation/gender identity discrimination. Thus, for LGBTQI persons, their claim to recognition and acceptance of their identity is at issue because of fundamental divisions on whether sexual orientation discrimination is prohibited as a matter of human rights law at all. There have been legal and policy successes for advocates of LGBTQI rights (Gallo et al. 2014; Johnson 2013), but as with any human rights movement, there are setbacks stemming from political and social obstacles (Altman and Symons 2016). Many of these obstacles arise from the fact that different states take diametrically opposite positions on the question of whether the rights LGBTQI persons are claiming are “existing” or “new” rights (Roseman and Miller 2011).

**International Mechanisms**

Although there is a long history of the persecution of LGBTQI+ persons and homophobic/transphobic legislation, the history of engagement by the UN is very short (McGill 2014). Since 2003 the UN General Assembly has repeatedly called attention to the killings of persons because of their sexual orientation or gender identity through its
resolutions on extrajudicial, summary, or arbitrary executions. In June 2011 the Human Rights Council, by a vote of 23 to 19, with three abstentions, adopted Resolution 17/19, the first UN resolution on sexual orientation and gender identity. It expressed “grave concern” at violence and discrimination against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. Surprisingly, it was not until 2011 that the first official UN report on sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination was prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)—Discriminatory Laws and Practices and Acts of Violence against Individuals Based on Their Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (UN Doc A/HRC/19/41, 17 November 2011). The report’s findings formed the basis of a panel discussion at a meeting of the Human Rights Council in March 2012. This was the first time a UN intergovernmental body had held a formal debate on the subject. An updated report was presented in 2015 with a view to sharing good practices and ways to overcome violence and discrimination in application of existing international human rights law and standards (UN Doc A/HRC/29/23, 4 May 2015).

**UN Special Rapporteur**

A major political and institutional development was the creation by the Human Rights Council of an independent UN special expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Resolution 32/2, 30 June 2016). Member states on the council were deeply split over the appointment, and for the first time ever, there was a series of votes in the General Assembly in an attempt to reverse it on the grounds that sexual orientation and gender identity has no clear basis in international human rights law. The first independent expert, Vitit Muntarbhorn (Thailand), was appointed in September 2016, and he was succeeded by Victor Madrigal-Borloz (Costa Rica) in January 2018. The expert’s mandate includes implementing international instruments, with identification of good practices and gaps; promoting awareness of the violence and discrimination issue, and linking with root causes; engaging, consulting, and cooperating with states and other stakeholders; identifying multiple, intersecting, and aggravated forms of violence and discrimination; and supporting international cooperation and related services to assist national efforts.

**Advocacy**

Advocacy for the human rights of LGBTQI persons has aligned itself with nondiscrimination campaigns and social movements based on more established grounds, such as race, gender, and minority status. Historically, that advocacy proceeded by focusing on the interpretation and application of existing substantive rights obligations binding on state parties to human rights treaties, rather than arguing for the recognition of new human rights and new human rights instruments. The implicit assumption was that identification of sexual orientation and gender identity issues in a human rights discourse within existing
mechanisms and institutions was a necessary, if not sufficient, condition for having a positive impact on the lives of those concerned.

For LGBTQI Human Rights

The central issue of the debate in normative terms has been whether discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity should be considered on a par with such established grounds as racial or gender discrimination. Those who support this view submit that human rights apply to everyone, and therefore everyone has the right to a private life and a family life. Provisions in international human rights instruments that prohibit discrimination tend to follow the pattern of an open list and contain a reference to “sex” and to “other status”; sexual orientation has then been interpreted as falling into either or both of these categories. This is seen as an application of the “living instrument” approach to the interpretation of human rights treaties and as consistent with their object and purpose (Toonen v. Australia [1994]). The final step is to argue that discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation can be justified only by particularly serious or weighty reasons. International human rights institutions, particularly the European Court of Human Rights (Dudgeon v. UK [1981]; Johnson 2013), UN human rights treaty bodies (Toonen v. Australia [1994]), and the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (Atala Riffo and Daughters v. Chile [2012]; Advisory Opinion OC-24 [2018]) have largely duplicated each other’s jurisprudence to reach these results. In 2006 a distinguished group of international human rights experts adopted the Yogyakarta Principles on the Application of International Human Rights Law in Relation to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (O’Flaherty and Fisher 2008). This is not a UN instrument, but its intended effect was to apply existing international human rights law standards to address the situation of LGBTQI people and issues of intersexuality. The OHCHR, UN Special Procedures, UN human rights treaty bodies, and the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights have all referenced the Yogyakarta Principles.
Against LGBTQI Human Rights

States that oppose the recognition of LGBTQI rights as human rights, such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Nigeria, Uganda, and Botswana, have tended to simply reverse the arguments relating to interpretation and application. They have not been able to deny that human rights apply to everyone, but they stress that very few national, regional, or international provisions prohibiting discrimination expressly refer to “sexual orientation.” They have criminalized same-sex relationships, which they view as not protected by the rights to private or family life. They reject the view that sexual orientation falls under “sex” or “other status,” regarding such an interpretation as going beyond the permissible limits of a purposive living instrument approach to the interpretation of human rights treaties and as inconsistent with their object and purpose. Even if such an interpretation of “other status” was justifiable, these states reject the view that such differential treatment can be justified only by particularly serious or weighty reasons. At best, a lower standard of reasonable and objective reasons is considered applicable. Or, conversely, these states argue that they do have particularly serious or weighty reasons or reasonable and objective reasons that reflect their traditions, cultures, and/or religions. Finally, they argue that the fact that some international human rights institutions have copied each other’s jurisprudence to reach the contrary result does not make that result justifiable.
Culture and Tradition

An LGBTQ Public Awareness Campaign Poster in Lithuania Reads "It's a Human Right." This poster was sponsored jointly by Amnesty International and Lithuania's national LGBT rights organization, demonstrating the sort of international and national partnership between NGOs that is critical in LGBTQ advocacy.

Some African political and religious leaders have argued that gay rights and homosexual identities are against African traditions, as well as against their cultural and religious value systems. They also argue that African states have a sovereign right to reject what is seen as an imperialist or postcolonial imposition of a particular human rights agenda by mainly Western states that have sought to influence national sentiment via aid and trade conditionality (Baisley 2015). They resent the hypocrisy that although the United Kingdom presents itself as a global leader in LGBTQI rights, it was under British colonial rule that homosexual acts were first criminalized in many of its colonial territories around the world (Richards 2013). Many of those colonial laws remain in force, for example in Bangladesh, Brunei, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Singapore, and Sri Lanka (Lennox and Waites 2013). The argument of some African states and leaders is that acceptance of homosexuality is a cultural import from the West (a claim that has also been used to oppose the equality of women). This argument disregards the fact that culture and tradition are neither static nor monolithic. Nonheteronormative sexual orientations and gender identities have existed in all world regions, including Africa. Some Asian countries, such as Malaysia and Maldives, have made similar claims. They have marginalized LGBTQI
communities by promoting a narrow conception of “Asian values” that emphasizes homogenous societies where the only acceptable norm is heterosexuality. Yet even in regions that are broadly negative on LGBTQI rights, there are strong pockets of resistance, especially in Nepal, South Africa, Japan, and Taiwan. These arguments based on culture and tradition are not confined to Africa and Asia; they are also invoked in central and eastern Europe and parts of the Russian Federation (Trappolin et al. 2012). It is notable that both sides of the culture argument have utilized the same paragraph of the 1993 Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Conference on Human Rights (UN Doc. A/CONF.157/23, para 5, 25 June 1993) to support their understanding of human rights law. One side emphasizes the “various historical, cultural, and religious backgrounds” that must be borne in mind, while the other points to the “duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

**NGOs**

Awareness of LGBTQI rights as human rights can promote rights activism at the local and national levels. There are an enormous number of very active LGBTQI nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) nationally, regionally, and internationally. NGOs have played their part in advocating gay rights, although sustained efforts had to be made to persuade national and international human rights NGOs to take on sexual orientation issues as part of their agendas. A contemporary difficulty is that some feminist organizations have concerns that support for trans organizations can undermine the uniqueness of women’s rights. OutRight Action International (formerly known as International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission), based in the United States, is a leading international organization dedicated to human rights advocacy on behalf of people who experience discrimination or abuse on the basis of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression (Thoreson 2014). Particularly important in strategic terms was recognition of LGBTQI by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch as the so-called gatekeepers of the NGO movement, that is, dominant NGOs that police the boundaries of political expression of a given issue forum (Mertus 2007; Linde 2017). Transgender and intersex NGOs have relatively shorter histories. In the United States, the National Center for Transgender Equality was founded only in 2003.

It is critical for campaigners against sexual orientation discrimination that they are supported by vibrant NGOs as well as the civil society actors and the civil space they occupy. Financial and human resources are almost always limited. The use of modern communication methods—particularly videos, films, images on the internet, and contacts via social media—allows NGOs and civil society actors to become established more easily and to communicate more effectively and efficiently. Although cohesive national advocacy is growing in strength, in many states that oppose LGBTQI rights as human rights, NGOs
face restrictions and repression. As of 2017, in about twenty-five states there were barriers to the formation, establishment, or registration of LGBTQI-related NGOs. Most are in Africa and Asia. These laws limit civil society participation, as well as NGOs' abilities to bring their issues into the wider public domain and be included at the policy and political levels.

International NGOs (INGOs) have taken a more significant role in addressing problems regarding acceptance and accreditation in international forums. The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association is an international organization, with headquarters in Geneva, that brings together more than 1,228 LGBTQI groups from 132 countries. LGBTQI NGOs and INGOs continue to battle to be accredited with international organizations and to subsequently get LGBTQI issues onto their agendas.

**Marches and Propaganda**

Pride marches both celebrate LGBTQI culture and serve as political demonstrations for more extensive legal rights. Marches have been held on all continents and some have attracted millions of participants. State and public support for and opposition to pride marches are another contemporary indicator of attitudes to sexual orientation discrimination. Denial of permission to hold and restrictions on marches or assemblies promoting gay rights have been understood as violating Articles 11 (freedom of assembly) and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights (Alekseyev v. Russia [2010]) and Article 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (freedom of assembly) (Alekseev v. Russian Federation, UN Doc, CCPR/C/109/D/1873/2009). A recent trend has been for states to consider or pass legislation banning “homosexual propaganda,” particularly in relation to minors. In 2012 the UN Human Rights Committee held that the Russian Federation had not shown that a restriction on the right to freedom of expression in relation to “propaganda of homosexuality”—as opposed to propaganda of heterosexuality or sexuality generally—among minors was based on reasonable and objective criteria (Fedotova v. Russian Federation). In 2017 the European Court of Human Rights held that a ban on promoting nontraditional sexual relationships violated freedom of expression and the prohibition on discrimination (Bayev v. Russian Federation). The legislative provisions in question embodied a predisposed bias on the part of the heterosexual majority against the homosexual minority, and the government had not offered convincing and weighty reasons justifying the difference in treatment.

**Key Indicators of LGBTQI Rights**

**Decriminalization** There is a clear historic trend toward the decriminalization of same-sex sexual activity. As of May 2017, seventy-two states had criminalized consenting same-sex sexual activity between adults in private. In eight of those states the death penalty is “allowed,” or there is evidence that it occurs. In forty-five of the seventy-two states (twenty-four in Africa, thirteen in Asia, six in the Americas, and two in Oceania), the law is
applied to women as well as men. From a practical perspective, achieving moratoriums, not enforcing criminal laws, restricting the scope of applicable offenses, and educating the public are all elements of the process toward decriminalization. In 124 states there are no legal penalties for such same-sex sexual activities.

**Family Life and Personal Status** In considering the question of whether same-sex couples can establish a “family” for the purposes of the right to “family life,” European and inter-American human rights bodies have not ruled out extending the right to marry to two persons of the same sex but have left the question to regulation by the national laws of the contracting states (*Schalk and Kopf v. Austria* [2010]; *Advisory Opinion OC-24* [2018]). Thus, the trend toward legalizing same-sex marriage at the national level is an indicator of incremental support for nondiscrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. The number of countries that have legalized same-sex marriage is relatively small. As of May 2017, twenty-two states recognized or provided for same-sex marriage. Such change has come either on the basis of national court rulings or legislation (sometimes following referendums). Same-sex marriage was approved by a referendum in Ireland in 2015, and by a voluntary nationwide postal survey in Australia in 2017. Conversely, some states have introduced or reinforced restrictions on marriage. In Hungary in January 2013, a new constitution defined marriage as a union between a man and a woman. In 2018 Bermuda was the first jurisdiction in the world to reverse a law allowing same-sex marriage. However, Bermuda’s supreme court subsequently ruled that parts of the law that banned same-sex marriages were unconstitutional. Same-sex marriage is performed and recognized in England, Wales, and Scotland in 2018 but not in Northern Ireland. In *United States v. Windsor* in 2013 the US Supreme Court held by five votes to four that Section 3 of the federal Defense of Marriage Act (1996), which defined marriage as the union of a man and a woman, violated the Fifth Amendment’s due process clause insofar as certain tax laws discriminated against persons of the same sex who were legally married under the laws of their state. In another historic ruling of the Supreme Court, in *Obergefell v Hodges* (2015) a five to four majority held that the Fourteenth Amendment required states to license a marriage between two people of the same sex and to recognize a same-sex marriage licensed and performed out of state. However, the court was bitterly divided, and neither the majority nor the minority made any reference to international human rights standards or jurisprudence.

As for recognition of status, same-sex couples are offered some rights of marriage via civil partnerships, registered partnerships, or civil unions in twenty-eight states. Twenty-six states or parts thereof, mostly in Europe and the Americas, have joint adoption laws. The only African state that recognizes these rights is South Africa; the only state in Asia to do so is Israel. Twenty-seven states allow for same-sex second parent adoption (*Carroll and Mendos* 2017). The trend for all these indicators is toward greater recognition of LGBTQI rights.
**Immigration**

States that recognize full marital rights or civil partnerships for same-sex partners also usually extend to them the same immigration rights conferred on heterosexual spouses. However, an increasing number of states have decoupled the issues; they view the recognition of same-sex couples’ immigration rights as a logical requisite of application of nondiscrimination and equal protection principles, even while they have been unwilling to accept full legal recognition of same-sex unions or civil partnerships (Wilets 2011). Recognition is normally on the same basis as heterosexual spouses and, thus, may afford only limited temporary or provisional residence and on a dependency basis.

In many parts of the world, there has been increased understanding and recognition of individuals changing gender, but even progressive states have been slow to deal with the legal and practical effects (Lease and Gevisser 2017). The relative newness of the issue means that it is very much an evolving area of human rights concern. Trans immigration, as distinct from trans asylum (as in Avendano-Hernandez v. Lynch, 2015), is a good example. Some states, such as Australia, allow passports that acknowledge categories other than male and female, but most do not. Only a small number of states (Argentina and Denmark) allow individuals to change their gender category on their passports relatively easily; others require new birth certificates as evidence of gender surgery. Many states do not allow it at all. A host of practical immigration issues have also been raised, including body scanners that misfire when gender-nonconforming people go through them, pat-downs or strip searches as part of border security policies, immigration to a country that allows same-sex marriage or partnership, and immigration for the purpose of seeking gender-reassignment surgery or other medical interventions. It has also been acknowledged that trans and intersex persons held in immigration detention may be at particular risk of abuse and mistreatment from other detainees (Frankel 2016). In the United States, a significant number of transgender immigrants are unable to obtain legal permission to migrate and, therefore, arrive as undocumented immigrants, which can leave them in the same state of perpetual uncertainty as other undocumented migrants (National Center for Transgender Equality 2018).

**Persecution on Grounds of Sexual Orientation**

LGBTQI asylum seekers and refugees face distinct vulnerabilities (UNHCR 2015). In addition to severe discrimination and violence in their countries of origin, they are frequently subject to continued harm while in forced displacement. In the country of asylum, these harms may include: violence and harassment by members of the asylum seeker and refugee community; insensitive and inappropriate questioning at various stages of the refugee status determination procedure; intolerance, harassment, and violence by state and nonstate agents in countries of first asylum, undermining the possibility of local
integration as a durable solution; discrimination and safety threats in accommodation, health care, and employment by state and nonstate agents; and subjection to sexual and gender-based violence or survival sex in forced displacement. Some protective jurisprudence on persecution on grounds of sexual orientation has been developed in a refugee context. In 2008 (updated in 2012), the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) published its Guidelines on Claims to Refugee Status Based on Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity within the context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and its 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees (HCR/GIP/12/01, 23 October 2012). In 2011 the UNHCR estimated that at least forty-two states had granted asylum to individuals with a well-founded fear of persecution owing to sexual orientation or gender identity. Some national courts have held that individuals could not be deported to a state where they would have to hide their sexual identity, or where there was, in general, a serious risk of persecution on grounds of sexual orientation without that persecution affecting any particular percentage of the population (Frank 2012).

Health Care

Nondiscrimination, in the context of the right to sexual and reproductive health, encompasses the right of all persons to be fully respected for their sexual orientation, gender identity, and intersex status. UN human rights treaty bodies have stressed that human rights law proscribes any discrimination in access to health care and underlying determinants of health, as well as to means and entitlements for their procurement, on the grounds of sexual orientation (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, General Comment No. 22 [2016] on the right to sexual and reproductive health). Approaching sexual orientation issues from the standpoint of public health can be a good strategic move because states may appreciate the long-term impact of the health issues on the rest of the population. Although states may be reluctant to reform laws criminalizing homosexuality, they may be willing, for example, to include men who have sex with men in national HIV plans and consultation processes to strengthen the effectiveness of national HIV responses. It is also important to emphasize the historical importance of the HIV/AIDS issue. Its rise as a global health issue gave greater visibility to LGBTQI struggles for recognition. However, sexual orientation issues can also arise within the health agenda, broadly understood. Emerging issues include so-called bathroom bills—legislation that defines access, exclusively or inclusively, to public toilets (restrooms) by transgender individuals—and the regulations by world sporting bodies on athletes’ testosterone limits to comply with the female classification in sporting competitions.

Future of LGBTQI Rights

The struggle to achieve recognition for LGBTQI human rights parallels the efforts to develop other existing rights or to gain recognition for “new rights.” What appears to
distinguish sexual orientation claims from other rights claims has been the widespread political and legal opposition with which they have been met, but a closer analysis reveals that state practice is mixed and in a state of flux, even in the African and Southeast Asian regions. In India in 2009 the high court in *Koushal* held that Section 377 of the Indian penal code (on “carnal intercourse against the order of nature”), insofar as it criminalized consensual sexual acts of adults in private, violated Articles 21, 14, and 15 of the constitution. However, in 2013 this was reversed by the Supreme Court in a judgment that was dismissive of alleged discrimination toward sexual minorities and hostile to the “so-called rights of LGBT persons.” In 2016 the Supreme Court decided to refer the issue to a five-judge Constitution Bench for reconsideration. In 2017, in *Puttaswamy and Another v. Union of India and Another*, the Supreme Court recognized a “right to privacy” in the constitution and held that “discrimination against an individual on the basis of sexual orientation is deeply offensive to the dignity and self-worth of the individual” (quoted in Madani 2017). In September 2018 India’s Supreme Court decriminalized same-sex sexual activity under Section 377. In China, attitudes toward nonnormative sexual orientations and gender identities have moved from taboo to tolerance. There are over 190 LGBTQI groups and organizations with an online presence in China, but none appears to have NGO status. In December 2014 a district court determined that the conversion therapy to which a thirty-year-old man had been subjected was illegal and that compensation should be paid; China had removed homosexuality from its list of mental disorders in 2001. In 2018, in China’s first transgender employment discrimination case, an appeals court ruled that gender identity and expression were protected under antidiscrimination laws, and that, therefore, laborers should not be treated differently in the course of employ because of their gender identity and expression.

Levels of dialogue, public education, training, and information on LGBTQI issues are increasing. Time and visibility, aided by the greater tolerance of younger persons and the ubiquitousness of the internet and social media, may bring greater understanding and acceptance, as they have with other grounds of nondiscrimination and identity, such as race, sex, and, more recently, disability. However, history suggests that progress will be neither quick nor linear (Ayoub 2016; Picq and Thiel 2015). Indeed, it is not even inevitable.

**SEE ALSO** Adoption and Surrogacy in Europe; Adoption, Fostering, and Surrogacy (International); African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights; Defense of Marriage Act (1996); Hate Crime Law and Policy in the United States; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Human Rights and Queer Arab Refugees; Human Rights Campaign; Human Rights in Europe; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Taiwan; Marriage, Universal, in Europe; Migration to Europe; Parenting Rights in North America; Pride Parades and Marches; Refugees and Asylum in Africa; Russian Gay Propaganda Law


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_Huffington Post_, 24 August 2017. [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/india-declares-freedom-of-sexual-orientation-a-fundamental-right_us_599f574ee4b05710aa5b4194](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/india-declares-freedom-of-sexual-orientation-a-fundamental-right_us_599f574ee4b05710aa5b4194)


The geopolitical context that defines the relationship between LGBT activism and human rights in Latin America in the twentieth century.

The control of gender and sexuality has been part of the normative structures in Latin America since colonial times. Based on the legal subordination of women in marriage, inheritance, and property, and their exclusion from the public sphere, such control was first inscribed in the canonical principles inherited from Spanish law and then, after independence, in the secularization processes carried out as an attempt to establish secular-liberal states in the nineteenth century and part of the twentieth century (Pecheny and de la Dehesa 2014; Jaramillo Sierra 2008). Mario Pecheny and Rafael de la Dehesa maintain that the processes of exclusion characteristic of the heteronormative model did not transform with the attempts at secularization or the inclusion of the middle classes and low-income sectors in the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth century. Their perspective, albeit counterintuitive, correctly highlights that, on the one hand, these processes were invisible to all actors and analysts, making it a successful ideological process, and, on the other, that this ideology was internalized, not so much because of a political-religious effect, but rather as an effect of the secular-liberal principles that never questioned the hierarchical heterosexual matrix, exclusionary of nonbinary bodies and practices (Pecheny and de la Dehesa 2009).

The political processes of “normalization of sexual citizenship” (Figari 2010, 225; here and following, all translations by the authors) date back to three historical moments in the region. The first, in the 1960s and 1970s, was the emergence of the “homosexual movement,” which dealt with the invisibility or persecution and criminalization of bodies by state and nonstate actors. The second, in the 1980s, is framed within the outbreak of HIV/AIDS, which marked—especially for gay men, transsexuals, and transvestites, perceived as “high-risk populations”—a new circuit of prejudice and violence, but also prompted in the countries new regional and international articulations of activists and groups (Serrano-Amaya and Gomes da Costa Santos 2016; Raupp Rios 2010). The third
period of LGBT activism, in the mid-1980s and 1990s, describes the development of transnational bonds in the context of transitions to democracy, the emergence of new political constitutions, the scaling up of armed conflicts, and the instauration of a neoliberal model that still reigns, or has been renewed, over most of the region.

This entry examines the geopolitical context that defines the relationship between LGBT activism and human rights in Latin America in the twentieth century. Although there is plenty to be said about all the countries in the region, this text is limited to providing examples from Ecuador, Colombia, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay. Brazil and Mexico are crucial in that they are, in themselves, a universe of pioneering inspiration for the whole continent.

**The Early Organizations**

LGBT activism in Latin America first appeared in the 1960s and 1970s. Despite the differences among the countries' movements, the initial wave of activism was marked by the context of turbulent political processes, including the presence of the revolutionary left; new women's, indigenous, and black social movements; dictatorships and repression by authoritarian regimes in many countries; and not one but several events of state persecution. Among the events and movements that inspired the collective action and politicization of youths seeking social and sexual transformation were the Cuban Revolution of 1959 (which inspired the Left), the student riots of 1968 in Paris and the Tlatelolco massacre of students in Mexico City in the same year, the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City, and the countercultural and feminist movements of the Global North (Simonetto 2017; Figari 2010; de la Dehesa 2010). It was in this political climate that the early homosexual groups in Latin America emerged, driven, for the most part, by emblematic activists such as Nancy Cárdenas (1934–1994) in Mexico, León Zuleta (1952–1993) and Manuel Velandia Mora (1955--) in Colombia, and Néstor Perlongher (1949–1992) in Argentina.

The emerging period of the first organizations was also influenced by an ambivalent relationship to the Left (Serrano-Amaya and Gomes da Costa Santos 2016; Simonetto 2017). Initiatives by Latin American LGBT groups to link their struggles with those initiated by the Left were, on the whole, viewed with caution. For the region's leftist movements, the struggle for sexual liberation was secondary to the class struggle and perceived as an ultimate expression of “bourgeois decadence” (Simonetto 2017, 161). These early groups were “marginalized by the Right and scorned by the Left” (Pecheny and de la Dehesa 2009, 9), but it is indisputable that it was under the wing of leftist formations that the early homosexual collectives first came together (Simonetto 2017).

The pioneers in this process were groups with radical perspectives, which formed in Argentina and Mexico. The Argentine group Nuestro Mundo (Our World), founded in 1967
by Héctor Anabitarte (1940–), a trade unionist, post office worker, and former member of the Communist Party, was the first organized group in South America (Simonetto 2017). In 1971 Grupo Nuestro Mundo (GNM) joined leftist, middle-class university students (operating underground since 1967), anarchists, and religious groups to form the Frente de Liberación Homosexual Argentino (FLHA; Argentine Homosexual Liberation Front), a clearly Marxist group (Comunidad Homosexual Argentina 2018; Rapisardi 2008). Carlos Figari (2010) explains that during the 1970s the FLHA was intensely active: it participated in protests and study groups, was allied to feminist groups, and had contact with gay and lesbian groups in other countries. Despite its achievements, even after the end of the dictatorship and Juan Domingo Perón’s (1895–1974) return to power in 1973, the FLHA remained a mainly underground institution (Brown 2002). However, Perón’s death triggered increased right-wing paramilitary activities targeting homosexuals, leading to the erosion of the FLHA’s and other homosexual collectives’ ranks, a slump in the movement, and its final dissolution in 1976.

In Mexico, the emergence of the first homosexual groups was inspired by the 1969 Stonewall riots and by the political, social, cultural, and ideological transformations of the 1970s. In August 1971 a group of intellectuals led by the activist Nancy Cárdenas founded the Frente de Liberación Homosexual Mexicano (FLHM; Mexican Homosexual Liberation Front) in Mexico City (de la Dehesa 2007). As with the FLHA, the FLHM had a predominantly radical agenda and was distinguished as being a “pioneer gay and lesbian organization, which served as a seedbed of future drivers of the lesbian and gay movement.” Its roots went back to “communist circles” and highlighted “the role of workers in the liberation of the oppressed” (Mogrovejo 2000, 63). The FLHM split in 1973 as a result of internal pressures, primarily because of differences between its male and female members. Other groups were subsequently formed: Grupos de los Martes y los Viernes (Group of Tuesdays and Fridays), the Grupo-Grupo (Group-Group), and Sex-Pol, which had “a strong reflexive nature, raising awareness about the homosexual” (Figari 2010, 230). In 1978, against the backdrop of a political demonstration to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the student movement of 1968 and the Cuban Revolution, the various groups reunited as the Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria (FHAR; Homosexual Revolutionary Action Front) (Simonetto 2017).

Also in the 1970s, lesbians in women’s groups mobilized. In 1975 Mexico City celebrated the World Conference of the International Women’s Year, a space in which lesbian women took the floor. The Lesbos group was founded in 1977, followed by the Oikabeth group, which included a dissident part of the Lesbos group and former members of the FHAR (Mogrovejo 2000). At the same time, some transgender groups, such as Mariposas Rojas (Red Butterflies) and Mariposas Negras (Black Butterflies), appeared (Argüello Pazmiño 2013).

In the same way as in Argentina and other South American countries, the emergence of gay
and lesbian movements in Brazil was marked by dictatorial oppression (1964–1985). In the 1960s and 1970s, the dictatorship of General Emílio Garrastazú Médici (1905–1985) launched a campaign to “cleanse” society of homosexuality, considering it a manifestation of immorality (Green 2010, 78). The alliance with the Left (especially with Partido Obrero [Workers’ Party]) politicized the gay groups and collectives, and it allowed their organized emergence by the end of the 1970s. The organization Somos (We Are), so called as homage to the FLHA publication of the same name, was the first gay organization in Brazil. As mentioned by Figari (2010), because of the tension with gay men and the need to organize themselves around their own agenda, lesbians from Somos separated off and formed a new group called the Grupo de Acción Lésbica Feminista (Lesbian Feminist Action Group), which fought for ten years, until its end in 1990, for the rights of lesbians in Brazil. In parallel, in 1980, the academic and activist Luiz Roberto Mott (1946–) propelled the first LGBT human rights organization in Brazil, the Grupo Gay da Bahia (Gay Group of Bahia). The group’s activities turned toward the defense of human rights and the exposure of violations against LGBT people.

In Chile, sexual minority groups emerged in the midst of a prevailing climate of political polarization and an intensification of the social conflict marked by the victory of Salvador Allende (1908–1973) in the 1970 presidential election (Robles 2008). The sociopolitical environment led a group of homosexuals, transgender people, and lesbians from low-income origins “to demonstrate for the first time in the center of Santiago. Around fifty people protested police abuse, but they were soon beaten and dispersed by the police forces. In the same way as the socialist project, this pioneering initiative sank vis-à-vis [Augusto] Pinochet’s dictatorship” (Simonetto 2017, 170). Following the 1973 coup d’état and the subsequent establishment of the dictatorship (1973–1990), the repression of sexual minorities intensified; the emerging homosexual community, which had been forming under the Allende government, was restricted by curfew, “leaving them engulfed in the underground and under military surveillance” (Palacio Vargas 2017).

The Integración (Integration) group appeared in 1977. It was the first gay organization that existed under Pinochet’s dictatorship. This group, in contrast with other dispersed collectives of the decade, “did not have a revolutionary goal, rather it sought social acceptance” (Simonetto 2017, 170). The group met in private houses, where its members gave educational talks on homosexuality. These activities created political awareness in the movement and forged networks of new homosexual collectives and leaders, which, in 1982, culminated in the first gay congress in Chile.

While in Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, and Chile, LGBT mobilization emerged in the 1970s, in countries such as Uruguay and Ecuador the sociopolitical and violent context contained any attempt at collective action during the entire decade. The origin of Uruguayan LGBT groups can be situated around 1984, toward the end of the authoritarian military dictatorship (1973–1985). According to the activist and academic Diego Sempol (2015), state violence
during the dictatorship and the early years of democracy inspired the formation of these groups. The year 1984 saw the creation of the first gay organization, Fundación Escorpio del Uruguay (Grupo de Acción y Apoyo Homosexual) (Scorpio Foundation of Uruguay [Homosexual Action and Support Group]). The organization emerged after a meeting of twenty friends who organized as a social movement both to help homosexuals and to “understand themselves” (Sempol 2016, 20). Two years later, in 1986, came the formation of Homosexuales Unidos (United Homosexuals), an LGBT organization of great prominence on the Uruguayan scene that mobilized against state violence. Homosexuales Unidos gave great visibility to the problems that homosexuals had to live with and progressively adopted alternative agendas such as that of the transgender groups.

Finally, in Colombia, the first homosexual groups appeared at the beginning of the 1970s at the same time as the Argentine and Mexican ones. In 1970 the writer León Zuleta and the activist Manuel Velandia Mora created the Movimiento de Liberación Homosexual Colombiano (MLHC; Colombian Homosexual Liberation Movement) in order to transform the oppressive social institutions and the arguments on which they were based (Sánchez Barrera 2017; Serrano-Amaya 2012). Zuleta was a prominent figure on the Colombian LGBT scene of the 1970s and 1980s. His transgressive and unconventional personality turned him into a recognized figure that was very visible within the movement. In 1977 he led a series of meetings with homosexual groups aimed at promoting dialogue between the collectives, the conformation of solidarity networks, and the consolidation of national agendas. The meetings gave rise to the Grupo de Encuentro por la Liberación de los Güeis (Meeting Group for the Liberation of Gays) (Velandia Mora 2016). December of the same year witnessed the emergence of the Marxist newspaper El Otro (The Other) as a flagship publication of the MLHC (Serrano-Amaya 2012). Its slogan was “of sexualities and counterculture,” and it was considered the first medium to advocate for the recognition of gay rights in the country’s public arena (Simonetto 2017, 171). From its beginnings, LGBT mobilization in Colombia was especially the target of violence by both state and nonstate actors. The confluence of the moral rejection of homosexuals and the presence of legal and illegal armed groups that defended traditional gender roles created a dangerous environment for LGBT people (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica 2015). In such a context, the creation of gay movements and the struggle for their recognition was, above all, an act of courage.

**The Impact of HIV/AIDS on LGBT Mobilization**

The second wave of mobilization for LGBT rights in Latin America was marked by the appearance of HIV/AIDS at the end of the 1970s, reaching its peak in the 1980s (Pecheny 2003). In the midst of the crisis, the LGBT movement took a turn and emerged with renewed vigor through a new type of collective organization. Awareness groups, social denunciation meetings, and magazines were replaced by advocacy efforts and a search for
the recognition of human rights—in particular, the right to health. As José Fernando Serrano-Amaya mentions, “The struggle for a wide cultural transformation gave way to more specific, identity-based demands. Instead of relying on demands related to sexual liberation and cultural transformation, new activisms that emerged in Latin America were mainly focused on providing care to those affected by AIDS” (Serrano-Amaya and Gomes da Costa Santos 2016, 2).

Gay men and, to a lesser extent, transvestites became visible after the first public cases of HIV/AIDS in Latin America (Pecheny 2003). This visibility, however, had paradoxical consequences. The appearance of HIV/AIDS exposed gays as the cause of a public health problem, increasing discrimination and veering public opinion toward stigmatization. Yet, HIV/AIDS also brought political opportunities for the recognition of gay rights and the strengthening of social mobilization. The HIV/AIDS crisis impelled the movements of the 1980s to establish a dialogue with other actors, such as state and international institutions, to advocate both for the recognition of the right to sexuality as a human right and for access to international cooperation and funding (Serrano-Amaya and Gomes da Costa Santos 2016).

In such countries as Colombia, Brazil, and Ecuador, the emergence of HIV/AIDS in the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s intensified discrimination against homosexuals, as they were considered the only vector of the disease. According to a 1996 report by the Comité Intereclesial de Derechos Humanos en América Latina (Inter-church Committee on Human Rights in Latin America), many of the sexual minorities or people who worked with HIV/AIDS prevention organizations in Colombia were the object of multiple attacks and death threats. The social climate in Brazil was no different. Shortly after the first publicized HIV/AIDS-related death in Brazil in 1983, the term risk group was popularized in public discourse in reference to the epidemic (Klein 1998). The response to this discrimination by the media and the state was the emergence of organizations dedicated to vindicating the image of homosexuals. The activism of the 1980s in Brazil can be attributed mainly to nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) in charge of developing campaigns and actions aimed at reporting the implications of HIV/AIDS and the need to guarantee access to health for homosexuals. The role of NGOs, in particular of the Grupo Gay da Bahia, was so relevant that by 1994 there were already over 500 organizations in Brazil (Klein 1998).

In Ecuador during this period, HIV/AIDS was proclaimed as a new “plague” and identified as the consequence of practices attributed to homosexuals. In this context, several organizations saw the possibility to claim legal changes and protect the health of homosexuals. The Sociedad Gay (SOGA; Gay Society) group, as well as other gay collectives, emerged in the midst of national turmoil surrounding HIV/AIDS. This situation also led to the creation of the Fundación Ecuatoriana de Ayuda, Educación y Prevención del SIDA (Ecuadorean Foundation for Aid, Education, and AIDS Prevention), which promoted the development of civic action to encourage the viability of human rights, diversity, gender
equality, and social justice, as well as the elimination of all forms of discrimination, and the creation of the first Red Nacional LGBT (National LGBT Network) and the Red de Organizaciones con Trabajo en SIDA (Network of Organizations Working with AIDS) (Mancero Villarreal 2007).

With the arrival of HIV, the activist groups, which in the 1970s had been characterized by their radical discourse, transformed their relationship with the state. In Mexico, for example, “if the epidemic reinforced stigmatization and prompted incidents of state repression, the purportedly politically neutral frame of public health also opened limited opportunities for gay activists to articulate linkages with the state” (de la Dehesa 2010, 154). The gay collectives began to include new types of activities in their agendas; informing about the disease and its possible treatments, conferences, advocacy before public authorities, and the use of legal resources were the new repertoires that progressively monopolized the organizations' actions. Although HIV/AIDS opened up new spaces and opportunities for discussion for gay groups, this privilege was exclusively for gay men. The agendas of lesbian women and transgender people did not enjoy the same visibility in the public debate, leading them to activate new processes of politicization alongside feminist organizations (Argüello Pazmiño 2013).

Argentine groups also modified their means of appealing for recognition. In contrast with the FLHA of the 1970s, the gay movements of the new decades did not expose homosexuality as a form of transgression, “but rather as a lifestyle choice as legitimate as any other” (Pecheny 2003, 257). According to Mario Pecheny, “the language of liberation is replaced by that of rights. The corresponding community and contemporary gay-lesbian movements also attempted to redefine homosexual identity in terms of gay identity” (2003, 257). The Comunidad Homosexual Argentina (Homosexual Community of Argentina, the first postdictatorship organization of sexual minorities, was also founded in the mid-1980s. During the 1980s, most of the activists in this organization focused on securing a space of visibility for gay communities, and in 1988 the group promoted awareness campaigns on HIV/AIDS together with the Pan American Health Organization. Subsequently, in the early 1990s, a number of NGOs, such as Fundación Huésped (Guest Foundation) and Fundar (Found), joined health professionals in the fight against HIV/AIDS, which was the result of the totalizing effect of HIV/AIDS on the collective action of gay groups. Similar to the situation in Mexico, some activists decided to separate from the struggle against HIV/AIDS to establish their own agendas. This led to the formation of a new wave of groups, such as Gays y Lesbianas por los Derechos Civiles (Gays and Lesbians for Civil Rights).

**Democratization and Transnational Groups**

This section focuses on the democratization processes, responsible for the political renewal of activism in Latin America. The end of the dictatorships and the appearance of accentuated social and pluralist constitutions marked the beginning of a new moment in
the genealogy of LGBT mobilization. The fight against HIV/AIDS had placed human rights at
the forefront of the struggle, but the 1990s brought new circumstances that activated the
use of the rights and the search for legal reform as the dominant repertoire. The
revaluation of the rule of law and the new charters of rights coincided with increased
violence against LGBT people. This paradox was inherent to the region’s experience of the
1990s: the emergence of a progressive discourse of human rights and the recognition of
marginalized minorities coexisted alongside growing cultural and systemic violence against
these groups (Lemaitre Ripoll 2009).

LGBT activists in the 1990s used international platforms to seek recognition of sexual
rights. The first explicit reference to sexuality, sexual orientation, and sexual rights in the
international human rights discourse appeared after the 1993 World Conference on Human
Rights in Vienna (Serrano-Amaya 2012). Two years later, the participation of lesbian
groups was important in questioning the topic of sexual diversity in international bodies. At
the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, in 1995, lesbian groups, aligned with
women’s and feminist groups, insisted on the explicit recognition of discrimination on
account of sexual orientation. However, the legitimization of sexual rights for women
 accorded in Beijing “was not accompanied by equivalent advances in terms of the rights of
sexual diversity (homosexual, lesbians, bisexual, transsexuals, transgender, sex workers)”
(Corrêa 2008, 28). Given the systematic opposition of conservative sectors, it was not
possible to include a specific mention of sexual orientation in Paragraph 227 of the Beijing
Platform for Action, a paragraph referring to the multiple forms of discrimination against
women. In any event, the participation of lesbian women in the conference “served to raise
awareness regarding the exclusion of lesbians from existing human rights guarantees and
laid the groundwork for future action at the local, national, and international level”
(Rosenbloom 1995, xi).

In the 1990s human rights discourses, even if uncritically applied (Corrêa 2008), drove
activists to focus on international bodies, forging international networks of LGBT
organizations. The International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and the human rights
organizations Amnesty International and International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights
Commission (IGLHRC) were key in accompanying the national groups in the
documentation and diffusion of human rights violations against LGBT people and the local
struggles on which these groups embarked.

The ILGA was founded in 1978 as the first effort to promote international gatherings
between LGBT activists, and it included over 1,000 organizations in 117 countries as of
2018 (by which time it was officially known as the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual,
Trans and Intersex Association). During early ILGA meetings, the question about the
participation of “Third World” countries emerged as a central topic of debate (de la Dehesa,
2017). Many of the discussions focused on the concern that the ILGA may be a “First World
organism whose main interests were not precisely related to the Third World but rather in
the interlocution with supranational bodies” (Mogrovejo 2000, 273). In time and through the pressure exerted by Latin American groups, the ILGA became stronger in the region. The organization’s thirteenth annual conference was scheduled to take place in Guadalajara, Mexico, in 1991; three years earlier, “the Grupo Orgullo Homosexual de Liberación [Homosexual Pride Liberation Group] of Guadalajara requested to be the venue for the conference, and the request was accepted provided that lesbian women were involved” (Mogrovejo 2000, 275). For the first time in history, a transnational LGBT event would take place in Latin America; however, local authorities, in a joint effort with the Catholic Church, launched a campaign to stop the event. The mayor of Guadalajara, Gabriel Covarrubias Ibarra, declared in an interview with Metrópoli newspaper that “an event of this nature cannot be authorized under any circumstances; neither our customs, nor our history, education, religion, or anything else permits it” (quoted in Comité Intereclesial de Derechos Humanos en América Latina 1996, 20). Given the mayor’s declaration and fear of possible police action, the conference was moved to Acapulco. Despite this rejection by the authorities and religious and far-right groups, the scandal made the topic more visible and led to the intervention of the National Human Rights Commission and of groups of intellectuals and artists who openly pronounced themselves in favor of the event (Mogrovejo 2000). In June 1995 the ILGA held its seventeenth conference in Rio de Janeiro with 300 participants from almost sixty countries, including delegates from eight Latin American countries (Comité Intereclesial de Derechos Humanos en América Latina 1996).

The IGLHRC (today OutRight Action International) worked in San Francisco with volunteers and no resources except for the few things volunteers could provide. But those volunteers had good contacts and connections with individuals and groups in the region (per the authors’ personal communication with founder Julie Dorf in 2018). Between 1995 and 2001, the IGLHRC co-sponsored reports in Colombia and Brazil and published a global report on the situation of lesbians, as well as a 2001 report, The Rights of Transvestites in Argentina, led by Lohana Berkins (Berkins, Sarda, and Long 2001). In 1997 Amnesty International also published Breaking the Silence, a global report on human rights violations based on sexual orientation.

By 1994 there were five gay and lesbian organizations in Colombia that together created the Asociación Colombiana de Lesbianas y Homosexuales (Colombian Association of Lesbians and Homosexuals) (Ordoñez 1995). In 1995 the activist Juan Pablo Ordoñez published No Human Being Is Disposable, a joint report of the Colombian Human Rights Committee, the IGLHRC, and Proyecto Dignidad por los Derechos Humanos en Colombia (Dignity Project for Human Rights in Colombia). The report documented “social cleansing” based on sexual orientation and emphasized the prejudice, violence, and material difficulties suffered by low-income LGBT people. Increased violence occurred in parallel with the issuance of the 1991 constitution, which marked a new era of legal progressivism in Colombia’s political history. The secularization of the state, the transformation of a formal liberal state to a social state, and the creation of the Constitutional Court as the
primary institution of control for fundamental rights are some of the transformations introduced by this new political charter. In fact, LGBT actors—both individuals and groups—successfully resorted to this court and obtained protection for their right to privacy, to equality in access to health and education, and to rectifying sex within official documents without any medical or psychological requirement.

The case of Marta Álvarez provides an example of how organizations saw the regional human rights platforms as an opportunity to remedy what the law could not achieve at the national level. Álvarez was denied the right to conjugal visits in prison given her sexual orientation as a lesbian. She brought the matter to the Comisión Interamericana de los Derechos Humanos (CIDH; Inter-American Commission for Human Rights) with the support of national and international LGBT and women's groups, and in 1999 her case became the first sexual orientation–related case admitted by this body. In 2014 the CIDH sided with Álvarez; the outcome of the case was a state apology to Álvarez and a commitment to concrete action to prevent future discrimination. Whether these advances in rights are a guarantee of substantial sociocultural transformations is a controversial issue, but, in particular, the Álvarez case “not only [led] to a legal change, but also [served as] a contribution to the development of the political agendas of the feminist movements and homosexual and transgender groups and organizations in Colombia” (Serrano-Amaya 2006, 346–347).

Through the 1995 IGLHRC special publication *Unspoken Rules*, a collection of reports covering the situation of lesbians in the world, including some Latin American countries, activists revealed how “women face violence, harassment, and discrimination because they reject socially imposed gender roles and because they have intimate relationships with other women” (Rosenbloom 1995, ix). In Argentina, for example, the process of democratization generated the conditions for groups of lesbians and gay men to emerge in the 1990s, but this was not enough to end prejudice, the state's authoritarianism, and Catholic discourse against LGBT populations. Although same-sex sexual relations were not considered a crime, law enforcement agents could arrest homosexuals through “police decrees” that were regulations through which they determined what constituted a contravention of the social order.

In Uruguay, LGBT people, and especially lesbians, were vulnerable to various forms of harassment and discrimination, even though the Uruguayan Constitution included norms that, in theory, protected them from persecution and rejection. During the 1990s such lesbian organizations as Lesvenus and Las Mismas (The Same [Women]), as well as mixed organizations such as Homosexuales Unidos, faced abuses that continued even after the transition to democracy (Martínez 1995). *Unspoken Rules* also revealed that in countries such as Mexico, where dictatorships were not the rule during the twentieth century, the situation of lesbians and gay men was not radically different: they were subjected to violence from religious groups, which reinforced a normative vision of heterosexuality
In 1996 the well-known Brazilian activist Luiz Roberto Mott (the founder of Grupo Gay da Bahia) published a report, cosponsored by the IGLHRC, called *Epidemic of Hate*, which cataloged human rights violations suffered by gays, lesbians, and transgender people in the country. The report included an important component on the historical origin of homophobia, as well as the effects of an antigay ideology predominant in Brazil in the 1980s and 1990s. The introduction to the report begins with a sentence that explains the situation in Brazil and, to some extent, in the region during the 1990s: “Behind its international reputation for welcoming sexual diversity, Brazil hides a shocking secret: a homosexual is brutally murdered every four days, a victim of the homophobia that pervades Brazilian society. The land of *Carnaval* is full of contradictions” (Mott 1996, 1).

Another important example of how the human rights discourse prevailed in the region was the mobilization around the decriminalization of homosexuality in Ecuador. Triángulo Andino (Andean Triangle) was the country’s first group of collectives whose aim was to gather signatures to appeal to the Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees to abolish Article 516 of the criminal code. Under heavy national and international pressure, on 25 November 1997 the Tribunal of Constitutional Guarantees decided unanimously to decriminalize homosexuality in Ecuador, opening a pathway to the visibility of LGBT people in the country. This was confirmed the following year by the celebration of the first gay pride march and legal reform that led to the enactment of the first political constitution in Latin America to explicitly prohibit discrimination on account of sexual orientation (Xie and Corrales 2010).

**Conclusion**

Legal achievements have undoubtedly brought benefits to LGBT people in the region. The repeal of oppressive laws, the recognition of local rights, and international commitments ratified by the states have provided social movements with the legitimacy to speak based on the authority of the law. However, legal mobilization has not eliminated the limitations of human rights discourse—its claims of ideological neutrality, invisibility, and universalism. For example, to argue that human rights are claims made before the state and its agents may subject LGBT groups and individuals to greater vulnerability vis-à-vis the violations against them committed by nonstate actors, including their families (Thoreson 2017).

The issue of universality has been an object of constant debate; the human rights debate reflects specific epistemological and cultural visions, one example of which, as pointed out by Roger Raupp Rios (2010), is that LGBT rights in Europe and North America are created and developed based on claims for the right to privacy and nondiscrimination—or negative rights—whereas in Latin America, it is social rights—or positive rights—that mark LGBT
As mentioned by Sonia Corrêa, “the actors of sexual politics” assumed different versions of the universalism of human rights without much consideration of their implications (2008, 34).

Despite accepting these criticisms, social movements, including LGBT movements, among others, have managed to operate around such debates. The distinction drawn by Stephen Hopgood (see Thoreson 2017) between human rights in lowercase and Human Rights in capitals is useful to illustrate what has happened in the region’s activism, and it is the use of the notion of “human rights” as a signifier that invokes numerous and even contradictory claims for social and sexual justice. Human Rights, in contrast, is a very formal ideological circuit among New York, Geneva, and London, focusing on international law, criminal justice, and institutions of global governance—a space for elites that does not correspond to what most in-field human rights activism uses in a flexible, diverse, and adaptable fashion to formulate the need for change (Thoreson 2017). This, despite the substantial theoretical differences in the foundational arguments, can be related to what Corrêa points to when she talks about the tensions derived from the contemporary epistemology of sexualities: the postmodern perspective on sexuality rights and the law as possible remedies for injustice. That is, it highlights “the fluidity, the instability of sexual practices and identities—and [contrasts them with] the Enlightened and Kantian principles that continue to predominantly constrain the contemporary paradigm of human rights” (2008, 32–33).

It can be said that at the end of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century, LGBT activism in Latin America has worked on the articulation of a programmatic or deconstructive rights discourse on justice, whereby it sheds light on the tensions that coexist in the field without being canceled out. The most important effects of addressing the rights debate have been, as maintained by Julieta Lemaitre Ripoll, of symbolic weight. The decisions and laws that recognize the equality (as normality) of LGBT people have an effect on the self-perception of gays, lesbians, and transgender people that consists of the “the possibility of articulating an identity and understanding of community life within a meaningful social network” (2009, 272).

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights; Frente de Liberación Homosexual; Grupo Gay da Bahia; HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean; Human Rights; Human Rights and Queer Arab Refugees; Human Rights in Asia; Human Rights in Europe; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Latin America; Neoliberalism in Latin America; Transfeminism; Travesti and Trans Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Human Rights and Queer Arab Refugees

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At no other time have gay rights been regarded as more successful on the global front, and more deeply contested. Since the beginning of the Arab Spring in late 2010, revolutions have brought down corrupt governments and dictators in the Middle East, transforming the region into a hotbed of political and social change. These transitions carry along with them conflicting issues, including the factor of LGBT refugees. Amid the revolutions and the human events taking place, many Arab LGBT individuals have grown more unsure of their future as a community. Queer refugees continue to rely on social media and blogs to reach the Middle Eastern and international LGBT communities; to come to terms with their identities as queer, Arab, and refugees; and to discuss and understand their experiences outside their native countries.
was threatened with being reported to the authorities as a lesbian. Turkey’s close proximity to the Middle East, coupled with its relatively more liberal society, draws some Middle East queer refugees to seek asylum there, although discrimination, the high cost of living, and the lack of support means that many LGBTQ refugees still struggle to survive.

As of 2017, over 1 million Syrian refugees resided in Lebanon and more than 3 million resided in Turkey (UNHCR 2017) as a result of the Syrian uprising and subsequent civil war (2011–). Many Syrian LGBT refugees view their current situation as temporary as they seek asylum in Western countries. Queer Syrian individuals struggle to survive in Lebanon and Turkey owing to various factors, including discrimination, the high cost of living, and lack of support. The majority of Syrian refugees in the Middle East register with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to access support, and most of them do not disclose their sexual orientation for fear of experiencing discrimination and violence from their families and conservative Middle East societies (Du Verdie 2014). Although Lebanon’s LGBT community is growing in prominence owing to organizations such as Meem, Helem, and MOSAIC (MENA Organization for Services, Advocacy, Integration and Capacity Building), homosexuality remains taboo in mainstream society. In such an economically troubled, conservative country, many gay Syrian men struggle to provide food and shelter for themselves and their families and are forced into prostitution as a means of survival (Du Verdie 2014). As a result of the financial hardships and difficulties refugees can encounter accessing services, LGBT Syrians are increasingly reliant on the help of others. Turning to Syrian communities in Lebanon and Turkey proves problematic for them, as members of these communities endorse values from their country of origin that are homophobic or conservative. Reduced to dependence on others for survival, many LGBT Syrians are at risk of being abused, and if in need of protection, limited support is provided to them by foreign states. In the case of gay refugee Muhammad Wisam Sankari, for instance, he reported many threats by violent male groups before he was found decapitated in Istanbul in 2016. No protection was provided to Sankari despite his many attempts to seek help from the Turkish state, and little was done following his death, as no arrests were made by the Turkish police (Moore 2016). LGBT Syrians are therefore growing more unsure of their safety in the Middle East, and the majority of them are seeking asylum in Western countries, hoping to gain access to more secure and LGBT-friendly spaces.

As attention and criticism have been directed toward the discriminations LGBT individuals are facing in the Middle East, little has been written about the trials of Syrian LGBT refugees in Western countries. For, after facing persecution and violence in their home countries, and enduring transitions to neighboring states, the refugees given access into Western countries face political, socioeconomic, and psychoemotional stresses. To be granted refugee status on the grounds of sexuality is to enter a highly charged discursive arena that has existed since the adoption of the United Nation’s 1951 Refugee Convention (McGhee 2003). The main controversy surrounding this topic centers on the granting of asylum to individuals for persecution stemming from their belonging to a certain social group, making this provision the most contested in refugee law.
Human Rights and the International Queer Identity

The early twenty-first century has seen the rise of a global gay rights movement and a push for international LGBT rights in many parts of the world. International human rights organizations are calling for the application of international human rights principles to LGBT individuals globally. This movement of globalization has located itself in the realm of gay rights, where the internationalization of human rights has become a prime indicator used to evaluate the “progress” of nations (Stychin 2004). The movement has also led to the globalization of same-sex sexualities as identities. This international model of sexual identity, which is inherently Western in essence and ideology, is problematic. As the legal scholar Sonia Katyal notes, “Some cultures view homosexuality as an activity, not an identity” (2002, 99–100). And while there has been an emergence of openly self-identifying gay and lesbian individuals who define their public sexual identity along the lines of their sexual orientations since the late twentieth century, many Western activists and scholars fail to recognize that arguments for legal protection on the basis of sexual orientation often collide with, rather than incorporate, these preexisting social meanings of same-sex sexual activity. In other words, the assumed equivalence between sexual behavior, sexual orientation, and sexual identity, which is dominant in Western law, fails when applied in a cross-cultural framework (Katyal 2002). The idea of a universal paradigm for sexual identity, which then becomes promoted as a universal global human rights fixture, renders all sexual acts, regardless of their motivations, as having similar significance in global civil rights terms. However, imposing a gay, lesbian, or bisexual identity on individuals who may engage in same-sex sexual behavior but “who do not fit a substitutive paradigm between identity and conduct … can be unduly confining [and] exclusionary” (Katyal 2002, 115). And apart from sexual acts having no inherent meaning per se, they “carry different meanings in different cultural and temporal contexts, [and] it is [thus] largely impossible to universalize clear definitions of identity, and the relationship between act and identity is not nearly as ‘fixed’ as the model of gay personhood presupposes” (115). Therefore, focusing on sexual identity–based protections, which are not always palpable to some cultures, can be very limiting and, in many cases, alienates many who do not subscribe to sexual identities but deserve these protections, creating a system of “gay-identity politics [sweeping] the world, like so much of Western commercial culture, but [that] may also prove as repressive and imperial as the old bigotries already in place” (Browning 1998, 28). In the case of Syrian LGBTs, for instance, many choose not to apply for refugee status based on their sexual orientation, as they do not consider themselves to belong under the Western-specific sexual identity of gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, or other.

Focusing on identity-based protections has thus proven to be an unsuccessful method of attaining equality for sexual minorities. This method of protection is limited when applied in a cross-cultural context, which reveals the inherent contradictions of the global gay rights discourse. In order for the global gay rights movement to succeed and the protection
of sexual minorities to be effective internationally, they must, therefore, take into account sexualities and sexual behaviors outside the traditional categories of sexual orientation and recognize that "many individuals who fall outside of neatly circumscribed categories of sexual identity are just as deserving of a model of liberation that includes them" (Katyal 2002, 100).

As human rights have become an indicator of the progress of nations, gay rights have become a mark of modernity, and the acceptance of gay rights as a mark of embracing modernity, but this acceptance is framed discursively through casting other countries and religions—and, more specifically, Muslim and Arab immigrants to the West—as traditional and backward (Puar 2007; Butler 2008). Western countries are using their status as sanctuaries for LGBT Arabs as a form of sexual exceptionalism, and the liberal gay politics of visibility employed by the West when discussing Middle Eastern LGBT communities, and more recently Arab queer refugees, is ultimately about the “[development of] a righteous critique of power from the perspective of the injured’ (queer) victim, who demands the protection of the benevolent state from the ‘social injury’ of homophobia” (Brown 1995, 27). The only acceptable visible queer Arab is the victim, which is why Judith Butler (2008), among other academics and queer activists who interrogate the “‘Western male white-dominated organizations’ that advocate on behalf of ‘victimized’ queer Arabs” (Ritchie 2010, 558), insists on the inseparability of the queer struggle and the struggle against racism and occupation in order to disrupt the effects of the globalized queer ideology that has labeled the Arab LGBTs as victims and has rendered queer Arabs as “acceptable, and visible, only insofar as they mute or repudiate their [Arabness]” (Ritchie 2010, 562–563).

Employed in the discourse of Syrian LGBT refugees, and queer Arab refugees in general, liberal gay politics of visibility thus renders the Arab, “even on the metaphorical level of sexuality, the victim of the Western phallus” (Lagrange 2000, 189).

The West—specifically the United States, Canada, and Germany—has become a primary destination for individuals applying for refugee status on the basis of their sexual orientation. LGBT Arab refugees, however, and those who work with them, are involved in a system founded on highly malleable, historically and socio-politically specific sexual terms and identities that benefit distinct gendered, classed, and raced interests and, thus, place LGBT Arab refugees, or any refugees from non-North American societies for that matter, in a particularly vulnerable position.
A Middle Eastern Gay Refugee Seeks Refuge in France. A gay refugee named Ismael fills out paperwork in the Marseille office of Le Refuge, a French nonprofit group that provides temporary shelter and support to young adults who have been victimized by homophobia and transphobia. Queer refugees from the Middle East often encounter prejudice from the mainstream Western LGBTQ population because of their nationality.

Sexual Citizenship and Queer Arab Refugees Today

Many queer Arab refugees fleeing persecution in their home countries experience discrimination and trauma in the West as their national identities continue to be regarded as obstacles preventing them from fully integrating into the Western liberal queer community. Queer Arab refugees, and queer Muslims, are gradually coming to the realization that the intersectionality of their sexual orientations with their Arab identities is problematic for them in the West as they encounter prejudice and lack of acceptance from the mainstream Western LGBT population (Gray, Mendelsohn, and Omoto 2015). In addition to navigating these various social spheres, refugees must grapple with potential conflicting pressures to acculturate and assimilate to a specific Western culture (e.g., the American culture), while still maintaining their cultural or ethnic heritage (Gray, Mendelsohn, and Omoto 2015). LGBT Arab refugees are also encountering difficulties interacting with different social groups and communities, for they are often not welcomed or accepted in many ethnic communities. They may be discouraged, then, from accessing the support that might typically be provided to refugees in Arab communities, such as that of family members, or in the LGBT communities, such as that of organizations and nonprofit services, whether on account of the hostility and violence they might have
encountered or as a result of the perception of being unwelcome.

LGBT Arab refugees also face daunting challenges negotiating a system that questions the authenticity of their sexual identity. These questions of legitimacy are constructed by ongoing evaluations of bodily appearances, conduct, and narratives to determine their suitability in Western homonationalist sexual categories (Puar 2007). These modes of evaluation and investigation of the queer refugee’s body across spaces and times create significant challenges for the refugees placed within the determination process (Murray 2014). Queer Arab refugee claimants, then, become classified by the legislators and Western governments as either unworthy claimants or as poor victims begging to be saved from the tyranny of their own cultures, communities, and nations. Sexual-orientation persecution, like gender persecution, as deployed in refugee discourse, can function as a deeply racialized, culturally essentialist concept in that it requires Arab LGBT people to separate their experiences of sexual violence from their experiences as colonized people (Murray 2014). Their application for asylum often entails generating a racist and colonialist discourse that critiques their native state, “while [they participate] in an adjudication process that often depends on constructs of ‘immutable’ identity refracted through colonialist, reified models of culture shorn of all material relations” (Luibhéid 2008, 179). In addition, as mainstream LGBT groups and human rights organizations seek to support queer refugees, they may inadvertently use the refugees’ statements and claims in ways that sustain homonationalist discourses that preserve “a narrow concept of diversity defined in terms of freedom and choice … that not incidentally chime with a neoliberal free market ideology whose inherent exclusions are harder to name” (Haritaworn 2012, 3). Nevertheless, as refugees encounter homophobia and racism in their daily lives in Western countries, the homonationalist discourse will expose the selective dynamics of asylum procedures and interpretations, as well as the role they play in supporting the privileges of neoliberal states (Goldberg 2009). But what is more important is the exclusion of the histories of imperialism, colonialism, and racism from queer refugees’ narratives of sexual identity formation and migration and that “we are not able to see how these systems of domination produce and maintain violence against racialized sexual minorities both within and beyond national borders” (Murray 2014, 29).

**The Future of Queer Arabs Internationally**

The postcolonial is inhabiting global queer space and time. In the countries that were once colonized and oppressed by the same people who are now working to liberate them from the restraints of their cultures and traditions, people are discerning within the global queer discourse the same Orientalist representations of Arab sexuality and myopic chauvinism about the superiority of Western configurations of sexuality. The globalization of Western notions of gay and lesbian identities has thus been met with resistance in postcolonial nations. Western queer ideology is seen as a means of “successfully subordinating Arabs to
foreign Western ‘sexual categories and identities’” (Ritchie 2010, 567). The international pressure to follow such human rights principles does not seem to work, particularly when many in the Arab world see such principles as a Western imposition. The human rights discourse has also proven to be epistemically injurious to Arabs and has been used politically in Israeli and Western democracies to serve ethnonationalist agendas. However, the very emphasis on the lands that were once colonized imposes the binary of us/others, with history continuing to define the past and future and the bodies that once inhabited that space. The continuity of a normative timeline thus becomes interrupted by the increasing weight of the past and the “diminishing future, [which] creates a new emphasis on ... the present” (Halberstam 2005, 2).

The competing demands of queer representations are gradually leading to the shaping of hybrid queer identities. But queer Arabs remain in limbo as they are “shamed locally (when socio-moral codes are publicly violated) and globally (for being too gay or not gay enough). [They] are proverbially damned if they do and damned if they don’t” (Georgis 2013, 242). There is an urgent need for queer Arab refugees to take part in the altering of the Western pride discourse to accommodate them and the emergence of queer Muslim identities in Western societies amid vitriolic political debates on the presence of Islam in the Western world. Thus, queer Arabs and queer Muslims struggle for due recognition from mainstream Western societies and the overwhelmingly secular queer communities. This reveals the limits of liberal multiculturalism, where, in the case of queer Syrians, religion, sexuality, and culture conflict in multicultural capitalist societies. In order for LGBT Syrian refugees, especially Muslim Syrians, to be fully integrated into Western societies, it is necessary for queer Arabs and queer Muslims to be integrated into the normative lives of Muslim and queer communities. Providing the necessary interaction, no matter how miniscule, between Muslims and other subcultures and communities, will lead to the “redefining” of those communities (Hunt 2015). However, queer Arab refugees, Muslim or otherwise, will continue to face challenges in the West as long as the Arab culture and Islam are not integrated into the societies of mainstream Western countries.

LGBT communities residing in the Middle East, who continue to mistrust Western ideologies as mere agendas, regard lesbian and gay Arab refugees as fallen victims to Westernization and foreign influence. The gay identity becomes even more synonymous with Westernization, and gay rights becomes a symbol of recolonization. Gay refugees are viewed as serving Western liberal ideals and as being supporters of Western capitalist values, as they are shown on international media outlets marching in gay pride parades and getting married to partners of the same sex, thereby living the Western dream of being “out” and “proud.” International actors within this discourse promote the model of the globalized queer identity while failing to address whether sexual orientation is considered internationally to be a central aspect of personhood. This is a particularly important question through which people from varying cultures view the intersections between sexual desire, behavior, and identity differently. From the Western queer discourse that
considers international LGBT rights to be part of international human rights came the assumption that increased visibility is a successful formula for combating homophobia, heterosexism, and misconceptions about LGBT people, but such visibility can prove dangerous. Current queer politics present “coming out” as a requirement for queer belonging and frame the discussion of LGBT human rights in the international context that deems a visible coming-out expression of sexual identity essential for the progress of international LGBT rights. That method has proven to be unsuccessful in many postcolonial cultures, because, as a replacement for the relationship between identity, conduct, and expression, queer pride becomes a political instrument in building a community rather than a personal choice. This model of gay civil rights is problematic not only because it relies on an overly constrictive form of identity but also because it alienates the very people such rights are supposed to protect. Many activists and scholars internationally are working to expose the logic of Western queer ideologies as mechanisms that have enabled the reproduction and perpetuation of oppressive and racist ideologies, as well as oppressive patriarchal and heteronormative practices.

But for the time being, queer immigrants seem bound to a constant struggle for identity in the face of the various postcolonial borderlands (Anzaldúa 2012). The Colombian writer Gabriel García Márquez said it best in his acceptance speech for the 1982 Nobel Prize in Literature:

> It is only natural that they insist on measuring us with the yardstick that they use for themselves, forgetting that the ravages of life are not the same for all, and that the quest of our own identity is just as arduous and bloody for us as it was for them. The interpretation of our reality through patterns not our own, serves only to make us ever more unknown, ever less free, ever more solitary.

SEE ALSO African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights; Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Human Rights; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Human Rights Campaign; Human Rights in Asia; Human Rights in Europe

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Human Rights Campaign

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The largest LGBTQ organization in the United States as of 2017.

The Human Rights Campaign, with a reported 1.5 million members and supporters and 150 staff in 2017, is the largest LGBTQ civil rights and political lobbying organization in the United States. Known as the Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF) when founded in 1980, it was the first lesbian and gay political action committee operating on a national level. Its original projects were the financial support of lesbian/gay-friendly candidates for public office and soliciting sponsors in the US Congress for a national lesbian/gay rights civil rights bill. (The terms LGBTQ and queer were not yet in use in the movement.) Over the next four decades, the organization grew and changed in terms of issues addressed, as well as staff, members, and activities, but not without struggle and controversy.

Origins

The HRCF was one of several responses, political and cultural, to the growing backlash against the expansion of civil rights and the increased visibility of racial and sexual minorities in the mid-twentieth century. Nonwhite people, women, and gay men and lesbians had made strides toward equality with straight white men in the postwar era while protests against US involvement in Southeast Asia in the 1960s and 1970s became more widespread. These conditions helped foster the rise of the New Right, defined by social and cultural issues and an alliance with the Christian Right. Desegregation, affirmative action, and second-wave feminism (especially the never-ratified Equal Rights Amendment [under consideration for ratification from 1972 to 1982] and the US Supreme Court decision Roe v. Wade [1973]) all came under attack, as did the lesbian/gay movement. In the words of Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell, “We must stand against the Equal Rights Amendment, the feminist revolution, and the homosexual revolution” (1980, 19).

The backlash against LGBTQ gains appeared in several forms, from antigay legislation to violence. In Florida in 1977, for example, conservatives successfully overturned Dade County’s ordinance prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation with the “Save Our Children” campaign. Similar ordinances were repealed in other cities in the next few years. On the national level, Congress introduced legislation (which eventually failed)
denying federal funds to any individual or group perceived as supporting “homosexuality.” The most famous act of antigay violence occurred in 1978 when openly gay San Francisco supervisor Harvey Milk was murdered, along with George Moscone, the city’s mayor. This and the assassin’s light sentence for the murders further sparked lesbian and gay activists to organize on all levels and address politics more specifically.

Among those activists was Minnesotan Steve Endean, who had served as board cochair of the National Gay Task Force (now the National LGBTQ Task Force) and founded the Gay Rights Legislative Committee in his state. In 1978 he arrived in Washington, DC, to direct the Gay Rights National Lobby (GRNL) and soon joined others, including Larry Bye, Jim Foster, and James Hormel, in forming the HRCF and became its first director (1980–1983).

The original aims of the HRCF, officially formed as a political action committee (PAC) in 1980, were to raise funds for supportive candidates and to sign congressional sponsors for a national gay and lesbian rights bill. To facilitate these goals it cosponsored the study “Does Support for Gay Rights Spell Political Suicide?” while establishing the nation’s first gay/lesbian fund-raising network, and in 1980 it also contributed to a congressional candidate (who won, encouraging candidates that such support might not be “political suicide”). Two years later the HRCF held a formal dinner at New York City’s Waldorf Astoria at which former US vice president Walter Mondale spoke. By 1983, however, conflicts in the organization and in the movement over strategies and images contributed to Endean leaving both the GRNL (which merged with the HRCF in 1985) and the HRCF. To some the dinner and Mondale’s appearance looked like progress, whereas others saw elitism in expensive events organized primarily by wealthy white men, causing some to dub the group the “Champagne Fund.” Added to this was criticism of both the GRNL and the HRCF for a sluggish response to the AIDS crisis, adding to the reasons Endean was ousted from both groups’ leadership.

**Challenges of the 1980s**

Vic Basile, known for his work in the civil rights, labor, and antiwar movements, succeeded Endean as executive director and served until 1989. During his tenure the HRCF added activities and personnel and began outreach to the feminist and African American movements. It absorbed the GRNL, and Endean returned to the HRCF in 1986 to run the Fairness Fund (later renamed Speak Out), a mailgram project that added grassroots activity under the newly created Field Division. Also in the late 1980s the HRC Foundation and the Young Leaders Internship Program were created, and the original PAC was now but part of several divisions. However, the HRCF’s image as a collection of wealthy white men continued, seemingly verified by the Insiders Group (later known as the Federal Club), whose members were male, privileged, and white, and whose main contribution was fund-raising by hosting black-tie dinners.
Among the central issues lesbian/gay organizations faced in the 1980s were passage of a national lesbian/gay rights bill and, most prominently, HIV/AIDS. Hearings were held in San Francisco (1980) and in Washington (1982); at the latter, the lesbian activist Jean O’Leary felt she had to state that the rights bill, H.R. 1454, “will not condone homosexuality” (quoted in Feldblum 2000, 164). There was some progress toward passage: all Democratic presidential candidates of 1984 endorsed it, and both the House and Senate reintroduced measures. In 1991 there were 110 cosponsors (Endean 2006), but the HIV/AIDS crisis came to overshadow these gains, and the bill was set aside.

The GRNL had lobbied the federal government for AIDS research funding and education and prevention programs beginning in 1983. Upon the GRNL’s merger with the HRCF in 1985, the AIDS Campaign Trust was formed, and efforts increased toward securing AIDS-related legislation. The HRCF played a key role in the late 1980s in the passage of such bills as the Civil Rights Restoration Act and the 1988 amendments to the Fair Housing Act, as well as increases in AIDS appropriations. It was also in this decade that national lesbian/gay rights groups devoted even more energy to building coalitions with labor, civil rights, feminist, and other lesbian/gay groups; both the National Gay Task Force and the HRCF joined the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, legislation prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities included people with HIV/AIDS, and Coretta Scott King spoke at the HRCF’s fifth-annual dinner event in New York City in 1986, declaring her “solidarity with the gay and lesbian movement” (quoted in Saunders 2016). In the meantime, as the historian Marc Stein has written, the HRCF in the 1980s “contributed millions of dollars to hundreds of candidates who supported gay and lesbian rights. This did not come close to the amounts raised and used by sexually conservative political action committees, but it provided an important counterweight” (2012, 174).

The decade’s main issues were addressed by the movement in the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights on 11 October 1987, the second of its kind. In 1979 the first National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights had occurred in October, also to publicize the movement’s major concerns (antigay legislation and violence toward LGBTQ people) and demand action. Concurrently with the 1987 march, the HRCF held the movement’s largest fund-raiser yet. Controversial were the actual number of marchers (a dispute to be repeated with other rights marches, including later LGBTQ marches) and the lack of media coverage. As one result, activists the following year declared 11 October as National Coming Out Day. The first to organize this was the group called the National Gay Rights Advocates, who also supplied a panel for The Oprah Winfrey Show that day. In 1993 the HRCF absorbed National Coming Out Day and broadened it into the National Coming Out Project, soliciting celebrity spokespersons as one strategy for visibility. As a result of the expansion of its mission and activity, the HRCF continued to elicit polarized reactions among activists, from celebration of progress to fears of domination by one organization and its vision of change; by 1989 the HRCF was the largest LGBTQ rights organization in the United States, claiming a membership of 25,000.
New Visions and Old Concerns in the 1990s

The next two executive directors, Tim McFeeley (1989–1995) and Elizabeth Birch (1995–2004), presided during a time that included high hopes, bitter disappointments, and controversy among LGBTQ activists. Under McFeeley, the HRCF continued to build coalitions and focus on AIDS—for example, participating in National AIDS Lobby Days and helping persuade Congress to pass such legislation as the Americans with Disabilities Act (which included protection for people with HIV/AIDS) and the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act. The HRCF also officially declared itself pro-choice and worked with others on issues involving women’s health and reproductive rights.

During Bill Clinton’s presidential campaign of 1992 he had included lesbians and gay men, especially in his promise to end the military’s policy against homosexuals serving openly. McFeeley was one of several LGBTQ organizational leaders to meet with Clinton in 1993, and the HRCF instituted Operation Lift the Ban, sending over 70,000 messages to Washington as one of its projects. The HRCF and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force worked together on changing the military policy and other issues, especially in the wake of the movement’s third national march, the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. Yet, the compromise known as “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” that went into effect in early 1994 did not remedy the situation and contributed to accusations that the HRCF was ineffectual, resulting in an internal review that generated a plan of action for 1994.

When Birch took over in 1995, “Fund” was dropped from the name, and the HRC adopted the “equal sign” logo. Goals included modernizing the group (going online, hiring professionals, and instituting better marketing techniques), addressing its elitist image, and adding hate crimes legislation and job discrimination to its agenda along with HIV/AIDS; this last item was part of a change in strategy from a national lesbian/gay rights bill to piecemeal protections. In 1994 the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) had been introduced in Congress, aided by the HRC’s Documenting Discrimination project, but the bill was defeated in 1996 and no version had passed as of 2017. There was also some outreach to transgendered people, and the HRC had added trans issues by the end of 1998. To some this seemed delayed and contributed to ongoing criticism of the HRC’s projects and focus. Even the support of President Clinton, who spoke at the HRC’s first national dinner and awards ceremony in 1997, could be viewed as either a victory for the movement or a typical example of the group’s “Washington insider” status.

By 2000 the HRC was embroiled in further controversies, first from its endorsement of Alfonse D’Amato, a Republican senator from New York, for reelection—he had voted for ENDA and was against the military antigay policy but was antichoice—then for proposing a march on Washington without consulting diverse movement activists.
What became the Millennium March on Washington for Equality in 2000 had begun as a grassroots movement called Equality Begins at Home with the aim of marching on all fifty state capitals, but occurred as the project of the HRC and others and was announced by those perceived as the movement’s most “top-down” representatives: Birch, Troy Perry of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, and the events promoter Robin Tyler.

**Growth and Going Global in the Twenty-First Century**

After 2000 the HRC was deemed effective in responding to the ad campaigns sponsored by the “ex-gay” movement and in expanding outreach and programs such as the fight against discrimination in the workplace. Upon Birch's retirement from the HRC in 2004, Cheryl Jacques became executive director but served less than a year, naming differences with the HRC board as the reason. Joe Solmonese (2005–2012) and Chad Griffin succeeded Jacques, with Griffin still serving as of 2017. The extension of the HRC’s programs and reach is evident in such initiatives as the Religion and Faith Program, introduced in 2005, and Project One America, with its focus on LGBTQ equality in the Deep South (Mississippi, Alabama, and Arkansas), begun in 2014. Workplace equality, health-care issues, and electing pro-LGBTQ candidates at all political levels remained on the agenda, as did the HRC’s efforts toward legalizing same-sex marriage. In the latter case, the group’s long-
standing activism at the state level contributed to the 2015 US Supreme Court decision in *Obergefell v. Hodges* that declared bans on same-sex marriage unconstitutional. (Plaintiff Jim Obergefell was a long-standing HRC member.) As part of its campaign in support of marriage equality, the HRC changed the colors of its logo from blue and yellow to red and pink, and the image went viral on the internet, particularly in Facebook profile photos.

According to its website, the “HRC works to improve the lives of LGBTQ people worldwide by advocating for equal rights and benefits in the workplace, ensuring families are treated equally under the law, and increasing public support around the globe” (HRC 2017). The HRC has indeed expanded beyond the United States, engaging in research, reporting news internationally, and hosting the Global Innovative Advocacy Summit since 2016.

SEE ALSO African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; Defense of Marriage Act (1996); Hate Crime Law and Policy in the United States; Human Rights; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Human Rights and Queer Arab Refugees; Human Rights in Asia; Human Rights in Europe; Military Law and Policy in the United States

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Asia is the largest and most populous continent on Earth. As a result, it includes a vast diversity of cultures and people with dissimilar religious beliefs, social organizations, and political histories. Furthermore, the very concept of “human rights” is highly contested. Asia is often juxtaposed against the “West” and characterized as a region that is authoritarian, overly disciplined, and suffering from a lack of civil liberties. To suggest that all of Asia treats LGBTQ people and sexuality in this manner, however, would be a gross misrepresentation. The treatment of sexuality issues and LGBTQ persons throughout the region differs from community to community and is tied to deep historical and cultural conceptualizations of gender, interactions with cultures from inside and outside the region (including the “West”), and local attempts to recognize and integrate LGBTQ people in a rapidly changing world. The three subregions of Asia discussed here are South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. The entry is organized along these subregions to capture similar influences, traditions, and histories; as such, human rights is discussed in local terms based on these regional histories.

**South Asia**

The countries of Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka constitute the subregion of South Asia. Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Muslims, Buddhists, and Christians all make their home in the region, demonstrating the deep and rich history of faith in South Asia, with many of these religions originating in the subregion. At the same time, most nations in the subregion were colonized by the British, Portuguese, Dutch, or French or experienced external political pressure on account of the colonization of their neighbors. Although one of the fastest-growing regions in the world, South Asia is still plagued with gross disparity between urban and rural areas. Simultaneously, the region has an incredible diversity of economies, ranging from advanced information- and knowledge-based services to small-scale production and traditional village farming. These historical, cultural, and economic forces all play a role in shaping the rights of LGBTQ people in South Asia. This section looks at the rights of LGBTQ individuals historically from precolonial to colonial times and in the postcolonial age, while also discussing LGBTQ activism and
prospects for the future.

**Precolonial and Colonial South Asia** Over two-thirds of the region practices the religion of Hinduism. The oldest known set of Hindu scriptures, the Rigveda, dating from around 1500 to 1200 BCE, makes no mention of homosexuality. However, ancient religious texts written between the third and sixth centuries CE do make references to homosexuality. The *Kama Sutra* includes an entire chapter on the practice of fellatio between men. Additionally, close to a third of the region practices Islam, which reached the region in the seventh century CE. Although Islamic law explicitly condemns homosexuality, a tradition of homosexual intimacy can be found in the Mughal era and Islamic mysticism (Sufism). Furthermore, records indicate that *hijras*, or those that may be described today as transgendered, have a long history in South Asia. Throughout the region’s history, as opposed to viewing sexuality strictly as a matter of procreation, the ancient literature also discussed sexuality as a source of pleasure. While it should be noted that South Asian LGBTQ history in its full complexity cannot be fully discussed here especially because this history includes a complicated discourse from period to period and from community to community (see Vanita 2002), it can be argued that how sexuality was conceptualized in the region changed dramatically with the introduction of Western colonial power.

Colonial-era legislation idealized the formation of conjugal heterosexual households on the basis of “love marriage” and biological adulthood. In 1860, in response to a number of local practices that challenged British values of the time, the colonial government inserted Section 377 into the Indian Penal Code, a provision that criminalized sodomy and carnal intercourse against “the order of nature.” Furthermore, in 1871, the Criminal Tribes Act was passed to scrutinize and regulate the practices of groups such as hijras. These types of laws transformed the South Asian sexual landscape. First, many of these laws were used to blackmail homosexual political and business rivals. Second, they subjected nonnormative sexualities and expressions of gender to state surveillance and control.

**Postcolonial South Asia** The nationalist movements and subsequent postcolonial projects tended to retain and mimic the values of the colonizer as evidence of a modern and developed nation with self-governing capacity. As nations in the West began to decriminalize same-sex sexual practices, South Asian nations sometimes chose to retain and even enhance similar laws that were inherited through colonization to distinguish themselves as independent nations no longer forced to follow in the footsteps of their former colonizers. Political Islam, an ideology that encouraged the re-Islamization of society through grassroots social and political activism, and that served to mobilize South Asian Muslims to challenge the authority of the British, emphasized a stricter interpretation of religious texts. Heterosexual marriage in the postcolonial context, although historically important, became the only acceptable form of intimate and sexual relationship.
Although Section 377 is still in place in most of the former British colonies of South Asia, such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Maldives, and the law serves as the model for similar laws in Bhutan and Sri Lanka, this does not mean that alternative sexual practices have been eliminated in South Asia under threat of law. Personal accounts of sexual activities in major cities of India in the 1970s reveal that, although forced underground, homosexual encounters could easily be found in public parks and buses (Rangayan 2012). Various sources document the presence of alternative sexualities and practices in countries such as Pakistan, despite the presence of such draconian laws (Azhar 2013; Ladly 2012).

Some societies are especially restrictive. Although it has been argued that Buddhism leads to more open and tolerant ideas of sexuality (Stewart 2010), in Sri Lanka, where nearly 70 percent of the population practices Theravada Buddhism, heteronormative versions of the family are promoted in the constitution and homosexual sex is criminalized. In 1999, when gay organizations protested a newspaper editorial stating that lesbians should be raped, the Sri Lanka Press Council ruled that lesbianism was “illegal, immoral, sadistic, salacious, and against Sri Lankan culture, and therefore deserved to be condemned” (quoted in Tambiah 2004, 84). Furthermore, even when laws are passed to recognize LGBTQ community members, such as laws protecting hijras in Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh, their implementation can be problematic. In 2014, after Bangladesh officially recognized hijras as a third gender and pointedly hired twelve hijras for government jobs, eleven of them were subsequently fired because they had penises (Hossain 2017). Thus, official recognition comes with state control, surveillance, and discrimination.

**LGBTQ Activism in South Asia** In spite of these challenges, LGBTQ activism in South Asia is growing. Since the 1970s, a number of LGBTQ individuals in India began to organize, and by the 1990s a number of prominent LGBTQ organizations had begun to seek official recognition from the government. In 2009 one Indian organization successfully petitioned the Delhi High Court, in *Naz Foundation v. Government of NCT of Delhi*, to strike down Section 377, although the ruling was reversed in 2013; in September 2018, India’s Supreme Court ruled that same-sex sexual activity could not be prosecuted under Section 377. In 2017 LGBTQ organizations in Sri Lanka petitioned the government to strike down Sections 365 and 365A of the criminal code—the laws criminalizing LGBTQ acts. Nepal’s Sunil Babu Pant—the first openly gay national-level legislator in Asia—successfully petitioned the Supreme Court to announce that LGBTQ persons are not mentally ill and deserve equal rights under the constitution. Nepal today has some of the best protections for LGBTQ people in the region and in 2017 was described as a “global LGBT rights beacon” (Knight 2017).

Yet not all nations of South Asia are pushing for the same outward recognition of rights, and in some cases where rights are afforded, LGBTQ communities suffer. In 2011 the US embassy sponsored the first gay “pride” festival in Pakistan. Instead of encouraging more Pakistanis to advocate for their rights, this event placed many queer organizations “in the
line of fire” and marked them as Western conspirators (Charania 2017). In India and Bangladesh, adopting the LGBTQ language of the West to become “respectably queer” or to better “serve” marginalized communities has intensified economic and social class, caste, and gender differences.

**East Asia**

The subregion of East Asia includes the countries and territories of mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, South Korea, and Taiwan. Much like South Asia, the region encompasses vast cultural diversity; simultaneously, however, East Asia has had a deeper penetration of economic development. East Asia contains three of the four “Asian Tigers,” or economies that experienced massive growth from the 1960s onward. These three—South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong—stand today as advanced, high-income, and industrialized economies. Additionally, as of 2018, Japan was the third-largest economy in the world, and China, though still developing, was the second-largest and one of the fastest-growing economies in the world. While economic wealth may bring social change, such change introduces complex interactions between local practices and globalizing norms. Mahayana Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, and Shintoism are but a few of the cultural influences on the region. Furthermore, economic growth occurred under strong authoritarian governments, and in response, waves of democratization have transformed some East Asian nations into robust, liberal democracies. However, even with sweeping political changes and economic growth—and some expanded rights for LGBTQ people—much of the region still adheres to strong heteronormative family values, communitarianism, and filial piety. Such social norms can lead to cosmopolitan and modern lifestyles, with alternative sexualities considered shameful and hidden from public. This section looks at the traditional views on homosexuality, the democratization period, and East Asian LGBTQ activism in the twenty-first century.

**Premodern Views on Homosexuality**

Historical records across much of East Asia document awareness of LGBTQ practices. Although Confucianism has been in existence since the sixth century BCE, and Buddhism arrived in the region in the third century BCE, both are vague in their views on sexuality (Stewart 2010). In China, records reveal homoerotic behaviors in the imperial courts as early as the second century BCE (Leupp 1995). Buddhist monks in Japan from the Heian period (794–1185) were reported to engage in same-sex relations, while gay sex was not uncommon in premodern Korea, from the Silla dynasty (57 BCE–935 CE) to the Chosŏn dynasty (1392–1910) (Leupp 1995; Shin 2013). It should be noted that although many of the records discuss male homoeroticism, gender inequality led to lesbianism being ignored (Chou 2000; see also Sang 2003). In Mongolia, however, homosexuality was historically recognized, accepted as normal, and even praised because of the significance of LGBTQ shamans in Mongolia prior to the 1700s (Stewart 2010). In China, attitudes appear to change during the late imperial era. The Manchu
dynasty criminalized sodomy in 1740 CE (Sommer 2000). Furthermore, it has been argued that by the early twentieth century, strong gender binaries and condemnation of “sexual perversions” had been introduced to the region by Western colonial powers (Stewart 2010; Hinsch 1990).

**Modern Era** Throughout much of the subregion, reactions against foreign influence were profound. Japan rapidly modernized following the Meiji Restoration (1868), triggering a militaristic growth that prepared the nation for World Wars I and II. In the first half of the twentieth century, the Chinese Communist Party took control after much political infighting emerged in part as a result of the presence of and competition from foreign influence. The Korean Peninsula, too, experienced conflict between the Soviet-backed north and US-backed south. By the early 1950s, the region was ravaged by war, economically in shambles, and politically weak. Strong authoritarian leaders emerged in South Korea and Taiwan to prioritize order and growth over freedom. China entered the Cultural Revolution period, purging itself of Western “decadence and promiscuity” such as homosexuality. Japan initiated an ambitious phase of industrialization and export-led growth. After three decades, Japan had grown into the third-largest economy in the world.

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, much of East Asia had grown economically robust, with laws playing down tradition and promoting economic growth and mobility. China removed communist-era laws criminalizing homosexuality. In Hong Kong and Macau, the British and Portuguese penal codes were amended (in 1991 and 1996, respectively) to remove clauses criminalizing gay male sex. In South Korea, since the 2001 passage of the National Human Rights Commission Act, discriminatory acts on the grounds of sexual orientation have been considered as violating one’s right to equality. Democratization movements in the late 1980s transformed Taiwan into a liberal and progressive state, leading many to believe it may be the first in East Asia to allow for gay marriage. Yet these changes have yet to transform the social status of LGBTQ persons in East Asia. Although gay marriage was discussed in Taiwan as early as 2003, this triggered a political backlash with politicians engaging in hate speech against the LGBTQ community (Yu-Rong and Wang 2010). In Hong Kong, because of homo-prejudice, many gay and lesbian individuals conceal their sexuality from friends, employers, and family. Although homosexuality is not illegal in China, South Korea, or Japan, and LGBTQ rights are constantly expanding, heteronormative expectations of marriage and children, along with strong filial piety expectations, force LGBTQ people to hide their feelings and prioritize social obligations over individual desires.

**LGBTQ Activism in the Twenty-First Century** Notwithstanding East Asia’s heteronormative rigidity from the early twentieth century onward, LGBTQ rights have been advancing thanks to a large number of dedicated individuals willing to contravene strict societal norms. In Japan, lesbians were the first to organize social groups starting in the 1970s. By the mid-1980s, as a result of the influence of Western LGBTQ movements, the LGBTQ community in Japan became more visible, issuing publications, organizing gay film
festivals, and putting on the first lesbian and gay pride parade, in 1994. In China, Li Yinhe, a scholar and LGBTQ rights activist, proposed the Chinese Same-Sex Marriage Bill in 2003 and, after it failed, reintroduced it again in 2005, 2006, and 2008. Activists in Mongolia and Macau are pushing for greater recognition of the LGBTQ community by petitioning the government for official registration of LGBTQ nongovernmental organizations. Finally, although Mongolia and Taiwan have laws allowing for transgender people to change their sex on official documents after sexual reassignment surgery, South Korea allows transgender people to change their sex on such documents without undergoing surgery. In Hong Kong, the landmark 2013 case *W v. Registrar of Marriages* declared that transgender people have the right to marry as their identified gender rather than their biological sex at birth.

**Southeast Asia**

This subregion is arguably the most dynamic in Asia, sharing both the dramatic economic growth of East Asia and the overt colonial past of South Asia. The subregion includes Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. Culturally, the subregion embodies great diversity, having traded and shared cultures with the major powers of Asia and Europe. Its inhabitants speak over 800 languages and practice almost all of the major world religions. The subregion’s legal systems are equally varied, with many nations crafting different laws to apply to their diverse communities. In this subregion, LGBTQ rights have been slow to materialize but also have great potential given the subregion’s vibrant diversity and hybridization of cultures from past to present. This final section reviews the subregion’s precolonial and colonial histories, “Asian values” and globalization, and, finally, LGBTQ activism in the twenty-first century.

**Sexuality in Precolonial and Colonial Southeast Asia** Deeply entrenched and broadly institutionalized traditions of pluralism with respect to gender and sexuality have existed in Southeast Asia since the early modern era. When the Portuguese, Dutch, Spanish, British, and French arrived between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, they found such gender norms confusing and unruly. The British subsequently passed Section 377, prohibiting sex against the “order of nature” in Brunei, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Singapore—with Singapore eventually also implementing Section 377A, a code specifically targeting gay males. In colonial Philippines, there is evidence that the Spanish decreed that sodomites be sentenced to death by fire. Additionally, the Spanish replaced the *babaylans*, or transgendered religious figures, with *datus* (heads of clan) as village leaders. While the French and the Dutch had less interventionist policies to deal with sexual plurality, they nevertheless saw it as a threat to European racial purity and public health.

Upon the departure of Western colonial powers from the region after World War II, borders were in flux, internal conflicts along racial and political lines erupted, and global
ideological battles (i.e., capitalism versus socialism) swept the region. National movements in Indonesia prioritized family and traditional values as the galvanizing, postcolonial force behind nation building. Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos turned to “high modernity” through socialism, expunging themselves of traditional and French colonial laws. The British colonies of Brunei, Burma, Malaysia, and Singapore all maintained their British laws and, in some cases, emboldened them with stronger penalties, particularly in the area of sexuality.

“Asian Values” and Globalization Experiencing dramatic economic growth, and in reaction to Western colonization, Southeast Asian nations began to push back against the human rights discourse. Political leaders, such as Singapore’s Lee Kuan Yew (1923–2015) and Malaysia’s Mahathir Mohamad (1925–), asserted that the Western obsession with individual rights and “moral decadence” were inappropriate for Asia. Many Southeast Asian countries therefore emphasized their “traditional cultures” and fought off Western individualism, of which LGBTQ rights were seen as a manifestation. In Indonesia, the family in particular was used by the New Order government as the fundamental building block of society, and by the 1980s and 1990s this heteronormative structure became increasingly exploited to marginalize LGBTQ identities. Even in Thailand, a state that has relatively liberal views on sexuality, when a Thai teacher’s college upheld its decision to ban gay teachers, the Thai minister of education refused to intervene, stating that “under no circumstances … would the ‘rights’ of individuals be permitted to undermine the security of the collective body” (quoted in Morris 1997, 54).

Yet the tension between globalizing norms, the changing economy, and political rhetoric led to changes in the way the state treated LGBTQ rights at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Some Southeast Asian nations began recruiting the “pink dollar” (purchasing power of the LGBTQ community), aggressively luring foreign talent from “liberal” Western nations, and playing down the “Asian values” discourse. Singapore in 2003 allowed LGBTQ people to openly serve in civil service positions and in 2009 had its first “Pink Dot” event to celebrate LGBTQ people. Vietnam in 2012 began debates on same-sex marriage and in 2015 began to allow ceremonial, though legally invalid, same-sex weddings. In 2010 Myanmar began its transition to a civilian government, with concomitant legal reforms and liberalization, as well as a budding LGBTQ rights movement. Not all countries are progressing smoothly or in the same direction. Brunei enhanced its colonial-era laws criminalizing sodomy by changing the penalty from ten years’ imprisonment to death by stoning. In Malaysia, the political opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim (1947–) was prosecuted, convicted, and imprisoned several times for sodomy in what appeared to be politically motivated gestures. Finally, in Thailand, reports still surface of parents killing homosexual children and of gay conversion therapy tactics, such as raping lesbians or sending gay males to the monastery to become more “manly.”

LGBTQ Activism in the Twenty-First Century In spite of the difficulties, LGBTQ activism remains strong in the region. In 2013 Section 377A was challenged in Singapore’s High
Court. Although it was ultimately upheld, the ruling opened the door for future constitutional challenges. In Myanmar, LGBTQ activists work hard to translate the meaning of “rights” into the vernacular language after so many years of military rule. Finally, activists in the Philippines formed Ladlad, the first LGBTQ political party in the Philippines, and the only existing LGBTQ political party in the world, to challenge deep-rooted institutional bias in Philippine politics. Concomitantly, Indonesia and Malaysia have seen an increase in the policing and public shaming of “effeminate” men. In 2017 Indonesia issued “socialization orders,” forcibly arresting, detaining, and expelling gays and lesbians from major cities. While Southeast Asia grapples with finding its own path in the modern world and eschewing the consequences of its colonial past, political activism is still a balancing act between pushing for individual rights and avoiding tactics that might antagonize the state or populations that still embrace the “Asian values” discourse.

As an incredibly diverse region, Asia resists generalizations, particularly when it comes to the contentious issue of “human rights.” It is clear, however, that LGBTQ people have made significant strides throughout the region in making their voices heard and in pushing for greater recognition. Such strides are not without challenges, however. From political hurdles of authoritarian or military governments and cultural influences of religion or "Asian values" to fast-paced yet unequal economic development, LGBTQ activists have had to overcome a plethora of obstacles in making Asia a safe place for the members of their communities to live on an equal footing with non-LGBTQ people. For better or worse, such progress will have to be made over time and—learning from the past—on homegrown terms and in response to local circumstances to be successful.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights; Human Rights; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Human Rights and Queer Arab Refugees; Human Rights Campaign; Human Rights in Europe; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Taiwan; Naz Foundation International; Section 377 and Section 377A; Section 377 in South Asia; Sunil Babu Pant and Others v. Nepal Government (2007); W v. Registrar of Marriages (2013)

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“Europe” is best understood in terms of political and legal organization as an inner and a larger outer circle of countries. All member countries of the inner circle are also members of the outer circle. The inner circle (twenty-eight countries as of 2017) is the European Union (EU). These countries are bound by the provisions of the successive treaties that make up the constitution of the EU. Although primarily concerned with economic issues, the EU has increasingly become concerned with human rights, such as the right to equality and privacy. The EU “legislates” through the creation of Regulations, which are directly enforceable in member states, and Directives, which member states must legislate to implement. The supreme court of the European Union is the Court of Justice, which is part of the entity known as the Court of Justice of the European Union. The Court of Justice, which sits in Luxembourg, is often referred to as the European Court of Justice.

The outer circle is the Council of Europe, which includes forty-seven countries as member states. The Council of Europe “legislates” by drafting treaties that member states may decide to become bound by. The most important of these treaties is the European Convention on Human Rights, which is legally binding on all member states of the Council of Europe. This Convention is primarily concerned with human rights, such as freedom of speech, privacy, and nondiscrimination. The supreme court of the Council of Europe is the European Court of Human Rights. It sits in Strasbourg, France.

**THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

The European Parliament is the legislative body of the European Union. It should not be confused with the Parliamentary Assembly (formerly known as the Consultative Assembly) of the Council of Europe, although both bodies meet in Strasbourg, France. The European Parliament’s role regarding human rights is limited by the fact that it does not initiate legislation (which is done by the Commission of the European Union), and the legislation that it does participate in is limited to matters within the competence of the European Union, which do not include criminal law. The Parliament
adopted a Holocaust resolution in 2005 that condemned the murder of homosexuals in Auschwitz-Birkenau and warned of the danger of victimizing people for their sexual orientation. Within the Parliament the Intergroup on LGBTI Rights is an informal forum for over 150 members of the European Parliament. It has five priorities for its work: freedom of movement for LGBT people, monitoring the European Commission, combating discrimination in the European Union, securing transgender and intersex rights, and monitoring human rights in the work of the European Union.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has no legislative function, although it is very active in all areas of human rights and elects the judges of the European Court of Human Rights. On 16 May 2017, on the eve of the International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia, Jonas Gunnarsson, PACE’s general rapporteur on the rights of LGBTI people, issued a statement in support of the LGBTI community: “Recent allegations of wide-scale abductions and torture as well as extrajudicial killings of LGBTI people in Chechnya highlight more than ever the urgent need to protect victims of homophobic and transphobic violence and end the impunity of perpetrators.”

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Formation of the European Union and the Council of Europe

The reason for the existence of these two supreme courts in Europe is as much history as logic. After World War II (1939–1945) there was a growing consensus among nations that something should be done to prevent another war in Europe and to prevent abuses of human rights such as those under the Nazis. Initially, this took the form of a movement for European unity, formally discussed at the Congress of Europe in The Hague in the Netherlands in 1948. The movement soon divided.
One group of states was primarily concerned with preventing another European war by establishing international control of the primary means of industrial production through the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951. This was followed by the establishment, both in 1958, of the European Atomic Energy Community and the European Economic Community, the latter of which evolved into the European Union. The primary aim of the European Union is the facilitation of the free movement of goods, capital, services, and labor between member states.

The major human rights component of EU law for many years was the prohibition of sexual discrimination in employment. This did not initially include discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation. That was added, along with an expansive catalog of rights, in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which came into force in 2009 through the Treaty of Lisbon. Most EU legislation and case law regarding LGBTQ rights have been concerned with employment and related subjects, such as pensions.

The other group of states, including all those in the first group, was concerned with protecting human rights and democratic values. It began by creating the Council of Europe, the title given to the group of states that agreed in 1949 to abide by the Statute of the Council of Europe. This committed signatory states to guarantee democracy and fundamental human rights. The Council of Europe then began to draft treaties, the first of which was the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR; officially called the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms). This treaty established machinery for the implementation of rights, including the European Court of Human Rights. At present, individuals who feel that a state has violated their rights under the Convention can complain to the European Court of Human Rights, and states are bound to follow the rulings of the court.

The two provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights most relevant to LGBTQ rights are the right to privacy (in Article 8) and the right not to be discriminated against (in Article 14). The right to privacy has been significant in striking down laws penalizing same-sex acts and recognizing transsexual identity. The nondiscrimination right in Article 14 does not expressly include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground, but it has been adopted by interpretation. The right to marry and found a family (in Article 12) is relevant to LGBTQ rights, but the European Court of Human Rights has not yet ruled that this includes a right to same-sex marriage.

**LGBTQ Rights in Europe before the ECHR and EU**

Prior to the nineteenth century, homosexual acts were crimes subject to the death penalty in most European states. France was the first western European country to decriminalize homosexual acts between consenting adults when, in 1791, the revolutionary government adopted a new penal code that no longer criminalized sodomy.
During the nineteenth century, the persecution of LGBTQ individuals changed from a moralistic and punitive model to a medical model. Deviation from the sexual norm was perceived as an illness rather than evil. There was a great deal of speculation about whether this “illness” was the result of nature or nurture. The debate was far from theoretical, because the etiological theory chosen indicated the societal response. If it was a condition from birth, then the response would be medical treatment, which could be through drugs or surgery. If it was the result of environmental conditioning, then it could be “cured” by various changes in environment.

In Germany in 1897 the sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) cofounded the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee) to campaign against Paragraph 175 of the penal code, which made sex between men illegal. This was the first public gay rights organization in Germany. In 1919 he also cofounded the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Science), a private sexology research institute. The first gay demonstration, with about 400 people, took place in Nollendorfplatz in 1922 in Berlin.

In post–World War II Europe, national laws regarding homosexuality were often changed as a result of internal campaigning and reform. But many laws regarding LGBTQ rights resulted from rulings by the European Court of Human Rights under the European Convention on Human Rights. Dating from 1950, it is the best-known treaty from the Council of Europe, the larger and older of European institutions, not to be confused with the smaller and younger European Union. Both the Council of Europe and the EU have been active in formulating LGBTQ rights.

Although the two courts are often confused, sometimes even by lawyers, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg and the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg are very different. The European Court of Human Rights was created by the European Convention on Human Rights, which was promulgated by the Council of Europe, the older, larger, and legally less directly controlling European institution in comparison with the EU. The European Court of Human Rights considers complaints from those who believe that their Convention rights have been violated, after exhausting all national legal appeals. The European Court of Justice is the supreme court of the EU. Its usual procedure is to consider requests for advice on EU law from national courts at all levels and to advise the national court on how to apply EU law. This advice, on subjects such as the inclusion of transsexuals under EU sex discrimination law, must be followed by the court that requested the advice and is highly persuasive on courts in other EU countries. It is the equivalent of rulings by the US Supreme Court.

**European Court of Human Rights LGBTQ Cases**

**Cases Involving Criminal Law and Humane Treatment** The LGBTQ case law under the
European Convention on Human Rights is mostly about the Article 8 right to private and family life, the Article 12 right to marry, and the Article 14 right not to be discriminated against, while some cases involve the Article 3 right not to be subject to inhuman or degrading treatment and the rights to freedom of speech and assembly in Articles 10 and 11. In 1981 in the landmark case of *Dudgeon v. United Kingdom* the European Court of Human Rights held that Article 8 was violated by a Northern Ireland law making male homosexual acts crimes. The applicant had not been convicted, but as a homosexual he was a victim by the very existence of the law. In 1988 in *Norris v. Ireland* the court also held that there had been a violation of Article 8 of the Convention by the law in the Republic of Ireland. In the 1993 case of *Modinos v. Cyprus* the court also held that the law in Turkish-occupied Northern Cyprus violated Article 8. The court began by ruling that laws penalizing homosexuals violated the right to privacy and then began to find that they also violated the right not to be discriminated against, even though sexual orientation is not one of the specifically prohibited grounds for discrimination in Article 14.

**THE HOLOCAUST AND LGBT VICTIMS**

While gays and lesbians had been socially marginalized well before Adolf Hitler came to power as leader of the Nazis in Germany in 1933, persecution of them intensified in the following years. Under the Nazis, organizations such as Magnus Hirschfeld's Institut für Sexualwissenschaft were banned, and in 1933 all the books in the institute's library were publicly burned. The Reichszentrale zur Bekämpfung der Homosexualität und Abtreibung (Reich Central Office for Combating Homosexuality and Abortion) was created in 1936, and large numbers of homosexuals began to be arrested. In July 1940 the Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler declared that all men convicted for homosexual acts and known to have had more than one partner should be sent directly to a concentration camp, although the Gestapo had been rounding up men since the late 1930s. In November 1942 an SS (Schutzstaffel [Protection squadron]) decree gave concentration camp commandants the power to order the castration of homosexual prisoners, although castrations had been carried out against sexual offenders, including homosexuals, as early as 1935 on the basis of the Law against Dangerous Habitual Criminals and Sex Offenders.

In concentration camps homosexual men were identified by a pink triangle, while some wore a green triangle as ordinary criminals. Lesbians were not persecuted formally, although some wore a black triangle as asocials for failure to conform to gender norms. Some were subjected to medical experiments. Between 1933 and 1945 about 100,000 men were arrested, with as many as 50,000 serving time in jails and prisons, and 5,000 to 15,000 were sent to concentration camps. In the camps only about 4,000 survived. At the 1945 Nuremberg war crimes trials no mention was made of crimes against homosexuals. The Federal Law for the Compensation of the Victims
of National Socialist Persecution of 1956 declared that men held in concentration
camps as homosexuals were not qualified to receive compensation. There was little
recognition of LGBT victims of the Holocaust until the 1970s, and it was only in 2002
that the government of Germany issued a formal apology for the Nazi persecution of
homosexuals.

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In the United Kingdom the Sexual Offences Act in 1967 removed criminal penalties for
homosexual acts in private by males over the age of twenty-one. In 1994 the age of consent
for male homosexual acts was lowered to eighteen, while the age of consent for
heterosexual acts was sixteen. The case Sutherland v. United Kingdom was filed in 1994,
arguing that the difference in the age of consent was discrimination in violation of Article
14. The British government agreed to lower the age of consent for male homosexual acts to
sixteen. This was done in 2001, and a friendly settlement between plaintiff and the United
Kingdom was approved by the court.

The European Court of Human Rights has decided several cases involving the treatment of
LGBTQ people that amounted to violations of the right to life and the prohibition of
inhuman or degrading treatment (Articles 2 and 3). Identoba v. Georgia (2015) centered on
a demonstration held in May 2012 on the International Day against Homophobia,
Transphobia, and Biphobia that was violently disrupted by counterdemonstrators. The
court ruled that the Georgian government’s failure to protect against violent attacks and
effectively investigate them violated Articles 3 (torture) and 14 (discrimination). In 2012
the court found in X. v. Turkey that the solitary confinement for over eight months of a
homosexual prisoner had not been for his protection but because of his sexual orientation,
violating Articles 3 (torture) and 14 (discrimination). In the 2016 case of O.M. v. Hungary
the court ruled that detaining a gay Iranian man who applied for asylum for two months
violated his Article 5 right to liberty. The court has come close to deciding that the
Convention would be violated if ill-treatment was likely to result from the return of
homosexuals to their country of origin. The court was still deliberating *M.E. v. Sweden* in 2015 when the Swedish Migration Agency found that if a homosexual was deported to Libya he would be at risk of persecution.

**Cases Involving LGBTQ Gender Identity Rights** At first the European Court of Human Rights rejected claims by transsexuals, but it gradually has come around to the view that a refusal to recognize gender identity violates the European Convention on Human Rights. The court has modified its interpretation regarding gender identity in a series of cases from the *Rees* case to the *Christine Goodwin* case. In *Rees v. United Kingdom* (1986), the court found no breach of Article 8 (privacy) when a female-to-male transsexual was refused legal recognition of his condition. The court also found no breach of Article 12 (right to marry) because traditional marriage was defined as being between persons of different biological sexes. In *Cossey v. United Kingdom* (1990) the court repeated its ruling in *Rees*.

But in *B. v. France* (1992) the court found a breach of Article 8 (privacy) in the refusal of French authorities to amend the civil-status register to recognize a male-to-female transsexual, distinguishing from *Rees* and *Cossey* by differences between the British and the French civil status systems. In the United Kingdom there was less expectation that records such as birth certificates would be updated, but the French system allowed for records to be updated throughout a person’s life, establishing an expectation that the civil-status register would be updated for everyone, including transsexuals.

In *Sheffield and Horsham v. United Kingdom* (1998) the court was not persuaded that it should depart from its *Rees* and *Cossey* judgments. It said that “transsexualism raises complex scientific, legal, moral, and social issues, in respect of which there is no generally shared approach among the Contracting States.” The court held that there had been no violations of Articles 8 (privacy), 12 (right to marry), or 14 (discrimination) but reaffirmed that the area needs to be kept under permanent review by the Contracting States in the context of increased social acceptance of the phenomenon and increased recognition of the problems that postoperative transsexuals encounter.

But in *Christine Goodwin v. United Kingdom* (2002) the stance of the European Court of Human Rights changed from previous rulings. The court held that there was a violation of Article 8 (privacy) by the lack of legal recognition of Goodwin’s changed gender in terms of employment and social security, owing to a clear and continuing international trend toward increased social acceptance of transsexuals and toward legal recognition of the new sexual identity of postoperative transsexuals. The court also found a violation of Article 12 (right to marry), saying that it was for the state to determine the conditions and formalities of transsexual marriages but that it “finds no justification for barring the transsexual from enjoying the right to marry under any circumstances.” While the state could regulate the formalities of marriage, it could not impose a complete ban on marriage by transsexuals.
Following *Christine Goodwin*, the United Kingdom introduced a system whereby transsexuals could apply for a gender recognition certificate. Two later cases concerned transsexuals who were married before the sex reassignment surgery and who wanted to make use of this gender recognition procedure. In *Parry v. United Kingdom* (2006) and *R. and F. v. United Kingdom* (2006) the applicants were married and had children, respectively. In each case, one of them underwent gender reassignment surgery and remained with his or her spouse as a married couple. Following the enactment of the Gender Recognition Act of 2004, which was passed to comply with the 2002 ruling in *Goodwin*, the applicants, who had undergone gender reassignment surgery, made an application for the issue of a gender recognition certificate, which could not be obtained unless they terminated their marriage. The applicants complained in particular under Articles 8 (privacy) and 12 (right to marry) that they had been unable to obtain legal recognition of their acquired gender without terminating their marriage.

The court declared the applications inadmissible. The applicants were requested to annul their marriage because same-sex marriages were not permitted under English law. The United Kingdom had given legal recognition to gender reassignment, and the applicants could continue their relationship through a civil partnership, which carried almost all the same legal rights and obligations. The court observed that when the new system was introduced following the *Christine Goodwin* judgment, the legislature was aware that there were a small number of transsexuals in existing marriages but deliberately made no provision for those marriages to continue in the event that one partner made use of the gender recognition procedure. The court found that it could not be required to make allowances for that small number of marriages. This is an example of the European Court of Human Rights' reluctance to interfere with what it regards as the details of national laws on marriage.

In *Grant v. United Kingdom* (2006) the applicant, a sixty-eight-year-old postoperative male-to-female transsexual, successfully complained about the lack of legal recognition of her change of gender and the refusal to pay her a retirement pension at the age applicable to other women (sixty). The court held that there had been a violation of Article 8 (privacy). She had been a victim of the lack of legal recognition from the moment after the *Christine Goodwin* judgment when the authorities had refused to give effect to her claim, namely from 5 September 2002, until the Gender Recognition Act of 2004 entered into force. This lack of recognition had breached her right to respect for her private life. The refusal of health insurers to pay for the sex-change operation for a sixty-seven-year-old person because she had not complied with a two-year waiting period violated Article 8 (privacy) in *Schlumpf v. Switzerland* (2009).

In *Hämäläinen v. Finland* (2014) the court held that it did not violate Article 8 (privacy) to require the conversion of a marriage into a registered partnership as a precondition to legal recognition of an acquired gender because it would provide legal protection for same-
sex couples that was almost identical to that of marriage. The applicant was born a male, married a woman and had a child with her, and then underwent male-to-female gender reassignment surgery. She could have her identity changed to female in her official documents only if her wife consented to turn the marriage into a civil partnership or if they divorced. The court also found that there had been no violation of Article 14 (discrimination).

Cases Involving Same-Sex Marriage and Civil Union Rights Although the European Court of Human Rights had yet to recognize a right to same-sex marriage as of 2017, many European countries had already done so. The first country was the Netherlands (2001). By the end of 2017, same-sex marriages were legal nationally in fifteen European countries: the Netherlands, Belgium (2003), Spain (2005), Norway (2009), Sweden (2009), Iceland (2010), Portugal (2010), Denmark (2012), France (2013), the United Kingdom (2014), Luxembourg (2015), Ireland (2015), Finland (2017), Germany (2017), and Malta (2017). In addition, same-sex marriages were set to become legal in Austria at the beginning of 2019. The European Court of Human Rights sometimes seems to wait for an emerging consensus among Council of Europe states before changing its rulings.
In the 2010 case of Schalk and Kopf v. Austria the court ruled that the European Convention on Human Rights did not require a state to grant a same-sex couple access to marriage. The applicants were a same-sex couple living in a stable partnership, and the refusal of the Austrian authorities to grant them permission to marry was upheld by the courts. The European Court of Human Rights found no violations of Articles 12 (right to marry) or 14 (discrimination) and said that national authorities were best placed to assess and respond to the needs of society in this field, given that marriage had deep-rooted social and cultural connotations differing greatly from one society to another. In 2016 the court repeated that ruling in Chapin and Charpentier v. France but noted that France had granted same-sex couples access to marriage in 2013, and the applicants were therefore free to marry.

Although the court had yet to decide that there is an LGBTQ right to marry as of 2017, it had decided several cases involving LGBTQ people and civil unions. In Vallianatos v. Greece (2013) the court held that it was a violation of Articles 14 (discrimination) and 8 (privacy) for the Greek law of 2008 to provide for civil unions only for different-sex couples, automatically excluding same-sex couples. The court noted that of the nineteen state parties to the Convention that authorized some form of registered partnership other than marriage, Lithuania and Greece were the only ones to reserve it exclusively to different-sex couples. In Oliari v. Italy (2015) the court held it was a violation of Article 8 (privacy) that under Italian law same-sex couples had no option to get married or enter into any other type of civil union. The court noted that twenty-four of the forty-seven Council of Europe member states gave some legal recognition of same-sex couples, that the Italian Constitutional Court had repeatedly called for recognition, and that, according to surveys, a majority of the Italian population supported legal recognition of homosexual couples. In Salgueiro da Silva Mouta v. Portugal (1999) the European Court of Human Rights held that it was a violation of Article 14 (discrimination) and Article 8 (privacy) for the Portuguese courts to prevent a homosexual man living with another man from visiting his daughter, in breach of an agreement reached at the time of his divorce. The Portuguese courts’ decision—on a finding that “the child should live in a traditional Portuguese family,” which forced him to hide his homosexuality when seeing his daughter—was based on considerations relating to sexual orientation not acceptable under the Convention.

The court has been consistent in its rulings on residence rights and has decided two cases upholding the right of same-sex alien partners to residence permits. The 2016 case Pajić v. Croatia involved a national of Bosnia and Herzegovina who was in a stable same-sex relationship with a woman living in Croatia and was refused a residence permit in Croatia. The Croatian Aliens Act reserved the possibility of applying for a residence permit for family reunification to different-sex couples. The court held that there had been a violation of Article 14 (discrimination) taken together with Article 8 (privacy). It found that the applicant had been affected by a difference in treatment between different-sex couples and
same-sex couples. In Taddeucci and McCall v. Italy (2016) the court held that Italy’s immigration law violated Articles 14 (discrimination) and 8 (privacy) by refusing a family member’s residence permit to unmarried partners. The gay couple, one Italian and the other from New Zealand, could not live together in Italy because the Italian authorities refused to issue the second applicant with a residence permit on family grounds. The court found that the gay couple could not be understood as comparable to an unmarried heterosexual couple because they could not marry or, at that time, obtain any other form of legal recognition. The court ruled that treating homosexual couples in the same way as unmarried heterosexual couples breached the right not to be subject to discrimination based on sexual orientation.

**Cases Involving LGBTQ Social Rights** The European Court of Human Rights thus has evolved in its case law to recognize transsexual identity but has not yet recognized a right to same-sex marriage. In same-sex relationships the court has given recognition to residence rights and is beginning to give some recognition to social rights, such as pensions. Beyond gender identity, marriage, and residency, there have been several cases involving LGBTQ people and various social rights. In Mata Estevez v. Spain (2001) the court effectively upheld discrimination. The applicant complained about the difference in treatment for a survivor’s pension between de facto homosexual partners and married couples. The court rejected the application as manifestly ill-founded, finding that Spanish legislation relating to eligibility for survivors’ allowances pursued a legitimate aim (the protection of the family based on the bonds of marriage) and that the difference in treatment could be considered to fall within the state’s margin of appreciation. But in P. B. and J. S. v. Austria (2010), the court found a violation in the refusal to extend sickness insurance coverage to the homosexual partner of an insured person. Before a legislative amendment in July 2007, Austrian law provided that only a close relative of the insured person or a cohabitee of the opposite sex qualified as dependents. The court held that there had been a violation of Article 14 (discrimination) in conjunction with Article 8 (privacy). An amendment making the law neutral regarding the sexual orientation of the cohabitee put an end to the violation.

In Manenc v. France (2010) the court approved the refusal of a reversionary pension to the survivor of a civil partnership between two people of the same sex on the ground that the requirement of a lawful marriage had not been met. The court found that the French legislation on survivors’ benefits pursued a legitimate aim (the protection of the family based on the bonds of marriage) and that limiting the legislation to married couples, to the exclusion of partners in a civil partnership regardless of their sexual orientation, fell within the broad margin of appreciation accorded to the states by the European Convention on Human Rights. The court ruled the application inadmissible.

In Aldeguer Tomás v. Spain (2016) the applicant was denied a survivor’s pension following the death of his partner, with whom he had lived in a de facto marital relationship. The
applicant had been unable to marry his partner under the law in force during the latter's lifetime. Three years after his partner's death, the law legalizing same-sex marriage in Spain entered into force. The court held that there had been no violation of Article 14 (discrimination) in conjunction with Article 8 (privacy) and Article 1 (property) of Protocol No. 1 to the Convention, finding that there had been no discrimination in the applicant's case. In particular, his situation following the entry into force of the law legalizing same-sex marriage in Spain in 2005 was not the same as that of a surviving partner of a heterosexual cohabiting couple, who had been unable to marry before the law legalizing divorce entered into force in 1981 and who qualified for a survivor's pension by virtue of a provision of that law. Moreover, states had, at the relevant time, a margin of appreciation regarding the timing of the introduction of legislative changes in the field of legal recognition of same-sex couples and the exact status conferred on them, an area that was regarded as one of evolving rights with no established consensus.

The court held that there had been a violation of Articles 14 (discrimination) and 8 (privacy) in Karner v. Austria (2003) by the Austrian Supreme Court's decision not to recognize the right of the applicant to succeed to a tenancy after the death of his companion, which was discrimination on the ground of his sexual orientation. In Kozak v. Poland (2010), following the death of his homosexual partner, the applicant claimed to be entitled to succeed to the tenancy of a council flat that was in his partner's name. In dismissing his claim, the Polish courts found that the applicant had moved out of the flat and stopped paying rent before his partner's death and that, in any event, a de facto marital relationship, which was a prerequisite for succession to the tenancy of a council flat, could exist only between persons of the opposite sex. The European Court of Human Rights held that there had been a violation of Article 14 (discrimination) in conjunction with Article 8 (privacy). Given the state's narrow margin of appreciation in cases of difference in treatment on the basis of sexual orientation, a blanket exclusion of persons living in a homosexual relationship from succession to a tenancy could not be considered acceptable. These cases show that combining property rights with rights to privacy and nondiscrimination appeared to be persuasive to the court.

Cases Involving Adoption Although as of 2017 the court had not yet recognized a right to same-sex marriage, it did come close to recognizing a right to adopt in several cases involving LGBTQ people wanting to adopt. In Fretté v. France (2002), a homosexual man complained that the decision dismissing his request for authorization to adopt a child amounted to arbitrary interference with his private and family life because it was based exclusively on unfavorable prejudice about his sexual orientation. The court held that there had been no violation of Article 14 (discrimination) in conjunction with Article 8 (privacy). It found that the national authorities had been legitimately and reasonably entitled to consider that the right to be able to adopt, on which the applicant had relied, was limited by the interests of children eligible for adoption, notwithstanding the applicant's legitimate aspirations and without calling his personal choices into question. But in E. B. v. France
(2008), the court found a violation of Articles 14 (discrimination) and 8 (privacy) in the refusal to approve for adoption on the ground of the applicant’s lifestyle as a lesbian living with another woman. The court observed that the applicant's homosexuality had been a determining factor in refusing her request, whereas French law allowed single persons to adopt a child, thereby opening up the possibility of adoption by a single homosexual.

In Gas and Dubois v. France (2012) the applicants were two cohabiting women. The court found no violations of Articles 14 (discrimination) or 8 (privacy) in the refusal of the first applicant’s application for a simple adoption order with respect to the second applicant’s child. It saw no evidence of a difference in treatment based on the applicants’ sexual orientation, as different-sex couples who had entered into a civil partnership were likewise prohibited from obtaining a simple adoption order. In reply to the argument that different-sex couples in a civil partnership could circumvent the prohibition by marrying, the court reiterated its ruling in Schalk and Kopf v. Austria (2010) that there is no right to marriage for same-sex couples.

But in X v. Austria (2013), the court held that there had been a violation of Articles 14 (discrimination) and 8 (privacy) when the Austrian courts refused to grant one of the partners (two women in a stable homosexual relationship) the right to adopt the son of the other partner without severing the mother’s legal ties with the child (second-parent adoption). The case was distinguished from Gas and Dubois v. France, in which the court had found that there was no difference in treatment based on sexual orientation between an unmarried different-sex couple and a same-sex couple, because, under French law, second-parent adoption was not open to any unmarried couple, be they homosexual or heterosexual.

In J. M. v. United Kingdom (2010), the court found a violation of Article 14 (discrimination) and Article 1 (protection of property) of Protocol No. 1 in the rules on child maintenance including in the UK Civil Partnership Act, which discriminated against those in same-sex relationships. The applicant was a divorced mother who lived with another woman in a long-term relationship. Because her two children lived mainly with their father, the mother was required to pay 47 pounds per week, whereas if she had formed a new relationship with a man the amount would have been 14 pounds.

**Cases Involving Military Service and Free Speech Rights** The European Court of Human Rights' case law is clear that sexual orientation cannot be a bar to military service, as decided in Lustig-Prean and Beckett v. United Kingdom (1999), Smith and Grady v. United Kingdom (1999), Perkins and R. v. United Kingdom (2003), and Beck, Copp and Bazeley v. United Kingdom (2003). The applicants were all British armed forces personnel, discharged from the forces on the basis of their homosexuality. In all these cases, the court held that there had been a violation of Article 8 (privacy). It found that the measures taken against the applicants had constituted especially grave interferences with their private lives and
had not been justified by “convincing and weighty reasons” (Smith and Grady 1999).

In Kaos GL v. Turkey (2016), the court found a breach of Article 10 (speech) in the seizure of all copies of a magazine published by an LGBTQ association, and in Bayev v. Russia (2017) that Articles 10 (speech) and 14 (discrimination) were violated by legislation banning the promotion of homosexuality. The court, in Bączkowski v. Poland (2007), found violations of Articles 11 (assembly) and 14 (discrimination) in the local refusal of permission to organize a march in Warsaw in 2005 about discrimination against minorities, women, and people with disabilities. In Alekseyev v. Russia (2010), the court found a violation of Articles 11 (assembly) and 14 (discrimination) in the banning of several LGBTQ marches, and in Lashmankin v. Russia (2017) Article 11 (assembly) was violated when authorities placed severe limitations on plans for gay pride public events. In Genderdoc-M v. Moldova (2012), the court held that there had been a violation of Articles 11 (assembly) and 14 (discrimination) in the banning of a planned LGBTQ demonstration in May 2005.

**European Union LGBTQ Law**

Although the institutions of the European Union have often said that the protection of human rights is an important part of EU law, before 2009 the main aspect of human rights that was the subject of enforcement was equality of treatment of the sexes in employment. Only when the Charter of Fundamental Rights went into effect in 2009 through Treaty of Lisbon were many other rights made enforceable. These rights included socioeconomic rights and the right not to be discriminated against on the grounds of sexual orientation. But the rights were directly binding only on the institutions of the EU. They were to be binding on national governments only when they were acting to implement EU law. The United Kingdom and Poland required a protocol to the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights that attempted to limit the application of those rights. This was inspired partly by fears that the ratification of the Charter could force Poland to allow civil marriage to same-sex couples. The two countries refused to accept the Charter as part of the Treaty of Lisbon without the protocol.

The earlier Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into effect in 1999 after being signed in 1997, required the EU to respect fundamental rights, and for the first time there was an explicit reference to sexual orientation. According to that treaty, action could be taken to “combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation” (Treaty of Amsterdam 1997, 26). This was done through the Employment Equality Directive (2000), which requires member states to combat direct and indirect discrimination in employment on all the prohibited grounds. A Directive requires EU member states to adopt implementing legislation, unlike an EU Regulation, which has direct effect in national laws.

**European Court of Justice Transgender Cases**
Despite the absence of any reference to transgender rights in EU treaties and legislation, in three cases decided by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) the court enhanced the rights of transsexual citizens. In the 1996 case of *P. v. S. and Cornwall County Council*, a transsexual had been dismissed. The ECJ ruled that discriminatory treatment of a person who has undergone a sex-change operation was discrimination on the ground of belonging to a particular sex under the Directive on equal treatment for men and women.

In the 2004 case of *K. B. v. National Health Service Pensions Agency*, K. B. claimed that her transsexual female-to-male partner would not be entitled to a survivor’s payment because they were not married. They could not marry because her husband was registered as a woman, and it was not then possible to change a person’s sex in the British registry of birth after a person had undergone gender reassignment surgery. The ECJ ruled that EU law on equal pay for women and men also covered discrimination against transsexuals.

In the *Richards v. Secretary of State for Work and Pensions* case (2006), a British pension fund had refused to grant a male-to-female transsexual an old-age pension before her sixty-fifth birthday because she was legally still a man. The ECJ ruled that it was impermissible discrimination against a male-to-female transsexual who would have been entitled to a pension if she could have registered as a woman in the national civil registry. All three of these landmark rulings concerned the United Kingdom, but they applied to all EU member states.

**ECJ Cases Involving Lesbian and Gay Rights**

Curiously, the ECJ has been less assertive in protecting lesbian and gay rights than the rights of transsexuals. In the 1998 case of *Grant v. South-West Trains Ltd.*, Lisa Grant argued that her male predecessor had received a yearly travel allowance for his female partner (an unmarried cohabitee), whereas her female partner had been refused a travel allowance. She argued that if her partner had been a man, she would have received the allowance. The ECJ refused to interpret sex discrimination to include discrimination based on sexual orientation. Instead of comparing the unmarried cohabiting Grant with her unmarried cohabiting predecessor, the ECJ compared her situation to that of a male-male couple and applied an “equal misery argument”: both couples would have been treated equally badly.

One explanation for this ruling was its potential financial repercussions. Transsexuals are a small minority compared to the EU gay and lesbian population of some 35 million that could have benefited from a favorable ruling in *Grant*. The ECJ said that there was no consensus among member states as to whether same-sex relationships were equivalent to relationships between persons of different sexes. It also observed that the European Convention on Human Rights did not then protect same-sex relationships. There was speculation that *Grant* might have been decided differently under the Treaty of Amsterdam, which came into effect in 1999 with a specific reference to sexual orientation. But in the
2001 case of *D. and Kingdom of Sweden v. Council*, the ECJ confirmed its ruling in *Grant* and refused to treat the registered partnership of a Swedish EU official with his male partner as equivalent to a marriage.

The status of same-sex relationships was finally recognized by the ECJ in 2008, in the case of *Maruko v. Versorgungsanstalt der deutschen Bühnen*. Tadao Maruko’s claim to a widower’s pension was refused by the pension fund of German theaters because he and his partner had not been married. German law did not allow gay and lesbian couples to marry, but Maruko and his partner had entered into a registered partnership in 2000, as soon as German law made it possible. The question was whether it would be unlawful discrimination for same-sex couples to be denied rights reserved for married couples when the law did not allow them to marry, and the ECJ ruled that it was for the national court to decide whether a surviving partner was truly comparable to a surviving spouse. The Munich court that had referred Maruko to the ECJ ruled in favor of Maruko, saying that under evolving German legislation surviving spouses and registered partners were comparable with regard to survivors’ pensions.

**Comparison and Prospects**

Paradoxically, the European Court of Justice, which is primarily concerned with economic law, recognized transsexual rights in the UK *Cornwall* case in 1996, whereas the European Court of Human Rights, the premier European human rights court, refused to recognize transsexual rights in the United Kingdom until the 2002 case of *Christine Goodwin*. The specific inclusion of sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination along with many other rights in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights means that the ECJ may become even more important for LGBTQ rights in Europe in the future.

The future is likely to bring increasing recognition of LGBTQ rights in both the Council of Europe and the European Union. Although the European Court of Human Rights may recognize a right to same-sex marriage, other cases may be affected by the relatively recent membership in the Council of Europe of eastern European countries with less tolerance of LGBTQ rights, combined with the tendency of the European Court of Human Rights to rely on a consensus of member states. In the European Union the “statutory” recognition of LGBTQ rights in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, combined with the smaller membership of largely western European states that recognize LGBTQ rights in national law, may influence rulings by the Court of Justice of the European Union and lead to increased recognition of LGBTQ rights.

**SEE ALSO** *Adoption and Surrogacy in Europe; African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights; Human Rights; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Human Rights and Queer Arab Refugees; Human Rights Campaign; Human Rights in Asia; Marriage, Universal, in Europe; Von Mahlsdorf, Charlotte (1928–2002)*


The fifteen-year-long Lebanese Civil War (1975–1990) displaced an estimated 900,000 people (Murphy 2006). Today, it is estimated that 6 million Lebanese people live in diaspora, most of whom maintain an active relationship with their native country (Labaki 2006). The filmmaker Fadia Abboud shows the strong ties between diasporic communities and their Lebanese identities, as the dialogue in her web series *I Luv U But* (2012–2014) alternates between English and the Lebanese dialect. The series focuses on the experiences of Lebanese Australian LGBT individuals as they attempt to meet the demands and expectations of both their families and their proud, liberal community.

Abboud is one of the founders of Club Arak, a queer Arab dance party featured in episode 9 of season 1, and also the codirector of the Arab Film Festival Australia. She has written and directed a number of films, including *I Remember 1948*, a documentary screened on SBS (a public TV network in Australia) in 2008, and two short dramas: *In the Ladies Lounge* (2007), which won awards at the Queer Screen film festival, and *Big Trouble, Little Fish* (2010), screened at Flickerfest. *I Luv U But* provides a comic portrayal of the many gay and lesbian Arabs living in the closet in both the West and the Middle East, as proof that the Western pride discourse is not applicable to everyone, even those living in the West. Whereas other writers and directors, such as Abboud’s counterpart Alissar Gazal, who produced and directed the documentary *Lesbanese* (2008), focus on the Western “coming-out” narrative as adopted and altered in Lebanese and Arab LGBT communities, Abboud relocates the discussion within the failures of the pride narrative in Western countries to incorporate Arab culture in its discourse and ideology. Through her web series on Lebanese Australian gay and lesbian lifestyles, she challenges the notion of coming out as a necessary and desirable rite of passage for gay men and lesbians, arguing that not all people would choose to “just give up family for the individual pursuit of happiness” (Abboud, quoted in Taylor 2014).

Set in the heart of the vibrant and multicultural community of Sydney, Australia, *I Luv U But* depicts the lives of queer Lebanese Australian husband and wife Mouna and Sam, who married for convenience. The series consists of two seasons and a total of nineteen short
episodes that average about ten minutes each. Both characters are gay and not “out” to their parents and extended conservative families. The series aims to expose this lifestyle in a nonjudgmental way—to say that it is okay and that there is no right or wrong choice of LGBT lifestyle. Abboud was successful in casting a friendly and likable cast, with Alissar Gazal as Mouna’s mother, who is unaware of her daughter’s secret; Abbey Aziz as the lesbian wife, Mouna; George El Hindi as the gay husband, Sam; and Rose Souaid as Sam’s mother. The first episode begins with Mouna in a wedding dress and Sam in a tuxedo, addressing the viewer in an effort to explain their having to resort to deceiving their families. The series progresses and unfolds, as Sam is seen in episode 3 scrambling to get his date out of his house when his mother-in-law pays him an unexpected visit. The series does a great job portraying the old conservative and patriarchal traditions these Lebanese Australian families uphold when, for instance, in that same episode, Mouna’s mother tells her to “give [her] husband a taste [of the food] before [she] take[s] a bite of it,” or when, in episode 6 of season 1, Sam’s mother asks him: “Why did you marry such an old wife? She’s 35!”

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I Lui U But Director Fadia Abboud. Abboud, shown here at the Sydney Film Festival in 2007, used her miniseries to challenge the Western notion that “coming out” is a necessary rite of passage for gay men and lesbians in her portrayal of Arab characters who stay in the closet to avoid alienating their conservative families.

For the Arab communities residing in the West, preserving traditional cultural values is
crucial because they form a minority within a dominant culture with differing values that are constantly changing and influencing their Eastern culture, which seems on the verge of submersion within its dominant host culture. The children of Arab parents feel the pressure to assimilate and find it easier to set aside their Arabic language and Middle Eastern traditions. It becomes more crucial for Arab parents to minimize the Western influence on their families, and they therefore ultimately grow more conservative and religious as a result. Immigrant parents will uphold a romanticized version of traditional values and customs, despite these values and traditions having gone through substantial change since they left their home country (Foner and Dreby 2011). They expect a level of obedience and respect from their children that second-generation immigrants would naturally consider authoritarian and domineering. Parents’ concerns about the corrupting influence of their mainstream Western culture are also related to sexual relations as a second source of conflict. Parents worry about their children’s sexuality and dating choices, but that concern is particularly more acute with daughters than with sons (Foner and Dreby 2011). This leads minority Middle Eastern communities, such as the Lebanese community in Australia, to isolation, which can be devastating for queer Lebanese Australians. In the series, we experience how the couple handles these challenges in their daily lives while being married yet maintaining separate personal lives—Mouna with her partner, Sash, and Sam with his many sexual exploits.

**Portrayal of Marriage**

In *I Luv U But*, queer identity is transformed within the terms of Arab, religious, social, and cultural contexts. The couple finds themselves forced to reconcile many aspects of their identities: the cultural, the religious, and the sexual. For them, as it is for many Arab queer individuals in Western countries, the loss of group belonging is not a sacrifice they want to make for the right to be “out.” This is articulated in episode 4 of season 1, when Mouna tells her partner, who pressures her to come out, “There’s no way I can do what you did to your parents.” Arab families in diaspora, especially mothers, create strong emotional ties that bond members together. Children in immigrant families therefore have a sense of pride in their country of origin and appreciate their parents’ sacrifices and struggles to make a better life for themselves and their children (D’Alisera 2009). And despite the young members of the community resenting their parents’ constraints and obligations, they also feel a strong sense of loyalty, affection, and duty to their parents (Suárez-Orozco, Suárez-Orozco, and Todorova 2008). They recognize the importance of family and the need to provide, financially or otherwise, for their family members (D’Alisera 2009). Gay marriages of convenience have, thus, become the reality for many in the LGBT community as they hail from traditional ethnic and religious environments.

Capitulating to the expectations of their Lebanese heritage, children of immigrant Arab parents enter a heterosexual marriage, at least as far as their families are concerned. It is
not that same-sex acts cannot occur, it is that everyone must keep up appearances that conform to the important principles and values of Arab society: “So long as everyone can pretend that [homosexuality] doesn’t happen, there is no need to do anything [to] stop it” (Whitaker 2006, 10). This manner of keeping up appearances increasingly leads to a widening gap between the demands of society and the daily life the individual leads, as well as between upholding tradition and appearances for the sake of culture and history and the things individuals do in private away from the scrutiny of society (Whitaker 2006). This “double life” almost always involves marriage, because, as already noted, family and progeny are of the utmost importance in Arab society.

Mouna's Lebanese Australian partner goes on to talk about how coming out was not an easy experience for her, how it led to her parents ostracizing her, but how she continues to believe that that was a price she had to pay to be free. To which Mouna then responds, “You’re out but you’re not free.” I Luv U But evinces a pronounced hope for a future in which the price of gay rights and social freedom is not family ties or religion.

Performing Sexual Identity

This web series also serves as a commentary on the intersection of patriarchy, traditional conservative gender dynamics, and homosexuality, as well as on gendered behavior commonly associated with femininity and masculinity. An important factor in the definition of masculinity is the question of activity and passivity, as it has been established by many scholars of literature and cinema (al-Samman 2008; Dialmy 2009a, 2009b; Georgis 2013).

The Lebanese French author Amin Maalouf argues in his 2001 book In the Name of Identity that people identify with certain aspects of their identity when they are under threat of erasure. For many in Middle Eastern communities, homosexuality is a Western threat to their traditional values and national and religious identities. Children in the Arab world do not generally leave their parents’ home until marriage; and once married, they are expected to care for their elderly parents, who eventually reside with one of their children. In order to maintain this structure, familial bonds that rely on heteronormativity must remain intact. Any violation of conventional values, such as divorce, sex scandals, bearing a child out of wedlock, or any violations that are public in nature, are considered threats to the social fabric of these communities. And these threats are articulated in terms of the once-colonizer (current colonizer?) Western Other.

The topic of homosexuality in modern literature and cinema seems to be dominantly framed within the context of the colonial Other, which in turn re-creates the traditional power dichotomy of the active colonizer and the passive Arab partner (al-Samman 2008). The male, by default, is assigned the active role in Arab society in contrast to the female, who is reduced to passivity. Male activity is often accompanied by the insatiable desire to dominate, which carries a patriarchal operation that emphasizes the male as active (Ncube
And to be an active agent in a postmodern Arab society, or in keeping with the patriarchal Arab mentality, is to simply mechanically reproduce heteropatriarchal norms that define masculinity as domination. In *I Luv U But*, Sam inadvertently reproduces these norms, as he differentiates between passive and active masculinities in his personal relationship, shown in this exchange with his lover: “Are you a bottom?” / “Yeah” / “Good, because I’m a top” (season 1, episode 5). His behavior changes, however, when addressing the female characters in the miniseries, as the women take on more dominant roles.

As homosexuality in the Middle East is viewed as the failure of the Arab man to resist colonial influences, gay Arabs in the West seem to compensate for that view by attempting to show that indeed it is possible to be a homosexual and a real Arab man. *I Luv U But* questions the dominant belief that hindered behaviors are innate, depicting the ways in which an individual’s performance of an acquired gendered and sexualized behavior is imposed on them by normative heterosexuality. Judith Butler (1993) questions this distinction by establishing that “gender acts” influence individuals in physical and corporeal ways and that their recognition of corporeal sexual difference is affected and altered by social conventions. Sex, then, stops being “a bodily given on which the construct of gender is artificially imposed” and is instead “a cultural norm which governs the materialization of bodies” (Butler 1993, 2–3). Butler adopts the postmodern technique of viewing reality as determined by language, which ultimately renders it impossible to envision or articulate sex without imposing linguistic norms: “there is no reference to a pure body which is not at the same time a further formation of that body” (10). Thus, many Arabs who engage in same-sex practices do not identify as “lesbian,” or “bisexual”; they have formulated their “gay, sense of self through various culturally specific encounters and remain unconnected to the word *gay*. Even among those who may feel at home in their gay identity, the notion of publicly coming out rings hollow in a culture where who you share your bed with is a private matter.

**The Lebanese Mother**

In most works of literature written by Arab women that tackle the period of postcolonial wars, mothers and motherhoods have acquired centrality (Cooke 1994–1995). The nurturing persona, who in the literature of the colonial period seems bent on molding her daughter into her own resistant shape, has multiplied so as to be able to play numerous roles. These mothers are both aggressive and pacific, patriotic and nationalist, desiring and destructive, martyr and prisoner. They may be all of these at once or at different times. Motherhood, or the act of mothering, becomes a multifaceted tactic of resistance, and the literature to which it belongs becomes an act of resistance in and of itself (Cooke 1994–1995). As such, Arab motherhood is constantly reconstructed to suit its challenges. In *I Luv U But*, mothers embody the motherland. Sam’s mother represents a more modern Lebanon with her talk of seeking independence and living life to the fullest (season 2, episode 3) and...
of reconnecting to her womanhood and embracing her sexuality (season 1, episode 6). Mouna’s mother is constantly cooking Lebanese dishes for her daughter and son-in-law, as if to preserve her and her homeland’s memory in an inward culinary landscape, providing the framework of reference needed by her daughter. The maternal culinary heritage represents “the cultural agency of resistance and endurance ... [as] the mother teaches her daughter the importance of certain ‘memory foods’ that inscribe an entire ethos of harmonious living as her best defence against cultural erasure” (Mehta 2009, 213).

Immigrant families, therefore, are crucial to the development of children’s personal identities and ideologies, as they provide them with ideas of nation—making father and mother figures central in most Arab immigrant works of literature (Mehta 2009). The absence of fathers from I Luv UBut, however, is an indicator not of the lack of importance of fathers in the Lebanese familial structures but of the more masculine roles Lebanese mothers took on in the family following the Lebanese Civil War, when mothers had to replace the physical and emotional absence of the fathers and sons who left to fight or died in the war (Cooke 1994–1995). Mouna’s mother represents that Lebanese mother who had to raise her child alone. Middle Eastern and Arab queer cinema is growing in relevance and importance under current economic and political conditions, such as those that followed the Lebanese Civil War, as it redefines the link between the public field of radical politics and the private realm of sexuality and desire. These works demonstrate how both female and queer sexualities often serve as figures of sacrifice and marginalization and repression within the nationalist struggle and the subsequent formation of national states (Aaron 2004). The place of queer sexuality, in light of the predicament of postcolonial nationalism, is thus a social and political position.

**International Gay Arab Representations**

The first season of I Luv U But found a following not just in Australia but in Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and Lebanon; it was nominated for Most Engaging YouTube Channel in Lebanon's Social Media Awards in 2013. “There hasn’t been a queer Arab story that isn’t about poor us,” Abboud says. “This is almost a celebration and a comedy that says it’s OK not to come out. And it was really well-received for that reason” (quoted in Taylor 2014). I Luv U But filled an important gap in gay Arab representation. It was a breakthrough in terms of positioning racial minorities within the global/Western queer life and discourse. It also touched on the difficulties queer Arabs face integrating into mainstream Western society. It made these insinuations frequently, but in passing, just as these incidents take place in real life; examples include when Sam tells his cousin to shave because Western men do not find body hair attractive (season 1, episode 7), or when Sam employs the Orientalist image of Arabs as terrorists to scare his bedmates into leaving: “My mother just got back from a military camp with Hezbollah and she’s outside right now. Get out!” (season 2, episode 1). Such topics are essential to address considering not only how
undeniably close the mainstream LGBTQ movement in the West has aligned itself with capitalism and the military, but also the growing anti-Arab and Islamophobic sentiments of the second decade of the twenty-first century. In today’s dominant global queer ideology, the only acceptable visible queer Arab is the victim who exchanges his Arabness and native culture for the more tolerant Western nation.

*I Luv U But* ended with an episode titled “I Luv U,” in which Mouna and Sam attend a pool party given by Ali Baba, where Mouna reminisces on the good times she had with her ex-girlfriend Sash, who has continuously expressed difficulty in being in a relationship with a closeted lesbian, especially considering that she herself is a Lebanese Australian and has chosen to come out to her family. Ali Baba reconciles Sash with Mouna by enlightening the latter about the complexities of the queer Arab identity. What she says encapsulates the message of the web series: “Being gay is complicated. Being Arab and gay is even worse. Coming out isn’t the be all end all kind of thing. It’s actually OK not to be out. What really matters is what’s here [pointing at her heart]. Everything else is pure decoration.”

**SEE ALSO** [Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; Diasporas, Queer](#)

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Alaa al-Aswany's 2002 novel *Imarat Yaʿkubian* (*The Yacoubian Building* [2004]) appeared at a transformative time in Egyptian history. Published just months before the announcement of the American-led invasion of Iraq, the book began circulating as internal pressure began to rise in response to the government's apparent complicity or, at best, silence on the pending war. It was the second time in the then twenty-year tenure of President Hosni Mubarak that Egyptians had been asked to cooperate in a US-led attack on a fellow Arab nation. The first Gulf War (1990–1991) brought scores of protests and a subsequent crackdown that would reignite a fierce opposition campaign led in large part by the country's largest outlawed organization, the Muslim Brotherhood.

At the core of the government's ostensible complicity with the Americans was an overwhelming sense of hypocrisy. As Saad Ibrahim, a well-known academic and former chairman of the Ibn Khaldun Center for Development Studies in Cairo, wrote in a review of al-Aswany's novel:

> Egyptians bemoan their lack of freedom, yearn for an open society, fear Islamic militancy, and resent US hegemony. Yet official Egypt proclaims itself to be the guardian of the true Islam, a strategic ally of the United States, and a beacon of democracy. Few, if any Egyptians, believe these official proclamations, and worse, the hypocrisy is a crushing weight on their hope for progress.

*(COMBAHEE [1977] 2009, 3)*

Ibrahim described reading al-Aswany's novel (along with his prison guards) while incarcerated in Egypt's notorious Tora Farm prison. He wonders how the novelist, who captured so elegantly the same hypocrisies he observed, could remain unprosecuted while he stewed in jail. The situation reflected yet another of the many complex inconsistencies that characterized the regime's brutal, if brittle, grip on power.
Characters, Setting, and Plot

The novel is set around the time of the first Gulf War. Told in the bygone style of mid-twentieth-century realism, the novel depicts the interconnected lives of a dozen characters in a real-life decaying apartment building, called the Ya'kubian, built at the dawn of the twentieth century in Cairo’s historic downtown. The characters include: Zaki Bey el Dessouki, the now elderly Paris-educated son of a pasha (Turkish officer of high rank); Hagg Azzam, a ruthless and corrupt businessman with political ambitions; Busayna el Said, a young woman who must endure her employer’s sexual harassment in order to help provide for her younger siblings; her fiancé, Taha el Shazli, the son of the building’s doorman who hopes to advance in society by becoming a policeman; and Hatim Rasheed, the wealthy half-French, half-Egyptian editor of a French newspaper, who is gay. Al-Aswany’s inclusion of a gay character is notable for breaking the taboo on homosexuality in Egyptian literature.

Al-Aswany’s characters endure a methodical string of coincidences, common enemies, and shared miseries. More importantly still, the characters of *Imarat Ya’kubian* continually trade places. They drift from positions of power to positions of powerlessness, from love to hate, from virtuousness to depravity. They lose and rediscover a sense of autonomy, of citizenship in the face of oppression, and of alienation in the face of fraternity. Each in his or her own way is victimized by the corruption in Egyptian society and government that traps them in their circumstances with no hope for advancement.

The novel opens with Zaki Bey el Dessouki, who owns office space in the Ya'kubian, finally achieving his goal of seducing a local barmaid, only to discover after the encounter that she has drugged and robbed him. Zaki is a former engineer whose life now revolves around doing little besides seducing women; he represents the former ruling class in Egypt, which was cultured, secular, and cosmopolitan. His upper-class counterpart, Azzam, on the other hand, clawed his way from poverty to riches, and now uses his business dealings to hide his hashish empire. He uses the pretense of Islam to cover his immoral behavior. Busayna, who lives in the makeshift apartments on the building’s crowded rooftop, is frustrated with Taha el Shazli’s inability to financially provide for her; this ends up causing her to fall in love with Zaki “Pasha” instead. This turn of events is a blow to Taha, who is both honest and intelligent but is unable to advance in society because of his poverty and lack of social connections.
When Taha arrives to sit for his entrance exam to the police academy, the presiding officer asks about his father’s profession. Taha explains that his father is a “civil servant.” The officer corrects him, saying that his father is really a “property guard.” Both humiliated and outraged by the demand that he pay a bribe to enter the academy, Taha gives up his dream of becoming a police officer and enrolls as a student at Cairo University. There, he is drawn to the comradery of a group of devout Muslim students, and his disillusionment causes him to become radicalized. He then falls in with the clandestine cell of an organization based loosely on the outlawed al-Jama’a al-Islamiyya (the Islamic Group).

The course of Taha’s trajectory is a familiar motif in Egyptian literature. (The Egyptian Nobel laureate Naguib Mahfouz depicts a similar character’s evolution in the third installment of his famous Cairo Trilogy [1956–1957].) It also serves as the novel’s clearest iteration of social critique. Both Busayna and Taha are funneled to their respective paths—Busayna into moral compromise and Taha into increased religiosity—by the economic inequality of Egyptian society.

This economic inequality is also evident in the relationship between the gay character, Hatim Rasheed, and his impoverished, married lover Abduh. As the editor of a newspaper, Hatim is wealthy and cultured. Abduh, on the other hand, is a migrant from the South, a low-level security officer posted to an unfamiliar neighborhood in Cairo, as was
commonplace at the time. Their relationship is asymmetrical, violent, and doomed. Hatim initially seduces Abdulh by getting him drunk on wine and showing him pornographic movies. Over time Abdulh becomes financially dependent on Hatim. He relocates his family from the South but spends his evenings drinking and fornicating with Hatim. Abdulh becomes so impaired by his pseudo-enslavement to Hatim that he is no longer able to have sex with his wife without sodomizing her. The collapse of this holistic peasant marriage is maximized by an episode of unspeakable tragedy. Home alone, Abdulh’s wife is forced to call on Hatim to pay for their infant son’s hospitalization when the baby falls severely ill. Hatim responds, but the effort is too late, and the child dies. Abdulh interprets the event as God’s judgment on him for his relationship with Hatim and breaks off his affair with him.

**An Allegory of Social and Spiritual Decay**

To frame the parameters of this demonization narrative, al-Aswany situates the gay affair within a neatly coded allegory of social and spiritual decay. In textual terms, the most blatant technique for doing this is the author’s calibrated use of narrative sequencing. A lengthy passage detailing Abdulh’s full transformation from national serviceman to gay lover is preceded by the graphic climax of Taha’s interrogation and torture by secret state-security officers that includes his rape: “two thick hands reached down, grabbed his buttocks, and pulled them apart. He felt a solid object being stuck into his rear…. He screamed at the top of his voice” (al-Aswany 2004, 153).

Al-Aswany’s fame has derived in large part from his willingness to depict taboo subjects; his genius, however, can be found in the easy symmetry of his prose and his fluid capacity for defusing controversy through the rhetorical reinforcement of the status quo. The gay couple in *Imarat Ya’kubian* accomplishes this masterfully. Cast against the frieze of the novel’s aesthetic infrastructure— the fin de siècle settings, the glasses of whisky, and the music of Edith Piaf—Hatim is at once a creature and a by-product of Cairo’s bygone elegance. The editor of a French newspaper, he is a renowned public intellectual by day and a closeted homosexual “hobbyist” by night. This arrangement is less a matter of pragmatism, as one might intuit (everyone “knows” that he is a homosexual because “homosexuality is impossible to hide” [al-Aswany 2004, 177]), and more an expression of his psychology.

Al-Aswany psychologizes Hatim more than any of his other characters. The diagnosis—crass, racist, and uncreative—is that Hatim is gay because he was abused by his Nubian doorman as a child. His father, Francophile and worldly, never loved him but rather, he thinks, “treated me as though I were a rare art object or painting” (al-Aswany 2004, 181). His mother (whom he despises) was equally neglectful. Notably, however, she was French: “a barmaid at a small bar in the Latin Quarter” who, after moving to Egypt with her husband (“a bigger social leap than [she’d] ever dreamed of”), adopted the airs of indignant superiority over her Egyptian peers (181). So while Hatim, like Zaki, speaks French, he is
not a Francophile. He did not acquire his Mediterranean sophistication like Zaki. Rather, Hatim, a creature of miscegenation, is a sort of traitorous impostor, a poisoned pill who poisons all those whom he touches. His violent murder at the hands of Abdugh logically elicits little empathy from the narrator. Indeed, his penultimate words, “you’d strike your master you dog of a servant” (235), welcome the opposite interpretation. We are to cheer the gay man’s murder.

The Cultural and Political Context

Al-Aswany’s depiction of a gay love affair in Imarat Ya’kubian was not without context. As Samia Mehrez (2008) observed in her iconic study on Egypt’s culture wars from the 1990s and early in the next decade, sexuality and homosexuality, in particular, had become a firebrand point of contention in the simmering political warfare between Egypt’s oppressive secular regime and an insurgent wave of religious conservativism. Mutually reinforcing and vying for influence amid a deeply religious civil society, the regime empowered yet more radical calls for shari’aa just as the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood obligated the regime to harden its own posture of religious identity.

Mehrez, who had come under fire for teaching Mohammed Choukri’s 1973 masterpiece For Bread Alone (finally published in Arabic in 1982 as al-Khubz al-Hafi), begins her study with 2005, when the Muslim Brotherhood gained a shockingly high number of seats in Parliament for the first time and liberal groups across the nation were beginning to organize for greater protections. Al-Aswany’s novel capped a period of tumultuous jockeying for attention among the country’s literati. Since al-Aswany was a veritable “novice,” as Mehrez (2008) points out, there was little by way of intrinsic value in his novel and certainly nothing in the way of the kind of experimentalism one finds in a work like For Bread Alone. However, what Imarat Ya’kubian did share in common with Choukri’s novel was its depiction of sex, and homosexual sex in particular. It was this critical aspect, arguably, that elevated the attention behind the novel and that helped catapult al-Aswany into global stardom. Imarat Ya’kubian was made into a film in 2006 and became one of Egypt’s highest grossing films of all time, as well as an immensely popular television series a year after that.

Among the sensitive issues at the center of the cultural wars from which Imarat Ya’kubian emerged was Cairo’s booming and infamous gay night scene. As Sarah Kershaw wrote for the New York Times in 2003, “this hectic and vibrant city on the Nile was the place to be…. There were bars and discos and plenty of public meeting places in the city center where it was relatively easy to socialize, exchange cellphone numbers, hold hands and perhaps—for the more daring—sneak a kiss.” The infamous Queen Boat police raid of May 2001, when authorities stormed a casino houseboat on the Nile and arrested fifty-two men on charges of “debauchery,” signaled an end to the underground scene, as well as a new direction in the culture wars. The crackdown on “debauchery” was not merely a socially conservative
response to an ostensible “rise” in gay activity but a pretext for broader surveillance, particularly online, where much of the gay social scene was thought to be occurring (Kershaw 2003). Al-Aswany engages this topic directly in one of the novel’s many anecdotal scenes, when a disgruntled journalist for Hatim’s French newspaper *Le Caire* proposes to do a piece on the “phenomenon of homosexuality in Egypt.” Intended as a passive insult to his boss (“there’s been a major increase in the number of homosexuals and some of them now occupy leadership positions in the country” [al-Aswany 2004, 178]), the journalist’s commentary serves to reinforce the unsaid fact that “everyone knows he’s gay” and that Hatim has learned how to endure and vanquish his detractors.

As an antagonist, Hatim’s character crystalizes the novel’s underlying ideological bent: the country is swerving toward ruin, not simply the result of a corrupt and despotic political system (which is neatly captured by the subnarrative of Hagg Azzam, who attempts to purchase a parliamentary seat just as he does his second wife), but of an underlying social rot of which homosexuality is a central if clandestine piece. In dialectical fashion, al-Aswany’s figurative symptoms—extremism and homosexuality being the most outstanding, as both conditions lead to death—help bring into focus predominant tenets of Egyptian nationalism: namely, security and Islam. *Imarat Yaʿkubian* offers a nuanced critique of those elements that fall outside this nationalist paradigm, including false positives like Hagg Azzam who, despite a drug habit, zealously upholds his religious identity for the purpose of material gain, or Hatim, who champions nationalist causes (including creating an Arabic version of his newspaper) despite being gay. The danger of such impostures is made even more explicit by the inherent goodness of the earnest if flawed protagonists of the novel—Zaki, Busayna, and Taha.

Beyond this novel, al-Aswany has been an outspoken proponent of the pro-democracy movement in Egypt, including, notably, the 25 January uprising (part of the greater Arab Spring movement of 2011), where he rose to prominence as a kind of informal spokesman for the protesters of Tahrir Square in Cairo. But his political advocacy has seldom strayed beyond the parameters of the country’s official narrative, which upholds the military as protectors of liberty and the Egyptian people as custom bound by the mores of Islam. This became evident in his early support for the military coup of 2013 that led to the ouster of Mohamed Morsi, Egypt’s first democratically elected leader. “Morsi became president through the votes of 13 million Egyptians,” he wrote, “while the Tamarod campaign was able to collect 22 million signatures to withdraw confidence from him. Then, more than 30 million Egyptians took to the streets to demand he step down…. Thus, the ouster of Morsi in this manner was a completely democratic procedure” (al-Aswany 2013). Al-Aswany’s primary defense of the Tamarod campaign, however, was based on cultural grounds. “In just one year, Egyptians were able to realize the difference between Islam and political Islam,” he wrote. “The people discovered that the Brotherhood were using religion for political goals, and not abiding by its principles” (al-Aswany 2013). Much like the antagonists of his novel, the Brotherhood, for al-Aswany, were impostors. And, as such, the
military was right to evict them from power.

The Wholesome Relationship between Zaki and Busayna

In contrast to the double lives of Hatim or Hagg Azzam (who never tells his first wife about his second wife), the heroes of *Imarat Ya’kubian*, Zaki and Busayna, are wholesome in the sense that they are exactly who they say they are. Busayna is amazed to meet a “true Pasha” (the title now a commonplace term of endearment), and Zaki is delighted to discover a woman of pure innocence. That he is three times her age, that she works for him, and that they have sex out of wedlock are all details extraneous to the otherwise impervious value of their respective characters. Their marriage offers something of a happy ending in al-Aswany’s ethical universe. Unlike the relationship between Hatim and Abduh that ends in a pool of blood, or between Hagg Azzam and his second wife, which ends with her being abducted and forced to abort a pregnancy, the relationship between Zaki and Busayna is successful in part because neither has anything to hide. This is a somewhat cruel criterion, of course, particularly for Hatim, who has little choice but to separate his public and private lives.

The 2006 Film Adaptation of *Imarat Ya’kubian*

Marwan Hamed’s 2006 film adaptation, *The Yacoubian Building*, of al-Aswany’s novel drives home the precariousness of Hatim’s dual existence. His murder in the cinematic version comes at the hands of an anonymous young man, presumably a male prostitute he has solicited after his breakup with Abduh. Such dramatic licensure on the part of the director appeared calibrated to preserve the innocence of the rural police officer, while driving home the criminal dimensions of Hatim’s enterprise. His assassin strips him of his watch and snatches his wallet before fleeing the scene of the crime. But just as the adaptation effaces Abduh’s crime of passion, it denies Hatim the privilege of tragedy. His death as portrayed in the film is arbitrary, meaningless, and yet, in this way, inevitable. Designed for a broad and conservative audience in the Egyptian public, the filmic interlocutor of this important modern narrative chose the path of complacency, which, in the end—and in light of the movie’s massive success—may be the greater tragedy.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


**FILMOGRAPHY**

Starting around 1500, as new maritime knowledge enabled the expansion of global trade and the establishment of overseas empires by the Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, British, and French states and their subjects, European contacts with other cultures multiplied. This had important consequences for the global history of sexuality, especially after 1700 when a binary sexual system in which desire was organized around a sharp sense of male-female difference emerged in northwestern Europe, arguably displacing a more fluid traditional system in which differences in age might in some cases be as important as biological sex (Trumbach 2013). Explorers and other travelers encountered various kinds of same-sex erotic behavior, including roles that blurred gender boundaries, such as the people Europeans called “berdache” in North America (a term borrowed from the Middle East). These were biological males who assumed a female gender role and who had sexual relationships with men. Writing about these observations and stories contributed integrally to the processes that shaped the formation of modern sexual identities in the West and beyond from the eighteenth to the twentieth centuries, including male and female homosexual identities and their stigmatization (J. Burton 2013). While reported homo-erotic acts in places as diverse as Brazil, China, and North Africa were widely condemned as signs of moral degeneracy among the uncivilized “other,” in the late nineteenth century, ethnographic data suggested to some progressive thinkers that sexual attraction between members of the same sex was universal and therefore natural. In particular, this paradigm was invoked by the English social thinker Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), who promulgated a notion of “intermediate types” at the start of the twentieth century, and by leading European sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) to support his influential argument that these people constituted a “third,” intermediate sex (Bleys 1995).

The observations and generalizations of European travelers and theorists were shaped by their own cultural and political assumptions and interests and should not be read as adequate representations of the beliefs and practices of the societies they purported to describe. This may be glossed by considering briefly the common claim that “pederasty” was both ubiquitous and generally acceptable in Arab societies. One well-known source of this belief was the British imperial adventurer Richard Francis Burton (1821–1890), who
published an unexpurgated English version of *One Thousand and One Nights* in 1885–1886. Burton attached an essay arguing in part that same-sex behaviors (which he called the "Vice") were to be found in a geographic and climatic belt that he dubbed the Sotadic Zone, a broad swathe of territory that included much of southern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Americas. The sweeping essentialist claims of Burton, exemplified by the somewhat incongruous assertion that the Turks were "a race of born pederasts," have been repeated by many commentators, including historians, who failed to appreciate the variety and subtlety of sexuality across North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia (Bleys 1995; El-Rouayheb 2005). Historians have analyzed several strands of male same-sex eroticism in urban Islamic culture in the premodern Arab Ottoman Empire, including the cultural meanings attached to the insertive and receptive roles in age-structured acts of anal intercourse, which were closely aligned with normative gender roles. An adult man who acted as the receptive partner often attracted scathing criticism for performing the "female" role, but this was muted or absent in the case of a man performing the insertive role with an adolescent male (El-Rouayheb 2005).

A key point to emerge in this entry is that European imperialism and colonialism brought political and ideological forces of change to bear on the cultural meanings of same-sex acts and relationships among peoples around the globe. These were often exerted through systematic acts of legal and cultural suppression, the resonances of which are still present in the twenty-first century. Some contemporary historical scholarship is focused on attempting to recover these precolonial understandings and tracking the processes of change, an endeavor often directed toward the political purpose of emancipating LGBTQ+ people in postcolonial societies around the world.

**Regulating Male Homosexuality**

In his account of the demolition of the Portuguese-built fort in the Southeast Asian entrepôt of Malacca (Melaka) by the British in 1806–1807, the Malay writer Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir (1796–1854) referred to torture instruments once used by the Dutch, who had captured the city from the Portuguese in 1641. These included a barrel with nails protruding into it. The unfortunate victims “were rolled about inside it until their bodies were torn to shreds” (1955, 61). This was the terrible punishment inflicted on people convicted of “unnatural offences.”

**Criminalization** As European states extended their political reach and established colonial governments, their remit included the regulation of sexual relationships, a task made more complex and acute as increasing numbers of European men and some women lived in the colonies for long periods or were born and raised there. Christian missionaries, too, were implicated in attempts to eradicate homoerotic practices, an endeavor that was sometimes resisted by indigenous peoples (Mitchell 2007). The attempts of colonial regimes to police sex between men were underpinned by several shifting and overlapping ideologies. The
early Dutch Republic drew on the language of Reformed Protestantism, and Christian traditions were widely influential through to the twentieth century. Although Enlightenment rationalism contributed to the decriminalization of sodomy in France in 1791, and the new legal code was applied both throughout the Napoleonic continental empire and France’s colonial possessions, most European imperial states continued to prohibit and punish sexual acts between males. Indeed, with the growth of the bourgeois state and the development of the secular theories of evolution and degeneration, the range and intensity of these prohibitions increased (while punitive sanctions softened). This process can be observed in the German colonial empire.

Germany became a political entity upon the unification of the disparate German states in 1871, and its nascent overseas empire expanded rapidly under Wilhelm II (1859–1941) during the most intense phase of European colonization, known as the New Imperialism. Paragraph 175 of the German criminal code of 1871, which forbade penetrative sexual acts between men, was predicated on new legal and medical understandings of sexual desire, which were elaborated by the academic discipline of sexology. The homosexual, as he came to be called, was considered by most political leaders to be a threat to the authority of the emergent bourgeois order (Walther 2008). Although sex between white men and native women arguably raised critical issues such as the possibility of miscegenation, which became increasingly proscribed in the nineteenth century, all European colonial regimes tolerated some forms of heterosexual coupling. Any kind of sex between European and indigenous men, however, was deemed to conspicuously transgress the ideological boundary between colonizer and colonized. An allegation of homosexual behavior could be an incendiary weapon in personal and political conflicts, sometimes igniting major scandals, such as the Rechenberg scandal in German East Africa in 1910, named after the colony’s governor, Georg Albrecht Freiherr von Rechenberg (1861–1935). Rechenberg was accused of sodomizing his personal servant and consorting with a prostitute from the male brothel in the colonial capital of Dar es Salaam (Schmidt 2008). In German New Guinea, governors summarily expelled European men deemed guilty of homosexual acts. From the perspective of German nationalists, same-sex activity was inconsistent with being white and German, and it threatened to undermine the claim of racial superiority that buttressed the assumed right to rule colored and black people (Walther 2008).
The criminalization of male homosexuality had significant consequences not only for European men but also for indigenous peoples, especially throughout the British Empire. From the 1860s on, a common set of legal codes, based on the provisions enacted in India and the Australian colony of Queensland, were applied across the territories under British jurisdiction. Enacted a few years after the Revolt of 1857, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code may be viewed as part of the transition from East India Company rule to a British Crown-controlled, fully bureaucratic imperial state in which the line between colonizers and colonized was drawn more sharply. The statute explicitly prohibited and punished with long prison terms and fines “carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal,” and was usually applied to acts of anal and oral intercourse between men (Bhaskaran 2002).

During the twentieth century, and particularly after World War II (1939–1945), when the process of decolonization occurred throughout Asia and Africa, more than thirty independent countries inherited this punitive model from British colonial regimes. A careful statistical analysis shows that former British colonies were twenty-two times more
likely than a very large sample of 155 former French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch colonies to enact statutes prohibiting sexual relations between men (Han and O’Mahoney 2014). Section 377 was repealed as recently as 2009 by the Delhi High Court, only to be reinstated in 2013. In 2017 the Supreme Court of India argued that discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation violated a person’s right to privacy, and ruled that same-sex sexual activity could not be prosecuted under Section 377 in September 2018.

One of the ironic consequences of this history of suppression is the claim made in the present day by some African and Asian community and political leaders that homosexuality itself is an anathematic Western concept. In some African states, “violent public attacks on homosexuality are frequently couched as defenses of what is traditionally African from a contaminating Western influence” (Lewis 2011, 210). It appears that the legal and religious interdiction of same-sex eroticism by colonial rulers and Christian missionaries caused people to forget or deny their own traditional homoerotic practices. In the case of Africa south of the Sahara, denial began with the European imperialists, some of whom originated the stereotype of African male sexuality as exclusively heterosexual. They believed that Africans were “natural” beings who lacked the sophistication to perform sexual acts for any purpose other than biological reproduction, although it is now known that a variety of male and female homoerotic practices existed among Africans prior to European colonization (Lewis 2011).

The denialism of postcolonial political leaders may also be read, as Neville Hoad has proposed, “as displaced resistance to perceived and real encroachments on neocolonial national sovereignty by economic and cultural globalization” (2007, xii–xiii). This interpretation pays attention to the international context of the 1990s, when homophobic sentiments were articulated in several African countries, including Zimbabwe, Kenya, Uganda, and Namibia. To add a further layer of irony, in the case of the South African gold mines in the twentieth century, indigenous homoerotic acts were inflected and perpetuated within a colonial institution. There, black migrant workers, particularly from what is now Mozambique, participated in a social system in which power was structured by a kind of “marriage” relationship between an older and a younger miner. The younger miner assumed the role of a “wife” who was the receptive partner in intercrural (between the thighs) intercourse, a practice characteristic of premarital sexual relationships between men and women in southern Africa. The mine marriage system remained in place through the various stages of colonial rule and continued after independence (Moodie 1988).

**Literary Censorship** In addition to legal repression, the memory of indigenous homoeroticism was erased by removing its representation from literary texts. In post-1857 India, for example, colonial administrators condemned what they considered the homoerotic “vulgarity” of Urdu and Persian poetry, which was sanitized by a new generation of scholars and teachers dependent on stipends paid by the colonial government (Kugle 2002). Something similar occurred in the Ottoman Empire starting in
the mid-nineteenth century. Under the influence of a new, Western-oriented elite, all forms of homoeroticism came under attack. Bowdlerized versions of *One Thousand and One Nights* and other works were published, and by the second half of the twentieth century Ottoman Arab historians routinely denied the existence of “pederastic” themes in the literary tradition. In the 1940s a new Arabic term to express the European concept of “sexual inversion” became common (El-Rouayheb 2005). This points to the emergence of something like a global cultural hegemony of modern Western concepts, which often supplanted, suppressed, or at least supplemented indigenous and earlier paradigms. Therefore, in order to recover and understand indigenous concepts and practices, as well as to challenge continuing homophobic cultural representations and legal oppression, some contemporary scholars of African sexualities question the legitimacy and integrity of binary representations of gender and sexuality (Lewis 2011).

**Flexibility**

As significant as these findings and developments are, they should not be allowed to entirely obscure some variations in the ways in which same-sex desire was inflected in British and non-British colonies across more than four centuries of European rule and influence over a wide range of geographically and culturally diverse societies. It should not be assumed that written statutes and rewritten texts effectively inhibited all same-sex eroticism or necessarily governed behavior. A case in point is that of mid-eighteenth-century Philadelphia, a very important commercial center in British North America, with residents from various British and European backgrounds, as well as from Africa and the Caribbean. It has been found that while the colony of Pennsylvania enacted several statutes criminalizing sodomy, punishments were milder than under comparable British laws, and there is no evidence of active policing of male same-sex relations. As prosecutions at that time depended on private citizens bringing charges against alleged offenders, the dearth of cases appearing before the courts suggests that general tolerance or indifference prevailed. This stands in contrast to several contemporary western European cities where a new male homosexual subculture, typified by the London molly houses, attracted vigilant policing and publicity. Philadelphians were aware of these developments, but they did not identify this new category of sexual deviance among themselves. This probably reflects the Quaker roots of the colony, the social diversity and fluidity of the resident population, and the desideratum, at least among white males, to build a common identity (Lyons 2007).

**Cross-Cultural Homoerotic Relationships**

Many historians of colonialism, following the influential work of Ann Laura Stoler (2002) on Indonesia, analyze the role of sexuality, even in ostensibly private spaces, as an integral component of the exercise of power by imperial regimes. This raises issues concerning homosexuality. In addition to there being risks in expressing same-sex desire in territories
under European rule, it has been argued by some historians, notably Ronald Hyam (1990), that there were also plentiful opportunities, although it is uncertain whether they were everywhere greater than in Europe. Cross-cultural homoerotic relationships were often facilitated and structured by social institutions such as domestic service, and race and class were important elements of desire. These interactions were, therefore, inherently unequal, and some were indisputably exploitative. However, they were not uniformly so across all time and space, as Edward W. Said’s influential “Orientalism” model might imply. Said (1978) held that European intellectuals created a hegemonic discourse that unfavorably stereotyped non-European cultures by comparison with European norms. Instead, as more recent cultural studies of empire insist, historical events and situations were varied and nuanced (Darwin 2012). Many of the Western romantic partners of colonized people known to history showed genuine respect and appreciation for the cultures of their friends and lovers, albeit circumscribed by their own values and interests; and some publicly criticized European imperialism. It should also be acknowledged that the indigenous partners exercised agency in many of these relationships, and so it might be ventured that European imperialism expanded the sexual opportunities available to some colonized peoples.

China and India are especially interesting for examining the ways in which sexual desire was interwoven with cultural appreciation for select groups of elite Western men, some of whom had rejected Christianity and sought alternative sources of intellectual and spiritual inspiration. China was never a colony of any particular European state, but for around a century starting with the first Opium War (1839–1842), all the great powers of Europe, the United States, and Japan won and held significant trade concessions at a large number of locations along China’s eastern seaboard, and autonomous foreign enclaves emerged in these treaty ports. Imperial China had a long male homoerotic tradition that can be tracked in its literature (Hinsch 1990). In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Chinese culture made a powerful appeal to the imagination of Western men attracted to the aesthetic qualities of its art, theater, and music, as well as to the bodies of Chinese men. A number of them visited China and some lived there for extended periods, finding abundant sexual opportunities in the relatively tolerant urban milieu of the late Qing and Republican states. A good example is the English writer and aesthete Harold Acton (1904–1994), who lived in Beijing for most of the 1930s. Acton translated Chinese poetry and was passionately interested in classical theater, where homoerotic and aesthetic sensibilities intertwined. He admired the delicate bodies of some young Chinese men and enjoyed many sexual relationships and intellectual friendships during his residence there (Mungello 2012).

Around the same time, Indian culture, philosophy, and religion fascinated some well-known European homosexual men, including the British social radical and pioneering advocate of homosexual rights Edward Carpenter (1844–1929), the English American novelist Christopher Isherwood (1904–1986), the eminent French Indianist Alain Daniélou (1907–1994), and the English novelist E. M. Forster (1879–1970) (Aldrich 2003; Copley
Forster is a particularly good example of the interweaving of romantic and cross-cultural engagement. One of the main purposes of his first trip to India in 1912–1913 was to visit the Oxford University–trained educationist Syed Ross Masood (1889–1937), whom he had met in England in 1906. The two men shared a close and long-lasting friendship that was suffused with erotic feelings on Forster’s side. Forster later claimed, in hyperbolic fashion, that Masood “woke me up out of my suburban and academic life, showed me new horizons and a new civilization and helped me towards the understanding of a continent” (quoted in Moffat 2010, 91). In 1921 Forster visited India a second time, working for several months as the private secretary to the Maharaja of Dewas. Although critical of inefficient administrative practices and much coyer about sexuality than J. R. Ackerley’s travel memoir *Hindoo Holiday* (1932; revised 1952), Forster’s *The Hill of Devi* (1953) attempts a genuine engagement with Indian cultures and people. A more significant literary legacy is his greatest novel, *A Passage to India* (1924), which derides colonial rule and features an interracial friendship between the main characters, Dr. Aziz and Cyril Fielding, that is susceptible to a homoerotic reading. Although Forster’s work is colored to a degree by an Orientalist perspective, it demonstrates how cultural and sexual appreciation of the “other” might be closely related.

During World War I (1914–1918), Forster worked as a Red Cross volunteer in the Egyptian city of Alexandria. Egypt had inherited the Napoleonic penal code, and so homosexual acts were technically legal, but the city came under martial law after Britain imposed a protectorate over the country in 1914, and the authorities sought to curb the sexual license prevalent in some quarters. Early in 1917 Forster met Mohammed el Adl (1900–1922), a tram conductor, and the two soon became lovers. Forster kept a notebook on el Adl, which included transcripts of some of their correspondence. His biographer Wendy Moffat’s account of the development of their romance emphasizes mutual agency, but as the one in possession of greater local linguistic and cultural knowledge, el Adl arguably exerted more control, and he resisted Forster’s sexual advances until he was assured that Forster respected him. El Adl claimed to enjoy penetrative sex as the insertive partner with both men and women; from el Adl’s perspective with respect to regional sexual paradigms, Moffat suggests, Forster’s desire to be penetrated conceded to el Adl considerable social power. The case is an interesting example of how a relationship was negotiated at the intersection of different conceptual models (Moffat 2010).

**The Japanese Empire**

Under pressure from US naval squadrons in the 1850s and 1860s, Japan opened to Western trade and culture in what is known as the Meiji Restoration, and then the country went on to found its own empire. The fissures between ideology and practice there are indicative of the complex nature of the impact of Western imperialism on homosexuality outside Europe. By the time European missionaries traveled to Japan in the mid-sixteenth century,
a relatively open urban male homoerotic subculture existed. One of its iterations, the samurai model, was characterized by anal intercourse between an older man (the insertive partner) and a younger man (the receptive partner) (Leupp 1995). In this, it somewhat resembled systems of sexuality developed in both Europe and the Arab world prior to the eighteenth century in that it was based more on roles rather than identities. In contrast with the situation in Europe, homoerotic relationships in Tokugawa Japan enjoyed moral legitimacy through their links to Buddhist monastic traditions (Leupp 1995). Influenced by Western legal codes and values after the Meiji Restoration of 1868, however, the practice of sodomy was made a criminal offense. But indictments under the law enacted in 1873 were very few; and if the institution of the statute can be attributed, at least in part, to European attitudes and law, so can its 1881 repeal, which followed French precedent (Furukawa 1994).

The samurai model flourished in Meiji schools and military academies, particularly in Tokyo during Japan's wars against China (1894–1895) and Russia (1904–1905), which marked the beginning of a half century of imperial conquest and rule. At the same time, the German academic discourse of sexology led to a flurry of discussion in academic and popular journals of a new understanding of homosexuality as a perversion affecting both men and women. Japanese thinkers and commentators actively contributed to international dialogues on the new science, and with its claim to universal truth it quickly became influential within Japan (Furukawa 1994; Pflugfelder 1999). During the period of expansion into China and Southeast Asia in the 1930s and 1940s, the prevailing official ideology was "relentlessly heterosexual and pronatal," but despite this and the pathologizing of homosexuality in the academy and the popular press, sex between men was generally tolerated by the military (McLelland 2005, 42). In this, Japan differed markedly from its European ally Nazi Germany, which actively persecuted homosexuals. After World War II, evidence emerged in a number of the published accounts of the wartime experiences of Japanese soldiers of the existence of homosexual liaisons, not only between senior and junior soldiers but also between soldiers and native men in Japan's colonies.

Some of these relationships involved coercion. One example is known through the testimony of the Philippine cross-dressing dancer Walter Dempster Jr. (1924–2005), whose experience of repeated brutal rape by Japanese soldiers during the occupation of Manila has been compared to that of the comfort women who were systematically conscripted and assaulted during the war. In 2000 his story was told in the film Markova: Comfort Gay (Dempster 2006). But consensual interracial relationships also existed. A particularly evocative example is the romantic relationship between a young wounded Japanese soldier and his Indonesian male servant related in the story "Coconut Oil," published in 1954 (McLelland 2005). While the details of accounts such as these are virtually impossible to verify, the imaginative rendering of wartime same-sex relationships is suggestive of historical reality. And given that female prostitutes were accessible through the system of
military brothels, these various inflexions of homosexual passion cannot be attributed entirely to the homosocial organization of the Japanese army. Under the influence of European ideas, Japan had imported the new identity-based model of sexology, but this existed alongside the role-based samurai tradition, which was perhaps also inflected (or perverted) in the instances of rape associated more commonly with the sexual exploitation of Asian women in the Japanese empire.

**Women, Romantic Friendship, and Gender Crossing**

The history of sexual desire and relationships between women arguably follows a different trajectory to that of men, and its study has some different emphases (Donoghue 1994); therefore, it is discussed here in a separate section. European travelers reported on homoerotic practices among women in the Ottoman Empire and elsewhere, particularly in gendered spaces such as baths and harems, but, in contrast to male homosexuality, sexual acts between women were not targeted by colonial legal prohibitions (Rupp 2009). Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, to recall an influential example, required evidence of penetration to secure a conviction. This burden of proof has been understood to mean penile penetration. No woman has ever been convicted under the statute, although in the late twentieth century there were some newspaper reports describing cases in which mostly lower-class women applying for licenses to marry or seeking to cohabit with other women were threatened with Section 377 by their fathers or government officials (Bhaskaran 2002). The possibility of sex between women during colonial times was not believed to jeopardize the perpetuation of the imperial patriarchy. There are also few known cases of colonial regimes removing references to female homoeroticism from classical literature. One of the uncommon instances is the suppression of rekhti, a form of Urdu poetry written in the female voice that included passages that might be construed as speaking of “lesbian” desire (Petievich 2002). What, arguably, was more distinctive of women’s experiences in colonial contexts were romantic friendships and the intertwining of same-sex erotic relationships with gender crossing.

Although European women were generally less economically and socially privileged than men, the opening up of the New World after 1500 did nevertheless offer select women a greater degree of geographic mobility, and the phenomenon of romantic friendship, which empowered some women to avoid marriage and form domestic arrangements with other women, was a feature of the settler colonies of North America, as well as of European societies, especially in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The extent to which these friendships may have had erotic components is debated; at the time, little, if any, suspicion was usually attached to them. This may be represented by the response of the judges of a case brought against two schoolmistresses, Jane Pirie and Marianne Woods, in Scotland in 1811, on the evidence of one of their students, Jane Cumming. Although the pair evidently shared a bed, a majority of judges refused to believe that sexual misconduct
between respectable Christian women in Britain was possible, attributing Cumming’s allegation of female eroticism to knowledge they assumed she gained during her early years in India (Rupp 2009). It was outside Europe and North America that practices sometimes called sapphism or tribadism were thought to be endemic. In some instances, however, European writers argued that imperialism itself had instigated these practices, as in the sexological, almost pornographic work *L’amour aux colonies: Singularités physiologiques et passionnelles observées durant trente années de séjour dans les colonies françaises*, published in English in 1896 as *Untrodden Fields of Anthropology: Observations on the Esoteric Manners and Customs of Semi-civilised Peoples*. Author “Jacobus X” claimed that contact between white men and Tahitian women had introduced sapphism and masturbation, “two vices unknown to the old Tahitian women,” to the Pacific Islands by acting on local women’s “ardent” nature (1898, 2:451).

A particularly interesting category of women who ventured abroad in the modern age of empire comprised those who, in seeking to work in male occupations such as the military,

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Transvestite Mary Hamilton Being Flogged in Ireland in 1746. This illustration depicts part of the punishment meted out to Hamilton, a British woman accused of pretending to be a man. Hamilton wore men’s clothing, practiced medicine, and married a woman named Mary Price before being discovered to be a woman.
attempted to pass as men, adopting what might be conceptualized as a de facto third
gender or a male social role. At least some of them desired sexual or domestic relationships
with other women. By leaving Europe they hoped not only to avoid notoriety in their local
communities but also to escape the law. From the sixteenth century on, there are examples
in European states of women being prosecuted and sometimes even executed for assuming
the role of a husband (Rupp 2009).

One of the best-known cases is that of the British woman Mary Hamilton, whose life was
sensationalized in Henry Fielding’s essay The Female Husband (1746). According to
Fielding, Hamilton was first seduced by a woman called Anne Johnson, who converted her
to the Methodist faith; then, after Johnson abandoned her, she assumed the guise of a male
Methodist teacher and embarked for Ireland. In September 1746 Hamilton was arrested at
Glastonbury where she was practicing as a physician, and where, just two months earlier,
she had married a woman called Mary Price, who claimed to have believed that Hamilton
was a man. She was charged under the Vagrancy Act, flogged, and sent to prison for six
months. In 1752 she surfaced in Philadelphia, where, again practicing medicine under the
name of Charles Hamilton, she was found to be a woman dressed as a man. However, the
Chester County authorities detained her for only a short period to allow time for a
complainant to come forward (that is, a man alleging to be the victim of deception and
fraud). It seems that no one did, and she was released, again to disappear from the
historical record. Hamilton’s case suggests that a colonial milieu, at least a relatively liberal
one such as that of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, sometimes offered women with same-
sex desire a more secure place to live unorthodox lives (Lyons 2007).

Stories such as Hamilton’s raise the question of whether some of these cross-dressing
women might have been what are now understood as trans men. One interesting case is
that of the Swiss doctor Enrique Favez (c. 1791–1856), who was at the center of a huge
scandal in the Spanish colony of Cuba in the 1820s. Favez was born in Lausanne,
Switzerland, around 1791. His sex at birth was identified as female, but he adopted a
masculine identity when he went to Paris to study medicine; he then joined Napoleon’s
army and was captured by the Spanish. Around 1818 he migrated to Cuba, where he set up
a medical practice and married Juana de Léon. Several years later he was accused of being a
woman, and in 1823 a court in Santiago de Cuba imprisoned him for dressing as a man and
marrying a person of the same sex. Through his persistent challenges to the unfavorable
verdict of the court, however, Favez succeeded in having his sentence reduced by two-
thirds. A textual analysis of the extant primary accounts supports Favez’s insistence that he
was not an imposter and underscores that complicated debates about the mutability of
gender identity are by no means restricted to the present (Martínez 2017). Such examples
rarely appear in historical sources so it is not known how prevalent such a phenomenon
was. This brief discussion of the cases of Favez and Mary/Charles Hamilton is suggestive of
the ways in which the cultural history of women’s same-sex desire and relationships in
colonial contexts might need to be approached in different ways from that of men’s. What
their study has in common is the potential to illuminate some of the significant contours of the global history of how same-sex behaviors and identities have been conceptualized, and, in particular, to enrich the scholarly understanding of this history’s uneven development.

In summary, the four centuries following the exploration of intercontinental sea routes and the founding of the first settlements by Europeans in the Americas and Asia coincided with shifts in sexual practices, concepts, and legal regulations in Europe that were diffused around the world through imperial and colonial institutions. Significantly, this was not a unidirectional process, for these changes in conceptual understanding were shaped by the “knowledge” of American, Asian, and African societies encoded by Europeans implicated in the establishment and operation of early modern and modern empires and imperialist spheres of influence. Furthermore, non-European peoples played significant roles in these processes, not only as passive objects of representation but also as active participants in sexual acts, romantic relationships, legal proceedings, semantic negotiations, and deeds of literary censorship. In addition, it should be noted that concepts and practices predating the age of European imperialism were not simply supplanted; instead, around the world, they interacted in complex ways with the emerging sense of the modern. This variegated narrative comprises a significant strand of global cultural history. It is not, however, an exhaustive account of the ways in which the history of sexuality is related to the history of imperialism and colonialism. There are many other continental and maritime empires that might be studied. As China, to take one example, was a major imperial power for much of its history, its relative tolerance of diverse sexual practices is surely significant for the regions of East and Southeast Asia that were subject to its influence for more than a thousand years. The relationship between same-sex eroticism and these empires and others is worthy of investigation in order to better understand the history of sexuality over the last few millennia. Women’s experiences also demand further study.

SEE ALSO Antisodomy and Buggery Trials; Boston Marriage and Women’s Romantic Friendships; Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara; Conquest and Sodomy in Latin America; Female Husband; Florentine Codex and Nahua Sexuality; Groupe du 6 Novembre: Lesbiennes Issues du Colonialisme, de l’Esclavage et de l’Immigration; Inquisition, Criminal Courts, and Sexuality in Colonial Latin America; Molly Houses; Offences Against the Person Act (1861); Scandals in Europe; Section 377 and Section 377A; Section 377 in South Asia; Third Genders

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The role the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions played in defining and policing sexuality in the New World, particularly with regard to same-sex acts and desires.

The institution known as the Holy Office of the Inquisition was first established by the medieval Roman Catholic Church to uphold orthodoxy and fight heresies such as Catharism. Extended to Latin America centuries later, the Holy Office became a significant actor in the sexual lives of those under its jurisdiction—and its records have become a key source for the history of sexuality. This entry examines the development of the Latin American tribunals and discusses their influence on the sexual lives of colonial Latin Americans, with particular attention to men’s and women’s same-sex acts and desires.

**History and Jurisdiction of the Latin American Inquisitions**

A state-linked Inquisition under royal patronage was established in Spain in 1478, largely to police the religious lives of conversos (Christians of Jewish ancestry). Portugal’s Inquisition was established somewhat later, in 1536, but with a similar intent. By the early sixteenth century, the Holy Office’s mandate included policing converts from Islam (moriscos). From 1540 on, however, the Spanish and Portuguese tribunals increasingly dedicated themselves to reforming Christian morality, especially after the Council of Trent (1545–1563). The post-Trent sixteenth-century emphasis on Christian morality produced a sustained religious focus on sexuality that would endure for centuries.

As the Spanish and Portuguese extended their dominion over America in the first half of the sixteenth century, they carried with them the authority of the Inquisition. In Spanish America, friars and bishops exercised inquisitional jurisdiction until the early 1570s, when two official tribunals were established in Lima (1570) and Mexico City (1571). In 1610 another tribunal was added at Cartagena, with jurisdiction over the Caribbean and the northern coast of South America. In 1551 the Lisbon tribunal (one of three in Portugal) was granted jurisdiction over Brazil; Brazil would never have a resident tribunal, so those accused of crimes were either sent to Portugal or tried during one of the Portuguese Inquisition’s visits to the colony (1591–1595, 1618–1620, and 1763–1769). Thus, by the
final third of the sixteenth century, formal tribunals exercised jurisdiction over much of Latin America.

Created precisely as the new emphasis on Christian morality was spreading throughout the Catholic world, the Latin American Inquisitions to some degree took jurisdiction over crimes previously governed by legal codes such as Spain's thirteenth-century Siete Partidas, which had prohibited sexual crimes such as bigamy, rape, sodomy, and abortion. The Inquisition's authority over particular crimes was complex, however, as evidenced by the example of the “sins against nature,” which comprised both sodomy and bestiality. While the Spanish Inquisition originally exercised jurisdiction over the “crime” of sodomy, for example, the Holy Office was thereafter ordered not to take action against sodomites unless heresy was involved. Only the Inquisition in the Spanish kingdom of Aragon was granted the right to prosecute sodomy; it conducted almost 500 sodomy trials between the late sixteenth century and 1700 and generally punished sodomites with severity.

Jurisdiction over sodomy in the American tribunals has been the subject of confusion and controversy. Mexico’s Inquisition prosecuted a case of sodomy among sailors in 1542, but the Mexican tribunal generally followed the Spanish practice of prosecuting sodomy only in cases where blasphemy or heresy was implicated or where clerics were accused. In practice, however, this meant that both the Inquisition and civil courts sometimes prosecuted sodomy, while the Casa de Contratación (House of Trade) in Seville claimed authority over American sodomy cases that arose at sea and in harbors. This jurisdictional ambiguity was characteristic of all of the Spanish American tribunals. In contrast, the Portuguese Inquisition exercised clear jurisdiction over sodomy—making Inquisition documents from Brazil a rich source for the study of sodomy and sexuality in Portuguese America.

The Inquisition's jurisdiction over other sexual crimes was similarly ambiguous, because most were presumed to be matters for local religious officials at the church or diocesan levels. However, whenever questions of unorthodox belief or blasphemous statements were involved (as was frequent), a sexual matter fell under the jurisdiction of the Holy Office. Fornication (sex between unmarried people), for example, was generally ignored or dealt with by episcopal authorities. In contrast, stating that a man did not sin if he paid a woman for sex was a matter for the Inquisition. The Inquisition was therefore more interested in beliefs than acts, but the two are difficult to distinguish. As a result, sex-related cases are relatively common in the archives of the Inquisition even though other authorities had the primary responsibility for managing sexual crimes.

One final jurisdictional issue is worthy of mention; by the time of the creation of the American tribunals, the Holy Office had lost jurisdiction over indigenous people, who were judged to be “too new in the faith” to be subjected to Inquisitorial discipline. Indigenous morality and sexuality were thus governed instead by bodies under diocesan (episcopal)
authority and by criminal courts, although indigenous people are a frequent presence in Inquisition documents as witnesses and, often, as participants in other illicit activities.

Originally created to police converted Jews, *moriscos*, and later heretics, the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions became key institutions governing the moral and sexual life of Iberians and Ibero-Americans and in the creation of a colonial sexual regime in Latin America. But the Inquisition's jurisdiction was never absolute, despite the church's ambitious vision for Christian sexual morality in colonial Latin America.

**The Inquisition and Christian Morality in Colonial Latin America**

Scholars have long disputed whether colonial Latin America was a repressive sexual regime or lax with regard to sexual morality. Not surprisingly, the Inquisition has played a key role in discussions of this question. Certainly, the Inquisition acted as a principal bulwark of the Christian sexual regime, which permitted only one model of Christian sexual morality. In America, the one licit model of Christian sexuality was implemented on a vast and diverse population comprising indigenous people, free and enslaved Africans and their descendants, and European colonists—a process described as “the colonialism of vaginal intercourse” (Sigal 2009, 1341). While Inquisitors lacked the nineteenth-century terms *sexuality*, *heterosexual*, or *homosexual*, they nonetheless possessed a clear concept of “licit” sex and a number of terms and categories (sometimes imprecise) into which illicit sex acts could be grouped for condemnation and punishment.

As suggested above, the colonial ideal of Christian sexuality was “heterosexual”; but proper sexual conduct took place not merely between a man and a woman but also within holy matrimony. Even within marriage, heterosexual coitus in the “improper vessel” or the “vessel against nature” (anal intercourse) was strictly forbidden and policed in the confessional. Sexual sins were thus multiple, and there was a rough consensus on their severity. Sacrilege (sex with a nun or priest) was the gravest sin, followed by incest, adultery, rape of a virgin, concubinage (living together without marriage), prostitution, and fornication. As discussed above, the Inquisition lacked jurisdiction over most of these matters. More clearly a matter for the Holy Office was the use of sexual magic to attract, keep, and “tame” lovers—or even, in the cases of prostitutes, to bewitch clients—because these practices often involved blasphemy or even implied demonic pacts. In addition, the Inquisition was interested in the sexual promiscuity and beliefs often involved in heresies such as illuminism (*alumbradismo*), the belief in indirect enlightenment from God rather than through the intercession of the church. The potentially heretical erotic visions of female mystics also received attention. Finally, the Inquisition dealt with priests who used the confessional as a place to make sexual advances toward male or female penitents.

In this comprehensive field of sexual sin, however, the gravest offense was sodomy,
generally referred to as the *pecado nefando* (nefarious sin). Described by the jurist Gregorio López (1496–1560) as worse than heresy, sodomy was in the Portuguese world often treated as if it were heresy, despite the clear distinction between the crimes. Sodomy, masturbation, and bestiality were together considered the “sins against nature” because they were nonprocreative and supposedly violated both the “natural order” and God’s commandment to be fruitful and multiply. Sodomy and bestiality, indeed, were often lumped together in confessional manuals and legal codes. Sins against nature were an expansive category, however; the Spanish theologian Bartolomé de Medina (c. 1528–1580), for example, wrote that even sexual intercourse with the woman on top of a man constituted sodomy because such a position was unnatural.

Sexual sins, while ubiquitous in colonial Latin America, had their own geography, with bestiality clearly associated with rural areas and sodomy and prostitution more associated with urban areas. Some scholars argue that rural people were probably persuaded to avoid sodomy because of the lack of private places, whereas others have found sodomy established even in rural settings. Regardless, sexual sins appear to have thrived in private and controlled spaces—one possible reason that elite groups with access to such spaces, such as priests, may have been particularly likely to sin. Still, even plebeians had access to some private spaces, such as New Spain’s *pulquerías* (taverns) and *temascales* (steam baths), which offered ample opportunity to “sin” away from the prying eyes of the public.

Assessing the repressiveness of the Inquisition and the colonial sexual regime in general is a complex matter. As a powerful institution of social control, the Inquisition fought to varying degrees against all the practices and beliefs enumerated above. Yet the Inquisition was just one part of a complex social fabric of belief and sin. The Holy Office worked with other systems of social control such as confession (required once a year since the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215). Indeed, in its procedures, the Inquisition was not merely a mode of “violent repression” (Zbíral 2010, 218) but precisely followed the norms and practices of sacramental confession, in which sexuality was often a “privileged theme” (Harrison 2014, 118). Thus, it has been argued that the sixteenth century brought a new sexual regime as a result of regular confession and a clearer notion of sin. This regime in turn complemented the work of the Holy Office. Self-policing (either before or after illicit acts) was a potent tool for the Inquisition, and it is not possible to understand the role of the Inquisition in policing sexuality without understanding the “general attitude of guilt and fear of punishment” characteristic of the time (De Los Reyes 2010, 60). To some degree, then, the Inquisition can be seen as an enforcer of community standards. Within the confines of these standards, individuals navigated between their own desires and impulses and the teachings of their religion.

In an apparent paradox, given the repressiveness of the Inquisition’s intent, its archives are replete with evidence of heterodox behaviors. This suggests that whatever its intent, the Inquisition failed to produce ideal Christian sexual morality. One reason for this failure is
the vastness of the American territories and the extreme diversity and mobility of the colonial populations. In addition, the American Inquisitions themselves were uneven in their approach to sexual sins. Despite its clearer jurisdiction over sexual matters, for example, the Portuguese Inquisition was less interested than the Spanish in policing sexual crimes, particularly in Brazil. Even in Spanish America, periods of relative toleration could alternate with periods of harsher repression; the period before 1621 seems to have been generally less repressive than that between 1621 and 1720, when the church was most functional as an instrument of social control. Overall, then, the colonial Latin American sexual regime was neither lax nor repressive but offered a mixture of prohibition, disapproval, and tolerance.

Sodomy: The *Pecado Nefando* and Latin American Criminal Courts

In Mexico City in 1658, a laundress reported that she had been washing clothes near a ditch when two boys ran to her to report two men “playing like dogs” nearby. When she investigated, she witnessed what seemed to her a clear act of sodomy (Lewis 2007, 129). One of the men involved would later be among fourteen men put to death after a large-scale investigation by Mexico’s Real Audiencia, its highest criminal court. Over 100 men were accused of sodomy, described by authorities as a “cancer” infecting the kingdom (Garza Carvajal 2003). Despite the clear legality of secular jurisdiction in this case, some clerical authorities protested, believing that the gravity of the sin demanded the Inquisition’s involvement. This case thus showcases some of the key issues concerning the Inquisition’s involvement with sexuality, including both the importance of sexuality to Christian conduct and the often limited reach of the Holy Office. This section discusses how sodomy generally did not fall under the jurisdiction of the Inquisition (except in Brazil) but was prosecuted by secular criminal courts. Thereafter, two other issues are examined: the role of gender in sodomy trials and accusations and the question of sexual subcultures in colonial Latin America.
In the medieval and early modern world, *sodomy* had a much more expansive definition than that of the twenty-first century. The term could refer to several nonprocreative practices, including anal intercourse, oral sex, and the penetration of the vagina by anything but a penis. Thus, sodomy was not inherently “homosexual,” as three modes—male/male, male/female, and female/female—were distinguished. It has therefore been suggested that the Portuguese Inquisitors were interested not in sexual preference or orientation but rather in acts. However, male-male relations and anal sex tended to be viewed most harshly. For example, the first bishop of Mexico, Juan de Zumárraga (1468–1548), concluded that the male-female form of sodomy was less sinful than the male-male form (Nesvig 2001). Over time, anal intercourse between men came to overshadow the other forms of sodomy, and in practice, prosecutions of heterosexual sodomy were rare. Nonetheless, the gravest sodomitical sin was “complete sodomy,” in which a man ejaculated in the rectum of his partner; this, rather than sexual orientation per se, was the index of the sin’s severity.

Most scholars of colonial Latin America feel that sodomy took on additional significance in the colonial setting. Indeed, the elimination of indigenous sodomy became a key feature of colonial practices, particularly because sodomy was often thought of as something taught to indigenous persons by the devil or other demons. While the Inquisition did not directly participate in the “extirpation” of indigenous sodomy, the Holy Office nonetheless stood as the model for and enforcer of the Christian sexual regime.
Because sodomy developed in a male-dominated society that discriminated against women and femininity, those accused of the *pecado nefando* were often inherently feminized. Moreover, some scholars have argued, "active" (insertive) partners in intercourse were sometimes treated differently from "passive" (penetrated) ones. The passive-active distinction has fueled much of the scholarship on sodomy in colonial Latin America, although there is increasing evidence that the distinction was not as meaningful as previously thought. For example, both "actives" and "passives" were apparently punished with equal severity in the absence of compulsion, and men who presented evidence of forcible penetration were often exonerated.

Moreover, the question of "feminization" is more complex than some scholars have suggested. First, many men accused of sodomy were married to women and thus fulfilled the masculine gender role. Even within same-sex relationships, gendering was more fluid than has been assumed. For example, the seventeenth-century Mexican mulatto Juan Ramírez was described as someone who ground corn, made chocolate, shopped for food, and washed clothes—all traditionally feminine tasks—*and* as the insertive partner in sex (Lewis 2007). An insertive ("active") partner might therefore be highly effeminate to the extent of assuming a female social role. Conversely, although the sexual act of sodomy was often described as a man’s "serving as if he were a woman,” a man might be passive *sexually* and yet retain the *social* role of a man with regard to his sexual partner. Thus, it seems increasingly clear that despite the importance of metaphors drawn from male-dominant heterosex, these metaphors "do not always map neatly onto male-male sexual interaction" (Nesvig 2001, 691). Still, feminization remains significant, and it seems that many sodomites did adopt feminized modes of dress and activities.

Sodomy, like other sexual acts in colonial Latin America, occurred within a general context of unequal relations, not only between men and women but also among classes and races. To some degree, wealthy, elite, and clerical men (almost all of whom were of Iberian descent) could protect themselves from punishment or infamy when accused of sodomy. Sodomitical priests in particular were often treated leniently. In a 1595 case from the Real Audiencia of Charcas, for example, a clergyman convicted of sodomy was able to escape punishment because of his status and connections, whereas at least one of his plebeian lovers was executed (Spurling 1998). Priests were tried by religious authorities, who sought to avoid the scandal associated with severe and public punishments and who were conscious of the perennial shortage of clerical personnel. Almost never were clergy punished as harshly as normal plebeians accused of similar offenses.

Even in the case of laymen, however, one should not assume that sodomy was always prosecuted harshly or that the occasional brutal repression of the practice succeeded in eliminating it. There is ample evidence that sexual subcultures flourished, although there is much disagreement on how they should be described. Some refer to them as "gay " or "sodomitical" subcultures, whereas others claim the impossibility of such identities before
the nineteenth-century invention of homosexual (and heterosexual) identities. Whatever the case, occasional statements that suggest social tolerance of same-sex behavior are one of the most interesting features of Inquisition trials involving sexual practices such as sodomy. Certainly, criminal and religious authorities in colonial Latin America exerted unquestionable and brutal power over men who had sex with men. However, both the presence of sodomitical subcultures and the assertions of heterodox ideas about sodomy should caution against overstating the success of religious or secular institutions in extirping same-sex relations.

**Women and Sexual Heterodoxy**

The Holy Office and other bodies policed women’s sexuality as well as men’s, but women’s sexual misdeeds were generally fewer and more likely to be matters for confession rather than prosecution. The sexes were equally represented in concubinage and fornication, for example, but evidence of women’s more serious sexual crimes is scant. And, as this section shows, even same-sex behavior among women was poorly understood and often dismissed, unless it involved insertion or some form of “hermaphroditism.”

While women could theoretically be accused of sodomy, this was rare. Some sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish commentators wrote that coitus between women was not as offensive as male sodomy, because it neither dissipated semen nor offended the image of God. This meant that women should be punished lightly for same-sex relations, unless they used some sort of instrument to copulate. Perhaps even more importantly, commentators were baffled by female sodomy and whether it involved penetration and ejaculation. Given the emphasis on sodomy as “insertion,” it is not surprising that female genitalia were occasionally examined to ascertain, for example, whether an enlarged clitoris could be used as a phallus (Few 2007). However, such cases are rare. In the absence of evidence of penetration, prosecuting authorities and complaining neighbors often had to resort to circumstantial evidence of women’s romantic relationships and gender inversions: hence the use of terms such as *illicit friendship* rather than sodomy in the rare female cases prosecuted. Male officials’ confusion about and disdain for female sexuality meant that same-sex activities between women were, from the perspective of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, effectively decriminalized if not licit. Therefore, for Spanish America in particular, there are far fewer traces of specific female same-sex acts and named desires than in the case of men. The relative inattention to female same-sex relations can be seen even in cases where women volunteered information about acts including kissing, touching one another’s breasts, and reaching orgasm. This may mean that Spanish American women were relatively free to express moderate levels of same-sex eroticism within intimate relationships.

Although the Portuguese Inquisition prosecuted at least twenty-nine cases of female sodomy in Brazil, Brazilian authorities also struggled with the concept of female sodomy.
Indeed, in 1646, Brazilian female sodomy passed from Inquisition jurisdiction to that of secular courts, in large part because of internal controversy and confusion. In both Brazil and Spanish America at the end of the colonial period, then, “female sodomy” was still a topic of minimal interest and maximal bewilderment.

Inquisitors’ relative lack of interest in female same-sex activities might lead one to assume that women’s sexual transgressions were simply unimportant to the Inquisition and other authorities. However, Inquisition cases do reveal intervention in other areas of women’s sexuality, including the “unnatural” sin of masturbation. Masturbation was normally a matter for confession with one’s priest but might reach the attention of the Inquisition in specific cases, such as those involving blasphemous sexual fantasies or masturbation in church. The connection among heretical beliefs, religious fervor, and “unnatural” sexual behaviors such as masturbation was not lost on Inquisitors. Overall, however, neither the Inquisition nor other authorities paid sufficient attention to women’s sexuality to generate the rich detail (and harsh punishments) seen in the trials involving male sexual behavior.

In sum, the Inquisition was a significant force in the creation of Latin America’s distinctive colonial sexual culture. Only one of many religious and secular institutions charged with policing the sexual lives of the diverse colonial population, the Holy Office nonetheless played an important role in establishing and defending a model of ideal Christian sexuality in the Portuguese and Spanish colonies. But despite the power, secrecy, and occasionally draconian punishments associated with the Inquisition, exemplary Christian morality remained elusive. The colonial Latin American sexual regime, then, was highly ambivalent. This remained true after the establishment of independent Latin American nations in the nineteenth century, when new penal codes eliminated many of the old sexual crimes, including the nefarious sin of sodomy.

SEE ALSO Conquest and Sodomy in Latin America; Erauso, Catalina de (1592–1650); Florentine Codex and Nahua Sexuality; Sins against Nature in Colonial Latin America; Slavery and Sodomy in Brazil

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Institut Für Sexualwissenschaft

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*Pioneering institute for sexual research founded by the famous German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld.*

The Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Science) in Berlin was the first of its kind when it was founded in 1919. It is today most closely associated with the work of one of its three founders, the Jewish doctor and homosexual rights activist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935). The other cofounders, the psychiatrist Arthur Kronfeld (1886–1941) and the dermatologist Friedrich Wertheim, have remained in Hirschfeld’s shadow, not only because he was one of the most famous sexologists of the time, but also because it was his many sexual reform initiatives that helped to set up the institute's intellectual and financial structures.

© SUEDDEUTSCHE ZEITUNG PHOTO/ALAMY
Magnus Hirschfeld, Cofounder of the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft, 1928. Both a doctor and a
Hirschfeld published his first treatise on same-sex sexuality, *Sappho und Sokrates* (Sappho and Socrates), in 1896, not long after completing his medical qualification. The following year he cofounded the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee), which campaigned for the decriminalization of homosexuality in Germany, and in 1899 he launched the journal *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (Yearbook for sexual intermediaries), which supported the same cause. The term *sexual intermediaries* in the journal's title references one of Hirschfeld's major theoretical claims: that there exist infinite variations in bodies, genders, and desires, as well as in the intersections between them. A second major intervention came in 1910 when Hirschfeld coined the term *transvestite* to distinguish this gender-based identification from the, by then, more established sexual identity of the homosexual.

Hirschfeld collaborated with an international group of scientific colleagues, medical professionals, and activists. In 1919 he gathered many of them together to found the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft. Taking advantage of the sociopolitical changes wrought by World War I (1914–1918), Hirschfeld purchased an imposing building in the Tiergarten area of Berlin, on the corner of In den Zelten and Beethoven streets. It was here that the institute was inaugurated on 6 July 1919. Extended in 1921, the building provided space for medical research, consulting rooms, a library, an exhibition hall, and a public lecture theater.

**“Transvestites” Work**

The Institut für Sexualwissenschaft was in many ways the first LGBTQI archive, a place in which certain kinds of information were formally collected, stored, and analyzed. If this archival work anticipates the development of later LGBTQI library collections, it was only part of the wide range of activities, private and political, of the people who worked and lived at the institute. Hirschfeld and his colleagues aimed to realize a new kind of sexology, one that would be open to all members of the public and use science, including eugenics, to bring about greater social and sexual justice.

The institute's medical wing specialized in supporting people whose gender did not match their body, pioneering a range of hormonal treatments and surgical procedures with the aim of setting itself up as the leading place for *Genitalumwandlung* (which literally translates as “transformation of the genitals”) operations. A team of experts, including Felix Abraham (the institute's specialist in transvestism), the endocrinologist Bernard Shapiro, and the gynecologist Ludwig Levy-Lenz, worked together, sometimes with surgeons from other hospitals such as Erwin Gohrbandt, to perform some of the first gender realignment surgeries. One of their most famous cases was that of Dora, born Rudolph Richter and also
known by the diminutive Dorchen. Dora was referred to the institute by a judge after an arrest for cross-dressing. She received extensive medical treatments to complete her “sex change.” More unusually, perhaps, she was also offered employment at the institute, where she served as a maid until its closure in 1933.

**Sexual Intermediaries in the Frame**

Supporting people such as Dora, whose existence was criminalized beyond the immediate remit of the clinic, was an important part of the institute's sexual reform mission. Many of Berlin's cross-dressers and other “sexual deviants” visited the institute. A large archive of photographs documents the institute’s connection to the various subcultures of the time. Some of this photography crudely exposed the subjects to the gaze of medical experts and lay viewers. Close-ups of the genitals of intersex people, for example, were displayed at the institute and on portable so-called sexual intermediaries panels used in public talks—a visual aid that aimed to illustrate the argument that there exists an infinite number of gender variations. If these photographs treated their subjects as dehumanized objects of study, some same-sex couples, cross-dressers, and other queer folk came to the institute to pose for self-consciously staged pictures. The institute's photographic collection thus contains evidence of both medical practices that turned people into case studies and a more affirmative relationship between such scientific photography and Berlin’s sexual subcultures whose constructions of self thrived in and beyond the institute.

**Domestic Life**

In addition to providing work and exhibition spaces, the institute was also a home. The building was divided into living quarters that housed some of the institute's professionals—including Hirschfeld and his partner, Karl Giese (1898–1938)—as well as temporary and more permanent lodgers, many of whom were attracted to the institute precisely because of its reputation as a gathering place for homosexual women and men. The English archaeologist Francis Turville-Petre (1901–1941) and the American writer Christopher Isherwood (1904–1986), for example, rented rooms at the institute from where they felt free to engage in relationships with other men. Famously memorialized in Isherwood's autobiographical account titled *Christopher and His Kind* (1976), the two men, like other visitors, such as the poet W. H. Auden (1907–1973), experienced the institute as a liberatory space that allowed them to meet, live, and celebrate homosexual culture. Here the boundaries between private and professional life frequently became blurred, not only in Hirschfeld's friendships with the institute tenants but also in domestic arrangements such as those in the Turville-Petre household, which employed two male servants who became the lovers of Turville-Petre and Isherwood. Unlike that of the transgender maid Dora, who remained somewhat apart from her employers, separated by the boundaries between doctor and transgender patient, employer and maid, the lives of the homosexual
servants—a man called Erwin Hansen and one known only by his first name, Heinz—became intimately intertwined with those of their employers.

**A Home for the Left**

The institute attracted not only queer and transgender people. Several prominent thinkers and activists on the left lived in the building at certain points in time. Hirschfeld's widowed eldest sister, Recha Tobias (1857–1942), who had an apartment at the institute, rented out some of her rooms, first to Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) and then, after Benjamin left, to Ernst Bloch (1885–1977). Other rooms were taken up by Willi Münzenberg (1889–1940), the press officer of the Communist Party of Germany and a member of parliament who, together with his partner, the activist and publicist Babette Gross (1898–1990), organized many meetings of the Komintern (Communist International) from the institute. For Münzenberg, Benjamin, Bloch, and other radicals on the left, the institute seems to have mainly functioned as a convenient place to live where they could go about their intellectual and political life without interference. While they did not get directly involved in the sexual reform activities—suggesting that sexual reform and left-wing politics often ran in parallel even when they came into close physical proximity—they nevertheless benefited from the institute's climate of tolerance and its reform-oriented mission.

**Eugenics**

The institute was, however, by no means a place only for intellectual elites or sexual subcultures. It soon became an integral part of life in 1920s Berlin. Next to supporting people who felt that their desires, bodies, and genders challenged the norms of the time, the institute reached wider audiences via its marriage advice and birth control services. It is this work that perhaps most clearly indicates what are today considered the limits of some of the work undertaken at the institute: it was strongly framed in eugenicist terms. Like many other social reformers and political activists, the institute's sexual scientists considered eugenics a means of progress, capable of developing a better, healthier future society. The significance of the institute’s eugenics mission is sometimes minimized because it was not overtly racialized. Yet there can be no doubt that the institute deployed a racialized language of progress when it encouraged reproductive practices that favored a heteronormative view of the world. Homosexuals were discouraged from marriage and reproduction on the grounds that they would likely produce “degenerate” offspring. Such ideas were disseminated not only within the clinic and counseling services but also in hugely popular public events. The institute hosted, for example, public “questionnaire evenings,” which encouraged members of the public to anonymously submit their questions about sex. A member of the institute staff would then answer these questions in a public talk. These sex-education events were complemented by private marriage counseling services and birth control advice.
This work stood in close, and sometimes uneasy, proximity to the growing feminist efforts of the time. The radical feminist activist Helene Stöcker (1869–1943), who in 1905 cofounded the Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform (League for the Protection of Motherhood and Sexual Reform) and a related journal, Mutterschutz (Maternity protection; later renamed Die Neue Generation [The New Generation]) was an ally of Hirschfeld’s, supporting the decriminalization of homosexuality, while Hirschfeld in turn joined campaigns calling for the reform of marriage and antiabortion laws. Stöcker, like many of the institute’s sex reformers, promoted eugenics as a way of protecting racial health.

Nazi Backlash

The institute’s location in Berlin put it physically and symbolically at the center of both the German homosexual liberation movement and the efforts to suppress homosexuality in the country. Given the institute’s popularity, its support of homosexual and transgender people, and the fact that many of the practitioners, Hirschfeld included, were Jewish, it comes as no surprise that the institute became a point of attack soon after the Nazis came to power in January 1933. Hirschfeld had long ago fled into exile by that stage, but the institute continued to function under the general direction of Giese, who was responsible for the large archive, and the administrative support of Friedrich Hauptstein. From exile, Hirschfeld retained the directorship despite an attempt by Shapiro, who had remained at the institute, to take it over in 1933. During the early months of that year, threats against the institute intensified. On the morning of 6 May 1933, a Saturday, Nazi students entered the building and ransacked the library. They were joined in the afternoon by members of the Sturmbteilung (Assault division), the paramilitary wing of the Nazi party better known by the abbreviation SA, who removed books and other materials from the library and other parts of the institute. This material was set alight four days later on Berlin’s Opera Square, an event that inaugurated the infamous Nazi book burnings and marks the end of the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft.

Role in LGBTIQ History Today

After World War II (1939–1945) the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft became a symbol of progressive thinking and hope for reform. Today, it is considered a key institution in the history of the struggle for homosexual rights and transgender visibility. It also serves, however, as a reminder that this history has its own boundaries and exclusions: not only was the domestic life of the institute organized in fairly conventionally classed and gendered terms, it was largely a white space whose existence, like that of other medical and scientific research facilities in 1920s Germany, benefited from the country’s colonial expansions around the turn of the previous century. This unacknowledged debt filtered into research at the institute and not just via the support of eugenics. For example, the institute’s sex education journal Die Aufklärung (the title literally translates into English as
“the enlightenment,” but in German it could also mean “sex education” more specifically, which was coedited by Hirschfeld and the anthropologist Maria Krische (1880–1945), published many articles on sexual anthropology that perpetuated racial stereotyping. Although the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft has been claimed by many LGBTQI activists and educators as the radical birthplace of modern homosexual rights activism, its history also indicates that homosexual liberation in the West was often oblivious to classed and racialized oppression, and not a struggle for social justice per se.

**SEE ALSO** Biological Essentialism; Kinsey Scale; Kinship in Europe; Psychopathia Sexualis (1886; Richard von Krafft-Ebing); Transvestites/Transsexuals

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A critical analysis of the role of the internet in relation to LGBTQ identities and activism in Africa presents a geographical and social paradox. Africa is a continent of fifty-four individual countries, within which there is an incredible diversity of individuals and communities whose experiences are not generalizable. It is, however, beyond doubt that the internet and social media has revolutionized everyday experiences of being LGBTQ in Africa.

Africa has experienced rapid penetration of internet access, and social media has become a vital tool for LGBTQ people in Africa to make sense of their sexualities, establish intimate relationships, and engage in individual or collective activism. However, their digital existence has brought several challenges to their ordinary daily experiences. Digital spaces have also radically reshaped scholarship about African sexualities.

### Internet Access

In the twenty-first century, Africa has experienced a rapid rise in access to the internet because of urbanization, penetration of mobile phones over fixed lines, affordable smartphones, and infrastructure such as Wi-Fi, mobile broadband, and fiber-optic technology. Access to the internet and to social media varies across the continent. More advanced African economies such as Nigeria and South Africa have higher rates of internet use than smaller economies such as Malawi and South Sudan. Yet, internet penetration in Africa remains low overall, with only approximately one-third of Africa’s population having access to the internet. Most internet users are urban middle class. Access to social media, including the popular platforms Facebook, WhatsApp, Viber, and Twitter, remains limited as a result of unaffordable mobile internet data charges, poor or slow internet reception, and limited wireless internet infrastructure. Access can also be limited by government restriction of social media and other internet communications tools through repressive laws and regulation, covert surveillance of internet communication, crackdowns on users, or network shutdowns.

### The Internet and LGBTQ Visibility
In African communities, most LGBTQ populations are invisible as they are driven underground owing to stigma, discrimination, and repressive laws that put them at risk of social exclusion or persecution. It remains a rare occurrence to see a nonconforming person in most African public spaces. There are very few public spaces where LGBTQ persons can freely convene as a group. This invisibility has sustained the biggest myth—that homosexuality does not exist in Africa.

The internet has provided an alternative space for existence without the societal restrictions that come with physical spaces. The digital spaces are portable through mobile handsets. One can switch on the handset to enter the internet and switch off to exit at will. Social media has allowed LGBTQ people to create profiles and interact with others within their communities and beyond. For example, they have been able to open accounts on Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram and interact in their own rights as nonconforming citizens, with an option to reveal or anonymize their sexual identities. Such platforms have opened doors to the world and potentially opened the world to them.

The internet and digital spaces have also increased opportunities for dealing with the process of self-awareness and self-acceptance. For most LGBTQ Africans, discovery of their sexuality is a stressful and lonely process because they usually do not know other LGBTQ individuals personally and have no alternative sources of information. This lack of information is even more critical in the rural areas. The internet has availed a wealth of information for them to learn about their sexuality. Through social media they have been able to discover others—and discover that they are not alone. They have approached others for sexual advice and insight. They have also been able to seek out and connect with friends and partners. They have been able to join local or international groups and find a community to belong to. Through this interaction, they have made sense of their sexual identities and communities.

The digital spaces cannot be imagined as separate from the physical spaces. The cyberspace connections have opened a gate to the physical spaces. LGBTQ communities have shared information about safe spaces and services available for local needs. For example, through their connections on WhatsApp or Facebook, LGBTQ people have been invited to residential gatherings or to events and celebrations at other safe public spaces. They have access to information on areas or places that are not safe, sexual health services, or how to avoid threats of homophobia or blackmail. Importantly, LGBTQ persons have been part of the birth of the African internet, meaning their place in digital Africa is not an “import.”

**Coming Out**

Through social media, LGBTQ Africans have showcased their identities by declaring and publicizing their sexuality, sharing their photos, telling stories about their lives, and sharing their worries and hopes. The option of choosing between anonymity and publicity through
profile restrictions has enabled them to restrict access to information about their sexual lives. They have innovated strategies for avoiding homophobia by setting up multiple social media profiles in order to tailor membership for appropriate audiences. In this way, they may, for example, have a profile without their same-sex sexual identity for use in connecting with their relatives or friends whom they do not want to know about their sexuality. However, this dual identity has been viewed, even at times by LGBTQ individuals themselves, as a faking of their identity. Coming out on social media has been viewed as a safer option than revealing sexual identities in physical spaces. Social media reduces the risk of physical violence. Others, however, have suffered verbal abuse and threats when they revealed their sexual lives on social media.

**LGBTQ Activism and Social Media**

LGBTQ persons have taken advantage of social media as a platform for individual and collective activism to enhance their visibility and fight for their rights. At the individual level, they have raised topical issues and worked to mobilize a consensus to call for change. At the collective level, they have established movements and organizations on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Unlike what occurs with physical organizations, organizing through social media is convenient because there is no need for formal registration with the government, and there is a reduced risk of being shut down by authorities. LGBTQ people have been able to join formal organizations that have a social media presence, both locally and internationally. Through such platforms, they have reported incidences of violence and other forms of homophobia to seek support and to demand justice.

Because they view online spaces as safer spaces, LGBTQ persons have been willing to approach likeminded organizations and service providers for help. Online access to services has increasingly become a critical component of the response to HIV/AIDS. For example, service providers have disseminated behavioral change messages through social media, text messaging, and other mobile phone technologies in Kenya and Uganda. In Ghana, an online help line has enabled men who have sex with men (MSM) to connect with service providers to access referrals for HIV testing, treatment, and prevention services. In 2013, for example, a local program reached 15,440 MSM through social media. In Malawi, LGBTQ communities have created secret social media pages to share information directing LGBTQ persons to user-friendly services available in their communities, as well as directing them away from homophobic hot spots.

There have also been increases in online petitions calling for greater protection of LGBTQ persons, news alerts about the persecution of LGBTQ persons, calls for participation in causes, and the sharing of messages about LGBTQ rights. Closed groups have allowed the participation of those who remain closeted or those who prefer to participate confidentially. Some of the social media groups are open to LGBTQ members only, for safety and privacy, whereas others are open to the public. Because the majority of LGBTQ
Africans remain closeted or are uncertain about the repercussions of coming out, closed spaces are proving an effective way to mobilize those who may not otherwise participate in activism. Increasingly, LGBTQ allies are also speaking out against stigmatization, discrimination, and violence directed toward LGBTQ persons.

Social media brings an advantage for hosting social movements because it is cheaper and more convenient than organizing through physical premises and equipment. Events or protests can be hosted without the need for members to physically attend. The circulation of information or updates to constituencies is instant, without the need to print and ship handouts. Messages can be transmitted for free. Movements have been able to consult their constituents through online questionnaires without the need to book a venue and hold a half-day meeting. They have also been able to showcase their work without needing to wait for the end of the year to do an annual report. In other words, they can share instant messages to facilitate change. The internet and social media have also provided platforms to connect local movements to their international counterparts. Increasingly, LGBTQ Africans are able to take advantage of such opportunities as online training, virtual participation in international conferences, and accessing current information materials.

Challenges

While social media has brought opportunities to LGBTQ persons, it is not without challenges. First, it remains a space dominated by heteronormativity in which people who do not conform are policed and regulated. LGBTQ persons have been insulted, ridiculed, or threatened for their sexuality on the internet. In other cases, they have been traced to their physical location, where homophobes have verbally or physically attacked them.

Second, while there is a reduced risk of physical attack on social media, many people have suffered verbal abuse and threats on the internet. LGBTQ persons have been blackmailed by those who threaten to reveal their sexual orientation to their employers, church, or families. Others have been lured into dates that have ended in physical assault and even death. LGBTQ social media groups have been infiltrated, resulting in lists of gay persons being revealed to the public. Some of these cases of revelation have led to arrests and prosecution. Police have cited the internet as a space where they have an opportunity to spot and trace LGBTQ persons for prosecution.

Third, where there is no coordinated moderation in the quality of information related to HIV/AIDS services, there is a risk of misinformation about the location of service providers or guidance about treatment. There is a potential for people to access the wrong information that may be harmful to their welfare.

Fourth, while social media has revolutionized the way LGBTQ persons live, interact, and engage in activism, participation is still dependent on who has access to the internet. For
example, access to social media is higher among the younger, urban, literate, and middle-class populations. It is also influenced by the extent to which local areas have access to internet infrastructure and facilities. The elderly, poor, rural, and less-educated remain marginalized from internet communities.

Fifth, glamour presented in some gay media sites has idealized the gay subjects as the middle-class white male with a perfect body image. It has also idealized specific cities and countries as gay havens. As a result, some LGBTQ Africans aspire to emigrate to the “havens” rather than struggle for equality in their country of origin. Africa has lost several potential leaders in the fight for equality and human rights to the West.

Sixth, the increase in online activism has also been perceived as a risk to more visible forms of protest and demonstration happening offline. For example, submitting an online petition to an African parliament may not be as effective as submitting a physical one, as some state institutions continue to work with hard copy rather than online documents. Government institutions continue to have limited access to the internet. In some cases, officials are not very well conversant with social media. Politicians have also trivialized internet activists.

Scholarship
The internet has revolutionized how contemporary scholarship about African sexualities is conducted. Digital spaces are a modern research field with vast amounts of data, including broad access to research populations. Understanding the future of African sexualities will require inclusion of the digital discourses in scholarly analysis. The key issues will include digital sexualities, online violations, managing big data, digital economies, and struggles for equality.

The internet and social media have revolutionized communication, information sharing, social interaction, relationships, and activism by LGBTQ Africans. The internet has opened access to information through which LGBTQ Africans have interpreted their sexual and gender identities. Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Viber have enabled LGBTQ Africans to navigate the virtual spaces, whether publicly or privately, to be introduced to their local communities, join groups and causes, connect with new friends, and pursue sexual relationships. Importantly, they have found new ways to take a more prominent role in activism about issues that matter to them.

Internet freedoms have also come with regulation and policing by the state. Since 2015, countries that have executed internet shutdowns include Uganda, Algeria, the Republic of the Congo, and Ethiopia. For example, in 2017 the government of Cameroon shut down the internet for three months in the English-speaking region following public protests. The reach of the internet or social media remains exclusive to those with access to it. Currently, most Africans have no access to the internet, whether they are LGBTQ or not. If internet and social media access is restricted to only a privileged few, there is a risk that such virtual existences are superficial in their representation of the lived experiences of LGBTQ Africans, especially in areas of internet blackouts.

Matters of sex and sexuality remain shrouded in secrecy and silence in most African societies. However, the internet and social media have brought new opportunities for LGBTQ people to negotiate sexual rights and freedoms.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Digital Cultures in Latin America; Internet Queer Sites in the Middle East; New Media in Asia; Phone Apps

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Internet Queer Sites in the Middle East

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Descriptions of various current and defunct websites and blogs dealing with LGBTQI issues in the Middle East.

The internet is and has been an extremely important nexus of communication for LGBTQI people both in the Arab world and outside it. Beyond mere dating sites, the internet has also provided new and productive opportunities for activism and a means by which activism is deployed for LGBTQI individuals and their communities. Some of the most notable websites for LGBTQI activism have been Al-Fatiha (Opening), Muscat Confidential, Aswat (Voices), and the online magazine Barra (Out). While this entry discusses the above sites and their role in shaping Middle Eastern queer discourse, it also examines the importance of social media in allowing the LGBTQI community in the Middle East and North Africa region to connect and organize, as well as other websites that were inspired by the aforementioned websites, as three of those four (Al-Fatiha, Muscat Confidential, and Barra) are now defunct.

Al-Fatiha

Al-Fatiha (Arabic for “opening”; also the name of the first chapter of the Qur’an) was founded by Faisal Alam, “a queer-identified Muslim activist of Pakistani descent,” in 1997 as “an organization for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex [and] questioning (LGBTQI) Muslims, and their allies” (Alam 2017; see also Mastracci 2016). Alam stepped down from leading the organization in 2004 in order to pursue his own independent activism, and the organization was dissolved in 2011 (Mastracci 2016). While Al-Fatiha no longer exists as an organization, there is a large number of splinter groups that have risen in its place in order to address the issues that LGBTQI Muslims face. Two of the most notable ones are Muslims for Progressive Values (MPV) and the Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity (MASGD).

Describing itself as “a faith-based, grassroots, international human rights organization that embodies and advocates for the traditional Qur’anic values of social justice and equality for all, for the 21st Century” (MPV 2017b), MPV provides services, such as same-sex Muslim weddings, and drafts of sermons that express the values of MPV. MPV also has consultative status at the United Nations and “monitors human rights issues in Muslim-majority
countries related to women's rights, nondiscrimination of LGBTQI peoples, freedom of and from religion and freedom of expression” (MPV 2017a).

The MASGD describes itself on its website as an organization that “works to support, empower, and connect LGBTQ Muslims. We seek to challenge root causes of oppression, including misogyny and xenophobia. We aim to increase the acceptance of gender and sexual diversity within Muslim communities, and to promote a progressive understanding of Islam that is centered on inclusion, justice, and equality” (MASGD 2017). The organization publishes policy statements on its website and provides links to services that assist queer Muslims. It also hosts “a retreat for LGBTQ Muslims and their partners each May” (MASGD 2017).

**Muscat Confidential**

*Muscat Confidential* is a defunct blog written by a self-described “ex-expatriate who was living in Muscat, Oman, Middle East for too long, but still blogs about the place,” under the alias “Undercover Dragon.” The last entry is dated 27 May 2014. The blog became a site of controversy in Oman in 2010, when Undercover Dragon (even though he described himself as heterosexual) responded to repeated requests for information about LGBT life in Oman by publishing two interviews dealing with the topic: one with a gay “English Gentleman” who was living in Oman (Undercover Dragon 2010b) and one with a bisexual Omani woman who blogged for the (now set private) LGBTQI Omani community blog *Community Queer* (Undercover Dragon 2010c). According to a 6 March 2010 post by blogger “Nadia,” who writes the extant blog *Dhofari Gucci*, the latter interview originally included a picture of two Omani-looking women kissing, which led to *Muscat Confidential* being blocked by the Omani government. This reaction of the Omani government to that interview was particularly interesting in light of the fact that *Community Queer* had just been blocked less than a month prior to the publishing of the interview by *Muscat Confidential*, a fact that *Muscat Confidential* had reported on shortly after it happened (Undercover Dragon 2010a). *Muscat Confidential* was unblocked twelve hours later (Undercover Dragon 2010d).

**Aswat**

Aswat (Arabic for “voices”) is the website for an organization of Palestinian LBTQI women that describes itself as follows:

We are a group of lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex, questioning and queer Palestinian women. We came together in 2002 and established a home for Palestinian LBTQI women to allow safe, supportive and empowering spaces to express and address our personal, social and political struggles as a national indigenous minority living inside Israel; as women in a patriarchal society; and
One of the major projects that Aswat has undertaken is called the Information Project. This project is described on the group’s website as having the following aims (among others):

- To combat distortion of information, censorship and ignorance created by social taboos regarding women’s sexuality and lesbianism by disseminating alternative, resisting knowledge.
- To reach-out to other Palestinian gay women struggling with closet, shame, undisclosed feelings and identities and become a main source of information and empowerment by using our direct authentic voice and our own words....
- To increase the presence of women’s sexuality and lesbianism in the Arabic language and culture by forming an alternative glossary and indeed, a “mother tongue” with positive, un-derogatory and affirmative expressions of women and lesbian sexuality and gender.
- To contribute our unique gender and national experiential knowledge to the growing feminist/gay multicultural discourse by encouraging Palestinian gay women to author their “her-stories” and share their experiences, knowledge and perspectives.

To this end, Aswat produced a glossary of LGBTI terms in Arabic (published in 2006) and more than twenty texts on homosexuality and sexual identity, while also publishing essays written by Palestinian lesbian, transgender, and bisexual women about their experiences and their lives. The glossary is a particularly significant contribution to LGBTQI discourse in the Middle East and North Africa region, as it is one of the first times that concepts such as the difference between biological sex and gender identity and Arabic renderings of concepts such as “queer,” “transgender,” and “homophobia” have been tackled in Arabic by the Arab LGBTQI community. The idea of a glossary of Arabic gender and sexual vocabulary was further picked up on and developed by the Lebanese LGBTQI groups Helem and Meem, whose many contributions to the Middle Eastern LGBTQI presence on the internet are discussed in greater detail below, beginning with Barra, a sometimes-online, sometimes-inprint magazine dealing with LGBTQI topics in the Middle East that is published by Helem.

**Barra and Helem**

*Barra* (Lebanese Arabic for “out”) describes itself on its Facebook page as “a bi-quarterly publication by Helem that is oriented to LGBTIQ issues” (*Barra* 2017). Despite this claim, print issues of *Barra* have not been published regularly, and the website address provided on the Facebook page for the magazine (which was last updated in 2014) points to a now-
empty domain. While the magazine is not currently extant, and Helem’s website also has a message saying that it is down, and directing surfers to its hotline, email address, and Twitter and Facebook pages, it is important to note that those Twitter and Facebook pages are very much currently active. Additionally, the Lebanese LGBT Media Monitor, a project run by Helem, is also active on both Twitter and Facebook.

Helem’s Facebook page invites its followers to discussion groups on women’s issues, film screenings, book club meetings, art therapy groups, discussions on sexual diversity, and educational sessions on such topics as hormone therapy and threats posed by the police. The page also posts news articles and essays on LGBTQI history in the Arab world and LGBTQI life in other Arab countries, as well as videos and statements advocating for the improvement of LGBTQI rights in Lebanon and elsewhere (Helem 2017). The Lebanese LGBT Media Monitor project focuses on current events happening in Lebanon and in the Lebanese LGBTQI community, while also serving as a clearinghouse for reporting by media organizations on LGBTQI issues in Lebanon and throughout the Arab world. These same events and announcements are mirrored on Helem’s and the Lebanese LGBT Media Monitor’s Twitter accounts.

Another significant contribution made by Lebanese LGBTQI activists (a small number of whom are associated with Helem) is the creation of what they named the “Gender Dictionary” (Qamus al-jindir). Written by and posted online by people working at Lebanon Support, a nongovernmental organization established with the intent of expanding civil society capacity in Lebanon, the “Gender Dictionary” is similar to the project launched by Aswat but has expanded to include words such as intersectionality, heteronormativity, and cisgender, including, unlike in Aswat’s project, explanations of each of the terms in the dictionary in both English and Arabic in order to provide them with context and to explain the historical and discursive backgrounds of each of the terms (Lebanon Support 2016), reflecting both the extent to which sexual discourse has both changed and developed in the Arab world in a very short period.

*alQaws*

Another website dealing with LGBTQI issues in the Middle East that is still extant is alQaws (“rainbow” in Arabic). On the home page of the website, the group describes itself as:

*a civil society organization founded in grassroots activism ... at the forefront of vibrant Palestinian cultural and social change, building LGBTQ communities and promoting new ideas about the role of gender and sexual diversity in political activism, civil society institutions, media, and everyday life.

*Embracing the diversity of our society, while challenging the political forces*
According to the website, among the resources provided by alQaws are a community center in Ramallah, youth and student groups, intellectual discussion series in both Ramallah and Haifa, and monthly queer community parties. The site also provides information on where these events are happening, articles dealing with issues in the LGBTQI Palestinian community, and a listening and information hotline that LGBTQI Palestinians can call if they have questions or need counseling. alQaws has also launched a singing project called Singing Sexuality, in which LGBTQI Palestinians record songs dealing with their issues, and a safe sex campaign named “I want you safe.”

**IraQueer**

Another important website dealing with LGBTQI issues in the Arab world is that of the organization IraQueer. Available fully in both Arabic and English, the website’s home page states that

*IraQueer is a registered human rights organization focusing on the LGBT+ community in Iraq/Kurdistan region. It was founded on March 2015 making it the first and only LGBT+ focusing on the LGBT+ community in [the] Iraq/Kurdistan region. Having a diverse team of young activists between the age[s] of 18–32 residing mostly inside [the] Iraq/Kurdistan region, IraQueer represents the start of the first queer movement in Iraq’s public history.*

(IRAQUEER 2017A)

Like many of the other sites that deal with LGBTQI issues in the Middle East, IraQueer also has a Facebook and Twitter page. The Twitter page talks about news articles that deal with the LGBTQI situation in Iraq, including executions of LGBTQI people in Iraq by the Islamic State (ISIS). The Facebook page documents the same items as the Twitter page for the most part.
Founded by Amir Ashour, an LGBTQI activist living in Malmö, Sweden, the website provides news related to LGBTQI issues in Iraq, a blog to which LGBTQI Iraqis are invited to contribute, a collection of “journals” in which LGBTQI Iraqis talk about their personal lives and struggles, and a collection of publications, including one titled “Security Guide for LGBT+ Individuals in Iraq/Kurdistan Region,” a pamphlet on sexual health guidelines, and a report to the United Nations on LGBT+ human rights violations in 2015. It is important to note that, as of 2017, both guides were available only in English, but the journals were available in both Arabic and English.

The “Security Guide” focuses primarily on digital security, although it does touch on physical security as well. It advises that Iraqi LGBTQI individuals use a VPN (virtual private network), clear their browser history regularly, password lock their devices, and choose strong passwords that are unique for each site one logs into. It also advises using two-step verification and recommends apps that use encryption, such as Signal, Jitsi, and Telegram (IraQueer 2017b). The “Sexual Health Guide” provides a glossary of sexual terms and talks about safe sex practices, as well as mental health and the sexual rights of Iraqis according to international law (IraQueer 2017c).

Proud Lebanon

Founded by Bertho Makso, Proud Lebanon is an organization and website that deals with the unique issues that Syrian and other refugees in Lebanon face. It describes itself as “a non-profit, non-religious, non-political, nonpartisan civil society that aims to promote sustainable social [and] economic development in Lebanon and the region and is working to achieve protection, empowerment and equality of marginalized groups through community service activities. Proud Lebanon started its activities in August 2013 and is registered since April 2014 as a non-profit civil society” (Proud Lebanon 2017).

The only fully trilingual LGBTQI site discussed in this entry, with articles in Arabic, French, and English, Proud Lebanon’s website deals with issues that LGBTQI refugees face, such as HIV/AIDS, and how Lebanese law applies to and affects refugees in Lebanon. It also features stories from LGBTQI refugees that both are and are not beneficiaries of Proud Lebanon and announces events, including those hosted by Proud Lebanon and events elsewhere in Lebanon that are of interest to the LGBTQI refugee community in Lebanon.

Broader Role of Social Media and Blogs

It is also important to discuss the broader role of social media in the LGBTQI communities in the Middle East. There are numerous social media pages on both Facebook and Twitter that are not affiliated with larger LGBTQI organizations in the Middle East; these span a wide range of themes. Some provide a place for LGBTQI people to meet for dating, others serve a place for people to read news about LGBTQI issues in the Middle East, and others
seem to merely be a place for LGBTQI Middle Easterners to share links on things that they find interesting or funny.

EXCERPT FROM A GAY GIRL IN DAMASCUS BLOG

From 19 February to 6 June 2011, A Gay Girl in Damascus, a blog reportedly written by an “out” lesbian girl in Syria named Amina Abdallah Arraf al-Omari, caused a sensation in the global LGBT community for its daring commentary on politics, gender, sexuality, and Syrian culture. A posting on 6 June, which was supposedly written by Amina’s cousin, reported that Amina had been abducted. The news was covered widely in the mainstream media, with advocacy groups the world over calling for her release. The event prompted others, however, to question Amina’s identity. Within a week, evidence came to light that suggested Amina was not a Syrian lesbian but a married American man, Tom MacMaster, who was living in Edinburgh, Scotland. MacMaster admitted the deception in a posting to Amina’s blog on 12 June.

One of Amina’s most widely republished postings was a 26 April piece titled “My Father the Hero,” in which MacMaster, as Amina, describes a harrowing encounter with two Syrian security agents who arrive at her house late at night to arrest her. She is saved by her father, who manages to shame the two men into leaving through an impassioned speech.

“So you come here to take Amina. Let me tell you something, though. She is not the one you should fear; you should be heaping praises on her and on people like her. They are the ones saying alawi, sunni, arabi, kurdi, duruzi, christian, everyone is the same and will be equal in the new Syria; they are the ones who, if the revolution comes, will be saving your mother and your sisters. They are the ones fighting the Wahhabi most seriously. You idiots are, though, serving them by saying ‘every sunni is salafi, every protester is salafi, every one of them is an enemy’ because when you do that you make it so.

“Your Bashar and your Maher, they will not live forever, they will not rule forever, and you both know that. So, if you want good things for yourselves in the future, you will leave and you will not take Amina with you. You will go back and you will tell the rest of yours that the people like her are the best friends the Alawi could ever have and you will not come for her again.

“And right now, you two will both apologize for waking her and putting her through all this. Do you understand me?”

And time froze when he stopped speaking. Now, they would either smack him down and beat him, rape me, and take us both away ... or....
The first one nodded, then the second one.

“Go back to sleep,” he said. “We are sorry for troubling you.”

And they left!

As soon as the gate shut, I heard clapping; everyone in the house was awake now and had been watching from balconies and doorways and windows all around the courtyard ... and everyone was cheering.... MY DAD had just defeated them! Not with weapons but with words ... and they had left....

I hugged him and kissed him; I literally owe him my life now.

And everyone came down and hugged and kissed, every member of the family, and the servants and everyone. ... We had won ... this time....

My father is a hero; I always knew that ... but now I am sure.

Additionally, there are several privately run and written blogs that deal with Middle Eastern LGBTQI topics, particularly in Lebanon. One of the most notable of these blogs is titled Beirut Boy. Written by an anonymous blogger who goes by a pseudonym eponymous with the blog, the blog deals with LGBTQI news and events in Lebanon, particularly in Beirut, and with the author’s own dating experiences, struggles, and joys. He has been interviewed by Radio France Internationale and engages frequently in his blog with the activities of LGBTQI activist groups in Lebanon, such as Helem.

Another blog that has been important for both the LBTI community and the larger Lebanese feminist community is Sawt Al Niswa (meaning “the voice of women” in Arabic). Describing itself as “a network and a community of feminist writers, activists and artists working towards changing their realities by building a space that critically reflects on the social, political and intellectual experiences of women living in the Arab region—or West Asia and North Africa (however you look at it!)” (Sawt Al Niswa 2017), Sawt Al Niswa has frequently included queer feminist writers and discussed queer issues; the blog also has a podcast on SoundCloud titled Radio Sawt. It has also been frequently referenced by other, more explicitly LGBTQI Middle Eastern groups, such as the now-dissolved (or at least no longer public) Lebanese LBTI group Meem.

Privately written LGBTQI blogs dealing with the Middle East have also been the source of a great deal of controversy and mistrust in the LGBTQI activist community in the Middle East. For example, in 2011, the writer of the Gay Girl in Damascus blog was exposed as actually being an American male graduate student at the University of Edinburgh named Tom
MacMaster (O’Hehir 2015), causing many activists in the Middle East to become more mistrustful of the internet.

**Impact of Queer Internet Sites**

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, there has been a distinct shift from queer websites in the Middle East as a center for activity taking place in cyberspace to queer Middle Eastern websites as the initial public face and point of contact for actual brick-and-mortar organizations. Additionally, the increasing popularity of social media has further changed the nature of queer Middle Eastern websites. Twitter and Facebook often serve as platforms for queer Middle Eastern organizations to send out news and information to the largest number of interested people in the most rapid manner, at times even completely supplanting the standard web page, as in the case of Helem. It is quite possible that the growing prevalence of queer dating websites and apps has also rendered other queer websites and organizations less relevant for the purpose of allowing queer people in the Middle East to find each other and to meet. That being said, queer websites, whether having a presence on social media or not, have provided greater opportunities for LGBTQI activists in the Middle East to find each other and to better connect with both larger internationally focused LGBTQI groups and other smaller LGBTQI activist organizations elsewhere.

**SEE ALSO** alQaws; Aswat; *Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East*; *Digital Cultures in Latin America; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations*; Helem; *Internet in Africa*; Meem; *New Media in Asia*

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Intersex Identities

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An umbrella term to describe those whose anatomical, chromosomal, and hormonal deviations result in sex-atypical development.

Intersex is an umbrella term that began to be widely utilized by Western medical and sexological practitioners in the mid-twentieth century. It is used to group together a variety of conditions resulting in anatomical, chromosomal, and hormonal deviations from what are considered male-typical and female-typical morphologies. Some of these deviations are apparent at birth, while others develop during puberty. Intersex conditions range from partial or complete androgen insensitivity syndrome, in which people with XY chromosomes (typically considered “male” sex chromosomes) fail to respond to androgens, resulting in female-typical or ambiguous genitalia and sex-atypical morphological development, to congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH), a condition wherein people with XX chromosomes (typically considered “female” sex chromosomes) have an adrenal gland that produces larger-than-usual amounts of “virilizing” hormones, resulting in conditions such as clitoromegaly (enlargement of the clitoris), increased facial and body hair growth, voice deepening, and intensified muscle development. CAH also occurs in XY individuals, but in these cases does not manifest in sex-atypical development. While there is significant debate about what conditions fall under the intersex umbrella, scholars of intersex studies and intersex activist organizations tend to include close to twenty conditions that manifest in sex-atypical development, bringing the statistical frequency of such conditions to roughly 1.7 percent of live births (Fausto-Sterling 2000). Public awareness of intersex conditions increased with the publication of Jeffrey Eugenides’s best-selling and widely translated novel Middlesex (2002), a fictional memoir that traces the familial history and experience of an intersex narrator named Cal Stephanides. The Argentine film XXY (2007) also centers the experience of a fictional intersex protagonist as they come of age.

Provincializing Intersex

When discussing the emergence of intersex as a diagnosis and a descriptor of atypical forms of sexed embodiment, it is important to bear in mind that the history of the word intersex is steeped in Western understandings of sex, gender, and embodiment, and emerges out of North American and Western European research on biological sex differentiation. This means that there are significant geographic differences in
nomenclature that are important to bear in mind when considering intersex as an identity category. Additionally, some people with intersex conditions embrace the word *intersex* as an identity descriptor, others are more ambivalent about the use of this term to describe themselves, and some outright reject it. It is imperative that we heed the words of gender theorist David Rubin and “provincialize US [and Western European] debates about intersex” (2015, 74) by bearing in mind that “US and Western understandings of intersex are historically and geopolitically particular, not universal” (52) and that US/Western ways of interpreting intersex bodies and critiquing intersex treatment protocol circulate globally in ways that elide non-Western local and regional histories and contemporary interpretations of nondimorphic sexed embodiment. A counterpoint to the US and Western understandings of biology and sex difference is the set of knowledges that informed late imperial China’s interpretation of biological sex anomalies, wherein an imbalance of yin and yang at the time of conception was understood to cause what in the West would have been understood as “intersex” conditions (Furth 1988).

**Terminological and Diagnostic Debates**

In the West, the term *intersex* came to replace the use of the term *hermaphrodite*—now considered outdated and pejorative in many intersex activist circles—beginning in the early twentieth century. In 1917 German scientist Richard Goldschmidt coined the term in the fourth issue of the journal *Endocrinology*, using it to differentiate a number of conditions that resulted in sex ambiguity that were not specifically hermaphroditic, as the term *hermaphrodite* indexed a being with fully functioning male and female reproductive organs, which is not a phenomenon present among humans. Prior to Goldschmidt’s coining of this term, the dominant diagnostic language used to label intersex conditions consisted of three categories: “true hermaphroditism,” “male pseudo-hermaphroditism,” and “female pseudo-hermaphroditism.” This terminology was elaborated in 1876 by German physician Theodor Albrecht Edwin Klebs, and relied on the histological examination of gonadal tissue in order to determine the “true sex” of intersex subjects. “True hermaphrodites” were subjects whose gonads were a mix of ovarian and testicular tissue; “male pseudo-hermaphrodites” were subjects who had testicular tissue in addition to “feminized” genitalia; and female pseudo-hermaphrodites were those subjects who had ovarian tissue and some apparent “masculinization” of the genitalia (Fausto-Sterling 2000; Dreger 1998).

Historian of science Alice Dreger refers to the period beginning in 1876 and ending in the 1910s as the “age of gonads” (1998, 139), a period when the search for the “true” sex of intersex subjects resulted in the embrace of a moncausal determination of sex—in other words, a method of determining sex where it was understood as “caused” by one discrete biological entity (chromosomes, gonads, hormones), rather than the complex interactions of these phenomena with a broader environment. When confronted with the corporeal sex ambiguities of intersex patients, medical men utilized gonadal tissue to determine sex.
Earlier in the nineteenth century, before the “age of gonads,” multiple and sometimes competing classificatory systems were used to parse, understand, and diagnose intersex conditions. Dreger notes that none of the most widely utilized sex classification systems “divide[d] hermaphrodites along strictly gonadal lines” (140). After the age of gonads, medical practitioners continued to use the three-part classification system developed by Klebs, with the important difference that they ceased relying on gonadal tissue to assign sex, using it to specify conditions, but not to determine the course of “corrective” treatment.

**Medical Sex “Normalization”**

By the middle of the twentieth century, on account of surgical developments that made genital reconstructive surgery possible, as well as the discovery, extraction, synthesis, and mass pharmaceutical production of so-called sex hormones, it became medically possible to intervene in conditions resulting in intersex morphology and “normalize” such sex-atypical bodies. Surgical and hormonal normalization was advocated by sexologist John Money, who cofounded the Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic in the late 1960s and transformed that clinic into a site of experimentation with the “normalization” of intersex infants, children, and adolescents. Money’s recommended treatment method was dictated by his belief that gender identity was largely a matter of social imprinting and could thus be acquired by youths provided that they were socialized into a specific gender at a very young age. He believed that “the sex of assignment and rearing is consistently and conspicuously a more reliable prognosticator of a hermaphrodite’s gender role and orientation than is the chromosomal sex, the gonadal sex, the hormonal sex, the accessory internal reproductive morphology, or the ambiguous morphology of the external genitalia” (Money et al. 1957, 333). However, a key component of successful socialization was genital reconstructive surgery for infants with ambiguous genitalia; Money’s thinking was that if caretakers were attempting to raise a child in female-typical ways but were confronted with such genital atypicality, their ability to consistently relate to the child as female would be compromised. He argued that gender was similar to language acquisition: that it could be taught through immersion, and—like language—was easiest to acquire at a young age. Surgical and hormonal intervention were recommended in order to bring bodies in line with the selected gender of rearing. As gender theorist Jemima Repo explicates, Money’s method of diagnosis and treatment operated by “strategically interfering in the contingent cognitive processes of the behavioral control system of the mind, and by cutting up and reordering ambiguous genitals into normative and normalizing stimuli” (2013, 240).

The treatment paradigm that Money developed at Johns Hopkins, dubbed the optimum gender of rearing (OGR) model by child psychologist Heino Meyer-Bahlburg (Reis 2010), became over the course of the middle and late twentieth century the dominant method of treating intersex infants, children, and adolescents, and resulted in a large number of nonconsensual genital reconstructive surgeries. The surgeries performed were typically
vaginoplasty (surgical construction of a vagina), because it was technically easier than phalloplasty (surgical construction of a phallus), and clitoral reduction or complete cliterodectomy (excision of the clitoris), in order to remove phalloclitoral structures (genital protrusions larger than a typical clitoris but not long enough to be considered as a typical penis) deemed large enough to place genitals within the ambiguous range (which was, according to the practitioners developing this model, somewhere between 1 and 2.5 centimeters in infants). They were performed on infants and small children, who could not adequately consent to such surgical procedures. The criteria for a successful surgical outcome was the ability of the reconstructed genitalia to receive a penis, which demonstrates the heterosexist expectations undergirding such procedures: the end goal being to produce gender-normative, heterosexual women. Many of these surgeries resulted in partial or total lack of genital sensitivity and anorgasmia (difficulty with or inability to achieve orgasm), demonstrating how this model deprioritized the sexual pleasure and agency of intersex subjects.

**Criticisms of Medical Sex “Normalization”**

The OGR model has come under intense criticism from academic feminists and intersex activists, as well as some medical, sexological, and psychiatric clinicians. Intersex studies scholars Dreger and April Herndon, building on the work of feminist sociologist Suzanne Kessler (1998) and feminist biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000), have highlighted the ways it relied on sexist, transphobic, and heterosexist assumptions and violated basic principles of medical ethics, writing that

> it treated children in a sexist, asymmetrical way, valuing aggressiveness and sexual potency for boys and passiveness and reproductive/sexual-receptive potential for girls; it presumed that homosexuality (apparent same-sex relations) and transgenderism (changing or blurring gender identities) constituted bad outcomes; it violated principles of informed consent by failing to tell decision-making parents about the poor evidentiary support for the approach; it violated the axioms of truth telling and “first, do no harm”; it forced children to have their bodies adapted to oppressive social norms, using surgeries and hormone treatments that sometimes resulted in irrevocable harm; it generally involved treating psychosocial issues without the active participation of psychosocial professionals such as psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers.

*(DREGER AND HERNDON 2009, 204)*
When the first generation of these intersex infants and children came of age in the 1990s, they began to vociferously protest the medical violence done to them in the name of sex normalization. This coincided with the rise of the internet, which increased connectedness and facilitated the sharing of stories and the eventual emergence of intersex activist communities, as well as increased visibility and activity for both gay and lesbian and trans rights movements. Those movements put pressure on institutionalized forms of heterosexism and transphobia in ways that dovetailed with the nascent critique of the OGR model. Early intersex activists organized primarily around ending nonconsensual forms of surgical sex reassignment advocated by the OGR model. The first of these organizations was the Intersex Society of North America (ISNA), founded in 1993 by Bo Laurent (who then went by the name Cheryl Chase) with the mission of ending “shame, secrecy, and unwanted genital surgeries for people born with an anatomy that someone decided is not standard for male or female” (Intersex Society of North America, 1993).

The Intersex Society of North America

The ISNA began as a support group and quickly morphed into an advocacy organization, building a team of intersex adults, parents of intersex children, and empathetically allied medical practitioners, scholars, and lawyers. Representatives from the organization gradually became incorporated within the medical establishment, attending conferences, educating medical students, and drafting papers for publication in medical and bioethics journals arguing for increased medical transparency, an end to nonconsensual medical sex normalization, and increased social acceptance of non-dimorphically sexed bodies. In the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century they spearheaded the formation of the Consortium on Disorders of Sex Development. In 2006 this consortium published its Handbook for Parents as well as a brochure for medical practitioners, informed by the principles of patient-centered care and titled Clinical Guidelines for the Management of Disorders of Sex Development in Childhood. These documents were consistent with the ISNA’s aims and advocated selecting a gender of rearing for intersex infants and deferring surgical and hormonal treatment until those children were given adequate, nonstigmatizing education on their condition, the risks associated with medical intervention, and the possibilities of living a healthy life in the absence of medical sex normalization. Shortly after releasing this literature, the ISNA disbanded and some former members, including Laurent, formed an organization called the Accord Alliance, which “promotes comprehensive and integrated approaches to care that enhance the health and well-being of people and families affected by DSD” (Accord Alliance, para. 1).

Intersex or “Disorders of Sex Development”? 

It is noteworthy that the Accord Alliance—and the consortium that preceded its formation—does not utilize the word intersex in either its name or mission statement, opting instead
for “disorders of sex development” or “differences of sex development,” both referred to by the initialism DSD. This shift in nomenclature was hotly contested among intersex activists, many of whom claimed “intersex” as an important identity descriptor and objected to applying the language of “disorder” to their nonbinary sexed embodiment, claiming it intensified the feelings of stigma and shame that had only recently come to be countered. The most vociferous and incisive criticisms came from activists affiliated with Organisation Intersex International (OII), a decentralized global network of intersex organizations primarily active in Europe, with affiliate organizations in South Africa, China, Australia, and the Philippines. These critiques were summarized by intersex activist Curtis Hinkle in a 2007 web post wherein he argued that this shift reduced intersex conditions to a genetic “defect,” increased the pathologization of intersex subjects, and relied on Anglocentric diagnostic categories and linguistic norms (because, for instance, in French the word sexual may be used to refer to biological sex as well as sexual orientation and practice, which means that DSD could be mistaken as indexing a “sexual” disorder), and that the consortium promoting this shift did not adequately include intersex subjects in the deliberations that led to the revised clinical and therapeutic guidelines. While the term differences of sex development was coined to sidestep these debates about the pathologization and stigma implied by the word disorder, many intersex activists reject both iterations of the DSD acronym on one or more of the grounds outlined by Hinkle.

Juana la Larga (Long Juana)

The case of Juana Aguilar—dubbed Juana la Larga (Long Juana)—is of particular note when tracing histories of the interpretation sex ambiguities beyond the confines of Europe and North America. Juana la Larga was a purported hermafrodito (hermaphrodite) who was prosecuted in the criminal court of Guatemala City in 1803 for “the crime of double concubinage with men and women” (Few 2007, 159). During the proceedings, physician Narciso Esparragosa was enjoined to examine Juana la Larga, and he concluded that they were not hermaphroditic (both male and female) but rather neither male nor female. Esparragosa’s conclusion debunked medieval and early modern claims of the existence of “hermaphrodites” who supposedly flourished in zones of nascent colonization, and it introduced an understanding of intersex embodiment that differs significantly from the later European discourses of male and female pseudo-hermaphroditism that sought to establish the purported “true sex” of intersex subjects, demonstrating that “by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, medical frameworks of sexual difference were not uniform ... nor did medical practitioners in colonial Latin America simply follow European writers on the subject” (Few 2007, 171).

Intersex and Global Human Rights

Rubin’s recommendation to “provincialize” debates about intersex is particularly important
given the burgeoning use of the term *intersex* in the context of global human rights discourses. Since 2012 there has been a proliferation of literature produced by nongovernmental, transnational human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, and several United Nations committees (including the Committee against Torture, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities) have spoken out against coercive and nonconsensual medical procedures performed on intersex infants, children, and adolescents. These efforts have resulted in Malta’s 2015 ban on nonconsensual forms of medical intervention that alter the sex characteristics of minors, and a 2016 Chilean Ministry of Health order to suspend all unnecessary normalization treatments for intersex children until they reach an age of consent. Global human rights activism also resulted in the founding of Intersex Awareness Day, observed annually since 2003 on October 26, marking the 1996 protest of the American Academy of Pediatrics by North American intersex activists affiliated with the ISNA and the trans activist organization Transsexual Menace. As these rulings, protests, and declarations regarding intersex medicalization become more common, Western interpretations of sex-ambiguous embodiments gradually elide non-Western local and regional interpretations of the conditions.

**Guevedoces**

Anthropological research on cross-cultural forms of sex variance has documented several local and regional interpretations of nondimorphic embodiment in areas with increased incidences of certain medically identifiable iterations of sex ambiguity. The bulk of this research has focused on population clusters with high incidences of 5-alpha-reductase deficiency, a condition where those that have XY chromosomes and testes do not produce the hormone dihydrotestosterone (DHT), which is largely responsible for the embryonic production of male-typical genitalia and, during and after puberty, for increased hair growth, acne, and hairline recession. This means that individuals with the condition are born with external genitalia that appear either female-typical or ambiguous, but at puberty their bodies effectively masculinize—their voices deepen, their muscle mass increases, they experience a significant growth spurt, and their phallic structure and testes increase in size. Clusters of persons with 5-alpha-reductase deficiency have been identified in Egypt, Papua New Guinea, Turkey, and the Dominican Republic, and in each of these locations different terminologies and epistemologies of sexed embodiment have developed to account for the variations. The best known of these clusters is in the Dominican Republic, where persons referred to as *guevedoces* (roughly translated as “balls at twelve”) were initially socialized as girls and then allowed to transition to a more masculine gender identity at puberty (Lang and Kuhnle 2008). The high rate of reportage on guevedoces in the West is largely due to the role they have played in pharmaceutical research and development. In the 1970s Julianne Imperato-McGinley, a medical doctor based at Cornell University, traveled to the Dominican Republic to study this cluster and bring several
guevedoces back the United States for research. Following Imperato-McGinley’s realization that a lack of DHT had inhibited the growth of the prostate glands of guevedoces, “pharmaceutical giants Merck and GlaxoSmithKline started developing the 5 Alpha Reductase inhibitors finasteride and dutasteride respectively” (Gurram and Ashley 2016, 526) to treat male-pattern baldness and enlarged prostates.

**Sex Testing and Legal Sex/Gender Designations**

The prevalence of binary (male/female) markers on legal identification documents has historically necessitated that intersex people select a binary sex assignation. However, in response to trans and intersex activism on the issue, some nations and states have made it possible to legally change one’s gender identification assigned at birth, and enabled voluntary legal identification in a nonbinary category. In 2003 it became possible to choose an “X” sex designation in Australia and New Zealand, and several other nations have followed this example. Certain US states have adopted an opt-in nonbinary classification for intersex people only. In 2017 New York City issued the first birth certificate with an “intersex” gender designation.

Mandatory sex testing in sport was imposed by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) in 1950 and first utilized in the Olympics in 1968, and it continues in the early twenty-first century. Initially developed to prevent men from competing in women’s sports, sex testing began as a physical exam, later moved to chromosomal testing, and currently relies on monitoring testosterone levels of female athletes. As a result, many women with intersex conditions have been prevented from competing, subjected to sex normalizing procedures, and forced to take measures to lower the amount of naturally occurring testosterone in their blood.

**SEE ALSO** Cinema, Latin American (Late Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries); Clitoris; Elbe, Lili (1882–1931); Penis; Sins against Nature in Colonial Latin America; Third Genders; Two-Spirit

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Involuntary Servitude and Same-Sex Sexuality in Africa

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Examples of same-sex sexual practices in involuntary servitude in African history.

Slavery, pawnship, concubinage, and other forms of involuntary servitude were historically common throughout much of Africa. In some societies, unfree laborers constituted the majority of the population (Lovejoy 2011). Even slaves could own slaves, who performed a wide range of tasks that included providing sex. A lingering association between same-sex sexuality and slavery in the popular imagination today complicates initiatives to win rights and dignities for sexual minorities.

Slaves were generated through raids and kidnapping, by voluntary sale of children or other dependents, and by removing accused witches and criminals from free society. People suspected of witchcraft may have included individuals whose sexual behavior could not be explained or accommodated within the heteronormative tent (including homosexuals, as Ikpe 2009 claims). The internal market for slaves was probably the largest in absolute numbers. An export market oriented to the Islamic world (trans-Sahara, trans–Red Sea, and trans–Indian Ocean) also increasingly became internal to Africa as powerful Islamic states consolidated across the Sahel in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. From the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries there was an export market to the Atlantic Ocean islands, then to the Americas, to the Cape of Good Hope, and to plantation economies in the Indian Ocean. The suppression of these slave trades and of slavery itself over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was commonly cited at the time to justify the extension of European colonialism, although barely disguised forms of slavery, such as indentured labor, survived through the colonial period and indeed, persist into the present day.

The transatlantic slave trade has tended to attract the greatest attention on account of its scale, brutality, and role in stimulating the Industrial Revolution in Western Europe and North America. From the perspective of the history of same-sex sexualities, however, this
trade was significant mainly for occasionally making traditional same-sex practices visible to European observers, and transplanting these from Africa to the Americas. Europeans were seeking slaves primarily for agricultural production for the capitalist market (sugar, tobacco, cotton, and so forth). Exports from Africa of males outnumbered females by roughly two to one, and it was during the process of capturing and transporting them that cases of male-male sexuality were revealed (Sweet 1996; Murray and Roscoe 1998). During this period, anal penetration by or of cult priests was observed as a form of initiation to the cult that represented a transfer of knowledge and power among the Yoruba and Ovimbundu peoples. This practice reputedly survived the transatlantic journey to become entrenched in slave culture in the Americas, expressed, for example, in the adé (“passive homosexual”) priests of candomblé in northeastern Brazil (Matory 2005). By contrast, sexuality was a core feature of the internal and Islamic slave trades, which were predominantly of females. Women were valued for their subsistence agricultural and domestic labor, and for sex. For many female slaves, that low status was a phase on the way to attaining freedom through giving birth and joining a polygynous marriage as a junior wife (Robertson and Klein 1983).

**Muslim Societies**

Male slaves were used for production and porterage, but also for military and administrative purposes. Indeed, they could rise to positions of considerable authority in state bureaucracies. There was also a trade in eunuchs, who were valued in the Muslim world for their loyalty to their masters (rather than to their own families or dynastic ambition), for their discretion with the masters’ female wives, and for their use as sexual objects in their own right. A significant export market was to supply the slaves who ruled Egypt for several hundred years, the Mamluks.

The Mamluks were men imported into Egypt as soldiers, mainly from Central Asia, the Caucasus region, and the Balkans. A Turkish Mamluk effectively ruled in Egypt from as early as 868 CE, although in the later years of that dynasty black Mamluks played a key role in government. They were defeated in 905 by invading Arab armies, but the system was retained. Mamluks lived together in barracks in the encampment that became Cairo, conducted endless military training, and fought fiercely to defend the Islamic world from its many enemies. While they could marry women, neither their wives nor children could inherit any wealth and property. Their ranks as a class were refilled not by producing their own children but by purchasing and attracting recruits, whom they trained in the martial arts and masculine honor. The Mamluks were also notorious for being “addicted to homosexuality” (Murray and Roscoe 1997, 161), primarily with eunuchs imported from elsewhere in Africa rather than with each other.

Islam was sometimes amenable to such relationships, in part because of the way it recognizes (and regulates) slavery, and by how it categorizes sinful behavior. Heterosexual
intercourse outside of legal marriage or concubinage (zina) was the preeminent sexual “enormity.” The penalty for zina was death, and it is easy to see how this arose in relation to the culture of family honor, and particularly masculine honor in the Arab and Berber worlds. The need to protect the virginity of daughters, the modesty of wives, and hence the good reputation of the family over which the husband presided, was paramount. Temptations to commit zina therefore had to be reduced by practices that kept apart boys and girls and men and women in all but the most controlled, carefully watched settings. Strictly enforced segregation by sex meant people spent long periods without any prospects of heterosexual relations. By many accounts, this gave rise to same-sex relations as the lesser of two evils. Indeed, the social rank of the person being penetrated and his or her legal relationship to the penetrator, rather than the act of penetration itself, is what determined the level of moral infraction. Many of the scholars who interpreted Islamic jurisprudence over the centuries thus found same-sex relations between social equals reprehensible, but tacitly condoned the use of slaves however one wished (Gadelrab 2016).

**West Africa**

The jihads that established caliphates and other reformist Islamic states across West Africa imported ideas and institutions from the Middle East, including the use of Mamluks (Stilwell 2004). No study has yet revealed whether such slaves among the Hausa behaved sexually as did their like in Egypt. However, an institution arose in Hausa society, and among the Wolof to the west, that legitimized effeminate men as providers of sex for “normal” men. The ‘yan daudu (singular: ‘dan daudu) were not necessarily in involuntary servitude, but they engaged in sex work, derived their income therefrom, and as such were stigmatized as not far from slaves. ‘Yan daudu performed traditionally feminine roles including cooking, singing, dancing, and using certain gestures and language that they described as wasa (play) to describe the pleasure they derived from these activities (Gaudio 2009). The ‘yan daudu used their feminine mannerisms to attract potential patrons. Among the Wolof, a similar role was performed by gor-digen (men-women), who also wore feminine attire and hairstyles.

‘Yan daudu were sometimes linked to bori, a cult of spirit possession thought to be rooted in the pre-Islamic past. Bori and zar, a similar phenomenon, was known in Sudan and east Africa, honored saints almost in the manner of ancestral worship, and was often frowned upon if not directly suppressed by Islamic purists. Bori allowed the poorest and most oppressed to vent their emotions in a cathartic way, and for that reason was popular among women, slaves, and men who “did the deed” (i.e., had sex with men; Gaudio 2009). Shrines were, meanwhile, typically managed by a woman in whose body a venerated male spirit came to reside. As a male spirit incarnate, she could not have sexual relations with men, but rather took female adepts or servants with whom, it was sometimes whispered, she did have sex. One Islamic scholar from the eastern Senegal region left a damning
account of this on his way home from the hajj to Mecca in 1809. It is worth quoting at length one of the very rare instances of a black African writing on this topic:

Do you not see that they take unaccountable sums of money at the hands of [black] women for the worship of the jinn and for lesbian conduct? Muslim women have begun to steal money from their husbands to pay for the worship of idols and [the practice of] lesbianism. Do you not see that women have exchanged their men folk for slave women? Do you not see that whoever embraces a slave woman, if she is beautiful or wealthy, no one can marry her and she can be married only to none but the bori?

(QUOTED IN MONTANA 2004, 190–191)

Non-Muslim societies also made use of eunuchs for ritual purposes. In Dahomey (a kingdom situated in the geographical area currently occupied by the Republic of Benin) during the nineteenth century, eunuchs were among at least three groups of individuals, pledged in service to the king, who exhibited some degree of gender and sexual diversity. Men were turned into eunuchs through an operation described as involving the pulling apart of the testicles and said to be fatal if deferred into adulthood. The eunuchs were allotted the title of the “king’s wife.” There was a head eunuch who supervised other eunuchs and attended to the king personally. Excluding royalty, the head eunuch was the fourth-most powerful person in the realm and served as a minister of the palace interior. Some eunuchs were said to look almost identical to women in their physical appearance. Eunuchs, along with several of the king’s female wives, were executed when their king died (Burton 1864).

The lagredis were also high-ranking male officials in the king’s council who performed a variety of functions, including accompanying the king’s emissaries, monitoring royal negotiations, and providing feedback to the king. Lagredis were feminine in nature and appearance and were selected to serve in their roles at a young age (Murray and Roscoe 1998). In the nineteenth century the Ashanti and Denkyira (kingdoms situated in the geographical area currently occupied by the Ashanti and Central Regions of the Republic of Ghana) also had customs that provided an environment for homoerotic relations to develop. This tradition was known as the ɔkra or crabbah (soul) custom, whereby royalty chose slaves of the same sex to treat specially, bestow with gifts, and have an intimate relationship with (Ellis 1883; Hutchinson [1861] 1967). They were reputedly killed at their master’s or mistress’s funeral to accompany him/her to the afterlife. Donald L. Donham (1990) describes yet another ritual use of male-male sex through the ashtime role in Maale society of southern Ethiopia. Ashtime (which Donham translates as “male transvestites,”
but it would probably be more accurate to say “transgendered”) performed domestic labor and ritual functions in the king's court. The king, as “the male principle incarnate,” had to be shielded from pollution by female sexuality at key moments in the ritual life of the nation. Men who approached him after having had sex with their wives endangered his purity as a symbolic figure; hence, they should either abstain altogether, or have sex with an ashtime in order to protect the health of the nation.

**Warriors and Boy-Wives**

In the early twentieth century a practice was observed among the Zandes (variation: Azandes, an ethnic group currently found in South Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Central African Republic) where bachelor warriors married and had sexual relations with boys. The boys were typically adolescents and young adults, and while not technically slaves or even servants, they were obliged in a patriarchal, gerontocratic society to obey their elders' commands. These marriages were akin to heterosexual marriages in those communities. Bride-price was paid, and the boy was lavished with gifts. The warrior addressed the boy's parents as his in-laws and performed services for them as men did for the parents of their brides. Additionally, the boy performed some traditional duties of a wife, including fetching water and collecting firewood. Boy-wives bore their warriors' shields during journeys, and the couple slept together on the same bed and engaged in intercrural sexual intercourse (nonpenetrative sexual intercourse between the thighs). Any man who had intercourse with another warrior's boy-wife could be sued for adultery and was liable to compensate the offended spouse (Evans-Pritchard 1970).

These practices, like large-scale polygyny, largely disappeared under the influence of Christian ideology and the emerging colonial political economy. Yet, similar arrangements arose in response to the skewed demography of racial capitalism. Best attested in southern Africa, but also found among long-distance porters elsewhere on the continent, boy-wives accompanied men as servants and sexual companions on the long journeys to and from work in such industrial centers as Johannesburg (Harries 1994). Young, unaccompanied arrivals at the mines were recruited by older men into the same servile relationship patterned on a normal heterosexual marriage. The “wife” in these cases would eventually mature out of that role to become a husband in his own right. In some cases, there was a metaphysical aspect to the relationship—to protect the senior partner against the dangers of work, or to achieve a promotion and wage hike through the ritual transgression of sexual norms (Niehaus 2002).

African history is filled with persons who exhibited sexual and gender diversity. Some of these individuals were either in positions of enforced labor, or bound to service to their same-sex partners. Indeed, Stephen Murray and Will Roscoe (1998) note that in discussing the history of homosexual relationships across the continent, one must bear in mind that it is only in relatively modern times that there have been expectations for romantic
relationships to be mutual and egalitarian. The long history of slavery, servitude, and same-sex relations makes it difficult for many Africans to imagine same-sex sexuality as potentially loving, equal, and deserving of human rights protections.

**SEE ALSO**  
Eunuchs; Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa; Islam in Africa South of the Sahara; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Islam; Sex Work/Sex Tourism/Sex Trafficking in Africa; Slavery and Sodomy in Brazil; Witchcraft/Occult in Africa

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ISIS Gay Trials

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The atrocities committed against gay men by those affiliated with the jihadist group known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria.

After its emergence in 2011, the jihadist group Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) swiftly took a large amount of territory in Iraq and Syria, taking advantage of the Sunni/Shi’i power imbalance created by the US invasion in the former and the civil war in the latter. The group’s fundamentalist interpretation of Islam resulted in various atrocities committed against both people and property. These transgressions included subjecting the people in the areas that ISIS controlled—such as Mosul and Fallujah in Iraq and Raqqa and other cities in Syria—to strict Islamic interpretations in matters of clothing and worship. ISIS also destroyed world heritage sites, such as the ancient city of Palmyra in Syria, on charges that they promoted idolatry. In addition, ISIS soldiers enslaved Yazidi women in sexual servitude and executed suspected members of the LGBT community in what is dubbed the ISIS gay trials.

Though an exact number of those persecuted by ISIS on charges of liwat (sodomy) is neither available nor verifiable, the New York–based OutRight Action International estimates that thirty-six men had been executed as of 2015 (Associated Press 2015). The executions took place in various cities under ISIS control, including Mosul, Raqqa, Palmyra, and others in the Syrian northern region. Reports come from individuals who have escaped areas controlled by ISIS and are awaiting resettlement in the West, in Lebanon, or Turkey. One such account, told by Omar (not his real name), is of two men, Hawas Mallah (age thirty-two) and Mohammad Salamah (age twenty-one), who were executed in Palmyra in December 2015. The two were found guilty of sodomy by an ISIS judge, who ordered them to be thrown off the roof of the nearby Wael Hotel to cleanse their sins and to deter others who might engage in same-sex sexual practices. Asked whether they were satisfied with the judgment, Mallah stated that he preferred a bullet to the head instead, while Salamah begged for a chance to repent. Nevertheless, ISIS militants proceeded to execute the judge’s verdict, announcing that two of “Lot’s people” would be punished on that day in Palmyra’s main square. Subsequently, a black van carried Mallah and Salamah to the execution site, where they were both hurled to the ground from the top of the Wael Hotel; Salamah landed on his head and died instantly, but Mallah, who was tied to a chair, did not, so an ISIS fighter shot him in the head. The bodies were then hung up for two days in Palmyra’s
Freedom Square, each with a placard on his chest that read, “He received the punishment for practicing the crime of Lot People” (Associated Press 2015).

These executions took place after ISIS issued its own penal code on 15 December 2014, titled “Clarification [regarding] the Hudud [Qur’anic punishments].” The document details the punishments—according to shari’a—for various illegal acts, including gay sex: “Death for the person committing the act, as well as for the one receiving it.” ISIS declared that it distributed the penal code as a reminder to people living in the “caliphate” and warned that it would be vigilantly enforced (Counter Extremism Project 2018). The friends and family of those convicted of sodomy may also find themselves in grave danger because ISIS can access the phone contacts and Facebook accounts of suspected homosexuals to entrap others; ISIS informants masquerade as potential dates, thereby catching people redhanded. Those who had escaped to neighboring Turkey or Lebanon admitted to being afraid that their own families would turn them in to ISIS. As refugees, they remain easy targets for persecution by their local and host communities. For that reason, human rights groups describe Syrian and Iraqi gay refugees as “double refugees.”

**Islamic Rulings on Liwat Punishment**

Whether ISIS’s gay persecution is the correct Islamic punishment for those who engage in same-sex sexual acts is a matter of dispute. Like Judaism and Christianity, Islam frowns on same-sex sexual practices. The main admonition comes from the story of Lot and his warning to his people never to commit the sin of desiring men and preferring them over women. The seventh sura (chapter or section) of the Qur’an, known as Surat al-ʿAraf, describes same-sex sexual behavior as al-fahisha (sin) in the following manner: “And Lut said to his people: ‘Do ye commit lewdness such as no people in creation [ever] committed before you? For ye practice your lusts on men in preference to women: ye are indeed a people transgressing beyond bounds’” (7:80–81). Surat Hud continues the story and details the reason for the punishment of Lot’s people. When God’s messengers visited Lot’s house, the people of Sodom barged in, wanting to rape them. Lot offered his daughters for them to marry instead, but they refused, telling him, “Well dost thou know we have no need of thy daughters: indeed thou knowest quite well what we want!” (11:79). It was at that moment that God ordered the destruction of Sodom, turning it upside down and showering it with brimstones: “When Our decree issued, we turned (the cities) upside down, and rained down on them brimstones hard as baked clay, spread layer on layer” (11:82).

In these suras, the Qur’an never mentions individual punishments for persons engaging in same-sex sexual activity but rather a collective punishment of the entire city of Sodom and its inhabitants, with the exception of Lot’s own family (excluding his unrighteous wife). ISIS’s punishment ritual of throwing suspected homosexuals from rooftops and then stoning them comes from its own interpretation of the latter Qur’anic sura (Hud 11:82); by analogy, they equate the heavenly shower of brimstones to throwing convicted men from
buildings. Additionally, several hadiths (the sayings of the prophet Muhammad) have been interpreted as ordaining killing as a punishment of Lot's people, although they do not specify the method of killing. For example, ʿAbdullah bin ʿAbbas cites the following weak (in the sense of not following the proper chain of references) hadith, “If you find anyone doing Lot’s people’s actions, kill both the active and the passive partners” (quoted in Jawziyyah 1996, 334). In the same vein, religious scholars have debated whether liwat is similar to zina (adultery) in nature and in punishment. The caliphs Abu Bakr (573–634) and ʿAli ibn Talib (600–661) found that “liwat’s punishment should be harsher than that of zina, which should be killing at any rate, whether the convicted is single or married” (quoted in Jawziyyah 1996, 331). Others, including al-Shafiʿi (c. 767–820) and Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal (780–855), concluded that the punishment for liwat should be equal to that of zina (usually stoning for married people and flogging for single persons). A third group, including al-Hakim (996–1021) and Abu Hanifa (699–767), argues that “liwat’s punishment should be lesser than zina, and should only be restricted to taʿzir [prevention or corrective measures]” (quoted in Jawziyyah 1996, 331).

Contemporary punishments for sodomy in most Middle Eastern countries vary a great deal, ranging from imprisonment in most Arab countries to death by stoning in Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and Mauritania, and by hanging in Iran (Bearak and Cameron 2016).

The LGBT Brigade

Amid the outbreak of ISIS persecutions of suspected homosexual men, reports surfaced about the creation of an LGBT military unit fighting alongside Kurdish forces in northern Syria to exact revenge on ISIS. As with all information on ISIS and LGBT intersections, it is hard to independently verify the identities of brigade members, their financiers, and even whether they are a real entity or just a hoax. On 25 July 2017 Benjamin Kentish of the Independent (London) reported that a group of international volunteers fighting ISIS had formed a military unit named The Queer Insurrection and Liberation Army (TQILA; pronounced “tequila”), operating under the umbrella of the International Revolutionary People’s Guerrilla Forces (IRPGF), an anarchist group taking part in the fight against ISIS. TQILA’s formation was announced in a statement posted on its Twitter page that read: “We, the International Revolutionary People’s Guerrilla Forces (IRPGF) formally announce the formation of The Queer Insurrection and Liberation Army (TQILA), a subgroup of the IRPGF comprised of LGBTQI+ comrades as well as others who seek to smash the gender binary and advance the women’s revolution as well as the broader gender and sexual revolution” (Kentish 2017). Though TQILA asserts that “the images of gay men being thrown off roofs and stoned to death by Daesh [ISIS] was something [that they] could not idly watch,” it appears that their main audience was the international groups they addressed on Twitter and Facebook. The photos they posted on social media showed masked soldiers in military uniforms holding guns and standing in front of a banner
reading: “These Faggots Kill Fascists, TQILA-IRPGF.” Once again, there is no way of authenticating the photo to determine whether it was real or staged.

The paraphernalia of a rainbow flag and a banner displaying the group’s logo—an AK-47 on a pink background—held aloft by unidentified soldiers in what is purportedly Raqqa, seem to conform to what Joseph Massad (2007) calls a “Gay International” movement’s agenda and discourse rather than a local cause and concern. Supplanting the local terms luti (a person who engages in liwat) and ISIS with the Western discourse of “faggots” and “fascists” undermines the credibility of the group, framing it as an import of the LGBT international agenda rather than a local response. To complicate matters more, three days after the Twitter announcement of the TQILA formation, the Kurdish militia unit (of the Yekineyen Parastina Gel [YPG], or People’s Protection Units) that TQILA was supposed to fight alongside denied the group’s existence and the authenticity of the photo. Mustafa Bali, a spokesperson for the Kurdish-Arab coalition known as the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), of which the YPG is a major player, posted on his Facebook page the following statement, which was later aired on the Kurdish news site ARA News: “We in the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), while emphasizing our deep respect for human rights, including the rights of homosexuals, we deny the formation of such a battalion within the framework of our forces and we consider this news to be untrue” (Moore 2017).

**ISIS-Inspired Killings in the Diaspora**

The threat for LGBT individuals does not end with their escape from ISIS. Many LGBT refugees in the diaspora report fearing violence from ISIS-affiliated persons or homophobic, conservative populations in their host countries. On 25 July 2016 the decapitated and mutilated body of Muhammad Wisam Sankari, a Syrian refugee, was found in Yenikapi, a central district in Istanbul. Five months before he was killed, Sankari was targeted by a group of men who gang-raped him in a nearby forest; in addition, he and some of his roommates had been harassed by phone and text messages threatening to kill them. Sankari reported these incidents to the Turkish authorities, who did not take them seriously. A Turkish LGBT group, Kaos GL, reported that Sankari was trying to be relocated to another country through the United Nations Refugee Agency because his life was in danger (BBC News 2016). Two days before his body was discovered, Sankari left his home in the conservative Fatih district and then went missing. One of his friends described the condition of his body: "They cut Wisam violently. It was so violent; two knives had broken inside of him. They beheaded him. His upper body was beyond recognition; his internal organs were out. We recognised our friend from his trousers" (Agence France-Presse 2016). Though sodomy has been legal in Turkey since 1923, conservative attitudes and political upheaval and threats by ultranationalist groups have led to the banning of the annual gay pride march since 2015.

It is not only refugees who face threats from ISIS. An ISIS-inspired attack on the gay
nightclub Pulse in Orlando, Florida, on 12 June 2016 resulted in the deaths of forty-nine people, with fifty-three more injured. Before the attack, the shooter, a US citizen of Afghan origin named Omar Mateen, made a 911 call in which he reportedly pledged allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Following a shootout with police in which Mateen was killed, ISIS officially claimed responsibility for the attack, announcing that “an Islamic State fighter” had “targeted a nightclub for homosexuals” (Tsukayama et al. 2016). Despite Mateen’s claims and ISIS’s assumption of responsibility for the attack, Mateen was not a religious person, and an FBI investigation into his background showed that he was not affiliated with ISIS and did not have any help in planning the attack. Other reports alleged that he was a psychologically troubled person with doubts about his own sexual identity. An examination of his cell phone indicated that he frequented gay dating apps before the attack; it is unclear whether Mateen was employing a tactic often used by ISIS to ensnare LGBT individuals, or he was a closeted gay person whose guilt motivated him to attack the Pulse club as a form of religious atonement for his “sin” of homosexuality. Mateen’s father adamantly denied that his son was homosexual, stating, “Let me tell you: my son is not gay. He’s not.” Mateen’s ex-wife, Sitora Yusufiy, is not so sure. “It's just making more sense in my head from my personal experience that this was probably it,” she said. “He might have been homosexual himself and lived that lifestyle but could never ever come clean about it because of the standards of his father, because of the obligation to be a perfect son” (Alter 2016).

The difficulty of finding credible reporting, the lack of a uniform Islamic verdict on the punishment for sodomy, and the intersections of local and global LGBT international networks with reference to ISIS gay trials and hate crimes make documenting and evaluating these incidents challenging, and raise suspicions of their entanglement with global pinkwashing practices. These methods use LGBT human rights issues to justify targeting, bombing, and colonizing Middle Eastern lands such as Iraq and Syria. Unfortunately, the shadow cast by pinkwashing tactics obscures the visibility of the oppression of Middle Eastern LGBT populations due to entrenched homophobic beliefs and praxes.

SEE ALSO Homosexual Acts in Shariʿa; Human Rights and Queer Arab Refugees; Queen Boat Trials (2001–2002); Spectra Project

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yusufiy-omar-mateen-gay/


Iskandariyya … Leh? (1979; Youssef Chahine)

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Egyptian movie that includes a subplot of a same-sex encounter between an Egyptian and a British soldier.

*Iskandariyya … leh?* (Alexandria … why?) is the first of a series of autobiographical films directed by the Egyptian filmmaker Youssef Chahine (1926–2008). It was critically acclaimed in Egypt and internationally and was awarded the Silver Bear Special Jury Prize at the 29th Berlin International Film Festival in 1979. Among a number of stories woven together, the film includes a subplot of a same-sex encounter between an aristocratic Egyptian and a young British soldier.

**Plot Summary**

Set against the backdrop of World War II (1939–1945), the film focuses on the coming-of-age of Yehia (played by Mohsen Mohiedine), a student at the prestigious Victoria College in Alexandria, Egypt, who dreams of traveling to Hollywood. Much of the story follows Yehia as he develops his love of acting and struggles to find the resources to study at the Pasadena Playhouse in California. He is shown eschewing the pursuit of women for his love of cinema, and the film tracks his development as an aspiring actor from his recitation of scenes from *Hamlet* to his involvement in the drama club at his school. As the film progresses, Yehia struggles to persuade his father to support him in his Hollywood dreams. After a short time working in a bank, Yehia finally gains admission to the Pasadena Playhouse and secures the support of his family, including his father and grandmother, both of whom are instrumental in helping him procure the visa and financing to undertake the voyage to the United States.
Among a number of stories woven together in this critically acclaimed movie by Egyptian filmmaker Youssef Chahine is a subplot of a same-sex encounter between an aristocratic Egyptian and a young British soldier.

In addition to Yehia's story, the film offers a broader portrait of wartime Alexandria, with attention to groups often written out of accounts framed in ethnic, linguistic, or religious terms. The film both opens and closes with scenes at the coast: the initial scene is of children playing in the water, intercut with images of Nazi wartime air strikes, and the ending scene is of Yehia's departure aboard a ship destined for the United States. What emerges is a vision of Alexandria that points to the city's rich history and complex social composition. Among the various stories told, the film includes a nationalist group plotting to assassinate British prime minister Winston Churchill as part of a plan to liberate Egypt from British rule. It also includes stories about the working classes and connections to the Communist Party, and it gestures at various points to the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish communities intersecting in Alexandria. Newsreel footage interspersed throughout various scenes keeps alive the interplay between the film's narrative and the historical backdrop against which it all transpires.

Most prominent among the various subplots in the film are two distinct love stories, both of which highlight the challenges of taboo relationships. There is the story of an affair between Sarah (played by Naglaa Fathi), the daughter of a wealthy Jewish aristocrat, and Ibrahim (played by Ahmed Zaki), a college student and member of the communist
resistance who is eventually arrested and sentenced to fifteen years’ hard labor. At a crucial moment, anticipating the Nazi invasion of Egypt, Sarah reveals that she is pregnant with Ibrahim’s son just as she and her father are forced to depart Egypt for South Africa and, eventually, Palestine. Later in the film and following the war, Sarah returns to introduce the imprisoned Ibrahim to their son, whom he greets through the bars of the prison. As they speak, Sarah bemoans that Judaism has shifted from being a religion to being a nationality, and she remarks on the challenging conditions of living in Haifa, far from her true homeland in Alexandria.

The other key subplot is the story of a nationalist aristocrat, Adel (played by Ahmed Mehrez), and a working-class British soldier, Tommy (played by Gerry Sundquist). As the film begins, Adel arranges to purchase a kidnapped soldier, ideally one from New Zealand, to be murdered as part of the struggle against British occupation. When drunken Tommy is eventually delivered, Adel brings him to the seaside, leans him across the rail, points his pistol toward Tommy’s slouched body, but ultimately finds himself unable to pull the trigger. In the next scene, Tommy awakens in his underwear in Adel’s bed, seemingly unaware of how he got there. Intrigued by the young soldier, Adel looks upon him fondly, offering him breakfast and then introducing him as his friend when someone enters the room. In subsequent scenes, Adel is shown reading a letter from Tommy, who reports on the battle of El Alamein (al-ʿAlamayn) and complains of the hardship of war and the hierarchy between the generals and the soldiers. Upon the announcement of British victory, Adel discovers that Tommy has, in fact, been killed, perhaps even shortly after composing the letter from the front. A scene of Adel weeping at Tommy’s grave site gives way to a montage of headstones of British, Egyptian, and German soldiers killed in Alexandria, as Vera Lynn’s “The White Cliffs of Dover” plays on the soundtrack.

In the end, the romantic connections between Sarah and Ibrahim, on the one hand, and Adel and Tommy, on the other, are both thwarted by social conditions. And in a film that otherwise tracks the hopes and aspirations of Yehia in pursuit of his dreams, both of these romantic subplots end in tragedy.

SOURCE: MISR INTERNATIONAL FILMS

Scene from the Movie Iskandariyya ... Leh? (1979). In this scene, the British soldier Tommy wakes up in bed to find he is being held at gunpoint by Adel. Although Adel had intended to kill Tommy to advance the
cause against British occupation of Egypt, the two men develop a forbidden relationship.

Iskandariyya ... leh? in the Context of Chahine's Work

As the first film in his autobiographical series, Iskandariyya ... leh? presents Chahine’s early life through the character of Yehia and highlights his connections to Alexandria, filmmaking, and the history of Egypt. This first film concludes with Yehia’s departure to begin his studies at the Pasadena Playhouse. The second, Hadduta masriyya (1982; An Egyptian story), deals with Chahine in his thirties and forties as he aims to establish his career as a filmmaker and struggles with his health. Much of the film transpires in the form of a surreal courtroom drama with staged flashbacks as he undergoes heart surgery in London. As was the case in Iskandariyya ... leh?, Chahine incorporates archival footage, and he also includes a scene with homoerotic glances between himself and his London taxi driver, leaving rather unambiguous the desire between the two men. The third film, Iskandariyya kaman wa kaman (1989; Alexandria, again and forever), considers the director’s then-present moment and depicts the decision of a favorite actor, ‘Amr, to leave to pursue films financed by oil money. The film is seen as a reflection on Mohiedine’s break with Chahine but connects this incident to social questions regarding the Egyptian film industry, contemporary Egypt, and the star system. Together, these three films help to secure Chahine’s status as a global auteur, even if they never met with the popular success of his earlier film Bab el hadid (1958; Cairo station).

There are few directors who share Chahine’s iconic status among Egyptian and Arab filmmakers. In 1997 he was awarded the 50th Anniversary Prize for lifetime achievement at the Cannes Film Festival, and he is well known for helping to launch a number of acting careers, including those of Omar Sharif and Mohamed Henedi. Chahine’s filmography is remarkable for spanning a range of genres and styles, at times even within a single film. He is perhaps most famous for his 1958 film Bab el hadid in which he himself performed the lead role of Qinawi, a worker in the rail yard who falls in love with Hanuma (played by Hind Rostom). His 1969 film Al-ard (The land), an official entry at the 1970 Cannes Film Festival, is based on the novel by Abdel Rahman al-Sharqawi and revolves around a conflict between a rural landlord and peasants in the 1930s. Chahine is also widely respected for his historical epics, including Al-Nasir Salah al-Din (1963; Saladin the Victorious), which presents the twelfth-century Muslim leader Saladin as a sort of hero of Pan-Arabism, as well as Al-masir (1997; Destiny), which recounts the story of the twelfth-century Muslim philosopher Ibn Rushd (Averroës) in the context of an authoritarian government and religious opposition to his work. Never one to shy away from political engagement, Chahine also directed a number of documentaries and films that blurred the boundaries between historical fiction and documentary, including a film dealing with social life in contemporary Cairo and earlier work addressing the formation of the Aswan Dam.

Queerness in Chahine’s Films
Of the many social, cultural, and political issues that Chahine broached in his work, same-sex desire and queerness draw attention, either implicitly or explicitly, in many of his films. In various instances, Chahine’s films present same-sex romance between a foreign man and an Egyptian, and at other times, he highlights homoeroticism in a more general sense, reversing or playing with codes of objectification, spectacle, and looking relations.

In the first of these instances, same-sex relationships seem most pronounced at moments of imperial interaction, as though to suggest that homosexuality is a sort of foreign importation. Chahine’s *Al-nas wa al-Nil* (1972; The Nile and its people), for example, includes a love story between Barak, a Nubian working on the Aswan Dam, and Nicolai, a Soviet engineer assigned to the project. The second film of the series,*Hadduta masriyya*, includes a scene highlighting the director’s flirtation with a taxi driver in London, and a later documentary commissioned by French television,*Le Caire, raconté par Youssef Chahine* (1991; Cairo, as told by Youssef Chahine), highlights relationships between gay men from the West and Egyptians. And true to the conflation of foreignness and homosexuality, Chahine’s film *Wedaʾan Bonapart* (1985; Adieu, Bonaparte) contains a love affair between a French savant and two Egyptian teens. This aspect of *Wedaʾan Bonapart* was quite heavily criticized at the time, and Chahine’s subsequent films often allude even more indirectly to such encounters. It is worth noting that *Iskandariyya ... leh?* deviates from the common account in these other films. Adel is the aristocrat with social power, and he consciously plays with the codes surrounding the imperial nature of Tommy’s presence in Egypt. Unlike the other films that place the Egyptian characters in the position of the seduced, in *Iskandariyya ... leh?* the relationship between Adel and Tommy is one figured explicitly around the war and its structures of domination and insubordination. In this instance, anticolonial sentiments structure the initial plot to deliver Tommy to Adel, and the usual figuration of seducer and seduced is reversed, with Tommy held captive under Adel’s control. No longer a foreign importation imposed on Egypt, homosexuality emerges within the framework of anticolonial resistance.

In addition to the various depictions of same-sex desire between characters, Chahine’s filmography also manifests queerness in other ways, blurring the boundaries between cinematic looking and male bodies. *Iskandariyya kaman wa kaman*, the third film in the autobiographical series, emphasizes the filmmaker’s infatuation with a young actor playing Alexander, even while noting that the filmmaker is married. In these instances, homosexuality is less something broached thematically than something that permeates formal looking relations. In *Al-ʿusfur* (1972; The Sparrow), for example, Chahine presents a male actor stripped to the waist, admiring himself in the mirror as his hand slides down his bare chest toward his groin. When it comes to *Al-masir*, this historical drama presents men wrestling in various states of undress in the bathhouse. Neither of these scenes offers explicit or readily identifiable gay or lesbian characters, but they each make visible a way of looking that routes cinematic seeing outside the conventional optics of women performing for the camera. Much like Chahine himself, who was quite evasive when it came to
questions of his own sexuality, his films demonstrate registers of queerness without embodying these dynamics in recognizably homosexual characters or relationships.

**Formal Queerness in *Iskandariyya ... leh?***

Where there is commentary that treats *Iskandariyya ... leh?* in the context of forbidden relationships, far fewer critics have been attentive to the formal dynamics by which the relationship between Adel and Tommy takes shape. Part of what makes this particular encounter so remarkable is how it interrupts, and seemingly subverts, the conventions associated with the male gaze in classical cinema, especially with regard to the role of women as spectacle. When Tommy is first introduced, he is presented stumbling over himself in a cabaret located below the apartment of Yehia's family. The camera tracks Tommy's movements back and forth across the room as those gathered for the performance turn their attention to him. His drunken singing eclipses that of the performers on stage. As he wanders, he passes in front of the stage and then makes his way back out into the audience. At this point, there is a close-up on the face of Seif El Din, a nationalist intent on ridding Egypt of the British, who stares at the young soldier. It is initially unclear whether Seif El Din's look is lustful or part of a cunning political ploy to entrap him. When Tommy sits down to talk to Seif El Din, he exhibits all the brashness of a drunken soldier, and it becomes clear over the course of the exchange that Seif El Din plans to kidnap Tommy for Adel as part of the effort to thwart the British occupation.

In this initial scene, the viewer's look at Tommy is carefully mediated through a network of glances that frame him as the object of desire—both political, in the sense of a potential captive, and sexual, in the conflation of his place with that of the cabaret performer. As the scene progresses, Tommy drunkenly stands up from the table with Seif El Din and navigates his way backward, presented in long shot as he sings aloud to the music that is playing—or rather, as he sings “The White Cliffs of Dover” over the music that predominates in the cabaret. With the voice of the young British soldier layered over that of the Egyptian cabaret singer, and with the music layering a British song over an Egyptian song, the scene quite masterfully weaves together a number of layers of colonialism, sexuality, and gender. What is objectified in this scene is Tommy himself, a colonial soldier who is the object of the male gaze, at once frozen as a spectacle of a drunken singer and the object of desire.

When the cabaret is interrupted by electrical blackouts and German aerial attacks, the singer implores the musicians to continue. Amid the chaos that ensues, fights break out in the audience, and Seif El Din abducts Tommy, punches him in the face, and the film cuts to newsreel footage of a bomb going off. The film then cuts to a shot of Adel's face behind the wheel of a car, and the viewer learns that Tommy is in the backseat. Adel drags Tommy out of the car and places him over the railing facing the sea before stepping back, pulling his pistol from his jacket, and aiming at the young soldier. At that very moment, drunken
Tommy slumps down from the railing, and Adel moves to lift him up. Already, it is clear that Adel finds himself incapable of following through with the killing. The next shot reveals a close-up of Tommy's drunken face as his arms wrap around Adel in an effort to remain standing, ambiguously straddling an intimate hug and a drunken embrace. In what follows, Adel tells Tommy to act like a man, places him back in the car, and stares down at him as a bell rings and the film cuts to the next scene. When Tommy is next introduced, he is in bed in his underwear as Adel looks upon him with his pistol drawn. The scene proceeds with close-ups on Tommy's face as he asks questions about where he is, how he got there, and who removed his clothes. As the exchange continues, a woman interrupts by walking unexpectedly into the room, and Adel nonchalantly explains that Tommy is a friend and then invites him to join them for breakfast, as though nothing were out of the ordinary.

It is only in a subsequent scene that the nature of what transpired becomes clearer. Adel is shown driving Tommy to his point of deployment for battle. Tommy hands Adel some money, claiming that he has no one closer in his life now, and then adds that he will take it back when he returns from the war. He gets out of the car, walks toward the other soldiers, looks back over his shoulder at Adel, but then returns to the vehicle. When he gets back in the car, he asks Adel if he has, in fact, killed other British soldiers as he intended to do with him, and Adel replies that he has. Tommy curses Adel for his actions and then departs the car angrily. A long shot reveals Tommy walking away toward the soldiers before he looks back at Adel one last time.

What follows of the relationship between Tommy and Adel is revealed most tenderly in a letter that Tommy sends Adel from the front. In a darkened room, Adel is shown reclining in bed with a revolver in one hand and Tommy's letter in the other. Tommy's voice is heard narrating the contents of the letter, as scenes of him at the front appear onscreen. He suggests that he has escaped the shadow of death with the battle now over. As the letter continues and Tommy complains of selfish generals, Adel is shown standing in front of the bed, revolver in hand, shooting his pillow. Toward the film's conclusion, as Adel reports to a military office to search for Tommy, he learns that Tommy did, in fact, die in battle. A close-up on Tommy's gravestone pans out to reveal an entire field of white gravestones. Adel's face is shown surveying the graves solemnly as Vera Lynn singing “The White Cliffs of Dover” plays on the soundtrack. The seemingly impossible love story is one of many casualties of the war.

SEE ALSO AsrarʿAiliyyah (2013; Hany Fawzy); Hena Maysara (2007; Khaled Youssef); HIV/AIDS in Egyptian Cinema

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Islam in Africa South of the Sahara

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The status of those with nonnormative sexual identities in African Muslim communities.

Same-sex sexuality in African Muslim societies has always existed, but in the twenty-first century it has become more visible. Matters of sexuality have traditionally been dealt with quietly, with public discussion of sexuality considered an affront to cultural ideals of respectability. Given the prominent role played by Western nongovernmental organizations in the advocacy for LGBTQ rights, it is not difficult to see why Islamic religious leaders view nonnormative sexual expressions as a foreign practice that should be condemned. So the irony is that the call for LGBTQ rights, which requires public outing, may actually backfire on those with nonnormative sexualities (Massad 2002). The hatred expressed by the general Islamic clerics (ulema) and some of their followers toward homosexuality has created a hostile environment in which most LGBTQ persons are scared to declare their sexual orientation. On account of the dominance of the ulema in the public domain of their respective communities, homosexuality is projected by most Muslims as a perversion and reversal of the natural sexual orientation of human beings. This makes being a homosexual in African Muslim societies an enormous challenge given the vitriolic attacks from conformist ulema.

Generally, there are several modes that are associated with the spread of Islam in Africa. With significant expansion in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, Islam has been reinterpreted differently by various Muslim communities on the continent. Regional differences are evident as the cultures of indigenous African societies were integrated with the practices of Islam that readily accommodated them. Islamic accommodation to African cultures has contributed to the observance of a particular form of Islam that differs from one region to the other (Lapidus 2014). Thus, Islamic practice in Africa is very diverse and has changed over time with the ebb and flow of different schools of Islamic jurisprudence, such as the Shafi’i, Maliki, Hanbali, and Hanafi. This variation is also evident when dealing with issues of sex and sexuality. Despite the Qur’an’s lack of a proper term for homosexuals as a concrete idea designating same-sex sexual desires, Muslim ulema in Africa use the particular Qur’anic narrative of the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (see Qur’an 7:84) to condemn homosexuality as a perverse act, with limited theological bases for tolerating it. Even “the terms that became popular in Arabic in later times (Liwat for
acts associated with same-sex relations, and Luti for persons associated with these acts) are not found in the Qur’an at all” (Kugle 2003, 200). But because of the lack of a specific punishment for same-sex relationships in the Qur’an, the decision to arbitrate on the practice was left to the discretion of the local ruling authorities, as observed in Islamic history, which explains the varied attitudes toward LGBTQ persons among African Muslims.

Within Africa south of the Sahara, Islamic expression has demonstrated conflicting views despite nonnormative relations being strongly associated with certain Muslim communities. Historically, in West Africa, Arab Muslims were accused of male-male sexual exploitation and rape during the sixteenth-century conquest of Songhai, while in East Africa Arab Muslim traders “had a reputation for enjoying if not promoting male-male sexual relationships” during their contact with the local population (Epprecht 2013, 95).

Despite the supposed heterosexual emphasis within the Islamic tradition, in Muslim societies, including those in Africa, same-sex practices also seem to have been relatively accommodated (Murray 1997; Eppink 1992). Apart from the reputations of North African Muslim countries (Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia) as destinations for homosexual escapades in the European imaginary, in Africa south of the Sahara cases of nonnormative sexual expressions by Muslims can be drawn from Senegal, Nigeria, Kenya, and Zanzibar, among others. Among the Wolof Muslims of Senegal, “homosexuals” (gor-digen) are transgendered men who, among other services, offer sex to other men (Epprecht 2013). A similar community of homosexual men (‘yan daudu) is found in northern Nigeria, and among them are people who identify themselves as devoted Muslims. They are known to provide sexual services for supposedly heterosexual “men either as sex workers themselves or procurers of female sex workers” (Epprecht 2013, 98). In Kenya, mainland Tanzania and Zanzibar, shoga (or hanisi or liwati) refers to the passive partner in a same-sex sexual relationship (Amory 1998).

Despite this seeming tolerance of nonnormative sexuality in African Muslim communities, Islam has a reputation for homophobia. Muslim critics of nonnormative sexuality have claimed that the Qur’an is clear in its condemnation of the practice, as indicated above. While there are variations in the punishment for known homosexuals, in some Muslim-majority countries such as Mauritania and Sudan and in certain states in northern Nigeria punishment includes the death penalty (Global Legal Research Center 2014). The coexistence of cultural acceptance of nonnormative sexualities with harsh condemnation points to a radical contradiction with regard to attitudes toward the practice among African Muslims—a theme explored in this entry. The extent to which African Muslim communities have tolerated homosexuality is the focus of this entry, which describes varied attitudes and opinions. Paradoxically, the idea of emphasizing heterosexual sexual fulfillment in some African Muslim societies through female initiation processes has to a certain extent promoted same-sex tendencies among them, as shown in this entry. The apparent signs of
acceptance of same-sex practice, however, have not stopped state and Islamic religious leaders from mobilizing hostility and public religion against nonnormative sexual persons. Therefore, this entry will demonstrate the challenges that African Muslims in same-sex relations face as a result of their status—from the religious clerics and, to a certain extent, the state. In that respect this entry will demonstrate the traditional existence of tolerance toward nonnormative sexualities in African Muslim societies, exploring why same-sex practice has become a public issue of concern among them. This earlier acceptance will be contrasted with the contemporary condemnation of nonnormative sexual expression as manifested on the continent.

**Sex and Sexuality**

In Islamic tradition, sexuality is not an obstacle to spirituality; in fact, the faith values the pursuit of sexual pleasure within specified limits. In this respect, sexual gratification within marriage is regarded as sacred in Islam (Azad 2016). As a result of the enormous value placed on lawful sexual relations, certain Muslim communities in Africa have designed ways of attaining this fulfillment through female initiation (Omar 2012). By the nineteenth century, *unyago* female initiation was a popular practice among coastal Swahili Muslim communities and became the tradition of preparing young girls for marriage, which began with seclusion. When girls experienced their first menses, they were secluded from public interaction with members of the opposite sex to safeguard their sexual purity. In a given locality, the mothers of the young girls would identify older women as instructors (*somo* or *kungwi*) to organize an initiation ritual that lasted for seven days. The *kungwi* provided the young initiates with information regarding female sexuality and morality through the performance of *unyago* rituals and dances (Fair 2004). While the initiation took barely a week, it was the beginning of a lifetime bond between the initiate and the *kungwi*, with the former always seeking advice about marriage, reproduction, and child-rearing from the latter.

During the initiation ritual dance (*unyago*), the young girls were instructed in the art of sexual intercourse. They learned the technique of seductively gyrating their hips, thighs, and buttocks to promote sexual gratification. As a way of mastering the skills to pleasurable sex, the girls tried the techniques on each other, a performance that aroused them sexually. Undoubtedly, the act exposed the female initiates to homosexual experiences. Despite the tacit acceptance of nonnormative sexuality, the female initiation dances provided instruction in “male and female physiology, the physical aspects of sexuality, desire and orgasm, masturbation, and physical relations between men and women” (quoted in Decker 2014, 224). Significantly, the instruction of the dance initiation was designed to produce girls who were skilled lovers and appreciated that the enjoyment of sex was a fundamental aspect of a marriage relationship. While late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century Islamic reformers in Zanzibar claimed that the initiation exposed young “girls to putatively
pornographic information about sex” (Decker 2014, 216), many Swahili Muslims did not see any contradiction between these practices and their faith. Despite the great emphasis on heterosexual relations, same-sex sexuality also prevailed in numerous Muslim societies in Africa, as illustrated below.

**Transgressing the Gender Categorization**

In Swahili Muslim society (Kenya, Zanzibar, and mainland Tanzania) there exist male homosexuals (shoga; plural mashoga) who take the passive role during anal intercourse with a male partner (Amory 1998). Though tolerated, mashoga are considered not to be living consistently with the expectations of a man in Swahili society because they violate “gender position” (Amory 1998, 78). Even though the early crossings of gender boundaries by the mashoga were sometimes harshly castigated, they were also to a certain degree accepted in society through sexual relations with other older men, including teachers (both religious and secular), neighbors, or even relatives. In certain instances, a passive male homosexual among Swahili coastal Muslims would marry a woman but secretly continue engaging in nonnormative sexual behavior (Shepherd 1987). Apart from the conduct being seen as a way of concealing the mashoga’s sexual orientation, marriage in Islam is half of one’s religion, which mashoga appear eager to fulfill.

In coastal Muslim society, societal roles are defined by gender, and they are linked with other gendered behaviors, including dress and speech. Because social space contributes to the construction of gender identities, the public spheres that mashoga occupy indicate their gender as being dissimilar from other men, but akin to women, although “not exactly the same as women, either” (Amory 1998, 79). On account of their nature, mashoga easily interact with women, crossing the stringent boundaries of gender segregation, which is customarily difficult for other men to do (Larsen 2008). Because gender is a social construction, mashoga perform it by being commonly identified by feminine alternative nicknames, as well as by dressing in a way that attracts male sexual partners. Clearly, male homosexuals in Swahili Muslim society violate gender categorization by appearing like women by assuming certain societal gender markers, but without much discrimination.

Generally, it is alleged that during the prerevolutionary era in Zanzibar same-sex relations were considered a normal practice— and even secretly observed during the month of “Ramadan when heterosexual intercourse is prohibited” (Middleton 1992, 120), a view that could not be confirmed in other parts of the Muslim world. In this Muslim society, nonnormative sexual individuals “had their space without having to fight for it” because “the society was neither encouraging them nor subjecting them to any kind of persecution” (Saleh 2009, 199).

Among the Muslim Hausa of northern Nigeria, the ‘yan daudu are men who constitute what can be referred to as a male homosexual community. Their social closeness to women provides cover for certain “men who seek men,” thereby allowing them to secretly interact
without attracting attention. Among the Hausa, nonnormative male sexuality is not viewed as an inclination, but merely an act; hence, gays are described “as men who do homosexuality [rather] than as men who want other men sexually” (Gaudio 1998, 117). In addition, same-sex practice in this Muslim society is not regarded as being in conflict with a heterosexual identity. At a certain moment in their lives, ‘yan daudu are also expected to marry women and have children, even as they discreetly continue with their nonnormative sexual affairs. This characteristic of the ‘yan daudu should not be interpreted as an expression of bisexuality, because in Hausa society marriage is not a choice of an individual but a moral responsibility for every member of society. As a result, even homosexual men are at least expected to “have sex with women” for procreation purposes “and not necessarily for sexual pleasure” (Gaudio 1998, 118).

The ‘yan daudu's inconspicuous engagement in sexual relations with other men is culturally interpreted in terms of gender rather than as a form of sexuality. Because of their feminine gestures and performance of tasks associated with women (cooking and selling food), their behavior is seen only as being “womanlike,” without necessarily forfeiting their fundamentally male identity. And because ‘yan daudu secretly engage in nonnormative sexual expressions, the general society ignores their crossgender conduct and same-sex connotations. Apart from ‘yan daudu always referring to themselves with feminine names, they also consider themselves wives while describing their sexual relations with their male partners. Rudolf Pell Gaudio observes:

*By employing heterosexual concepts to characterize their own sexual roles, ‘yan daudu and their [male partners seem to conform to] dominant ideologies of gender and power relations while challenging others. For, whereas the idea of a man who has a “husband” and calls himself a “wife” disrupts mainstream Hausa beliefs about gender and sexual identity as biologically based, the sexual, economic, and other expectations that ‘yan daudu and their boyfriends/husbands bring to their relationships follow mainstream norms governing how women and men should behave in heterosexual relationships.*

(1998, 121)

As a result of religious and cultural influences the ‘yan daudu conform to the belief that gender is divinely determined, which is why they still marry women as a way of fulfilling one of their religious obligations as men. Clearly, the ‘yan daudu’s exhibition of femininity does not nullify their male social identity, which they consider as God’s will that they cannot alter. And because they identify themselves as practicing Muslims, they believe that it is Allah who created them different from other men (Gaudio 2009).
Among the Muslims of northern Sudan, there is a healing cult (zar or zaar) that is primarily the realm of women. Despite the cultural sexual division of labor and sexual segregation in this society, there are also a number of men who frequently partake in zaar rituals, with some of them even becoming cult group leaders. While some of the men who often attend zaar rituals are suspected by the society of being nonnormative sexual persons, others are accused of merely pretending to be sick to disgracefully gain access to the women in the cult (Murray 1997). Despite the seeming acceptance of same-sex practice in African Muslim societies, in some conservative segments of the Muslim population, as a result of the emergence of Islamic reformist ideas in Africa, those with nonnormative sexual identities are periodically condemned as the source of sexual immorality and thereby subjected to denunciation and abuse.

**Religious Mobilization against Nonnormative Sexuality**

In Zanzibar, while nonnormative sexuality was considered by some to be an inconsequential transgression understood to occur as a result of God’s will, it was also despised by other members of society. This is also true of other African Muslim societies where religious leaders and politicians have come together in an alliance to persecute homosexuals. Religious mobilization against same-sex sexuality in Africa, therefore, is part of the broader political dynamics evident in various African countries where it is viewed as a struggle for the preservation of presumed Islamic, and sometimes African, identity against a domineering Western culture. Out of fear of losing their somewhat overlapping identities, the mobilization is an effort to protect Muslim societies against the hegemonic legacy of Westernization.
In Kenya, which has a significant Muslim minority, some Muslim clerics have called on Kenyans to reject same-sex sexuality because, according to them, it is an act that is contrary to religion as well as to African traditions and beliefs (Ndzovu 2016). They claim that nonnormative sexuality is prevalent in Kenya because of Western influences. As a result, Muslim clerics in the country have strongly fought against any recognition of LGBTQ rights. For instance, they have criticized a proposal to include questions pertaining to nonnormative sexuality in the national census as tantamount to validating its existence. It is the open expression of nonnormative sexual identity that has irritated many Kenya Islamic clerics, who caution that such public acceptance could “easily anger God and invite calamities such as the fire that claimed Sodom and Gomorrah” (Christian Telegraph 2012, np). Yet, the belief that it was same-sex sexuality that caused the destruction of the two cities has been the subject of contestation by scholars (Kugle 2003).

Alarmed by the boldness of some activists advocating for the rights of LGBTQ persons through the support of some Western countries, Muslim clerics in Kenya have suggested that the government “stop taking aid from countries” that “support gay rights,” claiming that such aid could come “with the condition of Kenya supporting gay rights” (Out in Perth: Something Different 2014, np). The increase in homophobic expression coincides,
beginning in the 1990s, with increased agitation for LGBTQ rights by numerous organizations. The most visible LGBTQ organizations in Kenya include the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya and G-Kenya Trust, whose campaigns are considered an affront to the cultural norm that treats issues of sexuality quietly and away from the public gaze. Undoubtedly, the appearance of the pro-LGBTQ organizations in the country advocating for public display of nonnormative sexuality disturbs the culturally accepted, discreet same-sex relations—hence the opposition (Ndzovu 2016).

In Zanzibar, the seeming accommodation accorded by society to those with nonnormative sexual identities started shrinking after the 1964 revolution as a result of religious and political mobilization. Islamic reform ideas emerged that criticized the past, implicit approval of nonnormative sexual practices in the society (Moen et al. 2014). Apart from religious mobilization, Zanzibar’s criminal law provides that a “person who will be convicted of sodomy will be liable to 25 years imprisonment” (Ottosson 2008, 37). Furthermore, the state’s mobilization against homosexuals is evident through the 1984 censorship board, which among other tasks, has a mandate to “review [taarab] songs … before they [could] be performed and aired” because there has been “a particularly virulent exchange of taarab songs concerning homosexuality” (Arnold 2002, 148). Along the Swahili coast, taarab is a popular form of sung poetry that incorporates performance and instrumental accompaniment and sometimes offers scathing and obscene lyrics depicting sexism (Mosoti 2012), compelling the state to introduce controlling measures.

Perhaps stemming from the influence of Islamic revival movements, there is a group of Muslims in Senegal vandalizing graves and exhuming bodies of supposed LGBTQ persons. Before 2008, Senegal was one of the predominantly Muslim African countries considered to be tolerant toward same-sex sexuality, despite the threat by groups of Muslims that they would attack anyone who openly violated culturally approved sexual orientation. As a consequence, in certain parts of the country, Muslim youth exhumed the bodies of known gor-digen because the latter were deemed to be defiling the graveyard (Awondo, Geschiere, and Reid 2012).

Despite the homophobic expressions evident in African Muslim societies, there are other Muslim clerics who have condemned such actions and have instead urged the acceptance of LGBTQ persons in their communities. For instance, in South Africa, this positive attitude toward nonnormative sexuality is represented by Imam Muhsin Hendricks (1970—), whose mosque provides “LGBT Muslims a safe space in which to worship, away from the condemnation” of conservative Muslim clerics, “many of whom see homosexuality as a sin” (Bruce-Lockhart 2017). A gay Muslim himself, Imam Hendricks in 1996 founded the Inner Circle, a support group for Muslim individuals in same-sex relationships who feel rejected by their religion because of their sexual identity. Hendricks has called on the general Muslim community “to stop the killing and violence perpetrated against queer people in the name of Islam,” and has urged his fellow imams instead to use the mosque pulpit during the
Friday prayer to deliver a message of inclusivity and accommodation (quoted in Arcus Foundation 2017).

In the cases illustrated above, same-sex relations seem to intersect with heterosexual marriage and reproduction. Male nonnormative sexual individuals are aware of the societal expectation that requires them not to upset the heterosexual norms of patriarchal dominance in society. “Indeed, they often explicitly reinforced those norms provided the relationships remained discreet (not talked about or seen) and discrete (kept separate from and not interfering with the needs of family, kin and nation),” Marc Epprecht (2013, 100) argues. As shown from the various examples, same-sex sexual practices among African Muslim societies differ from the Western understanding that allows public displays of nonnormative sexual identity. In response to the increasing public visibility of same-sex relationships, Muslim clerics arose to counter the emerging trend, insisting that it contravenes Qur’anic teachings. However, the texts dealing with homosexuality in the Qur’an have been variously interpreted by different Muslims.

SEE ALSO Christianity in Africa: Anglican; Christianity in Africa: Pentecostal and Charismatic; Christianity in Africa: Roman Catholicism; Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa; Homosexual Acts in Shari’ā; Involuntary Servitude and Same-Sex Sexuality in Africa; Maghreb; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Islam

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The Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG) emerged in 1998 after the dissolution of Jamaica’s Gay Freedom Movement (GFM). Jamaican activist Larry Chang formed GFM, the first gay rights movement in the Caribbean, in the mid-1970s. GFM’s goals were to raise consciousness among members of Jamaica’s LGBT community and to advocate for gay rights. GFM published a newsletter, in addition to running programs for LGBT youth, a prison outreach, and a free STD (sexually transmitted disease) clinic. GFM’s closure occasioned the need for specific LGBT interventions on the island. Members of the community, including Chang, Brian Williamson, and Ian McKnight, held a series of meetings and workshops in Kingston to develop new strategies and approaches for LGBT advocacy. They launched J-FLAG on 10 December 1998, with a formal announcement to members of the press on International Human Rights Day.

McKnight and Donna Smith were the first cochairs of the organization, and Julius Powell, Philip Dayle, Akin Hubbard, Thomas Glave, and others would later join as members. The primary goal of the organization was to repeal Jamaica’s “buggery” law—a holdover from the British colonial era (1650–1962) that continued to criminalize anal sex and other forms of sexual intimacy among men. They also sought to lobby political leaders to add sexual orientation to the nondiscrimination clause of the Jamaican constitution, which was established when Jamaica gained independence from England in 1962. In the 1990s the government formed the Joint Select Committee on the Charter of Rights to receive submissions from various interest groups and sectors of the public in order to develop a new charter of rights. JFLAG’s public submission to the committee was one of the organization’s first official actions as a gay rights organization.

Given that the founders had limited activist experience and that the organization had little funding, initially J-FLAG operated out of the offices of Jamaica AIDS Support for Life (JASL) —the country’s oldest and largest human rights organization dedicated to fighting the AIDS epidemic and to advocating for people living with HIV. The challenge of separating JASL from J-FLAG became a point of contention among members, and eventually J-FLAG
branched out into its own offices. Following their submission to parliament, however, J-FLAG’s members received anonymous death threats. Subsequently, J-FLAG remained largely underground until Williamson, an upper-middle-class Jamaican gay activist, agreed to be the public face of the organization. Williamson purchased a house and established a nightclub that became the most popular and most visible space for LGBT people in Jamaica. He would often offer financial support and employment to individual members of the community, including to a young man named Dwight Hayden, who, for reasons that remain unclear, murdered Williamson at his home in 2004. When Williamson’s body was discovered, people from surrounding communities assembled outside his home and publicly celebrated his death. Following his murder, J-FLAG returned to operating underground. Over the decade that followed, however, leaders of the organization gradually began to reemerge in media interviews, and by 2015, J-FLAG had returned to being more visible.

Since its founding, J-FLAG has undertaken several activist projects, including a letter-writing campaign to national newspapers, a help line, workshops for members of the community, advocacy training, and, the submission to the Joint Select Committee on the Charter of Rights calling for the inclusion of sexual orientation as a category for nondiscrimination in Jamaica’s constitution. While the submission was unsuccessful, it established J-FLAG’s status as the island’s foremost gay rights organization on the national stage. J-FLAG has also organized a men’s netball league, game nights, and frequent social events for LGBT communities.

Recently, J-FLAG has taken a more visible approach to its advocacy. In 2015, it organized its first annual pride parade, which coincided with national celebrations of Jamaica’s independence. J-FLAG frequently publishes online magazines with positive images of LGBT Jamaicans and with messages, information, and manifestos geared toward empowering members of the community. J-FLAG also has several new affiliate organizations, such as TransWave, an advocacy group for trans Jamaicans founded by Neish McLean in August 2015, and WE-Change, an organization dedicated to lesbian, bisexual, and trans women. J-FLAG’s new approach seeks to diversify and expand its advocacy to facilitate a broader, more multifaceted engagement with human rights in Jamaica.

SEE ALSO Human Rights and Activism in Latin America

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The modern Arabic novel has generally lacked complex representations of lesbianism, particularly in comparison to the more nuanced engagements with female homoeroticism in the medieval Arabo-Islamic literary tradition. Medieval Arabic literature includes vivid portrayals of romantic and sexual relations between women. Furthermore, medieval Arab lesbians “are said to have formed groups, to have held meetings, and to have led schools in which they taught other lesbians how best to achieve pleasure” (Amer 2009, 219).

The neglect of nonnormative gender and sexual identities in modern Arabic literature may be attributed to a number of factors, including but not limited to the impact of colonialism, increased censorship and authoritarianism, and sociopolitical changes in the contemporary Middle East (al-Samman 2008; Malti-Douglas 2001; Habib 2007; Amer 2012; Massad 2007). When female homosexuality does appear in the modern Arabic novel, it is typically constructed as a less desirable substitute for heterosexuality. Moreover, lesbian body politics are often subsumed by the text’s feminist agenda. The Syrian writer and researcher Iman al-Ghafari argues that “the feminist discourse that turns lesbianism into a political choice is not liberating. Instead, it puts lesbians in a troublesome position where they have to play a major role in fulfilling the desires and fantasies of some heterosexual feminists at the expense of their true lesbian desires” (2002–2003, 87). In a similar vein, the literary scholar Hanadi Al-Samman contends that “the adherence to a politicized passive/active ‘femme/butch’ formula that is clearly anchored in heterosexual and feminist politics rather than in lesbian body politics” stands in the way of engendering complex literary engagements with Arab female homoeroticism (2008, 301). Barring a few exceptions, including Elham Mansour’s Aná hiya anti (2000; I Am You [2008]) and Nihad Sirees’s Halat shaghaf (1998; A case of passion), most modern Arabic novels do not provide profound engagements with lesbianism, let alone feature well-developed lesbian protagonists.

Nawal El Saadawi’s Jannát wa-Iblīs (1992; The Innocence of the Devil [1994]) is among the novels that offer a reductionist treatment of lesbianism. Once the transgressive character Narguiss proclaims her lesbian identity, she meets a bloody death and does not have the opportunity to truly experience lesbian life (and love) out of the closet. Furthermore,
lesbian body politics are often overshadowed by the text’s predominantly feminist agenda. Despite its limitations in exploring lesbian identity, however, the novel does challenge the pervasive discourse of lesbianism as sin, and it gives voice to (lesbian and heterosexual) female protagonists who question dominant religious and cultural norms that engender the maintenance of a heteronormative patriarchal order. Incorporating religious allusions, intertextuality, symbolism, flashbacks, dialogue (in both formal Arabic and Egyptian dialect), and fantasy and realism, El Saadawi’s postmodern novel examines such topics as patriarchy, gender violence, theology, and lesbianism. This entry focuses on the novel’s portrayal of lesbianism and female subversion of patriarchy.

© MARINA HELLI/AFP/GETTY IMAGES
Tunisian Egyptian Writer Nawal El Saadawi. El Saadawi is perhaps the most recognized Arab woman writer in the world and an ardent feminist. Her works focus on often taboo topics related to women’s rights and sexuality, as is the case with Jannāt wa-Iblīs.

Synopsis and Reception of the Novel

Set in a mental institution, Jannāt wa-Iblīs recounts the experiences of four inmates and the two authority figures tasked with overseeing their treatment and ensuring that they are properly monitored and disciplined. The inmates include two females by the names of Ganat and Nefissa; a male patient with the Arabic devil’s name, Eblis; and a male patient carrying the deity’s name (referred to in the English translation as “God”). The authority figures include the female Head Nurse/Narguiss and her superior, the male Director. As the novel unfolds, the reader becomes privy to the past lives of the asylum inhabitants, who have been scarred by traumatic experiences, including abuse by authority figures, failed relationships, and stigmatization. The asylum, however, does not provide a refuge from past trauma, nor does it offer a space for healing or empowerment. As the gender studies scholar Fedwa Malti-Douglas argues, the asylum “is a place where the past assumes center stage, governing and delimiting the actions of the individuals” rather than a space that engenders “forward vision” (1994, xiv).

Despite its association with the Garden of Eden, the asylum is not a paradise by any means. On the contrary, the injustices that happen behind the asylum’s closed gates mirror and
intersect with those that have occurred in the “real world” outside it, particularly the recurrent physical and mental violation of vulnerable populations. Even the devil, with whom the female characters are often linked, is depicted as a scapegoat who receives his share of oppression at the hands of the male deity. It is the women, however, who receive the biggest share of abuse in the asylum. Most poignantly, Nefissa is raped by the deity shortly after invoking him with the words “ya rabb”—that is, “O God” (El Saadawi 1994, 82). As she is being sexually assaulted by the inmate referred to as God, she recalls the instructions of Sheikh Masoud, the religious leader in her village, regarding the importance of keeping her eyes shut in the face of God’s powerful light. Blinded, literally and figuratively, Nefissa cannot even face her assaulter, let alone defend herself. Nefissa’s story draws attention to the instrumentalization of religion as a means of manipulating women. While Nefissa’s story highlights the victimization of women at the hands of male authority figures, the story involving the Head Nurse/Narguiss, Ganat, and the Director demonstrates both the condemnation of lesbianism and female resistance against a patriarchal, heteronormative order.

_Jannát wa-Iblīs_ is often regarded as a sequel to El Saadawi’s novel _Suqut al-Imam_ (1987; _The Fall of the Imam_[1988]), which also provides a scathing critique of religious figures who abuse their authority and exploit women. Similar to _Suqut al-Imam_, _Jannát wa-Iblīs_ was controversial in Egypt, as some religious clerics considered it yet another example of El Saadawi’s blasphemy and her disregard for religion. The novel has been compared to Salman Rushdie’s _Satanic Verses_ (1988) in its transgression. It also contributed to promoting El Saadawi to the top of the Islamists’ death list (Cooke 2015). The novel has received mixed reviews in the West. Some critics have praised El Saadawi for her authoritative engagement with theology and tenacious rewriting of patriarchy. Others, however, have criticized the novel for its simplistic portrayal of Arab women as endless victims and Arab men as unequivocal oppressors, as well as its stylistic weaknesses, including its abstract and overwritten prose.

**Demonization and Disavowal of Lesbianism**

Soon after Ganat enters the asylum, she meets with the Head Nurse and the Director. Ganat seems to recognize the Head Nurse and inquires if she is “Narguiss.” However, the Head Nurse disavows the name with a “nervous shake of her veiled head as though refuting something” and solemnly declares that she is simply the “Head Nurse.” She fidgets with her whistle, twirls “the long chain with her finger like a rosary,” and mutters “a verse to chase away the evil spirits” (El Saadawi 1994, 11). The Head Nurse’s elusive response—her inability to verbally assert that she is not Narguiss—and her distraught demeanor suggest that the two women have been indeed acquainted in the past. In the mind of the Head Nurse, the women’s past relationship must have been “sinful,” as evidenced by her attempt to ward off the evil spirit and use her chain as makeshift prayer beads at the mere allusion
to her past liaison with Ganat. As the novel unfolds, the reader learns of the women’s past relationship and their fondness for one another.

In a chapter titled “Guilt,” Narguiss recalls her admiration of her best friend Ganat, starting with her name, which means “many paradises,” and her self-confident demeanor, despite being afflicted with a dark complexion like the devil. Narguiss remembers feeling ecstatic upon seeing Ganat and describes how “their bodies would fuse into one another, and she and her friend would become as one” as they hugged closely (124–125). When a schoolteacher asks Narguiss whom “she loved the most,” Narguiss replies that it is Ganat, rather than choosing her mother or father as expected. The narrative suggests that the two girls may have been romantically involved or that, at the very least, their friendship had the potential of developing into a full-fledged lesbian relationship. However, this lesbian love is not allowed to flourish. Narguiss’s unconventional response to the teacher’s question earns her a “zero for manners” and prompts a rumor about “a kind of love which the Devil was trying to make appealing to the hearts of the girls” (128). The text emphasizes that not only do the two girls share the devil’s dark complexion and his propensity for disobedience and nonconformity, but they are also perceived as being lured by the devil into falling in the “wrong kind” of love, which ruins their reputations as rumors start to spread in their conservative neighborhood.

It is worth noting that the association of femaleness (not just lesbianism) with the devil recurs throughout the novel, both literally and metaphorically: he is the serpent-like creature who appears in the cracks of the decrepit walls in the female ward, he is Nefissa’s mischievous brother, and he is the angel Ganat most admires because of his distinctive refusal to kneel before God. The women’s constant association with the devil signifies their “guilt by association.” It follows that the “innocence of the devil,” which the narrative ultimately reveals, suggests the innocence of the women as well. In other words, the novel’s final verdict complicates the dominant narrative that has rendered both the female characters and the devil as deviant partners in crime.

The Director prescribes solitary confinement and three sessions of electric shock therapy as a treatment for Ganat. The text’s reference to electric shock therapy, which ultimately results in a substantial loss of memory, is highly symbolic: for the Head Nurse to maintain the facade of normalcy in her current position as an authority figure, as well as a heterosexual woman who is sexually involved with the Director, both she and Ganat must put their intimate relationship behind them. While the Head Nurse/Narguiss deliberately denies any previous knowledge of Ganat, Ganat is forced to forget the past through an invasive medical treatment that targets her body and mind, forcing her into compliance. Her lesbian (or lesbian-like) past represents a badge of shame that must be forcefully extracted from her memory.

Reclamation of Lesbian Identity and Qur’anic Exegesis
In this novel, El Saadawi creates a narrative space where lesbianism is explored in the realm of theology, not just in everyday life. After Ganat undergoes treatment, she loses her memory and stops referring to the Head Nurse as her childhood friend Narguiss. Satisfied with her “progress,” the Director declares her as cured and ready for release from the asylum. However, when the Director attempts to hand the Head Nurse Ganat’s hospital discharge forms, the Head Nurse looks him straight in the eye and does not budge, a move that stands in contrast to what she had done for thirty years: “reach[ing] out with her hand to take written orders from him ... unable to lift her eyes to him” (El Saadawi 1994, 172). The conversation that ensues between the Head Nurse/Narguiss and the Director merits a close analysis:

–What’s the matter with you, girl? ...
–My name is Narguiss, not girl.
–Since when, you girl? ...
–From now onwards.
–Prepare the beer and the snacks. I’m coming to see you tonight.
–I’m leaving, leaving everything.
–Where are you going? To another man?
–I hate you. I hate all men.
–You love women now, eh?
–Yes.
–You’ll go to Hellfire with Lot’s mother.
–No, sir, I won’t.
–To be a lesbian is a sin, don’t you know that?
–No, sir. It is not mentioned in God’s book.
–You fallen woman. You whore.

(172–173)
Up until this point in the narrative, the Head Nurse/Narguiss may be considered both a complicit participant and a victim of the heterosexist system she inhabits. As the Head Nurse, she exerts power and control over the inmates and participates in managing their docile bodies using electric shock and medication. At the same time, she is a victim of shaming and humiliation at the hands of community members who find her relationship with Ganat deviant, as well as the men and women who later witnessed her failure to prove her chastity on her wedding night. In fact, the Director seems to believe her side of the story: that although she did not bleed on her wedding night, she was a virgin upon entering the marriage. He even explains to her that the most likely reason she did not bleed is that her hymen is “elastic.” Despite understanding Narguiss’s predicament and the injustice committed against her, however, the Director becomes the immediate beneficiary of Narguiss’s ostracization and her sense of worthlessness. He exploits her sexually and professionally behind the asylum’s doors.

Feeling a sense of loss upon realizing that Ganat has finally forgotten her as a result of being “cured,” Narguiss finally rebels against the Director and the patriarchal system that empowers him and undermines her identity as a woman and as a lesbian. First, she reclaims her womanhood by refusing to be referred to as “girl,” and she insists that she has a name, Narguiss. She then challenges the Director by declining to receive and serve him in her room and announces her decision to abandon him. When he assumes that she must be involved with another man, she confronts him and strips him of his alleged knowledge—which he had lorded over her for decades—by declaring that she actually hates all men, including him. By answering “yes,” to the Director’s question regarding her preference for women, Narguiss reclaims her lesbian identity that she has been forced to repress.

The last few lines in the dialogue reveal Narguiss’s daring in challenging the Director’s knowledge of the Qur’an and her powerful intervention in the interpretation of religious scripture. Narguiss argues that, contrary to the Director’s belief—and contrary to popular belief—the Qur’an does not condemn female homosexuality by virtue of the fact that female homosexuality is not mentioned in the Qur’an. Narguiss is right in that the Qur’an does not specifically mention lesbianism, or suhaq (the Arabic word for “lesbianism” that the Director uses), at all. As Al-Samman notes, “Female homosexuality is considered to be a sin only if one uses the *qiyās* Islamic rule of jurisprudence (according to which one act is banned because another of a similar nature is)” (**2008**, **300**). In a similar vein, the gender and sexuality studies scholar Samar Habib contends that “there is nothing to suggest that the Qur’an prohibited female homosexual activity” (**2007**, **60**). In other words, while male homosexuality is referenced in relation to the story of Lot’s people, the Qur’an does not include any reference to female homosexuality or to any punishment relating to it.

In her interpretation of this scene between Narguiss and the Director, Malti-Douglas argues that by demonstrating her “superior knowledge of the religious tradition,” Narguiss proves her ability “to subvert this seemingly eternal alliance between males and the religious
tradition” (1995, 204). If knowledge is power, then Narguiss has now reversed the power dynamic between her and the Director. Furthermore, it is important to note that Narguiss shifts her speech from informal Egyptian Arabic (al-ʿamiyya al-misriyya) to standard Arabic (fusha) when she references the Qurʾan, therefore asserting not only her awareness of the Qurʾan’s position on homosexuality but also her authoritative command of formal Arabic, the language of the Qurʾan and of Qurʾanic exegesis. Not only is she not just a “girl,” but she is a lesbian who is capable of authoritatively engaging in theological discussions. Narguiss’s retaliation against the Director and her protest of a dominant narrative that constructs lesbianism as a religious sin may be contrasted with her earlier (elusive) reaction to Ganat’s question regarding her name. She now confidently asserts her name and her lesbian identity, and she has no qualms about referring to the Qurʾan as a means of defending herself against the charge of engaging in “sinful” behavior.

**Death of the Lesbian Character**

Narguiss’s proclamation of her lesbian identity and her rebellion against the Director turn the world of the novel upside down and lead to insurmountable chaos: “The sky had
collapsed on the earth. Police cars ran over it, their wheels turned upwards to the sky.... Whistles echoed, and bells rang, the bells of schools and the bells of churches. Sounds like bells ringing also came from the minarets (El Saadawi 1994, 173). In this surrealistic and hyperbolic scene, the educational, religious, and law enforcement institutions all sound their alarms at this unprecedented news. They are all implicated for propagating patriarchal values and policing gender and sexuality. As Narguiss attempts to run away from the asylum, her eyes shining with a “new gleam, like the eyes of another woman, happy to be free,” she is caught up in the mayhem around her (174). Narguiss is then transformed into a white butterfly. Another butterfly joins her, and the two hover and laugh. However, the freedom of the two butterflies is short lived as the butterflies are shot and drop to the ground, bleeding. The plot suggests that the second butterfly embodies Narguiss’s childhood friend Ganat.

Although Narguiss succeeds in resisting the patriarchal order and proclaiming her lesbian identity, she ultimately shares the destiny of most homosexual characters in Arabic literature: an inescapable and bloody death. Therefore, while the novel disrupts the dominant discourse about the condemnation of lesbianism in the Qur’an, it does not provide an alternative narrative regarding the tragic fate of the lesbian character. Narguiss’s premature death also precludes a thorough examination of her life and sexual identity as a lesbian. It is in this sense that the novel both challenges and reinscribes dominant narratives about female homosexuality.

SEE ALSO  Imarat Ya’kubian (2002; Alaa al-Aswany); Misk al-Ghazal (1988; Hanan al-Shaykh); Sharaf (1997; Sun’allah Ibrahim)

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The etymology and significance of the term *jotería* is important to understanding the relatively new but growing academic field known as jotería studies. The term *jotería* derives from the colloquial Spanish-language term *joto* (sissy, faggot), one of three pejorative terms (the others being *puto* and *maricón*) for gay men in Mexico and in Mexican and Chicanx (a gender-neutral version of Chicano/a; also, Latinx) communities in the United States. According to Robert Buffington (1997), the term *joto* resembles a bastardized past participle of the word *joder* (to fuck), but Buffington suggests the word derives not from *joder*, but from *Jota* (Cell Block J) of the Lecumberri federal penitentiary—in existence from 1900 to 1976—in Mexico City, where prison authorities kept effeminate men isolated from the rest of the prison population starting in the early part of the twentieth century. Prisoners in Cell Block J were called *jotos*, Buffington posits, and the word became synonymous with homosexuality; yet, the word existed before this period. Although for some *jotería* is a stand-in for the US umbrella term *queer*, *jotería* has a cultural, linguistic, and political specificity not captured in *queer*. Given the Mexican and US Chicanx origins of the terms *joto* and *jotería*, other Latinx folks sometimes feel excluded by the nomenclature, but this is changing as people engage with it and as the field decolonizes and becomes more inclusive. It is hard to pinpoint an exact year when the field of jotería studies was created, given the long trajectory of queer Chicanx and Latinx folks engaged in scholarship and cultural production. However, the development of the Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship (AJAAS) in 2011, its first conference in 2012, and the publication of a special issue of *Aztlán* on jotería studies in 2014 were critical, formative events in the growth of the field.

**Resignification of Jotería**
Daniel Enrique Pérez argues that jotería studies “can be considered a critical site of inquiry that centers on nonheteronormative gender and sexuality as related to mestizo subjectivities” (2014, 144). For Xamuel Bañales, jotería studies is a decolonial project; he argues that contrary to the “reclaiming of fag or other terms like dyke and queer, the resignification of Jotería ... is part of a decolonial collective movement—an emerging political term that challenges Western thought” (2014, 156). The influential Chicana lesbian scholar Gloria Anzaldúa (1942–2004) helped launch the academic usage of the term jotería in her classic work *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) when she wrote, “People, listen to what your jotería is saying” (85). This widely cited command has been taken seriously by jotería scholars, artists, and activists as confirming that they have something valuable to say and that their experiences need to be heard. Between 1987 and the *Aztlán* special issue in 2014 (the so-called jotería studies dossier), a vibrant body of work was published using the term and helping to form the field. In the dossier, Anita Tijerina Revilla and José Manuel Santillána (2014) outline tenets of jotería identity and consciousness, which include radical queer love, commitment to multidimensional social justice, and rejection of racism and colonization. Francisco J. Galarte, writing about trans inclusion in jotería studies, asserts that “the challenge for jotería studies is to be attentive to the lived realities of trans* Chican@folk and to consider how this can inform and challenge how we understand varying assemblages of race, gender, sexuality, and nation” (2014, 233).

Importantly, not everyone doing queer and trans studies work at the intersection of Chicanx/Latinx studies is comfortable saying they are engaged in jotería studies. In part, this is due to the lack of legibility of the term in mainstream academic circles, including in queer studies. Another reason is that that field is grounded in border consciousness and may be attributed to Mexican or Chicano communities specifically. For some, the use of the pejorative term jotería as a term of empowerment is still a challenge. Although these scholars choose not to use jotería to describe their work, their contributions are part of the intellectual lineage that nonetheless contributes to an understanding of the field.

Jotería studies is a political project and scholarly field vibrantly evolving at the intersection of Chicanx, Latinx, queer of color, and transgender studies concerned with the histories, identities, scholarly works, and artistic and activist practices of queer Chicanx and Latinx people. In the jotería studies dossier, editor Michael Hames-García defines jotería studies as “identifiable but not yet fully formed” (138). This collection of essays put jotería studies on the map and is regarded by scholars and educators as a foundational pedagogical, historical, and theoretical text, containing essays on topics ranging from jotería activism to spirituality, identity, aesthetics, pedagogy, and trans studies. They serve as an entry into the field and leave room for others to continue to define it and reimagine its contours. As Hames-García wrote, the essays in the dossier are “gestures toward elaborating this emergent formation, whatever it might finally become” (2014, 138).
Emergence of Jotería Studies

For many, jotería studies has a longer historical genealogy than one might expect. The field dates back to the early work of gay and lesbian Chicanx artists and activists of the late 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, as well as Chicana feminists such as Anzaldúa and Cherrie Moraga (1952–), who coedited the landmark anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981). Certainly, works such as Moraga’s *Loving in the War Years: Lo que nunca pasó por sus labios* (*Loving in the War Years: That which never passed through her lips*; 2000 [1983]), *The Last Generation* (1993), and *Virgins, Guerrillas, and Locas: Gay Latino Men Write about Love* (2001; edited by Jaime Cortez), Tomás Almaguer’s essay “Chicano Men: A Cartography of Homosexual Identity and Behavior,” and fiction by Michael Nava, John Rechy, and Terri de la Peña are part of the legacy of jotería studies, as are women-of-color feminist texts by Audre Lorde, bell hooks, Emma Pérez, Chela Sandoval, and others. Tatiana de la tierra’s poetry, photographs, and editorial work, and Carla Trujillo’s *Chicana Lesbians: The Girls Our Mothers Warned Us About* (1991) and *Living Chicana Theory* (1997) are included among the foundational influences of jotería studies. More recently, queer-of-color theorists, such as Leonel Cantú, José Esteban Muñoz, Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, Juana María Rodríguez, Richard T. Rodríguez, Catrióna Rueda Esquibel, and Rita Urquijo-Ruiz have also contributed to the expanding field. Rigoberto González’s *Butterfly Boy: Memories of a Chicano Mariposa* (2011) is also an influential text. However, it was the publication of the dossier that helped to name, curate, and shape the field, as well as to provide legibility, primarily within the North American academy.

As jotería studies scholars join the faculties in US universities, more students are exposed to the field. Currently, jotería studies is taught in Chicanx, Latinx, and queer studies, sociology, and education courses, to name a few. Students may find an entire undergraduate or graduate course on jotería studies, or instructors who include readings on the syllabi or use a jotería pedagogical approach in their classes at the University of Nevada, Reno; the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; Portland State University; the University of Oregon; Oregon State University; the University of Michigan; the University of California, Davis; the University of California, Santa Barbara; the University of California, San Diego; the University of Minnesota, and some of the California State Universities, among others, where some of the innovators in the field are teaching or in graduate school. Artists and activists are central to jotería studies, as are movements such as the undocuqueer movement, led by a network of queer undocumented immigrant activists fighting for the rights of undocumented youth and their families (*Equality Archive 2018*). The pathbreaking labors of Bamby Salcedo, immigrant and trans rights activist and founder of the TransLatin@Coalition, have been inspirational to jotería studies. Her work has been documented by several jotería studies scholars, and she has led workshops and given keynote speeches at many conferences and symposia. These examples show how intersectionality and coalition building are important to the field. These coalitions were
germinating as early as 2006, when an undergraduate conference called La Jotería was held at the University of California, Los Angeles, organized by queer Chicanx and Latinx students and activists (Santillana 2011). Many of the organizers and attendees have moved on to make important contributions to the field. US-based artists Monica Palacios, Yosimar Reyes, Julio Salgado, Adelina Anthony, Carlos Manuel, and Hector Silva have made important contributions through the provocations in their art and have inspired jotería scholarship on their work. Recent scholarship on jotería studies in mainstream publications includes Alejandro Madrid’s essay about Mexican icon Juan Gabriel in a 2018 issue of *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, which also includes a poem by Maya Chinchilla, and Ellie Hernández’s essay “Cultura Jotería (Jotería Culture): The Ins and Outs of Latina/o Popular Culture” in *The Routledge Handbook of Latina/o Pop Culture* (2016). Another key text within this developing canon is *Queer in Aztlan: Chicano Male Recollections of Consciousness and Coming Out*, edited by Adelaida del Castillo and Gibrán Güido. Through these interdisciplinary and intersectional projects, jotería studies engages with activism, popular culture, affect, memory, healing, sex positivity, self-care, and spirituality.

Jotería studies is nurtured by its relationship with the AJAAS, which was founded in 2011 after meetings in Berkeley, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles. The founders of jotería studies met at the National Association for Chicana and Chicano Studies (NACCS), a Chicanx professional organization that brings together academics, students, and community members doing scholarship on or for Chicanas/os/xs and Latinas/os/x. The development of AJAAS followed a route similar to that of Mujeres Activas en Letras y Cambio Social (MALCS; Women Active in Letters and Social Change), which broke off from NACCS and created its own organization in 1982. Women and gay/lesbian members of NACCS became frustrated with the lack of representation and a safe space for them to share their work within the organization. The Lesbian Caucus was created in 1990, and in 1993 the Gay Caucus was incorporated into NACCS and became the Joto Caucus two years later. In 2007 the Joto Caucus of the NACCS hosted its first conference at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, titled Towards a Queer Homeland: Bridging Communities and Resisting Hate. This conference catapulted a critical mass of queer Latinx and Chicanx people into a sequence of organized events (conferences, working meetings, and symposia), including large events at the University of Oregon (2008) and California State University, Los Angeles (2010). At that point many felt it was time to create their own organization, and the AJAAS was established in 2011. In 2012 the first AJAAS conference took place in Albuquerque, New Mexico, followed by conferences in Phoenix in 2014 and Minneapolis in 2017; the next meetings were planned for 2019 in Portland, Oregon, and 2021 in Reno, Nevada.

As AJAAS and jotería studies are symbiotic, the organization and its regional offshoots have engaged in defining, debating, healing, loving, creating space, and being intentional about centering indigeneity and Afrodiasporic and intraethnic alliances. Cross-generational exchanges among artists, scholars, and activists have led to the intersection of activism, solidarity, community, and coalition, taking seriously activism and politics as central to
knowledge production and art practice. These tenets were important in the development of AJAAS but can also be seen as central to jotería studies scholarship. Several scholars in the jotería studies dossier documented their own engagements with and contributions to the burgeoning field of jotería studies. Since then, both jotería studies and AJAAS have flourished in academic and community spaces in the United States, and several scholars identify their work as jotería studies, although the origins of this work predates both the 2014 dossier and the organization. Speaking of the history of the field, Hames-García noted that “jotería studies is not something new. It feels old, continuous with years of organizing, reading, writing, and activism. In another sense, of course, it is new, so I have been trying to put my finger on exactly what is new about it. I think it has to do with its face-to-faceness” (2014, 4).

**Recent Developments**

Jotería studies is continually being shaped by artistic, cultural, political, and scholarly developments. These include art exhibits, films, activist platforms, and college courses on jotería studies, as well as the AJAAS conferences and opportunities for publication. One important advance was the establishment of Kórima Press by poet and activist Lorenzo Herrera y Lozano, one the original founders of the AJAAS. Kórima Press is an independent publisher committed to “queer Chicana and Chicano literary art,” according to its website. Publishing books by Claudia Rodríguez, Maya Chinchilla, Michael Nava, Anel I. Flores, Adelina Anthony, Joe Delgado, Cathy Arellano, and others, Kórima has been a nexus of creativity, organizing book launches and poetry readings across the United States. Its publications serve as an archive of jotería literary innovation and inspire new theorizations and scholarship grounded in the lexicon of jotería studies. These works take an unapologetically introspective approach to identity and cultural production that is attentive to the impacts of colonialism, homonormativity, neoliberalism, and racism. Another literary and artistic endeavor anchored in jotería studies is the Jotería Storytelling Project developed by Ernesto J. Martínez in collaboration with Maya Gonzalez, Adelina Anthony, and other artists (AJAAS 2018).

While not all projects use the term jotería, many explicitly do, and they are guided by the evolving vocabulary and framework jotería studies provides, which allow them to claim identities and epistemologies typically shunned by the more traditional Chicano studies, Latino studies, and queer theory (espoused especially by white academics who remain uncritical of whiteness). Others build on jotería frameworks, developing such new theories as Daniel Enrique Pérez’s “mariposa consciousness” and Roberto Orozco’s “critical race jotería theory.” The voices of queer US Central Americans have also been part of jotería studies, as exemplified by the scholarship of Horacio N. Roque Ramírez, Suyapa Portillo, Raquel Gutierrez, William Calvo-Quirós, and Juan Ríos, and the poetry, performance, and editorial work of Maya Chinchilla, whose poem “Jota Poetics” insinuates jotería as a “home”
Possible Future Directions

The future of jotería studies is generative. As a political project, jotería studies is providing a truly intersectional perspective and making an effort to continuously engage queer, trans, gender-nonconforming, indigenous, Afro diasporic, and immigrant voices and perspectives. Future directions include transnational approaches that cross borders to address LGBTQ culture and politics not only in Mexico but also in other places, such as Panama, Guatemala, and Argentina, for example. Scholars in the fields of linguistics, philosophy, film and media, art history, and higher education are applying jotería studies to their perspectives. For example, Pedro DiPietro studies modes of being “permeated by indigenous cosmologies (Aymara, Quechua, and Nahua), ... [and] the production of queer space by comparing networks of racialized travestis in the Andes to jotería networks in the San Francisco Bay area,” as noted on his faculty webpage (Syracuse University 2018). Furthermore, “travesti and jotería both point to the geopolitical tensions between West and non-West. Latina and Chicana spatial thinking enables the comparative study that DiPietro pursues.” Cristina Serna, a queer Chicana art historian, writes about the cultural, aesthetic, and political practices of feminist and queer artists in twentieth- and twenty-first-century US Latina/o and Latin American social movements. Serna’s work on Mexican lesbian feminist and queer Chicana feminist art highlights the way art has been a medium for activists to engage in transborder dialogue about identity, the border, culture, and social justice (Colgate University 2018). Across the border, Mexico City–based Alexandra Rodríguez de Ruiz is a trans activist who lived for many years in the United States. Her activism and publications about her work are part of the transnational conversation in jotería studies. These are only a few examples of the transnational conversation unfolding and building jotería studies.

Space limitations in this entry do not permit mention of everyone who has contributed to and continues to shape jotería studies through their scholarship, art, and activism. However, this entry should serve as a starting point for students and scholars interested in doing more thorough research on this growing field. Jotería studies needs more and new critical voices at various intersections of identities and experiences, including the transnational connections described above and engagement with transgender voices and experiences. As a field that is still expanding and finding its range of analytical and methodological approaches, jotería studies continues to be shaped by scholars, activists, and artists as they confront the political climate around them. Its newness and indeed its marginal status in the academy allow for a malleability that is exciting, promising, and fruitful.

SEE ALSO Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Neoliberalism in Latin America; Queer in Latin America; tatiana de la tierra (1961–2012); Travesti and Trans Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean
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A complex Thai term most commonly used to refer to male-bodied individuals who express a feminine gender and seek relations with heterosexually identified male partners.

The Thai term *kathoey* is often translated as third sex (*phet thi-saam*). The label can have negative connotations and should be used with care. The Royal Thai General System would transliterate *kathoey* as “kathoei,” but “kathoey” is common in English academic use. English Romanizations of the term also include *krathoey*, *gatoei*, and *gatuhy*. *Kathoey* is often used synonymously with “ladyboy.” Alternate English translations of *kathoey* are “gay,” “fag,” “sissy,” “queen,” and “transvestite.” In everyday Thai usage, *kathoey* are considered along a continuum of degree rather than as an absolute difference of kind from gay men. Thus, the term includes intersex individuals, postoperative transsexual women, and feminine gay men (*Jackson 2004; Sinnott 2004; Enteen 2009; Chonwilai 2012; Kang 2014*).

Since the 1980s, urban middle-class usage of the term more narrowly referred to trans women or sissies, queens, and other femininely presenting males. In Bangkok the term is rarely used to refer to gay (*maen maen*, masculine gay men), tom (butch lesbians), or trans masc (trans masculine) individuals assigned female at birth. (Note that the term *trans masc* moves away from the “opposite sex” binary indicated by the term *female to male* to a broader range of masculine identifications.) That is, the term references feminine male-bodied individuals (*ork-sao*, “show out their femininity”) or “effeminacy” more broadly (*Kang 2012*). The two defining characteristics of *kathoey* are feminine gender expression and a desire to attract “real” or “normal” (heterosexually identified) male partners. *Kathoey* can also be used to refer to intersex (“hermaphroditic”) individuals who are referred to as *kathoey thae* (real *kathoey*). In rural areas, *kathoey* is still used to refer to any person whose gender and sexuality are not heterosexual male or female.

In Thai, *kathoey* can be used neutrally or pejoratively based on tone and context. In 2010, after an hours-long deliberation, Khreua-khai Pheuan Kathoey Thai (Thai Transgender Alliance, or Thai TGA) decided to use the term in the Thai version of their name. Founding Thai TGA members felt that it was the broadest and most widely recognizable term in reference to trans women and could be given new positive valences, according to
unpublished fieldwork conducted by Dredge Kang in 2010. When in-group, kathoey refer to each other vocatively as whores (e.g., *i-dok*, *i-tua*, *kari*) and *tut* (fag, sissy, queen; thought to derive either from “Tootsie” or the term for “ass”), which sissies and queens also use self-referentially. This would be highly offensive otherwise.

Kathoey also jokingly use the slang *kratiam* (garlic) to refer to each other, because it sounds similar, allowing them to speak openly about a potentially taboo subject in public, and because food is often used as a metaphor for sex. The term *norg-toey* (younger sibling kathoey) and *kathoey-noi* (a little bit kathoey) are endearing and diminutive, and often are used for youth whose gender expansiveness is evident or who exhibit potential signs of becoming kathoey but are not yet transitioning into womanhood or fully realized. Another term that can apply to these individuals is *hua pok* (shaven head or short hair). When not referring to a youth, *hua pok* is generally pejorative, synonymous with *i-aep*, which refers to kathoey who try to pass as men or closeted gay men. Kathoey also dismiss each other with the term *kathoey khwai* (water buffalo kathoey), which suggests unattractive faces, large masculine builds, or old-fashioned and rural styles. Kathoey prefer being called *sao praphet-sorn* (second category woman), especially in the context of beauty pageants, cabaret performances, and entertainment media. *TG* or *sao thi-ji* (transgender woman) is often used in the context of HIV prevention and services, borrowing from the English abbreviation MSM & TG (males who have sex with males as well as trans women) used in global health discourse. The term *phuying kham-phet* (literally, cross-gender woman; transsexual lady) has become popular since 2010 through the advocacy of Nok Yollada and her Samakhom Bukkhon Kham-phet Haeng Prathet (Transsexual Association of Thailand, or Trans Female Association of Thailand). Terms such as *banteut* and *taeo* typically have negative connotations; they are used primarily in writing rather than speech.

**Thai Genderscapes**

Various formulations of the Thai sex/gender system have been proposed in academic and popular literature identifying three to eighteen or more categories ([Morris 1994](#); [Jackson 2000](#)). Thais are often nonconfrontational in interpersonal interactions and provide room for “following one's heart,” but still stress and tacitly enforce compliance to group and social norms. This includes the standardization of morally legitimate genders and their other permutations. Genderscapes focus on the distribution of sex/gender/sexuality forms in the everyday lived experience of gendered worlds as they are conditioned, practiced, and recontextualized by the ever-transforming historical and sociocultural realities of labeling, meaning, and identification in uneven fields of moral evaluation, social legitimacy, and power ([Kang 2014](#)). Genderscapes thus destabilize universalized notions of sexual dimorphism and compulsive heterosexuality through cross-cultural comparison.

Individuals who identify as kathoey express a broad range of gender presentations, which also frequently change over the life course or due to specific circumstances. (For example,
the death of a parent requires ordination as a monk, which includes shaving the head and removing any breast augmentations.) Some kathoey identify themselves via their gender performance of femininity, others via their sexual desires for "real men"; the latter often compels the former. This is common when, for example, the kathoey from the village who moves to the city changes from being kathoey to gay, including “gay king.” There are also regular cases of gay men in the city transitioning to trans women, tom transitioning to trans men, and so on. Clearly, biological differences, categorical labeling, and social institutions play a role in identity formation, but the flexibility of Thai genderscapes allows for a back-and-forth between kathoey and gay or other identities, sometimes repeatedly. While US gender studies academics and LGBT+ activists have promoted ontologically fixed distinctions between gay/lesbian and trans identities, everyday people often think of these identities on a gender continuum. The conflict between the difference in frameworks of academics and activists and of everyday folx (a gender-inclusive version of “folks” used self-referentially within the LGBT+ community) is rarely explored.

In Thailand there is more or less cultural consensus that gender and sexuality are clearly linked, though this connection has been eroding since Thai gay men and lesbians have been deinstitutionalizing heterogender pairings. Heterogender relationship forms, where one partner is masculine and one is feminine, are no longer presumed. Gay king + gay queen and tom + dee have evolved to include both dai mot (versatile gay men), tut lesbian (sissy + sissy), tom gay (tom + tom), and tom gay two way (reciprocal gay tom). There is an ongoing proliferation of new forms (Sinnott 2012; Kang 2014). Kathoey + “real man” has similarly evolved. Kathoey generally consider sexual relationships with each other to be repulsive: homosexual, homogender, “lesbian.” However, this is changing as kathoey are increasingly pairing with and can find romantic or companionate fulfilment with gay, tom, other kathoey, and women. Furthermore, sex and love need not be mutually entangled. Kathoey generally have no qualms about buying sex from men or gay men. But there are more options for kathoey who can also be sao-siap (penetrating or insertive girl), as their versatility expands their potential partnerships.

**History and Culture**

There are various potential sources of kathoeyness in contemporary Thailand, some of which constitute continuities from the past and others that are novel formations or hybridizations. *Kathoey* can also be used to refer to fruit trees that bear no fruit or seedless fruit (e.g., a barren papaya tree or a seedless longan); this is closer to the meaning of *kathoey* as intersex or sterile. The term is thought to originate from Khmer. Others point to the kathoey origin in the mythology of Lanna, now the region of northern Thailand (Costa and Matzner 2007). The Tripitaka, the core religious texts of Theravada Buddhism practiced in Thailand, notes the existence of five sexes, including those we would now consider trans feminine, trans masculine, and nonbinary or intersex (Jackson 1998).
The first historical evidence for the use of the term is in the Three Seals Law of 1805. Kathoey were barred from serving as witnesses in court cases, suggesting that they were untrustworthy or mentally deficient. What a kathoey was, however, remains unclear. In the early twentieth century the Kingdom of Thailand mounted and legalized a highly codified system of modern sex differentiation. In trying to maintain its independence from colonial European powers, Thailand had to recast its purported lack of gender differentiation into sexual dimorphism (man and woman, and only those two) in a manner clearly legible to the West (Van Esterik 2000; Jackson 2003; Loos 2006). The autocolonial governmentality of regulating gender thus provided the basis from which new cross-gender identities could emerge. That is, fixing binary male and female poles created new opportunities for their transgression and made those transgressions hypervisible.

Kathoey, as trans women, have increasingly differentiated themselves from gay men and tom (and vice versa). The term gay (as a noun) entered Thai in the 1960s, tom (from “tomboy”) in the 1970s. While there is little evidence of kathoeyness before this time, since then the concept of the kathoey has drastically changed, partly in relation to these other categories. Additionally, contra prior work in gay and lesbian studies that suggested that trans individuals would be replaced by modern gay and lesbian identities, there has been a simultaneous proliferation of all major categories of gender-variant individuals in Thailand since the 1960s (Jackson 2000). Dennis Altman’s (1996) original “global gays” hypothesis and subsequent modifications, for example, explicitly argue for the coevalness of indigenous forms of homosexuality, problematically including transgenderism and modern gay identity. However, the globalization of modern gay identities diffuses from a US-centric, post-Stonewall origin. Following the denied but presumed teleological categorizations of sexual identities leading to “modern” egalitarian homogender sexuality (Murray 2002), this framework suggests there would be a reduction in the number of gender-transformed, age-graded, and other “traditional” forms of homosexuality as they are transformed by gay and lesbian identities following capitalist economic development (D’Emilio 1983). Globalization and transnational contact is not creating kathoey but precipitating their current form (Jackson 2009).

Contemporary Thais generally believe that being born kathoey in this lifetime is the result of a karmic infraction of adultery, neglecting the rearing of one’s children, or prostitution in a prior life (Jackson 1998). Other etiologies include environmental factors ranging from cold, distant fathers to the overuse of testosterone-blocking plastics (Kang 2012). Thus, people born kathoey are tolerated and pitied because they have already been karmically punished to suffer in this lifetime: being kathoey is not a choice or lifestyle preference but rather attributable to external causes. Kathoey suffer because they cannot reach enlightenment in this gender form. Only men can be enlightened, through monkhood and training. Some Thais also believe that reincarnation as a kathoey will repeat 500 lifetimes before the sin is released.
Kathoey often do not believe in the karmic origins of their transgenderism. Many posit a “born this way” sense of self that does not entail misdeeds in a previous life. Among these individuals, most point to early experiences that demonstrated they were really girls, based on their choice of clothing, toys, friendships, and crushes. Many kathoey positively express physical pleasure and the crystallization of their identities during early childhood or teenage sexual experiences. These experiences, sometimes with peers but typically with older men, would likely be considered child sexual abuse in a Western context, but almost universally, kathoey suggest that they were beneficial rather than detrimental to their sense of personhood. The stories are often framed with the kathoey as the sexual instigator or aggressor, or as otherwise agentive, and they are compared to stories about cisgender (referring to individuals whose gender identity is aligned with their sex assigned at birth) girls who had much less control over their bodies and life situations. This is not to say that such encounters are objectively positive. Those who are psychologically devastated are the least likely to share their stories, so there is likely bias in how these incidents are reported in the literature.

**Sexual and Romantic Relationships**

Besides being karmically bound, the kathoey suffers in this lifetime because s/he will never find true, lasting love as a kathoey. The sexual, romantic, and affectionate partners of kathoey typically are heterosexually identified men. Because kathoey cannot provide biological children, they are doomed to be abandoned for “real women,” because men have three responsibilities: (1) duty to country (military service), religion (ordination as a monk), and king; (2) duty to marry and raise children; and (3) duty to support one's parents, especially in light of the karmic debt to mothers. Though not the same, tom also suffer under the expectation that feminine dee (from “lady”) will ultimately leave them for “real men” (Sinnott 2004). Local men are thought to “resort” to kathoey because they cannot do better; they are stereotyped as incompetent, lazy, and unable to attract a “real woman” (Kang, unpublished fieldnotes 2009; W. Keeler, personal communication, 26 March 2010). Thus, their status is diminished, and they experience courtesy stigma when in public with kathoey partners.

If gender definitions are fluid in Thailand, the definition of sex workers is even more slippery (Cohen 1982). There is little “prostitution” in Thailand, but there is a great deal of patronage, in both local and international sectors. Foreign partners tend to fetishize Thai kathoey. Aside from the desire for an “Oriental” lady, many sex tourists are explicitly looking for a woman with a penis (“chick with dick” or “shemale”). A man can never know if a woman is faking an orgasm, but a kathoey has a visible orgasm—the evidence is palpable. Therefore, in Thai “ladyboy bars,” sex workers are required to be preoperative. Preoperative and postoperative kathoey can also work in “girl bars” or as freelancers on the street. Male sex tourists who are repulsed by the idea of having sex with another “man”
and anxious about accidentally falling for a ladyboy trade tips to identify the signs of a woman being kathoey. Their homosexual anxieties are proof of masculinity. By contrast, about half of foreign men confronted with the situation think of it as local spice, something to try on a trip when locally available.

**Social Roles and Media Representations**

Kathoey are most commonly associated with sex work, entertainment, beauty pageants, hair salons, fashion, food service, and tourism. Although there is high social tolerance for kathoey, they continue to face discrimination, physical violence, and structural impediments to life opportunities, especially in education and employment. Kathoey reverse some of the gender roles associated with women. For example, kathoey typically financially support their male partners, rather than vice versa. Kathoey are also more likely to be of a higher class standing than their male partners—the reverse of hypergamy, the cross-cultural pattern of women marrying men of higher status. Their putative sexual availability and aggressiveness with men also sharply contrasts Thai gender norms, in which young women’s chastity is prized. When young women are sexually unavailable, young men are thought to resort to kathoey or each other. Kathoey are often involved in care chains, having a foreign patron who regularly sends money and occasionally visits (sometimes maintaining more than one patron simultaneously), continuing to have Thai and foreign clients, and “raising” a local Thai “boy.”

Although some kathoey are involved in Hindu, courtly, and local spirit cults, kathoey are generally not thought to be spiritually more connected with the undifferentiated nature of the universe, as trans people are in other parts of Southeast Asia. Rather, being intermediate between males and females, they are able to effectively channel both male and female deities, kings, and spirits. Additionally, because kathoey are not “real men,” they are permeable to possession; men and especially monks are not. Because kathoey are not “real women,” they do not experience the unholy pollution of menstruation. Furthermore, as former men who ordained as monks, they already have accrued a certain degree of religious power. Thus, kathoey and gay men make ideal spirit mediums.

Trans people are regularly represented in the media. Newspapers primarily associate kathoey with sex work and criminality (e.g., stealing money from their clients). Though trans women have been portrayed as comedic or tragic characters in film and television, their roles are expanding to be more common, activist, and diverse. Like Venezuelans who note the “spectacular beauty” of transformistas (*Ochoa 2006*), Thais often express awe and admiration for the (albeit freakish) “over-beauty” of kathoey, claiming that kathoey cabaret performers, beauty pageant contestants, models, and actors possess corporeal characteristics unattainable by “real” women. Kathoey cosmetic surgery and self-transformation are often valorized instead of stigmatized. Therefore, bodily feminization practices and gender transition in general can be very positive experiences for kathoey, but
more so if they are considered beautiful and do not have the stereotypical impediments of a Chinese father or Muslim community.

One reason foreigners believe kathoey are more accepted in Thailand than they are is because of the media that circulates internationally and is subtitled (Kang 2011). Popular Thai overseas films such as Iron Ladies (2000; Thai title, Satrie lek) and Beautiful Boxer (2004) provide positive affective associations with trans identities. However, the majority of portrayals in Thai films that never get exported, such as Hor taew tak (2007; Haunting me) and Dtaew dte dteen ra-bert (2009; Sassy player), would offend the same audiences. What appears “amazing” to the foreign gaze is often read as amusing, strangely titillating, or abnormally perverted by locals. This has been exacerbated by recent trends in K-pop cover dancing among sissies. The cover group Wonder Gay, for example, was held up by elite commentators as a contagious model promoting lack of genuine masculinity, developmental backwardness, and Korean influence among Thai youth.

**Medical and Legal Issues**

High social tolerance for kathoey does not mean there is no stigma or discrimination. This is especially true for kathoey who are not beautiful and do not pass as cisgender women. The most common complaint among trans and gender-expansive femme individuals in Thailand is that they are not able to find a “husband” (pua). Second, if they have difficulty with their families, they want to improve relations. Third, they want to make changes to their birth certificates, national identification cards, passports, and other legal documents, which in Thailand is not allowed, even after gender surgery.

For kathoey, this means that they have difficulties with safe feminization practices and tenuous access to professional health care, greater social vulnerability to partner violence and HIV infection, higher rates of substance misuse (e.g., methamphetamines), and exposure to invasive bodily searches and sexual harassment during international travel. In addition, they cannot legally marry a partner of the “same sex” or adopt children. The list of policy-level assaults is extensive. Well-documented cases include the 1997 attempt by the Rajabhat Institute (national system of teacher colleges) to prohibit “sexually deviant” individuals from admission, and a 2000 government public relations department request for television producers to limit portrayals of the “third sex.”

Older kathoey are rarely publicly visible. There are various theories to explain this, including that they die young from HIV, violence, drug abuse, or feminization procedures gone awry, or that they are unable to maintain their beauty and therefore revert to living as cisgender men of various sexual orientations. It is important not to stereotype kathoey as sex workers but also to be cognizant that sex work is a common profession among kathoey, in part because of the discrimination they experience in legal employment. About half of kathoey engage in regular sex work. In Bangkok Thai settings, kathoey can charge 100 Thai
baht (THB) (about $3 in 2018) for a quickie hand job or blow job on-site or 500 to 700 THB for service that occurs in a short-term hotel room. Rates for foreigners are more likely to be 1,000 to 1,500 THB for “short time” and 2,000 to 2,500 THB for “all night.” In high tourist areas, police harassment is heightened for kathoey. A kathoey can be arrested simply for being with a Caucasian man, which implicates the couple in sex tourism; the partner is evidence of sex work, as are any condoms s/he is carrying. Kathoey are refused admission to some nightclubs and hotels following the same rationale, to prevent sex workers from doing business on the premises. There is, however, increasing human rights activism and specialized services, such as Munnithi Sittoe (Sisters Foundation) in Pattaya and Sun Thaenchoerin (Tangerine Community Health Center) in Bangkok.

Human rights and policy reforms for kathoey have broad support among LGBT activists in Thailand. Unlike in other parts of the world where trans women were a later addition to lesbian and gay movements, in Thailand kathoey and tom have been central to and actively involved in what is referred to as “sexual diversity” movements; that is, kathoey do not have to be “included” because their perspectives and participation are expected. There have been many legal battles initiated by kathoey and many have been successful, often to the surprise of both local Thais and foreign observers. One of the most publicized involved the 2011 revision of the language that exempted trans women from mandatory military service. Previously, trans women who were conscripted via the lottery system were exempted due to “permanent and severe mental illness,” which made it difficult for kathoey to secure employment because job applicants are required to submit their military service documentation. (Alternatively, kathoey who were on hormones or who had breast augmentation surgery were exempted for having a “deformed chest.”) After the court ruling, the exemption language was softened to the less stigmatizing “gender does not correspond to sex at birth.” Implementation of the policy has been uneven, but it is improving. Trans rights are increasingly being taken up by the courts and garnering broader support among legislators.

SEE ALSO Hijras; Sex Tourism in Asia; Sex Work in Asia; Third Genders

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The presence of homosexuality and gender variance in the traditional cultures of the peoples of Kenya can be difficult to trace. The fluidity of the largely oral tradition of Kenya's precolonial culture makes it notoriously unreliable as a source of information on topics as charged as sexual orientation, particularly after coming under the influence of Kenya's dominant religions of Islam and Christianity. Yet it is still possible to find remnants of traditional artifacts that reference homoeroticism and gender variance.

**Sociocultural Context**

Oral literature cannot be studied and analyzed meaningfully outside the sociocultural forces of the society that created it. This limits an individual's ability to write about traditional “Kenyan” cultural understanding on any subject. One may be lucky to establish dominant themes emerging from the forty-two ethnic groups in Kenya, but there will always be nuances and intimate details to any cultural practice that are understood only by the insiders of any one of those cultural practices or worldviews. As such then, the value of the cultural remnants described below may very well be limited to the Kikuyu, the best-documented and historically influential ethnic identity. There are precious few historical writings in Kenya today that speak of homoeroticism or gender variance without ascribing a pseudo-African-Christian/Islamic value judgment at the same time. Themes that emerge range from viewing homoeroticism as something experimental or strictly juvenile to being pseudo-spiritual or a curse. Gender variance is also contextualized within the realm of the spiritual and to be feared. The following are some contextual themes that are important in understanding homoerotic and gender variance in Kenya.

**Homosexuality as a Juvenile Activity** Jomo Kenyatta, with his book *Facing Mount Kenya* ([1938] 1965), became perhaps the first indigenous Kenyan author to write on this subject without overmoralizing it. He casts sexual activity as being highly regulated, but even within this restrictive environment there were socially allowed pressure valves for sexual release. For example, before initiation into adulthood, “it is considered right and proper for boys to practice masturbation as a preparation for their future sexual activities. Sometimes two or more boys compete in this, to see which can show himself more active than the rest”
Competitive masturbation would probably not fit into the modern homoerotic practice of mutual masturbation among self-identifying gay men. One must be careful not to impose a contemporary narrative, especially because masturbation was considered very wrong for girls of a similar age. Indeed, even boys were supposed to outgrow this practice after initiation into adulthood. Others have ascribed homosexuality to juvenile acts that result from hormonal changes during adolescence.

**Heterosexuality as the Normative Behavior** Kenyatta also notes that given the freedom for heterosexual intercourse between young people of opposite sex, homoeroticism was irrelevant. One would therefore contextualize this reasoning to the lack of visibility of minority populations in any meaningful or culturally significant way, especially in the context of a conformist culture. It is therefore hard to find any legacy of minority narratives of homoerotic relationships and/or gender variance. Conformism is itself situated within a metaphysical and deontological (rules- or duty-based ethical) worldview, one featuring benevolent and malevolent spirits and ancestors, who have the ability to cause diseases and other calamities. As Michael T. Katola noted in a 2014 article, children were taught that they do not live alone, and they were therefore required to conform to the social norms and obligations. Death and calamity were seen to result from diversion from the established social order. Individuals operating outside the social norm were seen to be a threat not only to themselves but also to the society as a whole. This had a powerful effect not just of repressing potentially dangerous behaviors but also of silencing knowledge of their existence or encouraging people to avert their eyes from such behavior.

**Gender-Bending Mythical Stories and Proverbs** Myths about the changing of gender are quite common in many African communities in Kenya. Among the Kikuyu, for example, walking around the Mugumo tree seven times would lead one to change one's gender from female to male or vice versa. The Mugumo tree was a sacred place of worship for the Kikuyu, and it is not clear whether this myth was meant to dissuade sacrilege or to emphasize the magical powers associated with the sacred place. At any rate, the very idea of gender change demonstrates that the Kikuyu did not necessarily think of gender as immutable—that change could indeed be countenanced. Yet while one has to be careful not to impose a contemporary understanding of transgender rights to a different cultural milieu, the centrality of the Mugumo tree in the spirituality of this community should not be discounted. Among the Kamba, the Kituluni Hills are respected as sacred. Although the phenomenon that made them respected is now scientifically understood as that of a so-called gravity hill (where, for example, water appears to run uphill as a result of an optical illusion), it is believed that anyone who wanted to change his or her gender needed only to walk around the Kituluni Hills seven times.

**Sex and Sexuality Not Viewed as Moral Issue** Many communities in Kenya did not see sex and sexuality as a moral issue, a view that changed with attempts to normalize African sexuality and make it consistent with a Christian worldview. John S. Mbiti (1990), regarded
as the father of contemporary African theology, stated that sexual activity is a ritual with spiritual value for Africans—hence not at odds with Christian morality. Sexual practice was highly regulated and understood within the context of childbearing and family structure, as well as a community sense of internal and external security. Sexual pleasure per se was not viewed from a puritanical perspective but rather in relation to the risk of premarital pregnancy. Indeed, sexual pleasure that did not lead to pregnancy and did not otherwise enter the realm of public discourse was even encouraged, something that would not happen in the overly moralized view of sexuality in the twenty-first century.

**Religious and Legal Discrimination**

Islam entered the coastal region of Mombasa in the tenth century but did not spread to the interior until the advent of colonial occupation, particularly with the building of the East African Railway line in 1895. The presence of modern Christianity in Kenya can be traced to 1844. According to 2009 census data, about 48 percent of Kenyans have a Protestant affiliation, 24 percent report a Catholic affiliation, and about 11 percent report Muslim. Only 2 percent of Kenyans reported having no religion. The sacred writings of both Islam and Christianity have been widely interpreted to condemn same-sex relations as contrary to the will of God, leading to widespread discrimination against any person who engages in nonheterosexual relations. Under these powerful religious influences, traditional perspectives of homoerotic relationships and gender variance became extremely moralized, and the notion of same-sex sexuality as being contrary to Kenyan religious practices and sensitivities is all too common. The contemporary moralization of homoerotic relationships and gender variance would not be problematic if it were not cast as an accurate reflection of African character and as the normative position. Theology of inculturation posits African culture as primarily Christian in essence. Renowned African theologians of inculturation posit Jesus Christ as the *Nana* (ancestor) or as the *Muthamaki* (ideal elder).

The criminalization of homosexuality in Kenya is rooted in the legacy of colonization. A 2008 report by Human Rights Watch titled *This Alien Legacy: The Origins of “Sodomy” Laws in British Colonialism* provides an insightful perspective on how the British law criminalizing homosexuality, first introduced in India in 1890, became a model that spread to other colonies in Africa—first in Nigeria then to Kenya just before independence in 1963. Therefore, contemporary gender and sexual minority tensions in the society are contextualized within a colonial and postcolonial codification of the normative social order, enforced through legal and political organizing structures that are alien to precolonial African traditions.

The modern LGBTQ community in Kenya faces significant discrimination, both legal and social, as is the case throughout the African continent. According to a 2013 survey by the Pew Research Center, close to 90 percent of Kenyans do not accept homosexuality; LGBTQ
individuals in Kenya who come out, or are outed by others, are frequently disowned by their families, lose their jobs, or face ridicule and physical violence because of their orientation, according to a 2011 report by the Kenya Human Rights Commission. Beyond the social stigma, those in the LGBTQ community can face up to fourteen years in prison for “carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature,” according to the Kenyan penal code, making homosexual acts a criminal offense.

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Members of Kenya’s LGBTQ Community Protest State Discrimination, 2014. In a public protest against restrictions on homosexuality, LGBTQ individuals show their solidarity and simultaneously shield their identities behind rainbow masks.

HIV and AIDS

There is no denying that HIV and AIDS have disrupted the discourse on sexuality in Kenya immensely. There has been an explosion of research in the area of sexuality in the twenty-first century. The first systematic study of homosexual men in Kenya happened in 2005, and among its main findings was that the number of homosexual men in Nairobi was not negligible (Onyango-Ouma, Birungi, and Geibel 2005). After years of neglect in the provision of HIV services (ostensibly because homosexuality does not exist in the country), the government with the urging of international donors undertook a “know your epidemics” study that demonstrated that male-to-male sexual transmission of HIV in Kenya was a significant contributor to the national epidemic (Mbote et al. 2016). Even though homosexuality remains criminalized, the government and gay community groups have
been working together to address the epidemic.

**The LGBTQ Rights Movement**

Although primarily in major urban areas, there are vibrant LGBTQ groups to be found in every part of the country, with the Gay and Lesbian Coalition of Kenya (GALCK) being the main umbrella body that brings the groups together to form a national agenda. The oldest group, Ishtar-MSM, was founded in 1997, while GALCK was established in 2006. In almost every main urban center in Kenya today there exists an LGBTI group though not always a formally organized one (Mbote et al. 2016).

There is also evidence that LGBTQ rights activists in Kenya are gaining ground. In 2009, for example, two Kenyan men got married as what appeared to be loving, equal partners in London, which created a huge cultural shock in Kenya, typically expressed as outrage. Five years later, one of Kenya’s most internationally recognized authors came out as gay. Binyavanga Wainaina’s declaration was met mostly with apathy in the local press and “broadly sympathetic” coverage in the serious press around the continent (Adams 2014).

Meanwhile, the country's constitution, enacted in 2010, enshrined the values of equality, dignity, and freedom. Although no explicit reference to sexual orientation or gender identity was made, the attorney general committed to passing equality legislation that includes gender identity and sexual orientation by 2022. Transgender rights activists have been more active in using the court system to gain their rights. In 2016 Transgender Education and Advocacy became the first transgender-identified organization to be registered in Africa. In 2015 the High Court of Kenya ordered the registration of the National Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission by the Non-governmental Organizations Coordination Board. The board subsequently appealed this ruling.

The current criminalization and overmoralization of homoeroticism and gender variance represent an incomplete decolonization enterprise. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o, a prominent postcolonial author from Kenya, writes of the need to decolonize the mind in his 1986 book *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, but Kenyans and Africans need to do much more than deconstruct the colonial legacy in the mind. The criminalization of homoeroticism and gender variance in accordance with British colonial law and non-indigenous African religions could be seen as an example par excellence of contemporary voluntary collaboration with the masters of the colonial enterprise. If African collaborators were to be seen as the nexus between the colonizers and the colonized before independence (Wamagatta 2008), then the current supporters of the British colonial law on the basis of its opposition to homosexuality may be seen as the neo-collaborators perpetuating a British legacy that the British themselves have since abandoned or reformed.
SEE ALSO HIV/AIDS in Africa; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Islam

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Khookha McQueer is a Tunisian digital artist, performer, and genderqueer person. In their youth, Khookha came out as a gay man, using their birth name, Khalil Ayari. In 2015 they came out a second time as genderqueer and began using the English personal gender pronouns they/them/their {along with their chosen name, Khookha McQueer}. However, they still maintain some online platforms under Ayari, the name they first used for their artwork. (Their birth name is used here with their permission.) Khookha began their career as a graphic designer, explaining that “at first I was not considering myself making art or producing anything related to art,” but that “it started … during the most oppressive moments in my life, at some points in my life I was not able to externalize my thoughts and feelings through speaking and saying things about my preferences, orientation and gender identity clearly” (Khookha McQueer 2017d).

With their digital artwork, Khookha resists a state apparatus that denies them their subjectivity and sexual autonomy as a nonheterosexual person. Khookha uses almost exclusively digital platforms such as Facebook and Instagram, a progression of their early career as a graphic designer. Furthermore, as a genderqueer person, they experience cis-sexism. Genderqueer and transgender individuals in Tunisia, as is the case globally, are subject to violence and hate not only from heteronormative society but also from less tolerant members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and other marginal sexualities (LGBTQI++) communities. Khookha’s images present opportunities for small shifts in perception that, compounded, may eventually contribute to a less oppressive Tunisia; the mere representation of gender variation challenges viewers to engage with difference. Khookha also strengthens the development of queer and queerness as political-sexual positions by making visible a queer Tunisian politic that resonates with other queer-identified individuals, specifically genderqueer, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people. In doing so, Khookha addresses both the erasure of these individuals from LGBTQI++ communities and the violence perpetrated against them.

**The Tunisian Context**

Heteronormativity, homophobia, and patriarchy are embedded in Tunisia's social
framework, and LGBTQI++ people often experience sexual policing both in public and from their family members. They even risk imprisonment. A 2017 stakeholders report from the Tunisian Coalition for the Rights of LGBTQI People cites multiple incidents of discrimination and violence against LGBTQI++ Tunisians, such as beatings, arrests, detainment, and the Tunisian state’s attempts to prove the occurrence of anal penetration through the abusive practice of anal testing. Khookha, once beaten as a teenager, is no exception and still experiences harassment and hate speech in public and in the digital forums where they show their work (Khookha McQueer 2017a).

Before the 2011 Tunisian revolution that ousted Zine El Abidine Ben Ali from the presidency, the LGBTQI++ community was underground, using coded profiles and message boards to find one another and to organize (Khookha McQueer 2017a). Now, organizations can be more visible and speak out against oppression, both in public forums and online. Yet Article 230 of the penal code, which criminalizes “homosexual or lesbian acts” (quoted in Farchichi and Saghiyeh 2009, 8), continues to present obstacles to the LGBTQI++ community. While the new Tunisian constitution of January 2014 represents significant improvements with regard to the rights and personal freedoms of all citizens, the Tunisian penal code was not revised and remains in direct conflict with many provisions of the constitution.

Although Article 230 is most often applied, Article 226, a morality clause, can be used to criminalize an individual who “displays bawdy [sic] on purpose” and, according to 226a, to “those who publically violates [sic] good morality and public decency by signs or words” (quoted in Farchichi and Saghiyeh 2009, 14). Ali Bousselmi, from the Tunisian LGBTQI++ rights group Mawjoudin We Exist, has explained that Article 226 is often used against transgender people (Bousselmi 2017). Another Tunisian LGBTQI++ activist, Ramy Ayari, articulates that transphobia exists within the LGBTQI++ community and that he “knows certain people who did not like Khookha’s images” (Ayari 2017). Groups such as Shams, for example, perhaps choose to highlight Article 230 because gay men are arrested and prosecuted more often than transgender people (Bousselmi 2017). Thus, transgender and genderqueer people are often not represented in Tunisian LGBTQI++ visibility. The subtle erasure of the transgender population illustrates what Bousselmi calls “a lack of conscience and engagement with regards to transgender people, who remain in the [social] margins” (Bousselmi 2017). Furthermore, the social hierarchy of men who have sex with men is strict. According to Khookha, “tops are not systematically considered gays by society,” but men who receive penetration are stigmatized, as are “feminine boys [who are] subjected to discrimination and oppression within the community too” (Khookha McQueer 2017a, 2017b).

Yet Khookha’s relationship with the community is not antagonistic; rather, they are part of an effort to move toward more inclusive, fluid, and queer concepts of gender and sexuality. They pressed to add Q, I, and ++ to the LGBT initialism in Tunisia and have also been part of
public service announcement–style videos for the advocacy groups Where Love Is Illegal and M-Coalition. When Khookha uses the word *queer*, they mean that they do not want to be attached to an identity that has particular sexual acts and preferences already ascribed to it (*Khookha McQueer 2016*). Instead, Khookha wants to open up new possibilities for sexuality: the range of acts, sentiments, desires, and possibilities that make up a variety of human social interactions (*Weeks 2009*). Khookha’s images thus address a gap in advocacy for and representation of cross-dressing, transgender, and genderqueer individuals.

**Hairy Breast**

Two digital images by Khookha, *Hairy Breast* (*2016*) and *Znous 2* (*2016*), demonstrate how they use themes of masculinity and femininity to expose social constructions of gender and to express fluidity in gender and sexuality. In *Hairy Breast*, masculine and feminine elements coexist in order to disrupt the sex and gender binaries, critiquing how categories of man, woman, gay, lesbian, or straight, for example, are mapped onto gender presentation. While, globally, contemporary art that tackles issues of gender and sexuality often deploys similar strategies, here these elements disrupt the gender essentialism implied by Article 226 and upheld by aspects of the LGBTQI++ community.

![Hairy Breast](image)

**IMAGE COURTESY OF KHOOKHA MCQUEER**

*Hairy Breast (2016) by Khookha McQueer.* In *Hairy Breast*, masculine and feminine elements are shown as coexisting in order to disrupt the sex and gender binaries, critiquing how categories of man, woman, gay, lesbian, or straight, for example, become mapped onto gender presentation.

By creating visual space for effeminate expression, Khookha attempts to counter some of the hypermasculinity and transphobia they perceive within the LGBTQI++ community (*Khookha McQueer 2016*). In *Hairy Breast*, a corseted chest fills the frame, and two hands appear at the edges with fingers spread wide across the pectoral muscles; short, unpainted nails punctuate the fingertips. Because of the close cropping of the image, it is unclear
whether the hands are pushing the muscles together to create roundness or merely to display the chest. The subject’s fingers rest on both the corset and the chest, spread across as if linking the two incongruous elements. These ambiguous elements therefore prevent the projection of gendered expectations onto this body, refuting the violence of gendering experienced by Khookha and others in Tunisia. Tension is evoked with the possibility that the hands could be connoting the desire of embrace or pulling the gendered body apart in self-hatred and discomfort. Khookha’s image embodies the conflicting feelings many people of marginal sexuality experience, where self-affirmation and disgust are in delicate balance.

Znous 2

Like Hairy Breast, Znous 2 highlights gender nonconformity with a portrait of Aya, a young genderqueer Tunisian. The image is part of an ongoing series that documents queer and gender-nonconforming individuals in Tunisia. Aya’s chechia (a distinctive red wool cap), moustache, and cigarette are purposefully styled as markers of Tunisian cultural masculinity. The well-groomed moustache has long been a symbol of Arab male dignity and honor (Daoud 2000), while the chechia is a traditional Tunisian men’s garment. Although uncommon for young men today, it references a deep cultural masculinity (Spring and Hudson 2004). Thus, for Aya to both wear the chechia and sport a moustache symbolizes their claim of masculine identity in the cultural context of Tunisia. The cigarette serves a similar function. In Tunisia, it is still taboo for women to smoke. For boys and men, however, smoking is almost a right of manhood (Ben Romdhane 2017). The hand gesture in particular indicates that Aya uses this prop to perform Tunisian masculinity; holding the cigarette with thumb and forefinger signals a masculine assertiveness, “the way macho man hold the cigarette to show their manly attitude [sic]” (Khookha McQueer 2017d).

For Khookha, the most important aspects of their art are that it is deployed as a visual engagement and collaboration with the Tunisian LGBTQI++ community, as well as a means by which to challenge perceptions of gender in Tunisia (Khookha McQueer 2016). In Znous 2, Khookha demonstrates the existence of queer and non-conforming individuals in Tunisia to different audiences: Tunisians, non-Tunisians, and also the LGBTQI++ community in Tunisia. There are several pronounced cues that locate the photograph in Tunisia, the most immediately recognizable of which is the bright blue door: “The subject in Znous clearly stands in front of a door in the street of the conservative sphere of the Medina of Tunis” (Khookha McQueer 2017d). Written on the door in Arabic are the words “for rent,” a background that Khookha chose in order to complicate the idea of personal rights and freedoms in Tunisia, where women and LGBTQI++ individuals often experience contradictions between self-fulfillment, state laws, social regulations, and family expectations. The “conservative” medina featured behind a genderqueer individual highlights these contrasts (Khookha McQueer 2017e). Khookha therefore visualizes a precise geopolitical location, asking viewers to recognize the presence of gender boundary-blurring individuals in Tunisia.
Despite the inhospitable social climate, Khookha is in fact opening up space for queer possibility within Tunisia; they do not want to leave Tunisia, disown their heritage, or espouse a one-sided and negative attitude about oppression in their locale. Instead, they propose that queerness and Tunisianness are not mutually exclusive. While viewers may dislike the image’s content, Aya’s presentation and the geographical marker that serves as their background locate them indisputably in a particular cultural and geographic space. Furthermore, Khookha articulates that they perceive a disconnection between the Tunisian LGBTQI++ community and the global queer community; they feel isolated from contemporary conversations and issues (Khookha McQueer 2017a). The keffiyeh, a scarf most commonly associated with Palestinian resistance, perhaps then indicates the potential for solidarity with oppressed populations across the Arab world.

Finally, Khookha titled the series Znous, an Arabic word that they repurpose to indicate multiplicity of gender. Khookha explains that “the expansive plural of jens (sex), which is jounouss, is never used to describe human sexes.... Jounouss is the Arabic root of the word znous (and) znous is also meant to say and to be understood in other Arab countries as multiple sexes and genders.” In a play on Arabic language, Khookha references jounouss—used as “janous” in the Persian Gulf region to, for example, humiliate gender-nonconforming people—and recuperates the slur to highlight the diversity of gender expression in Tunisia (Khookha McQueer 2017c).

**The Importance of Digital Spaces**

Khookha’s use of digital spaces means that their work reaches a much larger audience than,
for example, art displayed at Tunisian galleries. They intentionally use this broad platform to make political statements, expressing that “after my second coming out as a genderqueer individual I took my social media expression to a new level, clearly promoting bodily rights, genderlessness and queerness” (Khookha McQueer 2017d). While the anonymity of the internet often exposes Khookha to hate speech, they explain that for these two images “the reactions both on media and outside the media varied, [but] over all the comments were majorly positive, [and] most of the people who saw the work understood the main message,” and that “the most shocking comment I got about [Znous 2] came from an administration agent … [who] works in [an] artistic and cultural organization [who] said that I may represent a harm for the community as my work is disadvantaging the LGBTQI+ cause” (Khookha McQueer 2017e). The agent’s reaction is one example of the cultural inflexibility described by Khookha and found throughout heteronormative, artistic, and LGBTQI++ communities.

Khookha illustrates the complexities of gender and sexuality for the Tunisian context within which they work and live. They are an instrumental part of the small, but active, Tunisian LGBTQI++ community making its mark on the country, and although they sometimes face resistance from within the community itself, Khookha continues to combat the erasure of, and violence against, cross-dressing, transgender issues, and queerness, visualizing a multiplicity of gender expressions in Tunisia.

SEE ALSO Amer, Ghada (1963–); The Art of Identity in India; The Art of Queering Asian Mythology; Graffiti and Graphic Art; Internet in Africa; Ottoman and Persian Miniature Paintings; Photography in Europe; Tom of Finland (1920–1991)

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In 1940 the biologist and sex researcher Alfred C. Kinsey (1894–1956) created the Kinsey scale. This metric, also known as the 0–6 scale or heterosexuality–homosexuality scale, was first published in Kinsey’s coauthored book *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948; hereafter *Male* volume) and reprinted with additional discussion in the succeeding volume, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953; hereafter *Female* volume). The Kinsey scale is a visual representation of human sexual behavior, desire, and fantasy on a seven-point band from zero (wholly heterosexual) to six (wholly homosexual). It also has a separate X category for those who have no sexual experience or attractions at all. Since its initial publication, the Kinsey scale has served as a tool for self-knowledge and a representation of the broader concept that human sexuality exists on a spectrum. It remains a popular instrument for people who want to consider their sexual identity in a numerical form without using the words *heterosexual*, *bisexual*, or *homosexual*.

**History and Context of the Scale**

American social and human scientists in the 1920s and 1930s gradually turned to quantitative methods from the more qualitative research methods that were popular during the previous two decades. Researchers focusing on sex and reproduction—including Robert Latou Dickinson, Katharine Bement Davis, Carney Landis, and Hannah M. Stone—used the titles of their books to announce specifically the number of subjects they studied. Kinsey, who had collected more than 6 million individual galls and gall wasps during his entomological research in the 1920s and 1930s, also believed that collecting and analyzing large samples of biological data were marks of scientific precision. After teaching sex education to biology pedagogy students and reading widely across sex-related literatures, he turned his interest in gathering mass quantities of data from insects to human sexual behavior. Beginning in the summer of 1938, he began leading a marriage course at Indiana University, Bloomington, and collecting data in voluntary private interview sessions from the students, faculty, and faculty spouses who attended the course. The marriage course grew rapidly in popularity among students, largely because of the explicitness of Kinsey’s lectures, and Kinsey encouraged course participants to tell him...
their sex histories in private interviews. The course and the interviews together inspired him to start interviewing people across Indiana and Illinois, particularly members of homosexual communities.

After hostility from the university's medical staff forced Kinsey to terminate the marriage course following its seventh iteration in August 1940, he turned to sex research full time. He developed a standardized interview method, hired staff, and used punched-card machine technology to organize the ever-growing amount of interview data. That September, he wrote a letter to Glenn V. Ramsey, a former marriage course participant and an Indiana University graduate student in education. Ramsey found in his own research with adolescent boys in Peoria, Illinois, that approximately one-third of them engaged in same-sex sexual behavior. Kinsey compared Ramsey's research to his own findings, and in the letter, he described a new numerical method that represented ranges of sexual behavior and that decoupled behavior and desire from the identity categories “homosexual” and “heterosexual.” He also included a drawing of a scale that depicted the method graphically. The original drawing is no longer extant, but Kinsey's textual description resembles the scale printed in both volumes.

![Figure 161. Heterosexual-homosexual rating scale](image)

Based on both psychologic reactions and overt experience, individuals rate as follows:

0. Exclusively heterosexual with no homosexual
1. Predominantly heterosexual, only incidentally homosexual
2. Predominantly heterosexual, but more than incidentally homosexual
3. Equally heterosexual and homosexual
4. Predominantly homosexual, but more than incidentally heterosexual
5. Predominantly homosexual, but incidentally heterosexual
6. Exclusively homosexual
After the creation of the scale and Kinsey’s decision to include it in the standard sex history interview process, Kinsey and his interview staff showed it to interviewees and asked them to select a number that most clearly represented their sexual self-perception on the scale. The interviewer would also include his own observation of the interviewee's scale number on the interview sheet if there was a difference. The interviewer's selected number was then included into the interviewee's data set and integrated into the mass data set generated for the Male and Female volumes (Weinrich 2014). The Male volume was published in January 1948, and the chapter on homosexuality in particular drew immediate wide attention for the large percentages of men across educational, age, and social levels who reported having same-sex sexual arousal and contact to orgasm.

The Scale in the Male Volume

The Male volume compiled data from 5,300 white American men, including men who had served or were serving prison time, and the 0–6 scale appeared in the volume’s “Homosexual Outlet” chapter. Kinsey and his coauthors described the scale as a continuum, pointing out that human sexual behavior, desire, and fantasy rarely fell into simplistic black-and-white categories that contemporary law, medicine, and religion and broader American society established and enforced. An individual could be placed anywhere on the scale, and any measurement device for human sexual behavior needed to reflect such diversity: “It is a fundamental of taxonomy that nature rarely deals with discrete categories.... The living world is a continuum in each and every one of its aspects. The sooner we learn this concerning human sexual behavior the sooner we shall reach a sound understanding of the realities of sex” (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin 1948, 639). The most accurate representation of an individual’s sexual experience, then, would be based on the relative amounts of heterosexual and homosexual experiences in that person's history. Depending on age, social class, marital status, and educational level, between 80 and 97 percent of men were classified as 0s on the scale and the remainder as 1s through 6s. The population with the greatest amount of 1s through 6s was single men with no more than a high school education (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin 1948). Forty-six percent of all men interviewed had experienced some sexual arousal toward other men, and 37 percent had experienced at least one homosexual contact that led to orgasm.

Furthermore, Kinsey and his coauthors argued in both volumes that the scale should be used as scientific evidence that the word homosexual and its many slang variations should be used only to describe certain types of encounters and fantasies, not persons. For example, it was common in the 1940s to consider a man “passively” receiving oral sex from another man as heterosexual and consider only the man “actively” giving oral sex as
homosexual. Because same-sex sexual encounters were illegal across the United States at the time, Kinsey and his team argued that homosexual behavior should be legalized given their evidence. Sexual identities could then be destigmatized by omitting the identity terms *homosexual*, *bisexual*, and *heterosexual* and replacing them with the scale numbers. While this latter idea never took hold broadly, references to being a “Kinsey [number]” or statements that “[this celebrity] raises my Kinsey number from a [2 to a 3]” are common on websites with content in American English related to gender, sex, and pop culture.

**The Scale in the Female Volume**

The authors repeated some of their arguments regarding the 0–6 scale in the *Female* volume when it was published in August 1953. The *Female* volume contained the histories of 5,940 white American women, none of whom had served prison time. According to Kinsey and his colleagues, women had combinations of homosexual experiences at three different levels of arousal, which marked their placement across the 0–6 scale. The authors tracked three types of experience separately: psychological sexual arousal with a same-sex partner or through fantasy, same-sex physical experience without orgasm, and same-sex physical experience to orgasm. By age forty-five, up to 36 percent of women had experienced arousal with a same-sex partner or through fantasy, up to 27 percent had had homosexual experience without orgasm, and up to 19 percent had had homosexual contact to orgasm (Kinsey et al. 1953). Between 11 and 20 percent of unmarried women and 8 to 10 percent of married women were rated 1s between twenty and thirty-five years of age; between 3 and 8 percent of unmarried women and under 1 percent of married women were rated 3s at those ages; and between 1 and 3 percent of unmarried women and less than 0.03 percent of married women were rated 6s at those ages (Kinsey et al. 1953).

The *Female* volume contained a more detailed explanation of the X category because it had a greater importance in women's sexual histories than it did in men's histories. In the *Male* volume, the X category—which was not included in the 0–6 scale graphic—was limited to male children and adolescents who had not yet had their first orgasm and a handful of adult men who “have no socio-sexual contacts or reactions” (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin 1948, 656). The *Female* volume identified those in the X category more specifically as people who “do not respond erotically to either heterosexual or homosexual stimuli, and do not have overt physical contacts with individuals of either sex in which there is evidence of any response” (Kinsey et al. 1953, 472). Twenty-two percent of single women who had reached thirty-seven years of age were labeled as Xs, as were 2 percent of forty-year-old married women and 10 percent of previously married (widowed or divorced) forty-year-old women (Kinsey et al. 1953). On the whole, the Kinsey Reports found that while women were more likely to be Xs, some of the individual women interviewed had a much wider range of sexual experiences than most men did.
The Kinsey Reports in US Politics

While the Kinsey Reports generated thousands of responses in the press, academia, and professional circles, as well as among the public, the findings made a direct impact on US politics in the 1950s. One of the statistics derived from the *Male* volume was critical in both antihomosexual campaigns and in the nascent gay and lesbian rights movement. Kinsey and his colleagues found that 10 percent of men had lived exclusively homosexual lives for at least three years between the ages of sixteen and fifty-five (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin 1948). The figure of 10 percent soon became fixed as the overall percentage of gays and lesbians in the United States (Drucker 2010). Antihomosexual campaigns of the 1950s, and particularly the anti-Communist witch hunts led by Joseph McCarthy (1908–1957), a US senator from Wisconsin, used that figure in order to claim (with no evidence) that 10 percent of federal government employees must be homosexual and therefore must be discovered and removed from employment. Meanwhile, gay and lesbian political movements, beginning in the mid- to late 1950s and growing much larger by the 1970s, proudly proclaimed that they made up 10 percent of the US population and deserved full legal rights. The American Law Institute also used the Kinsey Reports as inspiration for reforming legal codes addressing homosexual behavior (Allyn 1996). “Ten percent,” more than any specific number on the 0–6 scale, remains a well-known and widely reproduced figure representing the percentage of individuals identifying as homosexuals in the United States.

Successors of the Kinsey Scale

Sex researchers have reused and adapted the 0–6 scale into other forms, including Fritz Klein’s Klein Sexual Orientation Grid (KSOG). Klein designed the KSOG specifically for scientific researchers and fellow professional psychologists as a diagnostic tool for use with clients. Klein was inspired to create his adaptation of the 0–6 scale after many therapy sessions with clients who expressed their frustration that the terms *homosexual*, *heterosexual*, and *bisexual* were inadequate to expressing their true identities. As part of Klein’s interest in promoting bisexual identification and activism, the KSOG was designed to extend the scope of the 0–6 scale by including twenty-one questions about an individual’s sexual attractions, behaviors, and fantasies; social and emotional preferences; self-identification; and lifestyle. The user was asked to answer those questions in three time frames: the past (more than twelve months ago), the present (the last twelve months), and an ideal set of circumstances. A clinician could then identify the differences between patients’ actual and ideal activities and senses of sexual selfhood and could help them work through (or come to terms with) gaps between dreams and reality. The KSOG was published in both the 1978 and 1993 editions of *The Bisexual Option* and a 1985 coauthored article but required mathematical calculations of patients’ answers in order to provide clinicians with useful information. Unlike the 0–6 scale, which provided users with
only a single number to represent their identity, KSOG users needed professional assistance to interpret the meaning of a multinumber result such as 2-1-3-6-7-5-4. On the internet, however, the KSOG is the most popular sexual identity scale after the 0–6 scale, and it has since been turned into quizzes that quickly provide a compiled score (equivalent to a Kinsey scale number) after one fills out an online form.

Many other sexual identity scales, also largely aimed at scientific researchers, have been based on the 0–6 scale and, later on, the KSOG (Udis-Kessler 1999). They include Harry Benjamin’s Sex Orientation Scale, which categorized forms of “transvestism” and “transsexualism” in persons assigned a male gender at birth; Michael D. Storms’s Storms scale, which differentiated sex role and erotic orientation; Eli Coleman’s combined scale that examines identity categories, including gender, sex role, physical, and past/idealized; and the Measure of Sexual Identity Exploration and Commitment (MoSIEC) (Benjamin 1966; McWhirter, Sanders, and Reinisch 1990; Worthington et al. 2008). The MoSIEC, using twenty-two items, queries how American psychologist James E. Marcia’s 1966 identity status theory applies to the construction of sexual identity and assesses the processes of sexual identity development among persons of any orientation, whether or not researchers know that orientation beforehand.

The Kinsey Scale Online and Beyond

In the early twenty-first century, the 0–6 scale has been reproduced widely online, and numerous individuals use it as an instrument of self-discovery. It is particularly popular among teens and young people exploring their sexual identity, often along with their gender identity (Drucker 2012). Those who view the scale online can discuss their choice of scale number and the scale itself in internet forums; can take quizzes that promise to provide their “real” Kinsey scale number; can seek community with others contemplating their identities; and can anonymously express past sexual experiences and feelings about sexual identity that their friends and family members may neither know about nor sympathize with. While taking a quiz is unnecessary—all someone needs to do to find their appropriate number on the scale is look at it—quizzes in multiple languages add a dimension of fun (and usually some interpretative or glib inaccuracies in the explanations) to considerations of sexual identity.

The 0–6 scale remains popular because of its simplicity, although many of its viewers and users consider it too simple to represent fully the intersectionality of sexual and gender selfhoods that gender-fluid and gender-queer individuals express. Furthermore, studies of transgender individuals’ sexual identities “have acknowledged the need for conceptualizing pansexual identities” (Galupo et al. 2014, 427). People who claim more than one identity category, such as gay and asexual at the same time, also find continuum scales such as the 0–6 scale and KSOG problematic and unrepresentative of their whole personhood.
The linguistics of sexual and gender identity shift constantly, with new descriptors continuing to emerge; thus, new tools of measurement are necessary to capture new languages and forms of self-understanding (Galupo et al. 2014). Identifying as a Kinsey scale number may never take the place of the dominant English-language categorizations heterosexuality, bisexuality, and homosexuality, or of more recent terms such as monosexual, plurisexual/nonmonosexual, and asexual. Because of its historicity and longevity in the public eye, the 0–6 scale is likely to remain a popular first step in contemplating and discovering one’s unique sexual identity. Given the myriad of other scales and sources of information about sexual identity on the internet and beyond, though, it is not likely to be the last.

SEE ALSO Biological Essentialism; Institut für Sexualwissenschaft; Psychopathia Sexualis (1886; Richard von Krafft-Ebing)

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Kinship in Europe

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Family models used by LGBTQI persons in Europe.

Kinship, as opposed to marriage and family, refers to a set of practices that address fundamental forms of human dependency, which may include birth, child-rearing, relations of emotional dependency and support, generational ties, illness, dying, and death, as defined by American philosopher of gender Judith Butler (2000). Scholars formative in the field of anthropology, starting from the mid-nineteenth century, sought to categorize, classify, and systematize the origins of kinship and the evolution of civilization. These included the American lawyer and anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881), who, in his book Ancient Society (1877), studied concepts of kinship in Iroquois society and developed a theory of the three stages of human progress: from savagery to barbarism to civilization. Swiss anthropologist Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815–1887) insisted that prehistoric matriarchal societies predated and were subsumed by patriarchal ones, thus establishing motherhood as the source of all society, religion, and morality. Finnish sociologist Edward Westermarck (1862–1939) claimed that the early humans were actually monogamous, contrary to a widely held belief that early societies were based on promiscuity, thus establishing the nuclear family as the fundamental and universal unit of society. After World War II, French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009) was formative in the development of structuralism, which is a method of analyzing kinship according to a binary system of opposites: brother/sister, husband/wife, father/son, and mother’s brother/sister’s son.

The Bias of the Reproductive Heterosexual Family Model

The American anthropologist David M. Schneider (1918–1995) questioned these approaches in the late 1960s. He pointed out that the kinship studies canon was based on “naturalizing” and “universalizing” those family and kinship habits that these scholars (and others) saw around them and was thus heavily biased toward reproduction in the heterosexual marriage and the importance of blood ties. This bias neglects the different unions and care networks formed by LGBTQI and queer-identified persons in Europe. Only through careful work by feminist and queer scholars has this rich history of marginalized desire, sexualities, and genders beyond the binary of male/female and heterosexuality/homosexuality been scrutinized in depth.
The clan, and later the married couple with children, have long been viewed as the core of Euro-American kinship, while the heteronormative family is considered essential and “natural” both in national legislations and in the rooted attitudes to kinship. This approach assumes that blood-related kinship roles, biological reproduction in wedlock, binary gender division of identity and labor, the hierarchical and oppositional order of two genders, and certain styles of care and parenting were innate and natural practices. In the twenty-first century, the legal landscape and social attitudes regarding intimate relationships and family forms have been swiftly changing, mostly becoming more liberal. However, the larger queer history of kin and family formation gets easily overshadowed, and perhaps lost, with the current focus on same-sex marriage.

The success of twenty-first-century measures to gain equal marriage rights for LGBTQI+ persons connects all sexualities to the reproductive heterosexual family model, causing other queer forms—either historical or present day—of intimate unions or relations of emotional dependency and support to be marginalized or forgotten in the LGBT campaigning for gay marriage. According to the US scholar of sexualities Lisa Duggan (2003), the reproductive same-sex marriage form of kinship abides by the increasingly dominant mode of neoliberal logic and creates new exclusions, as not all queer people want to get married and instead actively look to oppose the conventional forms in their relations with others and in forming support networks. Here, it is relevant to pose the question of what kinship has to do with the state and cultural institutions.

**Civil Partnerships**

Occasionally, the legal imagination and cultural institutions in some European countries have explored the limits of Euro-American kinship. In France and Germany, these explorations have taken place by extending some legal protections to nonmarried couples via civil partnerships. This happened in slightly different ways, while in both cases the new legislation also tended to reconfirm some of the most crucial aspects of the heteronormative logic of the legal imaginations of kinship that it sought to challenge.

For example, as Judith Butler (2000) has discussed, the French *pacte civil de solidarité* (PACS; civil solidarity pact) was approved in 1999 as a contractual form of civil union between any two adults independently of their sexuality—barring close blood relatives—for organizing their joint life. A PACS, as an intimate contract recognized by the state, entails certain rights and responsibilities—for example, in terms of inheritance—but less so than marriage.

Although the primary intention of the French PACS was to offer legal status to same-sex couples, the clear majority of actual PACS have been between opposite-sex couples. Individuals who register as a couple under such pacts are no longer considered *single*, and their official records will show their status as *pacsé*. In 2013, along with adoption rights,
PACS remain an option for them. Interestingly, instead of same-sex couples, it is mostly heterosexual couples who have made use of this form as they have seen in PACS a welcome extension of the narrow marriage form.

The Relevance of Inheritance and Caretaking

Butler (2000) suggests that the initial opposition to the PACS in France was an effort to make the state sustain a certain fantasy of marriage and nation whose hegemony was already, and irreversibly, challenged at the level of social practice. Here, it is noteworthy that explorations of kinship forms moving between the law, cultural institutions, and social practice are not a twenty-first-century development in Europe. For example, until the 1960s, in rural agrarian parts of eastern Finland it was an unofficial practice to adopt an adult son in the household if there were no “legal sons.” Everyday life was harsh during the Nordic winters, and every pair of hands was needed for survival. Arguably, an arrangement that resembled the official kinship system and adopted its terminology made the relationship more secure for both the adopted “son” and the elderly couple who got extra help and an “heir.” This arrangement provided advantages over the system of hired hands, which required cash as part of the salary system in a rural agrarian world where the exchange of goods, work, and social favors formed more of the base of social life than in the urban setting.

In the Balkan mountains, in households where there was no biological son, the custom of sworn virgins, or women who dressed and functioned socially as men under a vow of celibacy, dates back to the fifteenth century. It has been argued by mainstream anthropologists that these practices were done out of necessity (due to circumstances that disrupted the normative kinship model) as opposed to serving as valid alternatives to the heteronormative family model, but queer scholars have also pointed to the illegal desire or nonconformity of gender that could accompany these models. In Germany, existing adoption laws actually allow for adult adoption and are sometimes used to “fix” the inheritance and caretaking responsibilities between gay men (Borneman 1996).
Qamile Stema, One of the Last "Sworn Virgins" of Albania, 2010. In the Balkan mountains a custom of sworn virgins, or women who dressed and functioned socially as men under a vow of celibacy where there was no biological son in the household, dates back to the fifteenth century. It has been argued by mainstream anthropologists that these practices were done out of necessity (due to circumstances that disrupted the normative kinship model) as opposed to serving as valid alternatives to the heteronormative family model, but queer scholars have also pointed to the illegal desire or nonconformity of gender that could accompany these models.

In some other European countries, such as Ireland and Finland, the combination of same-sex marriage rights and the unequal inheritance tax categorizations for chosen heirs outside of wedlock has resulted in situations where children raised in the same rainbow family (i.e., families with queer-identifying parent/s) are set in unequal economic and legally defined kinship positions in terms of inheriting from their parents, or where people got married without an intimate relation to make a pact on caretaking based on the promise of a future payment in the form of inheritance for the caretaking partner (Sorainen 2015; Sorainen 2016; O’Loughlin 2017). More research is needed to say anything conclusive on these examples, but they serve to raise questions about the assumed “naturality” and context of kinship in Europe.

Other Queer Kinship Configurations

In the twenty-first century, several alternative family models to the normative couple form with a reproductive function coexist, including households headed by same-sex parents, family units with more than two parents, households and families that include non-blood-
related children, and households headed by a nonreproductive adult. There are also new
terms for these family units, such as rainbow families or clover families (families with more
than two queer-identifying parents). The idea and concept of “family” has been further
fragmented as a question of “choice,” both in terms of its form and its core members:
instead of seeing one’s family and relatives as being “given” by blood, many queer people
now think that it is better to choose their own family members from among their friends
and the LGBTQI community. In doing so, they redescribe the family form after cutting off or
distancing the homophobic bloodline, as many queers have experienced exclusions or
discrimination from their relatives or parents.

The field of new kinship studies looks at how humans create intimate relations beyond the
rather narrow definition of “family” as heterosexual parents with their biological children.
Queer kinship, for example, is not always familial, dyadic, or even sexual, yet queer
communities have provided a kind of tangible, emotional support different from, but in
ways similar to civil unions or the Euro-American understanding of kinship. Two examples
of queer kinship configurations—one historical and one from present times—help to widen
our views on the concept of kinship in Europe. First, researchers looking through historical
wills and other documents learned that the late nineteenth-century British poet known by
the pseudonym Michael Field was actually two women united in a queer union: Katharine
Harris Bradley (1846–1914) and her niece and ward, Edith Emma Cooper (1862–1913),
who were lifelong lovers and cohabitees. Their beloved dog complemented their union, and
together they created a rather esoteric and unique cosmology and worldview on which
their queer communion of three was based. This union crossed the familial lines of species
relations and challenged the incest taboo and the obligation to reproduce (in the biological
sense), while it also contributes to the archive of lesbian desire and age difference.

The second, more current example comes from Finland. In a 2018 essay, Antu Sorainen
focused on a family unit in Helsinki composed of four marginalized gay men in their fifties
whose lives and choices are not easily understood in light of the LGBTQI movements'
campaigns for gay marriage. Their support network is complex, as some of them live
together, some of them are in a relationship, and some of them sometimes have sex. The
fluid nature of their relationships defies their classification as a commune, a romantic
couple, or single gay men looking for sex, but is, in fact, something else that resembles, but
also challenges, both the heteronormative and homonormative (gay marriage versus the
lone cruising gay) ideas of intimate relations and care. Their complex mutual support
network includes cross-species and cross-national companionship: a stray dog the men
adopted together from Spain. Their support relations are not recognized in the legal
conceptualizations of what constitutes “kin,” as they practice domestic and intimate
arrangements that do not easily accommodate the general lexicons of family or kin.

The case opens up wider perspectives on how the lexicon of gay male intimacies connects
to wider gendered kinship patterns and to specific configurations and histories of gay male
sexualities and cultures. Masculine sexuality has often been seen as an antithesis of kinship in European cultures, as it has been seen as building on temporary, selfish desire, not on perspectives of building responsibilities of care and reproduction. Hence, gay men have no ready-made social forms available to them, and such case studies have provided information on how gay men adjust to, but also challenge the prevailing expectations of social relatedness and gay identity.

Together, these two examples show that queer kinship relies on conceptual and practical reconfigurations between legal, social, political, and cultural categorizations and conceptualizations. They suggest that we need to approach queer lives from the perspective of social practices and cultural identifications rather than only from the perspective of sex and sexuality, so as to reshape the terms of the everyday and legal understandings of who actually is “kin” and who is not.

SEE ALSO Adoption and Surrogacy in Europe; Boston Marriage and Women’s Romantic Friendships; Marriage, Universal, in Europe; Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa; Queer Domesticity in Europe

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Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund

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The first organization in the United States established to protect and advance the civil rights of LGBT and HIV-positive persons.

Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, more commonly known as Lambda Legal or simply Lambda, is the first organization formed in the United States aimed specifically at protecting and advancing the civil rights of the LGBT community and people living with HIV through impact litigation, public policy advocacy, and education and outreach. The organization was officially established in 1973 when the New York State Court of Appeals ruled in favor of founder William J. Thom's appellate petition to recognize Lambda as a nonprofit and to practice law in that capacity (In re Thom, 301 N.E.2d 542). The successful appeal followed a ruling in which a panel of lower court judges had turned down Lambda's petition for nonprofit status, opining that, in its view, the organization's mission was "neither benevolent nor charitable" (Lambda Legal 2018d). The appeal was the first in a plethora of legal victories for Lambda Legal over the next several decades.

Cause Lawyering

The legitimation of Lambda Legal through In re Thom led to the organization of a group of attorneys dedicated to pursuing the cause of LGBTQ rights. To that end, Lambda Legal has employed a practice known as impact litigation, or “cause lawyering,” wherein cases are selected for litigation based on the likelihood that success in the courtroom will not only further the principals' interests but also lead to social change favoring the class of individuals to which the principals belong (Etienne 2005). While cause lawyering can be controversial—coming at a time when there was little acceptance or even tolerance toward homosexual individuals, and other LGBTQ people and the majority of the legal community refused to advocate for this community—the role that Lambda Legal played filled a void, offering LGBTQ people needed advocacy in the legal arena (Docoo 2014).

In the more than forty-five years since its founding, Lambda Legal's victories in state and
federal courtrooms across the country have been legion and its educational outreach to the LGBT and HIV-positive community has expanded exponentially. In one of the first legal victories in which the newly formed nonprofit was involved, *Gay Student Organization of the University of New Hampshire v. Bonner* (376 F. Supp. 1088 [1974]), Lambda Legal participated in a successful attempt by a gay student organization at the University of New Hampshire to overturn the school’s ban on its social events. In effect, the decision required the university to treat LGBT organizations like it treated other student groups. Over the course of the 1980s and 1990s, the organization redoubled its efforts against state and institutional discrimination against the LGBT community, shifting its focus somewhat to include antigay bias in corporate America and state-run institutions.

**Supreme Court Cases**

Lambda Legal has been party to a number of landmark US Supreme Court battles related to LGBT rights. In 1996, for example, Lambda partnered with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and various Colorado-based attorneys to secure a victory in *Romer v. Evans* (1996), a case focused on whether Amendment 2 of Colorado’s state constitution violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution. Specifically, Richard G. Evans filed suit after a statewide referendum in Colorado passed Amendment 2, which repealed all ordinances enacted by the cities of Aspen, Boulder, and Denver that banned discrimination based on sexual orientation in many transactions and services and prohibited future judicial, executive, and legislative action protecting the named class, being of a “homosexual, lesbian, or bisexual orientation” (*Romer v. Evans* 517 U.S. 620). At the time it was decided, the court’s six to three decision in favor of the plaintiff was hailed as “the single most positive Supreme Court ruling in the history of the gay rights movement” (Lambda Legal 2018f). In *Romer*, the court made it “clear that lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals have the same right to seek government protection against discrimination in the United States as any other group of people” (Lambda Legal 2018f). Perhaps as important as the holding itself, the court’s decision in *Romer v. Evans* set into motion another landmark case that the court would hear seven years later (Davidson 2016).

In September 1998 police arrested John Lawrence and Tyron Garner in Lawrence’s Houston apartment and charged the two with having consensual sex in violation of Texas’s “homosexual conduct” law. The men pleaded nolo contendere after their motion to quash the charges as unconstitutional was denied in criminal court. The following year, Lambda Legal challenged the lower court’s decision to the Fourteenth Court of Appeals in Houston on constitutional grounds. The conviction was initially overturned but was later reinstated by a larger panel of the same Texas court. Lambda appealed again, but Texas’s highest court refused to hear the case. Having exhausted its options at the state level, in 2002 Lambda Legal and Lawrence petitioned the US Supreme Court to review Texas’s homosexual
conducted law based on two independent claims: first, that the law violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, and second, that it violated rights of privacy and liberty. In December 2002 the court granted a writ of certiorari in the case, and in January 2003 Lambda Legal filed its brief urging the court to overturn Texas’s homosexual conduct law in *Lawrence v. Texas*. Following oral arguments, most notably by Paul Smith for the plaintiff, in June 2003 the justices ruled six to three in favor of Lawrence’s argument. Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy reasoned that “[homosexuals’] right to liberty under the Due Process Clause gives them the full right to engage in their conduct without intervention of the government” (*Lawrence v. Texas*, 539 US 558 [USSC 2003]). Directly contradicting the court’s earlier decision in *Bowers v. Hardwick*, 478 US 186 ([USSC 1986]), with its “sweeping language about gay people’s equal rights to liberty” ([Lambda Legal 2018e], *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) is widely considered to be the most important breakthrough for gay rights in the current era. Without a doubt, the case paved the way for subsequent landmark decisions, particularly those related to marriage equality, such as *Obergefell v. Himes* (2015).

**Other Notable Cases**

Lambda Legal has continued to expand its legacy of involvement in landmark cases related to LGBTQ rights. In the realm of employment law, for example, Lambda Legal petitioned the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals to reverse a lower court decision and allow Kimberly Hively, a lesbian, to present her case against Ivy Tech Community College. Having worked as an instructor at the institution for more than fourteen years, Hively claimed that Ivy Tech had denied her both full-time employment and promotions and ultimately terminated her employment because of her sexual orientation. Attorneys through Lambda Legal argued for the plaintiff in *Hively v. Ivy Tech Community College* (853 F. 3d 338; Court of Appeals, 7th Circuit [2017]), convincing the judges to reexamine the case, since the Supreme Court had not previously ruled on the issue of Title VII and sexual orientation. Although traditionally it had been assumed that sexual orientation was excluded from protection under the Civil Rights Act of 1964, in an eight to three decision the Seventh Circuit Court ultimately ruled that Title VII’s protection of individuals based on their race, color, religion, sex, and national origin also protected against discrimination based on sexual orientation. As Greg Nevins of Lambda Legal noted, “[The decision in *Hively*] is a gamechanger for lesbian and gay employees facing discrimination in the workplace and sends a clear message to employers: it is against the law to discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation” ([Lambda Legal 2017]).

As part of its campaign to protect and extend the rights of people living with HIV, in *Hickman v. Donna Curry Investments, LLC, et al.* (2006) Lambda Legal announced that it had settled a lawsuit filed in the US District Court for the District of Nevada on behalf of a man who was fired by a Subway restaurant owner because he had HIV. The fully executed
settlement between Hickman and his employer required that the company provide written policies explicitly stating that it does not discriminate against any qualified individuals living with HIV. Furthermore, all managers and employees in supervisory roles had to thereafter be trained on how HIV is transmitted, thus putting to rest any concern about HIV transmission in the food service industry, and they would be instructed regarding the legal obligation not to discriminate against existing or potential employees based on their HIV status (Lambda Legal 2006).

More recently, on 30 May 2018 Lambda Legal and OutServe-SLDN joined with pro bono cocounsel in filing suit for declaratory and injunctive relief in US District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia on behalf of a sergeant in the DC Army National Guard who was denied the opportunity to serve as an officer and faced possible discharge from the US armed services because he was living with HIV. The lawsuit challenged the Pentagon’s policies preventing enlistment, deployment, or commissioning as an officer of a person living with HIV, and likely would affect implementation of the “deploy or get out” policy unveiled by the Donald Trump administration in February 2018. The deploy or get out policy directs the Pentagon to identify service members who cannot be deployed to military posts outside of the United States for more than twelve consecutive months and to separate them from military service. Despite current scientific and medical knowledge to the contrary, most service members living with HIV remain classified as nondeployable under military policies developed in the 1990s. One of the largest employers in the world, the Department of Defense, like other employers, is not allowed to discriminate against people living with HIV without reason. “The Pentagon needs to catch up with the twenty-first century. Recruitment, retention, deployment, and commissioning should be based on a candidate’s qualifications to serve, not unfounded fears about HIV,” a spokesperson for Lambda Legal observed (Lambda Legal 2018a). Harrison v. Mattis (2018), along with a companion complaint (Voe v. Mattias [2018]), was pending in US District Court as of June 2018.

Expansion

Since its founding in 1973, Lambda Legal has grown exponentially. In just the four years from 2010 to 2014, the number of cases on its docket soared 65 percent, its social media audience increased by 802 percent (from 31,351 to 282,804), and its operating budget expanded by 58 percent. Recognizing that legal victories alone are insufficient to secure the future for LGBT people and all those living with HIV, the central mission—to advance the rights of its constituency through impact litigation—was expanded to include multiple programs aimed at promoting LGBT and HIV-positive individuals’ ability to access and secure the rights and privileges they had won in the courtroom. Foremost among these is Lambda’s Fair Courts Project, which aims to ensure that the judiciary remains free to “make decisions based on constitutional and legal principles—not politics or popular
opinion" (Lambda Legal 2018b). In addition, Lambda Legal maintains programs specifically intended to provide advocacy and disseminate information about such diverse issues as workplace equality, family law, laws affecting LGBT immigrants and asylum seekers, the well-being of LGBT and HIV+ seniors, low-income LGBT and HIV-positive populations, and police misconduct. Lambda maintains an extensive web presence, which includes a legal help desk and a media center on its website.

SEE ALSO Hate Crime Law and Policy in the United States; HIV/AIDS in the United States; Human Rights Campaign

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At a basic level, language can be viewed as a highly elaborate semiotic system that facilitates interaction by making communication possible. But it also accomplishes much more; it indexes various aspects of a speaker’s—or community of speakers’—identity, thus signaling meanings that go far beyond the specific contents of a message.

**Language of and Language about**

In discussing language in relation to LGBTQI+ issues, the focus of research by linguists has often been twofold. First, it preoccupied itself with how homosexuals (initially, mainly, homosexual men and only later lesbians, bisexuals, transgender and transsexual persons, queers, intersex persons, etc.) use language. What, in other words, if anything, distinguishes homosexuals linguistically from nonhomosexuals. In this context, the meaning of homosexuals has traditionally been males who have sex with males and females who have sex with females. Initially, the question of whether these individuals self-identify as homosexuals, or “gay,” did not receive particular attention. However, the situation later changed, especially following the rise of gay liberation movements in the 1960s and especially the 1970s. Most research viewed the perceived linguistic differences as culturally based rather than inherent. There is also, however, another perspective that has received attention, and this is the language used by non-LGBTQI+ people to talk about and, at times, to them.

Research on the language used by gays and lesbians has its roots in a preexisting interest in the relationship between language and masculinity and femininity, and, later, language and sexuality, in the 1970s and 1990s, respectively. It later expanded to include other sexual minorities and owes a considerable debt to the feminist movement and the research that the latter inspired. One should bear in mind, however, when this research began; as previously mentioned, it was mainly concerned with homosexual men; lesbians were almost an aside, and it was not until much later that the whole gamut of postmodern sexualities began to be investigated. This fact should be kept in mind whenever terms such as gay and homosexual appear in this entry. As Deborah Cameron and Don Kulick note, in
the field of language and sexuality the question that has been asked most is: “how does the language of homosexuals differ from that of heterosexuals?” (2006, 3). Early work carried out in the 1970s and early 1980s concentrated on finding differences between the way in which men speak and how women speak, trying to identify the culturally based differences in language use between the sexes.

Interest in the distinctive language of (mainly) homosexual men in Europe and North America has a relatively long history (Cameron 2005), which can be dated back to the late 1920s. Initially, what seems to have interested researchers the most have been the words and phrases used mainly by homosexual men, later resulting in the publication of a number of “gay” dictionaries, glossaries, and lexicons. In addition to the dictionaries, there were also some more extensive studies on language use (i.e., language in context—what later came to be known as “discourse”) by, again, mainly homosexual men. These include Donald Webster Cory (1951) and David Sonenschein ([1969] 2006), who argued that the main function of a gay slang was not mainly about lowering one’s visibility as a gay person but, rather, about signaling in-group membership. But it is the period between 1980 and the present that saw what Kulick terms an “explosion of work on gay language” (2000, 243).

It has to be said that the study of the language of and on homosexuality and other queer identities presents some challenges, the first of which is the difficulty of locating sources. This is a result of the stigma generally associated with homosexual practices. This is particularly true of language originating from within queer circles, as opposed to that used by nonhomosexuals to refer to what is sometimes seen as a problem, sometimes as an example of moral degeneration, and sometimes as a medical issue. Marcel Barriault (2009) argues that an important source on the language-homosexuality nexus is gay male erotica and pornography. This, as well as many other records, were either suppressed or destroyed, and those that survived were often censored and altered, which, in itself, provides another level of evidence. Indeed, early references to a “gay lexicon” are attested to in at least two examples of pornographic literature of the Victorian era: *The Sins of the Cities of the Plain; or, The Recollections of a Mary-Ann, with Short Essays on Sodomy and Tribadism* (1881) and *Teleny; or, The Reverse of the Medal* (1893). Although the former purports to be the autobiography of a famous male London prostitute (*Mary-Ann* being slang for a homosexual), the book is probably the work of James Campbell Reddie (1807–1878) and Simeon Solomon (1840–1905). The authorship of the latter is unknown, although it has often been attributed to the famed Irish writer Oscar Wilde (1854–1900). Of the two, because of its alleged autobiographical nature, *Sins* delves more fully into homosexual slang of the time. Indeed, it offers a sort of homosexual slang dictionary. Most of the words listed refer to sexual organs, both male and female—such as *stones* and *bubby* (testicles) and *charms* (the male genitals)—and sexual activities, such as “to tongue” (to fellate). As Jonathon Green (2014) notes, however, all the listed lexical items would have been applicable to heterosexual sexual activity, too. It is therefore the context that provided the homosexual connotation, apparently lending support to Kulick’s theses that to speak of
an exclusively "gay language" is somewhat misleading.

The aforementioned examples are instances of language of homosexuality. The nineteenth century is also, however, a resource for the emergence of language on homosexuality, especially in the socioscientific field. In a book titled *La corruption à Paris* (1889; Corruption in Paris), the French social observer Ali Coffignon created a taxonomy of homosexual types. It is not clear if the terms he uses to label the various “types” were in common usage at the time and if homosexuals themselves employed them. They are nonetheless important as linguistic signs that codify—albeit disapprovingly—homosexuals (*pédér-astes*) and homosexual behavior. Coffignon divides homosexual men into two main groups: active and passive. The former are *amateurs, entreteneurs*, or *souteneurs*. The latter comprise the *pétits-jésus* (little jesuses), *jésus* (jesuses), and *tantes* (aunties). The *entreteneurs* are basically closeted gay men. Often belonging to well-to-do families, they have everything to lose by revealing their condition. The *souteneurs* are men who have been found out and received punishment; they keep their jesuses, whom they use to procure new young men (*faire chanter la rivette*) with whom they then proceed to have intercourse. The little jesuses or aunties (notice the feminization) are young males seduced and then used by the *amateurs*, who are then trained to become prostitutes, whether they themselves are homosexual or not.

**Homosexual Argots**

Historically, “in-group languages”—sometimes referred to as “argot,” “slang,” or “jargon”—have served a number of functions. First, they signal membership of a group, often while simultaneously concealing it to outsiders. In a world in which nonadherence to the prevailing societal rules about, in this case, appropriate sexual behavior can literally be fatal, this cryptic signaling of belonging allows for interactions while offering protection, through what M. A. K. Halliday (1976) defined as an "anti-language": a coded use of familiar words and expressions designed to exclude outsiders. Indeed, anti-languages often develop among socially excluded, oppressed, and stigmatized groups, such as criminals or members of politically proscribed groups, in an effort not only for members to hide and protect themselves but also to show, through unusual linguistic practices, defiance of mainstream norms.

There are documented examples of this practice in the distant past, even in highly cultured and literary circles. For example, Giovanni Dall'Orto (2015) discusses the nature and function of the *gergo* (“slang” or “jargon”) *burchiellesco* in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy. It takes its name from the poetry of Domenico di Giovanni (1404–1449), also known as Burchiello. Dall'Orto explains that the essence of *poesia burcellesca* (poetry in the style of Burchiello) is humor that relies on puns and double entendres based on slang terms that were already in use. Although at a highly complex level, this type of literary communication relies on the interactive meaning-making efforts between author and interlocutor, like
those in action in the slang-based communication discussed by the aforementioned authors. Interestingly, as Dall'Orto points out, Burchiello’s poetry was homophobic. He—and his readers—were laughing at not with homosexuals.

In 1941 Gershon Legman (1917–1999) compiled “The Language of Homosexuality: An American Glossary.” He begins by discussing the term homosexual, as well as all the terms then current in the United States to describe homosexuals and their sexual practices. The author comments on the paucity of terms in relation to female homosexuality, which he curiously attributes to the “tradition of gentlemanly restraint among lesbians” (2:1154). He acknowledges that some of the listed terms are also used by heterosexuals, which is generally true of those present in most argots, as there are no truly discrete homosexual languages. Most of the entries pertain to sexual activity. However, interestingly, Legman comments on some linguistic behavior that in later research will be considered markers of “in-group” identity and of “performativity” (the practice of “enacting” or affirming identity) through repeated and repeatable linguistic acts, such as “the substitution of feminine pronouns and titles for properly masculine ones” (2:1155).

The signaling of identity and in-group belonging through linguistic practices need not only rely on single words. It can, of course, make use of discursive practices that encode and embody belonging by referring, for example, to certain cultural milieus. In his 2003 work on London’s geography of homosexuality in the period from 1885 to 1914, Matt Cook discusses the references to Hellenic ideals of beauty and love, in particular “Greek love”—that is, homosexual love—that highly educated men used to reify and publicly discuss their experiences, their desires, and often their wishes for social and legal reform. Indeed, homoerotic literature inspired by Hellenism continued to be published until at least the 1930s. In Cook’s words, “It had become a barely obscured code which yet enabled continuing communication about an outlawed set of practices” (126–127). Yet again, language was used by homosexuals to simultaneously bring their lived experience into the open and keep a protective veil on it.

Cory dedicates one chapter of his 1951 book on homosexuality in the United States to “gay slang.” He also offers sociological explanations for the phenomenon—namely, the need to dissimulate but also, crucially, to feel empowered by electing to define themselves rather than being defined by (often unsympathetic) others. While discussing the lexicon used by American, mostly male, homosexuals—and in particular the then-emerging term gay—Cory notes that “one of the most desirable purposes [that it offers] is that it facilitates discarding the mask [i.e., to “come out,” if only intragroup] by offering a language free of odium [in other words to feel empowered through a process of relabeling]” (108; emphasis added).

In 1972 The Queens’ Vernacular: A Gay Lexicon, by Bruce Rodgers, was published. This was a rather extensive work of more than 219 pages. Although The Queens’ Vernacular is still
essentially a list of lexical items (nouns, adjectives, verbs), it shows, in embryo but more explicitly than previous works, a shift toward an understanding of language as constitutive of gay men’s and women’s identities, as well as signaling in-group belonging and resistance to the majority’s oppressive culture. Tellingly, in his introduction, Rodgers writes that

*Gay slang, like black slang, enriches our language immeasurably.... [It] was invented, coined, dished and shrieked by the Gay stereotypes: The flaming faggots, men who look like women, flagrant wrist-benders, the women who don't shave their legs, all those who find it difficult to be accepted for what they feel and are even within the pariah Gay subculture.*

*(11; EMPHASIS ADDED)*

**Examples of Documented Argots**

Having mentioned gay argots, the following are examples of a small selection of them. They represent different geographical and cultural areas, such as Britain, Spain, the Philippines, and South Africa. Since the 1980s, investigations into these argots have become more frequent and broader in scope so as to somewhat rectify the previous Anglo-American, male homosexual bias. Space limitations do not allow a full survey of the interplay between sexuality and gender identity across the world. Therefore, what follows can offer only a partial overview of research conducted across different cultures and areas of the world.

One of the most interesting examples of a well-developed gay slang is the British *Polari* *(Baker 2002)*. Polari (the name derives from Italian *parlare*, meaning “to speak”) consisted of around 100 words derived from different sources. Among them is the lingua franca used by entertainers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries *(Cameron and Kulick 2003)*. Leslie Cox and Richard Fay *(1994)* suggest that, in the 1940s and 1950s, at least some of the vocabulary was in usage in cities such as Liverpool, Bristol, and London and was strongly associated with male homosexuality. Polari’s links to pre-Stonewall times and its connotations of effeminacy led gay liberation activists to oppose it. More recently, however, there have been efforts to re-evaluate it and to preserve it, as witnessed by Paul Baker’s 2004 dictionary *Fantabulosa: A Dictionary of Polari and Gay Slang* and by the launch of an app dedicated to it. Gay slangs have been documented and studied in countries other than the United Kingdom and the United States. Some of these are briefly introduced below.

**Spain** In documenting the argot used by (mostly) gay men in Spain, Ferran Pereda *(2004)* has commented on its linguistic characteristics, most of which are applicable to other argots. This includes semantic change, whereby a word is borrowed from the general vocabulary and transported into the argot with an altered meaning. For example, the
Spanish word *hermana* (sister) is used by gay men to mean a very close, platonic friend, or a “bosom buddy.” This word also exemplifies another characteristic of gay argots—namely, the feminization of nouns and adjectives. So, *hermana*, which in ordinary Spanish has a female referent, has in the gay argot a male one, as in English and Italian where gay men often refer to each other as “girlfriend” and *amica* (girlfriend) or *sorella* (sister). An early example of the use of the word *sister* to refer to fellow homosexuals can be found in one of the cases presented by Richard von Krafft-Ebing in his *Psychopathia sexualis* (1886), where—quoting the words of one of his subjects—he writes, “In T. I was unspeakably unhappy, in spite of some ‘sisters’ whom I found” (*Krafft-Ebing 1947, 199*). This practice, ubiquitous across languages, allows the speaker to play and subvert societal heteronormativity and ideas of masculinity and to depotentiate, by actually embracing them, the majority’s prejudices (that a gay man is partly or wholly a woman, or “non-man”). Another characteristic is the use of prefixes and suffixes, especially to coin new words. Very common is the use of *mari* (from *maricon*, or “faggot”) to “homosexualize” words and create neologisms such as *marifiesta* for a party (*fiesta*) organized by and for gay men. Another common lexical creation that uses the same prefix is *marimacho*, more or less equivalent to the English *tomboy*. The term is used to refer to a woman who, in her physical appearance and her actions, resembles a male. Francisco Molina Díaz, in his 2014 study of homosexual-related terms in Spanish academic dictionaries, notes that the term was first recorded in 1734 and has been in usage ever since, often with pejorative connotations.

Another phenomenon is the borrowing of foreign words, mainly English. Many of these denote sexual practices, such as *barebacking*, *cruising*, and *fist fucking*; others refer to types of people, or “tribes,” that gay men may feel a connection with: *bear*, *chubby*, and *drag queen*. This, in effect, results in what linguists call *code-mixing*. As Heidi Minning notes about the same phenomenon in relation to German, this helps construct “group membership and a sense of the self as a participant in larger gay and lesbian local and transnational cultures” (2004, 65). Another characteristic of the Spanish gay argot noted by Pereda is the use of non-gender-specific language, often to maintain vagueness about one’s sexual orientation. So one finds *pareja* (couple) for *marido* (husband) and *mujer* (wife). Then there is the use of hyperbole, clichés, metaphors, and puns; the shortening of words; vocatives; compound words; onomatopoeia; and, finally, the reliance on extralinguistic devices, such as hand gestures. In addition to extralinguistic elements, the speech of gay men has often been associated with and identified by the use of particular types of what linguists call “suprasegmentals.” These are features such as intonation and voice pitch, as well as particular phonological traits, such as breathiness—the lengthening of sounds such as /s/ and /z/. Collectively, these features have often been referred to as “the voice.” This, however, does not mean that all speakers who use elements of “the voice” are, in fact, homosexual, or that all those who do. “The voice,” especially coupled with a certain type of hand gesture, is one of the main characteristics of the phenomenon known as “camp.”

**Philippines, Indonesia, China, and Thailand** Donn Hart and Harriett Hart (*1990*) have
documented what is known in the Philippines as *swardspeak* (from the word that designates male homosexuals: *swards*), also known as *Bekimon* and *lingo gay*. This argot is well known and widely used by those who work in fashion and entertainment. *Swardspeak* borrows from Tagalog, English, Spanish, and even Japanese and is heavily influenced by pop, celebrity, and consumer culture. J. Neil C. Garcia (2008) situates the conceptual birth of Philippine self-reflective gay culture in the 1960s. It is during this period that open reflection of the terminology used to refer to gays (especially men) begins, especially the term *bakla*. *Bakla* is often translated as “gay”; its meaning, however, is much more fluid and complex. In his study of gay culture in the Philippines, Garcia observes that *bakla* and *homosexual* are not the same. Mainly, this is because the dichotomous distinction homo/hetero has no equivalent in Filipino culture. It does not, for example, necessarily denote sexual orientation and cannot be used to refer to a female homosexual, for whom the derivative term *babaeng bakla* is used instead. As is the case for other nationalities, the economic situation in the Philippines has resulted in emigration and the consequent formation of Filipino diasporas across the world. Because, as Gary Simes puts it, language is the “most transportable item an individual possesses” (quoted in Manalansan 1995, 250), it is inevitable that the linguistic practices of gay Filipinos spread and adapt in the new social, economic, and cultural settings in which gay Filipinos find themselves. In his research on Filipino gay argot in New York City, Martin F. Manalansan IV (1995) argues that *swardspeak* is continually transformed by its users in response to local and global events. In part, this evolution is driven by resistance to the pressures of homogenization originating in white, gay culture. Consequently, gay Filipinos in the United States enact their evolving identity through linguistic choices at all levels, from the lexical to the discursive. As Manalansan argues, gay immigrants and laborers do not accept passively the cultural and social hierarchies society imposes on them. On the contrary, they engage with and resist them through language.

Tom Boellstorff (2004) researched gay language in Indonesia. In that country, many homosexual men speak what they call *bahasa gay* (gay language). *Bahasa gay* comprises vocabulary, intonation, and pragmatics (contextually determined elements); however, what speakers of this language variety find more prominent is the lexical element. This is a language, or “code,” based on *bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian, the national language). *Bahasa gay* is characterized by derivational processes, which often include suffixes and word substitutions. For example, the words *aluk, muttu, sibollo*, and *tabu*—all of unknown origin—are used in place of the existing Indonesian terms to mean, respectively, “penis,” “to have sex,” “friend,” and “to eat.” Interestingly, not all the words refer to the sexual sphere; *indexicality* (the signaling of gay identity) operates at various levels of the lexical and semantic fields. The words *kula* (“I,” “me,” “my”) and *sampeyan* (you), for example, which derive from Javanese, encode gender identity at the level of pronouns and possessive adjectives. Boellstorff notes that *bahasa gay* words are never coined from Sanskrit or Arabic words, despite their frequency in Indonesian. He argues that what this indicates is
that “gay subjectivities take form less through organized religion or the historical links between India and Indonesia than through national and transnational mass media” (256).

Like all living languages and language varieties, bahasa gay is productive. What this means is that it—or, to be precise, its users—continue to create, or produce, new words and expression by resorting to the existing rules, grammatical and otherwise, of the language. There are several ways to do this. One of the most common is to retain “the first syllable of a standard Indonesian word and then [modify] the ending” (255). To be a fluent bahasa gay speaker, one does not need to know all the words of its vocabulary; instead, one needs to be able to master the rules to be a productive (in the sense specified previously) user.

In a 1988 work (republished in 1992) Fang-fu Ruan and Yung-mei Tsai discussed homosexuality in China. Using a corpus of letters written by homosexual men, they were able to describe and discuss the isolation and the suffering of gay people in the People’s Republic of China and their wish for a better future. In the intervening thirty years, China has undergone an enormous transformation, both economically and socially.

Homosexuality is more visible and so are studies of it, including its linguistic aspects. Wei Wei (2007) researched and discussed the evolution of gay identities in contemporary China. He concentrated in particular on the city of Chengdu, the capital of the province of Sichuan. Wei focuses on piao piao, the identity of local homosexual men. This identity emerged before tongzhi, the predominant Chinese gay identity that, Wei argues, is an invention by gay activists beginning in the early 2000s that is a local appropriation of imported, Western models of homosexual identity. The classic Chinese view of homosexuality was that it was a series of tendencies and inclinations, rather than an innate “nature” or identity. The Chinese language has had terms relating to homosexuality for a long time. These include the rather obscure duan xiu zhi pi (the passion of the cut sleeve) and fen tao (the bitten peach), both of which derived from classical Chinese literature. More recent, and more transparent, are nanfeng (male trend) and xianghuo xiongdi (allied brothers). Following the creation of the People’s Republic of China, the term tongxinglian (same-sex love/homosexual) came into use to refer to homosexuals. Given the size of China, there is considerable geographical variation in the terms used to refer to homosexuals. However, because most words are derogatory in nature, most homosexuals do not use them. In addition, traditional words do not denote a permanent, “innate,” and stable gay identity. Yet, this is what has been emerging since the 1990s, influenced by European and American models of homosexuality. In Chengdu, this new, self-conscious identity has been embodied linguistically by the term piao piao, used as a noun to refer to homosexuals. The word also has derivative meanings; these include piao chang (a cruising area). From a linguistic point of view, it is interesting to note that, originally, in standard Chinese, piao was used as an intransitive verb. Locally, however, gay men use it as a transitive, as in “to piao somebody,” which means “to cruise somebody or check somebody out.” Piao yu is the name that the piao piao give to their language. Like other argots discussed in this entry, piao yu is an elaboration of existing linguistic resources.
used by the gay, mainly male, subculture to signal and enact a preferred identity—one that, in this case, is not just a local replica of the Western model of homosexuality.

**MOFFIE**

The term *moffie* is used by some South Africans to denote a gay or effeminate man. It is used mainly by Afrikaans speakers, particularly among white and so-called coloured people, a broad racial category that includes mixed-race people and those of indigenous South African (Khoisan) or Malay descent. The word *moffie* is believed to stem from seafarers who used it as a derogatory reference to men who were well groomed or seen as “delicate” or weak, its documented use stretching back as early as 1929 ([Luirink 2000](Luirink2000)).

Since its earliest use, the term became important to gender construction in white Afrikaner culture, where sexual minorities and gender-nonconforming men were set up as a foil to idealized patriarchal versions of masculinity. Under Nationalist politics (1948–1994), the state viewed homosexuality as threatening to the form of conservative patriarchal masculinity that underpinned white Afrikaner power in the country, and sexual minorities “did not fit into the prevailing meta-narratives of Afrikaners as heroic *volk* [nation or people] or racist scoundrels” ([Pieterse 2013, 620](Pieterse2013)). Consequently, the term *moffie* continues to carry a negative connotation among mostly white Afrikaans-speaking people.

Within coloured cultures, moffies were historically integrated into communities and were mostly seen as humorous figures as they were associated with quick wit and sassy, flamboyant personalities. Coloured moffies were simultaneously viewed as “an important constituent of coloured culture and an embarrassing element [for coloured people]” ([Tucker 2009, 149](Tucker2009)). The coloured moffie was a more acceptable, nonthreatening figure because of this association with humor and wit, and thus the scant representations of queer people in South African popular entertainment often relied on this figure. In fact, cross-dressing coloured moffies have even taken part in the Cape Minstrel Carnival, a large public display in the city of Cape Town, since the 1930s, a time when both cross-dressing and homosexuality were illegal in the country ([Pacey 2014](Pacey2014)). Moffies thus played a subversive role in the patriarchal pre-apartheid and apartheid state by challenging gender binaries and were a visible and at times celebrated part of coloured culture. Despite their ambivalent integration, however, effeminate men (and all queer people) were and are still ostracized and are frequently the victims of hate crimes in the country.

Cape coloured gay men have developed their own lexicon known as *moffietaal* (queer language) or Gayle. This lexicon has since spread to other racial groups and expanded out of Cape Town as well ([Cage and Evans 2003](Cage2003)). One of the features of Gayle is that
female names are used in place of certain words as a type of code that many gay men would understand. The cohesiveness of the coloured gay community has led to many queer men taking pride in the title *moffie*, embracing cross-dressing and effeminate gestures and styles of speaking, and calling each other *moffie* as a term of endearment and to solidify their sense of community.

Even so, the word still holds power to enforce patriarchal masculine expectations through its use as hate speech and as a form of ridicule. André Carl van der Merwe’s autobiographical book *Moffie* (2006) demonstrates how this word is used for shaming the protagonist about his failure to live up to the norms of white, Afrikaner, patriarchal masculinity. The protagonist, Nicholas, is called a *moffie* by his father, and his mother says that it is “the most despicable thing you could call anybody, never mind your own son” (20). The multiple meanings of this word and its cultural specificity make it a complex component of South African queer identities.

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Elsewhere, it has been mentioned that “gayspeak” can be in different parts of the linguistic system of a language, including its intonational patterns. Chi-kukHau (2007) has
investigated the acoustic characteristics of gay speech and perceived sexual orientations. In his empirical work, he was able to identify some differences in the production of certain sounds, such as /s/, which are often recognized—and not only in Chinese—as typical of gay speech. These were also frequently found, however, in the speech of straight men, but their identification as markers of a gay sexual orientation persists in China as elsewhere.

Thailand offers another interesting case for the study of homosexual identity in Asia and for the role that language plays in it. Like other non-Western locations, Thailand is often represented abroad as a “gay paradise.” In reality, the situation is far more complex and nuanced. Megan Sinnott (2000) conducted research on the representation of transgendered and/or homosexual identity in the Thai press. She argues that the representations are varied and often contradictory and that this reflects evolving debates within society and the formation of a local gay identity. In Thailand, homosexuality as a category is less often used. Instead, notions of masculinity and femininity are used. The terms *tom* and *kathoey* indicate, respectively, a masculine woman or a feminine man. *Kathoey* is the only traditional Thai term that refers to a “sexually eccentric individual” (Jackson 1995, 23), rather than “sexually eccentric behavior.” The term indicates what, in modern Western terms, might be referred to as a third sexual category. It should be noted that the term usually refers to a man, rarely a woman. More recently, new terms have appeared; they witness the emergence of new, evolving homosexual identities, including *tom-dee* and *gay*. The former derives from the English *tomboy* and refers to a masculine-identified woman. *Dee* refers to the feminine component of the *tom* and is derived from the English word *lady*. There is a long history of same-sex sexual activities between women in Thai culture; however, a recognizable transgendered identity began to appear in or just after the 1970s. Lexically, the shift is reflected in the change from the term *len-pheuan* (playing friends) to *tom-dee*. Peter A. Jackson has devoted considerable attention to homosexuality in Thailand, including its linguistic aspects. In a 1995 study of the topic through letters to a Thai “agony aunt” (someone who dispenses advice by replying to letters addressed to her or him, usually in a print publication but increasingly online)—or, in this case, “uncle”—he reviews the terminology relating to homosexuality, used both by heterosexuals (language about homosexuals) and by homosexuals themselves (language of homosexuals), as revealed by the correspondence he examined. He points out that the now-archaic term *len sawat* (literally meaning “playing love”) has acquired a sexual connotation and has come to denote anal sexual activity between males. It is interesting to note that the use of *len* (playing) is not in itself an indication that homosexual activity is seen by heterosexual society as harmless or in any way natural. Despite this, in the letters examined by Jackson, there is ample evidence that this and etymologically similar words are used by homosexuals themselves. This illustrates once again that a minority community can reappropriate lexical items in a move that both depotentiates hostility and enacts empowerment. During the second half of the twentieth century, as Western influence grew, Western-influenced terms to describe homosexuality and homosexual activity were
introduced. So rak-ruam-phet ("love for the same gender"—i.e., homosexuality) has been introduced, coined on the model of the existing rak-tang-phet ("love of a different gender"—i.e., heterosexuality). More recently, in another sign of cultural adaptation, the term for bisexuality, rak-sorng-phet (to love two genders), came into common usage.

**South Africa** South Africa presents an interesting case because of the double oppression of homophobia, which was encoded legislatively, and racial discrimination, enacted through the apartheid system. There, the complexities of the racial situation, which initially divided the population between whites, blacks, and coloured, and between Afrikaans and English speakers, helped shape the argot of male homosexuals. Ken Cage has documented and named it *Gayle* (*Cage and Evans 2003*). Initially it was used by coloured, Afrikaans-speaking gay men in the Western Cape but was later adopted by English-speaking whites. Following the end of apartheid, and the increased social mixing, usage of Gayle has been declining but has not disappeared.

Unlike in other regions of the world, following the abolition of apartheid in the early 1990s South Africa has brought homosexual identities to the foreground, enshrining gay equality in its 1996 constitution. William L. Leap, who has conducted research in the Cape Town area, observes that accompanying this emerging (self-)awareness and visibility are novel ways of "talking about same-sex desires and erotic practices as well as new ways of naming same-sex related identities and subjectivities" (*2004, 134–135*). These new ways of talking rely in part on traditional South African discourses on sexuality, and indeed they also draw on native linguistic resources derived, for example, from languages such as Xhosa and Afrikaans, as well as English. Yet, globalization has had its effects in this arena, too, and the incorporation into local discourse of North Atlantic and European linguistic features and cultural models—through tourism and the media, among other things—has had its effects. The new language of sexual citizenship, for both male and female homosexuals, is still not as formalized as Indonesia's *bahasa gay*. The function of this new code, or language, is not that of an anti-language, such as the one associated with Polari in Britain. In his research, Leap (*2004*) looked at the naming practices of gay bars and the language used in a South African national gay newspaper, in personal ads, and in personal narratives. What is apparent is that in the new South Africa speakers made full use of the existing cultural and linguistic traditions, mixing languages in a creative way. The result is not a cryptic argot, although this new way of talking can be used to conceal, at least in part, one's sexuality. What comes into being is a language that circulates in the wider society and becomes the preferred language used by queer individuals to talk about and among themselves. At the same time, it gives heterosexual South Africans a nonconfrontational way to talk about their fellow, homosexual citizens.

**From Gayspeak to the Lavender Language**

The word *gayspeak* was coined in 1976. From the 1960s the view among scholars changed,
and the vocabulary and expressions used by (still mostly) gay men—although increasingly also the speech of lesbians—ceased to be viewed as “exotic lingo or a mysterious argot” (Kulick 2000, 258). Whereas earlier views implied that gays were using a code that had been bequeathed to them, like an object or a ready meal, research conducted in the 1960s and 1970s recognized greater agency on the part of speakers. They were not, in other words, passive recipients of a prepackaged lingo, and it was recognized that the words and expressions they used existed in, and helped to constitute, a social and political context: to establish and maintain, through discursive practices, communities that were more or less transient. During this period, visibility and assertion replaced concealment (but not for all, of course, especially in non-Western societies), and intragroup homogeneity, rather than difference from those on the outside, became salient.

In addition to the name “gayspeak,” which remains one of the most used, other labels have been suggested. These, as listed by Kulick (2000), are, in chronological order: faglish, gay English, gay speech, lavender language, queerspeak, lgb talk, gay male language, gay and lesbian language, gay male speech, lesbian speech, and lesbian language. The term lavender linguistics was introduced by Leap, one of the most prolific scholars in the field of language and homosexuality, who also initiated the Lavender Languages and Linguistics Conference in 1993. This is now a regular event and attracts researchers from all over the world. Broadly, the term refers to research on how lesbians, gays, bisexuals, queers, transsexuals/transgender, and asexuals use language in everyday life and how particular forms of language use contribute to the formation and affirmation of identities in a variety of sociopolitical contexts. Lavender linguistics comprises, but is not limited to, homosexual argots such as the ones mentioned above. It includes, among other things, the use of language in gay erotica. The advent of lavender linguistics was instrumental in broadening the scope of research, so that, finally, lesbians, bisexuals, asexuals, intersex persons, or simply “queer” individuals were finally included, and not only sexual orientation but sexuality and desire began to be properly investigated.

**Language, Transgender, and Drag Communities**

As a result of the aforementioned broadening of scope, transgenderism (used here as an umbrella term to include transsexualism), like the other forms of gender and sexual nonconformity discussed previously, is highly intertwined with language. An added dimension to the debate, however, is that, especially in cases of sex reassignment, linguistic research is often used to educate transsexuals to speak appropriately, to “pass” as members of their chosen sex. Interestingly, the preoccupation seems higher for male-to-female transsexuals. The phonologists, logopedists, and others who advise transsexuals seem to rely on old, now-discarded models of “women’s language.” For example, they suggest using greater pitch variation, the use of tag questions (i.e., a statement turned into a question to ask for confirmation, for example: “he’s gay; isn’t he?”), and “empty adjectives”
(such as lovely and precious), thus apparently confirming, rather than subverting, gender stereotypes.

The construction and construal of transgender identity has also been studied cross-culturally, with inputs both from linguists and anthropologists. An example is Niko Besnier (2003), who studied language and transgenderism in Tonga. In Tonga (and in the Tongan diaspora) the term fakaleiti (also referred to as leiti or fakafine) refers to individuals who embody a broad range of characteristics. The term consists of the prefix faka (in the manner of) and leiti (lady). A fakaleiti is stereotypically identified as a man who presents “feminine” characteristics, such as talking emotionally and animatedly; and in domestic or rural settings, leiti engage in traditionally feminine endeavors, such as doing the laundry and childcare. Fakaleiti identity is performed and, crucially, identified through linguistic practices. Besnier reports that, in his research, when informants were asked how they identified a fakaleiti, they answered by citing their ways of speaking: tone, intonation, high pitch, a fast tempo. Interestingly, a noticeable feature in the linguistic display of fakaleiti is the use of English, even by relatively uneducated individuals. This practice allows speakers to align themselves with modernity and sophistication, as embodied by the English language. This common signaling of modernity and cosmopolitanism is likely to often operate at a subconscious level and results in frequent use of more or less adapted English words and phrases in the speech of Tongan male transgender individuals.

Another area that has attracted interest is that of the relationship between language and drag—in particular, drag queens. Rusty Barrett (1998) has explored the language of African American drag queens. His work concentrates on the significance of drag queens switching from one language variety (African American drag queen style) to another (white woman style, with its connotations of sophistication) to enact aspects of their race, gender, or sexuality. Stephen L. Mann expands Barrett’s work by “considering examples of drag queen language in which the discreteness of language is no longer clear” (2011, 794).

The language of drag has been receiving increasing attention and exposure, especially thanks to reality television shows such as RuPaul’s Drag Race, broadcast from the United States and with audiences in many countries. Libby Anthony identified and investigated the “meshing of languages” (2014, 64; quoting A. Suresh Canagarajah) as displayed by nonnative speakers of English in the show, which, among other things, exposes viewers to other ways of “doing (and speaking) drag.” Matthew Goldmark (2015) looked at the way the linguistic practices of the show, such as the frequent catchphrases, simultaneously work to include and exclude and to configure a common geographical space (the United States) that can symbolize common values and aspirations.

**Does “Gay Language” Even Exist?**

The idea of a “gay language,” or “gayspeak,” is not uncontested. As soon as the idea of
“gayspeak” was advanced, James Darsey ([1981] 2006) pointed out that nothing that had been identified as constitutive of “gayspeak” (i.e., secrecy, its function as enabler in a subculture, and its ability to be used to resist the dominant culture) was actually unique to gays. The circularity of Darsey’s argument—that the fact that gays do X does not make X gay—has been pointed out. For Cameron and Kulick ([2006]), to postulate something like the existence of a “gay language,” researchers would have to actually document how LGBTQI+ people use language in empirical ways. Because of the many ways, cultures, and situations in which LGBTQI+ live, generalizations are rarely possible. And even if it were achievable to document that something like gayspeak existed, in what sense would that language be “gay”?

Despite these doubts and ongoing debates, work on the language-sexuality nexus continues. Work since the late 1990s, for example, has expanded the existing methodologies by using, among other tools, vast searchable databases of texts stored on computers. These are called “corpora” (the plural of corpus, or “body” in Latin) and use the methods of the subfield of linguistics known as corpus linguistics. This might go some way toward solving the issues of generalizability. And with the new development pointing to investigations of “language and desire,” rather than language and gender or sexuality, the field is likely to remain active and productive in the years to come and to finally gather data from more areas of the world and different sociocultural groups, thus putting sounder foundations under possible generalizations. One such sociocultural group comprises deaf LGBTQI+ individuals in different countries. It is now generally accepted that signed language, such as British Sign Language, American Sign Language, and Lingua dei Segni Italiana, to name only three, are fully developed languages like their oral counterparts. As such, they too exhibit internal sociolinguistic variation; many LGBTQI+ signers are aware of specialized signs used by their community, or at least members thereof. In truth, work variation in the gay deaf community was investigated as early as 1981 (Rudner and Butowsky) and 1996 (Kleinfeld and Warner). It was noted by William A. Rudner and Rochelle Butowsky (1981) that in the United States, gay deaf women appeared more reserved about the use of special gay signs, and deaf heterosexual women knew more signs than gay deaf men. Mala Silverman Kleinfeld and Noni Warner (1996) chartered the spread of the accepted sign for “gay” among gay and nongay deaf students. Interestingly, and similar to what has been happened in their hearing counterparts, the adoption of preferred signs to referred LGBTQI+ identity has been pushed from within the community until it became, in many cases, the favored option among the larger population.

SEE ALSO Bakla; Hijras; Kathoeys; Language in Africa; Language in Europe; Language in Latin America; Pacific Island and Pacific Island Diaspora Identities; Pornography; Queer in Latin America; Queer Names and Identity Politics in the Arab World; Tongzhi; Waria

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The ways in which the West has imagined African sexuality has, in part, led to the belief that homosexuality is a fundamentally Western phenomenon introduced to African people through colonialism. Western hegemonic interpretations of African practices and perceptions of gender, sexuality, and queer identities are not new, and they present interesting issues of translation. These issues are not limited to questions concerning the equivalence of terms relating to queer identity and intimacies between the Western world and African societies. Instead, issues of translation highlight deeper historical underpinnings between varying social, cultural, and political behaviors relating to identity. The translation and terminology of African sexuality are frequently encumbered by colonial misinterpretations and distortions.

The Colonial Legacy

A cursory look at the colonial era exposes how rife the period was with inaccurate or, at best, understudied versions of African desire, pleasure, identity, and performances. The “dark continent discourse” of this period is apparent in several ways. Initially, Western colonizers conceived of Africans as having a primitive and bestial sexuality, which they used to justify the capture and use of African slave labor. The sexualization of such primitive Africans can be traced at least to Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, first published between 1776 and 1788 ([Murray and Roscoe 1998](#)). As Western imperialism, exploitation, and science spread, Christian dogma was used to demonize queer African expressions and pairings. Myths about African sexuality were sustained through early scholarship on indigenous African cultures that neglected rigorous and accurate documentation about the different patterns scholars observed.

Not only were same-sex intimacies considered examples of African inferiority, the myth of universal heterosexuality, which was rooted in a deeply sexualized and racialized view of Africa, was further established. The European imagination has consistently constructed African sexuality as exotic and depraved. This is further evidence of the colonial and postcolonial continuities of the “dark continent discourse.” As a result, the range of African
sexual expressions and practices has been reduced to something outside the norm and certainly distinct from European and Western sexualities (Arnfred 2004). As a result of the combined effects of slavery and colonialism, this period is also representative of ideas about racialized female African bodies, as evidenced by the familiar nineteenth-century case of the Khoikhoi woman Saartjie Baartman, who was put on display as part of a freak show in Europe. Such stark distinctions in racial and sexualized terms have also functioned to effectively “co-construct that which is European/Western as modern, rational, and civilized” (Arnfred 2004, 7). The continuation of this type of colonial thinking is manifest even in early studies of sexuality in Africa, which often portrayed African forms of desire and intimacy as an essential, premodern, and tribal phenomenon (Epprecht 2008).

**The Postcolonial African Context**

The second instantiation of these ideas is in the postcolonial African context. A compelling example of this is contemporary homophobic expressions of African nationalism transmitted through public rhetoric and policy-driving moral condemnation. The notion that same-sex desires are “un-African” is widespread among African leaders. For example, several African leaders, from Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe to Namibia’s Sam Nujoma, have criticized the rising emphasis on gay rights and protections in Western nations, calling same-sex and other queer intimacies and practices “un-African” and therefore inappropriate for Africa. Same-sex relations between men are penalized in thirty-eight of the fifty-four African nations, while same-sex relations between women are punished in twenty-nine of them. In places such as South Africa, where same-sex unions are legally protected, gays and lesbians continue to face violence because of their sexual orientation. However, other African leaders such as Kenya's retired chief justice Willy Mutunga and former Malawian president Joyce Banda have advocated for greater tolerance of gay rights and urged lobbyists to further discuss such social justice and human rights concerns.

While coloniality has significantly affected the development of queer identities in Africa, a central issue with questions of terminology, translation, and the Africanization of queer erotics and identities lies with the institutionalization of racism, sexism, and homophobia in contemporary African political and social contexts. The continuities of the “dark continent discourse” of the colonial era play a role in how these forces coincide on a globalized scale today. One argument that has been presented regarding Africa’s contemporary homophobia, in the words of Kapya Kaoma, a Zambian scholar, pastor, and human rights activist, is that it is “as much an expression of resistance to the West as a statement about human sexuality” (2009, 4). It is not so much that queer behaviors, practices, and desires are foreign concepts or phenomena within African tradition. Instead, what scholars and activists are calling attention to is the imposition of Western lenses and interpretive frames to investigate and define that which constitutes African sexuality. Approaching issues of African gender and sexuality in new ways, such as through an
excavation of indigenous and/or Africanized practices, facilitates alternative lines of thinking and theorization. A focus on such practices shows how alternative approaches produce distinct images and therefore realities that are undergirded by varying political, historical, and cultural genealogies.

Another issue is the hegemonic tendencies of contemporary Western intervention in African LGBTI efforts. Often, Western LGBTI groups focus their attention and advocacy overseas to keep up the momentum of their successes at home. In these groups’ efforts to save a desperate Africa from itself, the West’s influence on LGBTI activism has tended to be hegemonic, Eurocentric, and detrimental to Africans and has ultimately yielded antiqueer conceptions of African gender and sexuality. More specifically, a problem that has been identified with such postcolonial Western conceptual structures and modes of thought is that they operate on narrow definitions of sexuality and queer identities, thereby ignoring the diversity and depth of African ones. For example, Thabo Msibi (2011) argues that because of the specific historical, political, and cultural experiences from which the terms *gay* and *homosexuality* emerged in the West, these terms have little import for Africa, where there is no historical equivalent to Western constructions of sexuality as social categories. Further support for Msibi’s criticism comes from Robin Morgan and Saskia E. Wieringa’s 2005 study categorizing more than forty examples of same-sex intimacies in contemporary African cultures, including the Nandi, Kisii, Kamba, Kalenjin, and Kikuyu in Kenya. In other words, it is not the presence or absence of queerness that emphasizes the difference between Africa and the West but their divergent social constructions and historical contexts.

**HUNGOCHANI**

As of 2017 the word *ngochani* still did not appear in the authoritative chiShona/English dictionary (Hannan 2000), notwithstanding behind-the-scenes lobbying from Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ). Yet it is widely used in common parlance in Zimbabwe to mean “homosexual” with the connotation of a slur like “faggot” or “moffie”—an effeminate, receptive man or boy with an implied hint of prostitution or even dangerous occult practices. The word, moreover, does not sound particularly chiShona, the main African language spoken in the country. For some that confirms the claim that homosexuality is a foreign practice, probably imported by the colonialists, which many political and religious leaders have promoted since the mid-1990s. Tracing the etymology of the word helps to defuse the harmful implications of that claim and in a small way to support struggles for sexual rights and sexual health in Zimbabwe and the region more generally.

The first documented appearance of the word in colonial Zimbabwe was in 1907 during a trial for sodomy laid under then–Southern Rhodesia’s Roman Dutch law. The charge was against a Tonga man from then–Northern Rhodesia (modern Zambia) who
was alleged to have committed the offense against his *ngotshana*. This was translated as “a small boy used by the Zambesi boys as a wife,” which the translator claimed was a Tonga custom. Similar versions of the word appeared elsewhere as early as the 1880s far to the south along the route that African men took to get to the diamond and gold fields of the Kimberly and Johannesburg areas. The consensus then was that it derived from xiTsonga (Shangaan), spoken in southern Mozambique, the main source of male migrants to South Africa. One theory held that it was a corruption of a derogatory term for a “loose woman” adapted to the brutal living conditions of same-sex hostels, where elder men took younger men or boys first as servants, then as sexual partners. This was more than situational or opportunistic pleasure seeking. Rumor was that the men used the sex for metaphysical protection against the manifold dangers of the workplace. The word was subsequently adopted in other African languages used at the mines, presumably as other men adopted the practice. The first dictionary to acknowledge it (as *inkoshana* or “sodomy”) was for isiZulu, the largest language group in South Africa with related languages across the region, including siNdebele, the second language of Zimbabwe (Doke, Malcolm, and Sikakana 1958). The term cropped up occasionally in criminal cases in Zimbabwe with diminishing association with mining and migrant labor. By the time of independence in 1980 it was a rarely spoken, scandalizing term mostly linked to males in same-sex boarding schools, prisons, and hustling in the big cities.

GALZ, by contrast, has since the mid-1990s adopted a variant to combat these historical associations: *hungochani*. The prefix *hu* in chiShona (or *i*- in the second language of Zimbabwe, siNdebele) conveys the presence of a fundamental essence or nature to something (*munhu*, for example, is a person, whereas *hunhu* is the spirit of humanity, or the essence of being human). The new word thus not only sounded distinctly indigenous but countered the suggestion of an immoral lifestyle choice or evil; *hungochani* asserts homosexuality as a natural phenomenon. This class of noun is also genderless. *Hungochani* thus transforms a highly masculine slang term into one that is inclusive of lesbians, trans women, and other sexual minorities. Homosexuals in that very broad sense become part of the national family deserving of the human rights theoretically available to all citizens.

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At the heart of this has been the internationalization of Western LGBTQI identity politics that prompted research into African same-sex practices, stressing the political dimensions of the nationalistic homophobia prevalent on the African continent. Such homophobic discourses have found confirmation across several African nations and are evidenced by fervent legislative responses to African same-sex practices. However, a central tension lies between queer identity (which is itself a consequence of the globalization of Western notions of sexuality as identity) and queer practices. Western Africanists such as Marc Epprecht and William J. Spurlin have debated the utility of a Euro-American queer theory for African social and political realities. But rather than find ways to assimilate into “oppressive hetero-patriarchal-capitalist frameworks,” African scholars call attention to the importance of perspectives that account for gender and sexual plurality with an eye toward revolutionizing and transforming oppressive orders (Ekine and Abbas 2013, 3).

Because terms such as homosexual, gay, queer, and LGBTQ are considered exogenous and are, therefore, highly contested in the discourses of African queer practices, some scholars and activists have also taken up efforts to Africanize the discourse on same-sex relationships and identities. Beginning in the 1990s, these efforts were pivotal in the discursive developments around African sexuality, especially as more and more queer Africans became increasingly vocal and critical about white scholarship that either suppressed or gave a functionalist reading to narratives of queer desires among African men. Zackie Achmat (1993) was among the African individuals urging a new generation of scholars to bypass the heterosexist nationalism and homophobia in their search for and documentation of diverse African sexual desires. The outcome of this has been a growing body of queer anthropological and sociological analyses within African studies. Despite this, and because no system is perfect, traditional African expressions of nonnormative sexualities may continue to misalign with the contemporary expectations and needs of African queer communities.

**Conceptual Approaches to African Sexuality Studies**

Yet, because of these developments, there have been two key forms of Africanization underway. On one level, Africanization is accomplished through a focus on conceptual
approaches that bring to view the nonnormative and non-Western sexual and gender identities and practices among Africans. Analyses of sexuality and gender in African contexts are better apprehended through analytical categories such as "same-sex–desiring individuals" or "same-sex erotics," which can, as Deborah P. Amory argues, disclose practices among "many people in many different historical contexts, [and] do not always necessarily lead to the emergence of homosexual identities" (1997, 5; see also Msibi 2011). Examples of these queer intimacies include intersex relations, “boy-wives,” “woman-to-woman marriages,” and “female husbands.” Moreover, scholars call for analytical approaches that are more intersectional through their awareness not just of gender and sexual criteria but age, racial, cultural, social, and historical criteria as well.

Although there has been considerable debate about the relevance and utility of the Western umbrella term queer; some African scholars have adopted it, as evidenced by such publications as Zethu Matebeni’s edited volume Reclaiming Afrikan: Queer Perspectives on Sexual and Gender Identities (2014), Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas’s edited volume Queer African Reader (2013), and Kevin Mwachiro's edited volume Invisible: Stories from Kenya's Queer Community (2014). Nevertheless, debate regarding its significance and functionality prevail. Epprecht (2008), a leading scholar on African sexuality, questions the productivity and relevance of queer theory for studying African sexuality largely because of its heavy dependence on Western theory and inability to overcome colonialist conceptions and tropes such as Africa as the “dark continent.” Spurlin (2006) intervenes by proposing that an intersection of queer theory with postcolonial theory will sharpen and strengthen critiques of the former's Western hegemony and foundation. Spurlin also underscores the need to “decolonize assumptions in queer scholarship about sexual identities, politics, and cultural practices outside the West” (2006, 17). Another approach advocates for use of the term queer in its application to Africans following the Austrian queer theorist Gudrun Perko’s concept of “plural-queer variation” (2005, 8). In Perko’s conceptualization, this term encapsulates “the widest possible variety of human beings and living forms” in gendered and sexual terms (8; translations by Doris Leibetseder).

**The Use of Indigenous African Terms**

Although the conceptual and paradigmatic concerns of African sexuality studies is a contested arena, a second effort of Africanization includes excavating and relying on the use of indigenous African terms to identify and define certain queer practices and categories. Such attempts, particularly in eastern and southern Africa, have made legible not just more culturally relevant terminology but language that highlights the ethos and political and social realities of a much broader spectrum of African sexuality. These might include *ashtime* among the Maale of southern Ethiopia; *inzili* among the Bagishu and *kiziri* among the Maragoli in western Kenya and Tanzania; *mashoga* and *lelemama* among Swahili speakers in Mombasa, Kenya, and Zanzibar; *iweto* marriages among the Kamba of Kenya;
The *ashtime* among the Maale in southern Ethiopia formed an effeminate class of men who “dressed like women, performed female tasks, cared for their own houses, and apparently had sexual relations with men” ([Donham [1990] 1999, 92](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-411-0557-6_2)). Ashtime are considered “neither man nor woman” and were typically brought together and protected by Maale kings ([Donham [1990] 1999](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-90-411-0557-6_2)). They performed ritual functions and domestic labor in the king’s court, particularly in preventing the king and other men in the king’s court from the pollution of intercourse with women prior to a major ritual function. For men to sleep with ashtime instead during such times was considered acceptable and a means to preserve the symbolic and heterosexual virility of the head of the nation. In Maale thought, penetrating an ashtime was not considered unmanly, homosexual, or bisexual.

**KUCHU**

In Uganda, the term *kuchu*, considered to be of Kiswahili origin, means “same” and is commonly used to mean “same sex.” *Kuchu* functions as an umbrella term referring to a range of Ugandan gender and sexual identities that exist outside heteronormative forms. *Kuchu* is comparable to the Euro-American all-encompassing term *queer*. For many years, *kuchu* was used largely within and among queer communities of Uganda until about 2007, when a local periodical, *Red Pepper*, outed the term in a Sunday edition article that listed the names of self-identified queer Ugandans. Because of the dangers of identifying as kuchu, many queer Ugandans are in an ongoing negotiation of the risks and opportunities associated with living openly as queer people ([Peters 2014](http://www.redpepperuganda.com/)). Despite *Red Pepper*’s exposure, kuchu groups such as Freedom and Roam Uganda (FARUG) highlight the importance of raising awareness, education, and empowerment by “talking” ([Canavera 2017](http://www.redpepperuganda.com/)). Part of the balancing act between risk and opportunity has to do with Ugandan law that, as of 2018, permitted arrests for homosexual acts but not for identifying as “queer,” which makes “talking” about queer issues less perilous ([Canavera 2017](http://www.redpepperuganda.com/)).

Regardless, in 2011, David Kato, a prominent figure as a self-identified gay African man and LGBTI activist, was attacked in his home by unknown assailants, which resulted in his death. These events drew international attention to Uganda and shed light on the LGBTI debates in the Ugandan parliament and, especially, the highly controversial Anti-Homosexuality Bill, first presented in 2009. This bill called for criminalizing “aggravated homosexuality” by prohibiting “sex outlaws” and advocacy on behalf of gay people ([Tamale 2007](http://www.redpepperuganda.com/)). Kato’s prominence in Uganda’s LGBT community, as well as the activism of other gay rights groups, is portrayed in the 2012 documentary film *Call Me Kuchu*. In this film, the Ugandan scholar Sylvia Tamale comments that the very notion that homosexuality is a crime was introduced by the British. She stresses how Uganda’s antigay laws are examples of legislation that Britain
The reason kuchu as a queer signifier is gaining currency is because Ugandan queer activists favor a more indigenous term over its Western equivalent. This approach, according to leaders of the gay rights group Sexual Minorities Uganda, legitimizes their work and visibility not just as Ugandans but in terms of their multiplicitous sexual identifications as well. It facilitates recognition of certain aspects of an individual, with no single identity being taken to be “the only or the whole truth of the person” (Peters 2014, 10). Key to their conceptualizations of both morality and personhood are frameworks motivated by discourses based in human rights, freedom, and autonomy, as well as the Kiganda principle of ekitiibwa (respect/honor) (Peters 2014). Kuchus balance the Western-based emphasis on the self as autonomous, integrated, and cohesive with the indigenous values of appropriate interdependence and relationality (Peters 2014). Kuchu, therefore, offers queer Ugandans a culturally grounded mode of reference for their sexual identities. Because of its broad appeal, kuchu facilitates the coming together of a range of LGBTI organizations and individuals for common advocacy goals. Thus, kuchu communities are an example of efforts to indigenize the discursive currency and terminology related to African sexuality.

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Among the other examples, *mashoga* is a practice of Swahili-speakers along the East African coast. Mashoga are men who are reputed to be passive homosexuals who dress
entirely in women's clothing or select articles of such clothing at certain ritual and social occasions (Amory 1998). Amory (1998) considers mashoga socially equivalent to the drag queen of Western society. While the Swahili coast in East Africa stretches from southern Somalia to northern Mozambique, its unifying cultural practices include Kiswahili (Swahili), Islam, and an economy driven by trade, fishing, agriculture, and tourism (Amory 1998).

Among the Kamba of Kenya, iweto unions are common. Iweto marriage is when a childless heterosexual Mukamba woman marries a childbearing one. Such unions occur in two primary ways. First, as a first wife in a heterosexual partnership, a Mukamba wife can acquire additional wives for her husband. Although the first wife enjoys a superior position in the family, the co-wives help her tend to their husband’s properties. In this situation, an iweto would bring forth offspring on the first wife’s behalf (Samita 2004). The first wife would arrange the courtship, payment of the bridewealth, and even retain a caregiver for her co-wife (Samita 2004). A first wife can also enter into an iweto marriage for herself and become a “female husband.” This practice also typically follows the cultural norms surrounding bride-price common in heteronormative marriages. In such a scenario, the female husband, or mwaitu, appoints a man to father children with the iweto, and this responsibility is seen as distinct from the man’s own marriage and family obligations (Kitetu and Kioko 2013). Kamba “communal law” has always recognized iweto marriage as a given. The term iweto stems from the Kamba verb kwetwa, which means “to mention” or “to gossip.” According to Catherine Wawasi Kitetu and Angelina Nduku Kioko, taken together, the term implies “one who is to be ‘mentioned’ or ‘whispered about’” (2013, 37).

In Uganda, kuchu communities comprise a range of “queer” gender and sexual practices and identities. As Melissa Minor Peters (2014) notes, kuchus typically identify in multiple ways—as transgender, as women, as gay men, as ex-gay men, and as generically kuchu. The contemporary Ugandan case of gay rights activism and queer identities has come under great global scrutiny because the country itself has been identified as ground zero for intense antigay policy making on the African continent. There is historical evidence, however, suggesting that certain Bugandan rulers of the Kabaka royalty expressed nonnormative sexualities (Mutua 2011). An examination of historical examples of sexuality in Uganda can help current gay rights activists in their search for recognition of and protection for sexual orientation as a human right.

While indigenous terminology is productive and necessary to inform and shape queer African sociopolitical agendas and frameworks, they too can be laden with oppressive notions of gender, age, sexual relations, and hierarchies. Treading with care and caution is important, even in the embrace of vernacular terms. African values and worldviews, together with culturally appropriate human rights frameworks, should be consulted in order to ensure that indigenous terminology does not replicate and reinscribe oppressive systems.
Cultural reasons underpinning sexual relations very much reflect the dictates of African conceptions of the community and family. In some cases, these principles extend to the nation and its leadership as examples of morally appropriate behaviors. Equally, cultural integrity, African spirituality, and ethics are important considerations in any analysis of queer African practices and expressions. For instance, the existence of intersex spiritual deities has been documented among many African ethnic groups. Transgender transformation is common in West African religious ceremonies, just as it is in spirit possession rituals in East Africa. These are documented even in the present day. Even among activists, turning to African terms and discourse on queer intimacies and practices is regarded as more in line with the political and cultural goals of African queer agendas. They argue that policy changes alone are insufficient to adequately enhance the lives of queer Africans (Waechter 2016), and they continue to advocate for education as the most appropriate path for queer African liberatory outcomes (Waechter 2016).

SEE ALSO Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara; Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara; Language; Language in Europe; Language in Latin America; Queer in Latin America; Queer Names and Identity Politics in the Arab World

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**FILMOGRAPHY**


Language in Europe

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The development and use of queer-specific words and phrases by the LGBTQ communities of Europe.

Language is a key form of communication, both written and spoken. Definitions of language vary. However, it is agreed that the words used and the ways they are used (such as the use of *he* as a pronoun, or intonation) enable people to understand and describe themselves and their worlds, as well as to communicate with others. Language reflects and produces ways of thinking and identities. Today’s positive uses of the formerly pejorative *queer* (meaning “peculiar” or “questionable”) and the appropriation of *gay* (which usually meant “merry”) are important examples of new non-oppressive uses of language. Impassioned queer arguments *against* using such words (on the grounds that it is still stigmatizing in the case of the former, and it is inappropriate to lesbians in the case of the latter) indicate how much language matters.

There is some question as to whether queer discourse can exist without queer language. Queer language can variously be seen as a concerted, serious, and proud way of asserting complex queer identities; a joyous collective piss-take and celebratory in-joke; an ever-escalating creative perverse riposte to anodyne heteronormativity; or a handy pragmatic device, born of times when coded communication helped radically disenfranchised people in heteronormative and homophobic cultures evade pillorying and death. Yet one could also argue that “queer language” is problematic because it implicitly states that an oppositional binary exists: “queer language” versus “normal language.”

Such language has often involved obscenity, sharp humor, self-parody, stylish put-downs, appropriation of stereotypical feminine styles, sexual innuendo, derision toward receptive partners (for example the US word *faggots*), and a triumphant refuting of abjection, as in “out and proud.” The extent to which the various sorts of “LGBTQ language” are used is often determined by a situation; for example, it is easier—but perhaps less necessary—to exuberantly flaunt “gay slang” in a queer-friendly nightclub than in a far-right football crowd.

The most commonly used “gay words” are those associated with male sexual practices (for example, *cruising*) and with body parts (particularly for the penis, which is *cartzo* in the
queer language of Polari), but lexicons are expanding constantly. Today some words that make up queer language are often not politically correct and can arouse heated argument, as do the terms *queer* and *coon*. Language fluidity reflects and produces changes in LGBTQ culture; for example, *pride* is now automatically associated with the gay pride urban demonstrations now held every year in June. The mutation has been both heteronormative (*gay* is now widely used by straight people) and queer influenced in a quest for precision, inclusivity, and respect. (For example, *trans* was not in use at the beginning of the twenty-first century.)

**Lavender Approaches to Linguistics**

The study of language used by LGBTQ speakers is related to linguistic anthropology, which studies endangered languages and the influence of language on social life. Lavender linguistics evolved in the United States, not least as part of feminist recognition that language was not only manmade but patriarchal and misogynist. Just as in the new proud use of the word *queer*, there have been black and feminist liberatory reclamations of language, such as the words *nigger* and *bitch*, since the 1970s. Those Challenges to languages' oppressive use were mirrored in the emerging queer world. US anthropologist William L. Leap's annual Lavender Languages and Linguistics conferences, from 1993 onward, along with his founding in 2012 of the *Journal of Language and Sexuality*, with Heiko Motschenbacher, who is based in Germany, have made studies of queer language increasingly international.

From the 1990s into the twenty-first century, queer linguistics analysis moved swiftly from anthropology to cultural, gender, sexuality, and discourse studies. It often involves queer activism as well. Linguistics experts in European and other countries are constantly developing the study. Some connect digitally via the Queer Linguist(ic)s Network on Facebook and its spin-off Non-Binary Linguistics Network.

 Understandings have become increasingly nuanced as gender theorists move beyond the binary (meaning it is now recognized that human beings can have many gender identities rather than being limited to just “male” or “female”). Therefore, language use is a major and sensitive political issue for those no longer prepared to define themselves and their culture in exclusionary or hierarchical terms. New terms are emerging all the time and are controversial—for example, *same-sex–desiring people* or GSD (gender and sexual diversities) rather than LGBT.

 Gender identity is now recognized as something stylized that humans unconsciously perform, depending on the circumstances. Without thinking, people daily and provisionally select “scripts” available to them to help them speak and act like an acceptable sort, such as a properly sweet girl who admires alpha males. Identity is not something innate, which somehow flows from a mysterious and eternal center of one's being. The language used by
queer people is understood to be actively selected, too, in order to act a part. Therefore, as people move in and out of multiple identities—for example, bisexual and lesbian—they choose labels such as “pansexual dyke” that they believe appropriate for specific situations, even though they may do so with insufficient political power, knowledge, and options.

Discourses about sexuality and queer culture have long flourished despite hegemonic silencing. Coded queer “camp talk,” are a collective response to argots, or homophobic mainstream culture. It is similar to the way thieves’ cant and Cockney rhyming slang were partly cryptolects, meaning an intentionally created means by which people who needed to be covert could communicate; Cockney street traders could collude in cheating “outsiders” in this way.

There are two main views of queer language's origins. Some, such as US academic writer Michael Bronski (1984), contend that “camp talk”—especially gay men referring to one another with women’s names or pronouns—evolved as a coded, protected way of speaking about one’s personal or sexual life. It is part of a counter-discourse, amounting to a resistant political reaction to hostile and reductive mainstream culture, including labeling, such as “beaver” and “pouf.” A compensative attempt to create solidarity, it can undermine repressive straight culture and proudly brandish difference. Others feel that language evolves out of queer people’s lives and their needs to communicate with each other, including to sound out new friends' availability, talk discreetly about HIV illnesses, and have fun. The London-based historian Rictor Norton (2011) argues that camp talk came into existence for its own sake: to enable people with something in common to usefully communicate with each other.

Both views and others are valid. The scope of queer language is huge and global. English, Greek, and Turkish have such self-cultivated queer “languages” (which are better called “cants,” as no syntax or grammar exists). Other countries have just a range of words, often borrowed from other countries’ queer lexicons. Many of the words used are from a range of countries and cultures over centuries, including Italian, Romani (Gypsy), and Yiddish, and from the worlds of theater and thievery, fairgrounds and circuses, street trading, and the sex industry.

### European Queer Language Use

Varieties of queer language have been in existence in Europe since ancient times in countries such as Thrace (in presentday Bulgaria, Greece, and Turkey) and Phrygia (in present-day Turkey). English and American English have predominated in queer cultures, including in Germany and France. It is increasingly argued (Provencher 2007) that because new technology has enabled extensive international communication, gayspeak (such as outing) has become global, constituting a transnational hybrid mix of many words and terms. In addition, the growth of gay tourist destinations such as Ibiza off the coast of Spain
and Mykonos off the coast of Greece has meant that visitors return with expanded lexicons. The website Moscas de Colores offers “gay dictionaries” for most European countries. The United Kingdom, Greece, and Turkey, however, are the only countries to have what some call an entire queer argot.

**United Kingdom** The United Kingdom is known for Polari/Palare, a form of mongrel language or a lexicon that includes around 500 words. It has roots stretching back to at least the eighteenth century, including thieves’ cant and theatrical jargon. These were mixed with words from Italian, French, and Occitan. Later additions came from Parlyaree (slang used by tinkers and strolling players). More was brought by seafarers from the eastern Mediterranean, deriving from Lingua Franca, initially the main and polyglot commercial language. It also mixed with back slang, meaning words are spelled backward (e.g., *hair* is *riah*). Seventeenth-century molly-house culture had many self-created terms, such as *giving caudle*, which was derived from the Latin for “tail.”

Polari was used especially by camp male catering crews on passenger ships of the late twentieth century. Sea queens with elaborate and rude female nicknames such as Piss-Elegant Louise, often based on the movie divas they emulated, spoke Polari, not least to discuss passengers’ desirability. *Vada the lallies* meant “look at those legs,” for example. Polari enhanced collective identity in these floating gay havens. But it was also widely used by straight shipmates, too, in a classed solidarity against “outsiders” (customers). Polari became popularly known on land through the BBC Radio series *Round the Horne* (1965–1968), featuring Kenneth Williams as “Sandy.” It is argued that this exposure brought Polari into decline in the camp world because it lost its exclusivity, its delightful secrecy. Polari is still, but decreasingly, spoken by straight and LGBTQ ex-seafarers in the seaport of Southampton. The 2003 Polari translation of the King James Bible controversially continues to be used. In it the world’s creation is written as “munge was upon the eke of the deep” (darkness was upon the face of the deep).
Lancaster University professor Paul Baker (2002, 2017), who has extensively studied the language, comments that it has now been commodified and gentrified. It passed from widespread usage partly because of some 1970s gay liberationists' hostility to camp stereotypes. “Current attitudes towards it are still fragmented and ambivalent within the gay scene, with some people claiming it to be silly, feminising and outdated, others wanting a revival and others thinking it's an important part of gay heritage but shouldn't necessarily be brought back” (Baker 2017). Businesses such as Vada (Look) magazine, Staffordshire’s Polari Lounge café, and Brighton salon Bona Riah bear Polari names. London’s main queer literary salon is called Polari. In a 13 February 2017 message to the author, founder Paul Burston explained, “I named it Polari because it means, literally, gay language, and we’re a celebration of LGBT words.”

**Greece** Other countries have similar linguistic phenomena. There is a modern Greek argot, known as Kaliarda or Latinka, of over 6,000 words. It is said to be much used by receptive partners and by trans sex-industry workers. It has a secret sublanguage, Vathia or Latinika. Kaliarda was identified by the folklorist Elias Petropoulos in 1971. In the late 1960s opponents of the Greek military dictatorship used Kaliarda words as a way to evade censorship (Anna T. 2014).

**Turkey** Lubunca, the queer slang also used by Istanbul sex workers today, has been spoken

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Possible Root</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Affairette</td>
<td>a brief love affair</td>
<td>typical of the Polari use of diminutives; probably originated in Australia in the 1960s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bona</td>
<td>sexy, good</td>
<td>Roman dialect, derived from the Italian root noia, (good)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Camp</td>
<td>effeminate gay</td>
<td>from KAMP or known as Mab. Prostitute; originated in Germany in the 1930s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kersye</td>
<td>a lavatory</td>
<td>Cockney; originated in London in the early twentieth century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naffnaphe</td>
<td>bad, contemptible</td>
<td>partly theatrical, possibly from the sixteenth-century Italian naffia, (a despizable person), or from the acronym Not Available For Fucking, Not A Fuck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omene pâkine</td>
<td>same man</td>
<td>Also spelled Dini pâkine: Dmy is vagabond’s cant for “man” or may be from the Portuguese homens (men); Pâkine means “woman” (possibly from the Italian paglione, meaning “straw mattress,” “hay bag”), Conversely a lesbian is a pâkine oni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plates</td>
<td>loot</td>
<td>Cockney rhyming slang, from plates of meat; from early twentieth-century Eastern European Yiddish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riah shuaker</td>
<td>hairdresser</td>
<td>riah is fair spelled backward, or backslang, from early twentieth-century Eastern European Yiddish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheibl</td>
<td>a wig</td>
<td>From early twentieth-century British Yiddish</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Glossary of Polari Words
for at least 100 years. Nicholas Kontovas (2012) has identified roots in thirteen other languages. Many of them are also used in Kaliarda.

**Other Countries** While lacking a full lexicon, the following countries use some “queer words”:

- **France**: The most comprehensive study of queer language among French queered people is by Denis M. Provencher, a US-based professor of French and intercultural studies. His seminal work, *Queer French* (2007), sees the language used as a “vague English Creole.” He argues that while French people use English terms such as *outing* that therefore influence how people conceive of queer culture, they also use a homegrown language.

- **Germany**: Labels such as *warmer Bruder* (hot brother) existed in at least the 1700s in Berlin. They continue to be used, both pejoratively and by GBQ men themselves. Words also reflected contemporary politics: a “175er” (*Hundertfünfundsechzig*er) was a gay man pilloried under paragraph 175 of the German Criminal Code, especially in World War II (1939–1945) concentration camps.

- **Italy**: Many Italian words are used in Polari, Lubunca, and Kaliarda. The principal word for “faggot,” *finocchio*, was reputedly associated with the smell of fennel (*finocchio*), which Catholic clergy sprinkled on bonfires as they burned castrated men at the stake.

- **Russia**: Goluboi is gay slang. Russians have also Russianized English words, such as *kvir*, meaning “queer.”

- **Scandinavia**: Gay slang exists in Swedish, Danish, and Norwegian. Most of the words for gay men are derogatory toward receptive partners. The post-1920s Finnish terms *Hintti* and *Hinttari* are thought to originate from the German word for “from the back” (*von Hinten*). The Polari phrase “to troll,” meaning to walk alluringly, may originate in the Swedish verb *trolla* (to charm or bewitch).

These examples, which contain interesting overlaps, indicate the rich historical and international mix of “queer language” origins; they also demonstrate how the words are often insulting ones, especially when referring to “effeminate” men. The focus is on taboo male sexual activity rather than the whole person. Women are omitted. Implicitly, words reveal how male same-sex sex has been pilloried, forced underground, and punished by death in many European countries. The emergence of a queer cryptolect for those evading “Hilda Handcuffs” (the law) and creating heartening solidarity was, perhaps, inevitable. Celebratory words, such as *pride*, are crucial evidence of cultural change; new queer language also assists in producing still more respectful, insightful, and playful attitudes toward sexual orientation.

SEE ALSO Language; Language in Africa; Language in Latin America; Molly Houses; Queer in Latin America; Queer Names and Identity Politics in the Arab World

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Language in Latin America

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Stigmatized terms for nonnormative gender and sexual identities in Latin America, and how the LGBTQ community is resignifying them.

The reclamation of language in contemporary Latin America, including the resignification of stigmatized terms and the reevaluation or contestation of gender-marked linguistic practices, is a complex and ongoing process that goes hand-in-hand with the growing adoption of widely circulating global terms, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ). Some Latin American and diasporic Latina/o or Latinx (a gender-neutral way to render “Latina/o”) sex- and gender-nonconforming and LGBTQ individuals have actively reshaped the semantics of pejorative and derogatory terms, turning them into reclaimed terms of identity and into political tools. This process has not been seamless and has been accompanied by a variety of controversies and debates regarding linguistic innovation, questioning the efficacy of such efforts and criticizing the incorporation of “foreign” or stigmatized terms. Similar to phenomena happening in parts of the Francophone and Anglophone Caribbean, in Portuguese in Brazil, and perhaps even in some indigenous languages, Spanish-speaking language activists and others have also challenged hegemonic conceptions of appropriate linguistic practices, particularly regarding intonation, pronunciation, spelling, and the usage of singular and plural third-person pronouns and other gendered personal descriptors in attempts to mark their speech as nonsexist and/or queer—for example, by following feminist language reforms and incorporating the letters x or e as gender-neutral suffixes or by feminizing multiple words with the suffix a. These processes occur in tension with speaking and writing practices that favor gender compliance and the maintenance of traditional linguistic standards.

Reclaimed Language in Latin America

Language reclamation in Latin America entails the negotiation of multiple varieties of the European languages that became dominant through the process of conquest and colonization (English, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Dutch), but also of original indigenous languages, African languages spoken by enslaved populations, and other languages brought by migrants from Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. The descriptor “Latin America” requires some clarification, as it is not a stable signifier. The
term is most frequently understood in relation to locations in North, Central, and South America colonized by Spain and Portugal in the sixteenth century, including Hispanic Caribbean locations, such as Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Puerto Rico. But historically the term has also referenced French colonization in the Americas—for example, in Haiti, Martinique, and Quebec (Mignolo 2005). “Latin America” or its variants “Latina/o” or “Latinx America” can also refer to diasporic or colonized populations elsewhere who maintain a relationship to the Spanish or Portuguese or French languages, particularly in the United States and Canada, although many diasporic Francophones and Lusophones do not self-identify as Latinas/os or Latinx (González 2011). Nearly two centuries of US military, political, economic, and cultural interventions in the Americas and the ascendency of American global hegemony have also had an impact on linguistic practices, causing the rise in popularity of English-language terms that at times substitute or compete with local conceptions.

**Stigmatized Vocabulary**

Highly charged, potentially offensive Spanish-language terms such as *pato, pata, maricón, joto, puto, pájaro, mariposa, afeminado, ponca, loca, vestida, bugarrón, marimacho, marimacha, tortillera, bucha, muxe, and sinvergüenza*; Portuguese-language terms such as *viado* (or *veado*) and *bicha*; Haitian Kreyòl terms such as *massisi*; and Nahuatl terms such as *cuiloni* have frequently been used in a pejorative sense to describe supposedly “effeminate” men or “masculine” women or tranvested individuals or persons who are perceived to have sex with others of the same sex (particularly the male “passive” partner). These terms circulate widely, continue to have varied meanings, and are critically adopted by some (Murray 1995; Sigal 2005; Braziel 2008; Estrada 2011). Many individuals feel profoundly ambivalent about these words or reject them altogether, given their historically pejorative connotations. Others have never stopped using them, or see them as full of possibility, advocating for their critical usage, particularly as a way to combat the blanketing effects of hegemonic transnational English-language terms such as *gay, lesbian*, and *queer*, which do not account for the specificity of particular locations and groups. Because many of these terms are highly stigmatized, it is crucial to understand the specificity of use, including the social identity of the speaker and the context and intention of the utterance. Reclamation of terms can function as a way to limit, challenge, or negotiate injurious speech.

**Contested Language and Lavender Linguistics**

Language is a constitutive feature of LGBTQ community identity and self-fashioning and can be a tool of empowerment and survival, particularly through the process of linguistic reappropriation and resignification (Cameron and Kulick 2003). This process occurs at the individual and collective level and can be led by activists, artists, educators, journalists, and other media content producers, scholars, and writers, or it can simply occur among a group
of friends, peers, or acquaintances that interact with each other on a regular basis. It can also occur as the result of a single individual or a single cultural production having a broader impact.

The queer languages of Latin America form part of complex transnational frameworks and have been the object of multiple scholarly analyses. In general, diverse global studies on language, gender, and sexuality address issues of queer language, at times in the framework of lavender linguistics, using the term popularized by the American scholar William Leap (Leap and Boellstorff 2004). Research by anthropologists, sociologists, linguists, and literary and cultural critics documents the particularities of queer language in local contexts and can refer to vocabulary or lexical choice, semantics, intonation, pronunciation, grammatical markers, and other linguistic practices, such as the use of gendered pronouns, adjectives, and nouns. One example is Don Kulick’s ethnography Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes (1998), where the Swedish anthropologist noted the ease with which Brazilian travesti, or female transgender sex workers, in Salvador, Bahia, moved back and forth between referring to themselves with the gendered pronouns of he and she, at least when documented in the early to mid-1990s.

Another example is Horacio Federico Sívori’s Locas, chongos y gays (2005), in which the Argentine anthropologist mapped out three subject positions, or labels, for men who have sex with men in Argentina in the 1990s: (1) the stigmatized locas, referring to effeminate homosexuals, but also used by militant gays as a sign of affirmation, along with the equally stigmatized term putos; (2) chongos, a term used by locas and others to describe men who perceive themselves to be masculine, not stigmatized by effeminacy, and who are not socially recognized or self-identify as homosexuals; and (3) “gays,” who adopt international or cosmopolitan models of public self identification and masculine behavior, at times reject effeminacy, distance themselves from the label locas, and demand civil recognition. Sívori refrains from offering value judgments on these positions and is more interested in the interplay between the three.

Neologisms and Linguistic Innovation

It is important to note that language is constantly evolving as it reflects cultural, social, political, scientific, and historical changes. Neologisms such as the term homo-sexual, which was coined in 1869 by the Austrian-born writer Karl Maria Kertbeny (1824–1882) to challenge the stigma of such older terms as sodomite, and more recent terms, such as transgender and cisgender, are constantly being introduced to reflect novel concepts and ideas. Linguistic borrowing also occurs when speakers take a word or phrase from one language and incorporate it into their speech in another, such as queer/cuir and gay/gai/guei. Simultaneously, older terms change and evolve, and at times there might be competing definitions or understandings of what these mean. There are multiple examples
in the English language, including the changes in the meanings of the words *gay* and *queer*, which at times receive alternate spellings in Latin America that reflect local linguistic practices. Latin American activists, artists, educators, scholars, and other individuals who consume transnational media or who travel or interact with tourists and foreigners are fully informed of global developments regarding global LGBTQ politics and serve as a conduit for linguistic innovation in the region. At the same time, Latin Americans and other Spanish- and Portuguese-speakers expose global subjects to their linguistic practices.

**Maricones in the 1920s**

The transnational circulation of both spoken and written vernacular terms in Spanish and Portuguese is longstanding. In his 1929 Spanish-language poem “Oda a Walt Whitman” (Ode to Walt Whitman), included in the volume *Poet in New York*, Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) included a veritable transatlantic glossary of common terms from the English-, Spanish-, and Portuguese-speaking world, referring to the “Fairies of North America,” “Pájaros of Havana,” “Jotos of Mexico,” “Sarasas of Cádiz,” “Apios of Seville,” “Cancos of Madrid,” “Floras of Alicante,” and “Adelaidas of Portugal,” which the poet collectively identified as “Maricones [faggots] of the world, murderers of doves!” (*García Lorca 1998;* translation by Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes). In this tortuous poem, the Spanish poet sought to document but also distance himself from these categories, particularly from the stigma of effeminacy synthesized in the term *maricón*, an augmentative derived from *Marica*, the diminutive of the proper name María or Mary. Instead, the Spaniard favored the love or attraction among masculine-acting men portrayed in the life and poetry of the American poet Walt Whitman (1819–1892). Lorca, who was murdered by fascists in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War, was known for his homosexuality and republican sympathies; his poem would not circulate freely until well after his death.

**“Gay” and “Queer”**

The popularization of the term *gay* in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s led to the abandonment of previous terms, such as *fairy* and *pansy*. The term *gay* would gain great traction in the 1960s and 1970s as part of the gay liberation movement, which had international repercussions (*Murray 1995*). As Sívori notes, individuals in Latin America also adopted the term *gay* as a sign of modernity—spelled either *gai* or *gay*—and as a rejection of the stigma of local vernacular terms, but also of the medical-pathological tinge of “homosexual.” The rise in popularity in the 1990s of the reclaimed term *queer* as a radical signifier in the United States led once again to a semantic shift away from the stigma previously associated with this word. However, “queer” has not had the same traction in Latin America as “gay,” although it appears at times with the alternate spelling *cuir* (*Epps 2007*). The articles in Leap and Tom Boellstorff’s edited volume *Speaking in Queer Tongues:*
Globalization and Gay Language (2004), focus on the homogenization of queer language and the tensions that have ensued as a result of the global ascendancy of English-language terms, but the book's chapters also document distinct, local forms of resistance to this process—for example, among Cuban American men in Miami. Mexican literary scholar Héctor Domínguez Ruvalcaba, in his Translating the Queer (2016), has highlighted the possibilities for using the conceptual frameworks of queer theory to critically analyze Latin American experience.

Multilingualism and Vernacular Language in Latin America

Vernacular language refers to local or regional variations that mark the speech of a particular group of people and that are not necessarily considered standard. Individuals are frequently aware of the functioning of vernacular forms as more intimate or informal, distanced from the standard language taught in schools and used in mainstream media; these terms might not appear in general dictionaries or be understood by persons from other regions, countries, or social groups. While the term vernacular accounts for regional variation, particularly marked by geographical distance, it also reflects subcultural practices of minoritarians, frequently marginalized, or disenfranchised groups. The
maintenance, recuperation, and popularization of vernacular language has been a central feature of LGBTQ artists and movements in Latin America.

**Joto** One example of this linguistic recuperation is the current use of the word *joto*, a Mexican term indexing homosexuality or male effeminacy that is also very common among Mexican Americans or Chicanxs in the United States but that is not widely understood outside of its local context. The pejorative usage of the masculine term *joto* and the female term *jota*, which can also refer to gender-nonconforming women, has been overcome in very particular contexts. One example is the title of the anthology coedited by Michael K. Schuessler and Miguel Capistrán, *México se escribe con J: Una historia de la cultura gay* (2010; Mexico is spelled with a J: A history of gay culture). In this case, the coeditors took advantage of the double meaning of the word *jota* as “queer” but also the name of the letter *J*, highlighting the fact that in Spanish, the *x* in Mexico is pronounced as a *j* and that several nineteenth-century formulations of the name of the country were written as *Méjico*. In their whimsical yet cogently political formulation, there is no Mexico (no national culture) without the centrality of “jotas,” a point demonstrated in the essays through the discussion of leading cultural figures.

Another example appears in the academic embrace of the term *jotería* and the rise of “*jotería* studies” in the United States (Hames-García 2014)—for example, in the name of the Association for Jotería Arts, Activism, and Scholarship, which uses four butterflies in a circle as its emblem. In this case, predominantly English-speaking or bilingual Latinx (specifically Mexican American or Chicanx and Central American) activists, artists, and scholars chose to mark their distance from the terms generally understood in the initialism LGBTQ and inserted a linguistically specific Spanish-language Mexican regional marker, *jotería*, which refers to the culture and practices of *jotos* and *jotas*, understood as gender-nonconforming and/or sexually diverse individuals of Latinx descent.

**Mariposa** Use of the Spanish-language word *mariposa* (butterfly), which is stigmatized when used in reference to effeminate men, dates back as early as the seventeenth century, as the scholar Federico Garza Carvajal discusses in his book *Butterflies Will Burn* (2003), which treats sodomy in colonial Mexico and early modern Spain; Garza Carvajal theorizes the significance of the word *mariposa* in relation to sodomy and desire. The contemporary linguistic recuperation of *mariposa* is evident in the title of anthologies such as Charles Rice-González and Charlie Vázquez’s *From Macho to Mariposa: New Gay Latino Fiction* (2011), Emanuel Xavier’s *MARIPOSAS: A Modern Anthology of Queer Latino Poetry* (2008), and Rigoberto González’s memoir *Butterfly Boy: Memories of a Chicano Mariposa* (2011), as well as his Mariposa Boys series for young adult readers, including *The Mariposas Club* (2009), *Mariposa Gown* (2012), and *Mariposa U* (2014). The engaging Cuban documentary *Mariposas en el andamio* (1996; Butterflies on the scaffold), directed by Margaret Gilpin and Luis Felipe Bernaza, positively highlights the experiences of a multiracial cast of gay men who perform in drag in the working-class neighborhood of La Güinera in Havana.
Meanwhile, the Puerto Rican documentary *Mala Mala* (2014), directed by Antonio Santini and Dan Sickles, portrays the activism of the transgender activist group Butterflies Trans Foundation in San Juan, including their efforts to obtain island-wide legislation favoring employment protection.

**Tortilleras** A third example of linguistic recuperation involves challenging the use of the term *tortilleras* (female corn or flour tortilla makers), used as a slur against lesbians or masculine women, particularly in Mexico, which has regional variations, including *cachaperas* (female *cachapa* or corn-cake makers) in Venezuela and *areperas* (female arepa makers) in Colombia, all of which refer to women who make food by bringing their hands together to shape raw dough. The resignification of *tortilleras* appears in the title of the anthology *Tortilleras: Hispanic and U.S. Latina Lesbian Expression* (2003), coedited by Lourdes Torres and Inmaculada Pertusa, as well as in the name of *Potencia tortillera* (Tortillera power), a lesbian digital archive based in Argentina (*Peralta* 2014). According to Torres and Pertusa, the term *tortilleras* is used along with many others in Latin America (*jota, loca, pata, marimacho, culera, lambiscona, pajuelona*); the coeditors indicate that “although these words are often used in derogatory ways, Hispanic and Latina lesbians have reappropriated many of them as affirming identity markers” (2003, 6).

**Pato and Pata and Other Animal Metaphors** In Puerto Rico and in other locations in the greater Hispanic Caribbean, such as Venezuela, to be called *pato* (male duck) or *pata* (female duck), far from being a sign of affection, is a rather disconcerting and at times traumatic event, for it is to be marked as queer, strange, different, sexually or gender nonconforming, or simply marginal (*La Fountain-Stokes* 2007). Much like the word *gallina* (chicken), which also has profoundly negative implications (of cowardice, in that case), *pato* and *pata* are traumatizing terms and can operate as a form of bestialization with negative implications. Remarkably, this linguistic phenomenon is not limited to Caribbean Spanish but also occurs in other languages, such as British English (duckie) and American Yiddish (*feygelekh*, meaning “little bird”). It is not clear how and why these animal names became synonyms, stand-ins, or epithets for stigmatized gender and sexual behavior.

**The Widespread Use of Animal Epithets** The use of animal metaphors in reference to homosexuality and to individuals who transgress dominant gender and sexual norms in the Americas and in Europe—particularly the pejorative, stigmatized usage by dominant groups who do not identify with or practice queer sexualities—and the reappropriation and transformation of these terms by marginal subjects, is actually a widespread, multilingual phenomenon. Linguistic analysis of queer bird and animal epithets reveals manifestations in the greater Hispanic Caribbean (*pájaro/pájara* or “bird,” *pato/pata* or “duck,” *mariposa* or “butterfly,” and *mariquita* or “ladybug,” used with varied frequency in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Honduras, Mexico, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela) and in Brazil (*bicha* or “female animal,” *veado/viado* or “deer,” and *frango/franga* and *galinha* or “chicken”), in addition to the nonanimal term *puto*, the masculine version of *puta*, or female
prostitute, which is in common usage in Mexico and Argentina.

The definitive origin of the usage of the words *pato* and *pata* to describe gender-nonconforming persons has not been determined, although there are many competing theories and conjectures. For example, there is an interesting coincidence in the frequency of other Hispanic Caribbean lexical items, such as *pájaro* (bird), *mariposa* (butterfly), and *mariquita* (ladybug), which are used in Cuba and the Dominican Republic to refer to male homosexuals. All of these animal words refer to insects or birds that have wings and fly, associating their use to terms in other languages such as *fairy* in English and *feygele* in Yiddish. Clearly, *pato* and *pájaro* would seem to be lexically related, while *mariposa* and *mariquita* (which is also popular in Spain) seem to be derived from marica and its superlative, maricón, all of which derive from María (Mary), a proper name that is also used to refer to male effeminacy in the English language. *Pato* and *pájaro* would also seem to be directly linked to the Spanish phrase *tener pluma* or *plumero* (literally, to be full of feathers), which has a quite generalized usage in Latin America and Spain as indicating effeminateness.

**Literary and Performative Rewritings of Patos** Puerto Rican and Nuyorican artists have challenged the stigmatized use of *pato*. Perhaps the first author to fully engage this symbol as the central motif was Alfredo Villanueva-Collado in his poetry collection *Pato salvaje* (1991; Wild or savage duck), where the poet documented his relationship with his lover of seventeen years, Victor Manuel Amador (1944–1988), an artist who died from AIDS-related complications. In his introduction to *Pato salvaje*, the poet Carlos Antonio Rodríguez-Matos highlights how Villanueva-Collado dialogues with other gay Puerto Rican poets, referencing the work of the well-known writer Manuel Ramos Otero (1948–1990) and their shared rejection of domesticity and domestication (*Villanueva-Collado 1991*). Additional cultural productions that critically engage the trope of *pato* include the Arthur Ávilés Typical Theatre's performance piece *El pato feo* (2000; The ugly duckling), performed in the Bronx, and Frances Negrón-Muntaner's short story "La patita fea" (1999), which was published as “The Ugly Dyckling” in 2007. Alexandra Pagán Vélez's award-winning short story "El cisne" (2001; The swan) also takes up this trope and gives it a novel twist, highlighting transformational elements and a different bird as a replacement for the stigma of ducks. Many of these retellings build upon the metaphor of duck as homosexual in the context of Hans Christian Andersen’s well-known and widely translated children's tale “The Ugly Duckling” (1844), which has been seen as a reflection of the gay Danish author’s own personal travails.

One cogent example of the complex resignification of *pato* (duck) is Ángel Lozada’s loosely autobiographical novel *La patografía* (1998; The pathography), the title of which plays with the phonetic similarity of the word *pato* (“duck” or “faggot” in Spanish) and the terms *pathos* (“pity” or “sadness”), *pathology* (the science that explores illnesses), and *pathography* (the description of illnesses). It was first published in Mexico in 1998 in the
context of the International Book Fair of Guadalajara, which was dedicated to Puerto Rico on the centennial of the US invasion of the island. The novel’s cover features a visually arresting red, white, and green watercolor painting of a duck flying over a tropical landscape full of plantain and banana leaves by the gay Puerto Rican artist Rafael Rosario Laguna. The book is a bildungsroman, or developmental narrative, that tells the story of Ángel Rosado Mangual, also referred to as Luisin, a child growing up in the 1970s in Mayagüez, a city often linked in the popular imagination with male homosexuality. The protagonist of La patografía is harassed and persecuted for being effeminate, and in a Kafkaesque twist, sprouts plumas (feathers), grows a beak, and lays eggs, and finally is hunted, desplumado (defeathered), shot at, sodomized, kicked, cooked, and consumed in a violent homophobic carnage, or what the author calls a patocidio (a duck/queer pathocide); the child’s body becomes that of a sacrificial duck à l’orange, instead of a scapegoat or sacrificial lamb.

Organized as a new Puerto Rican Bible, Lozada’s novel has sections with such titles as “Génesis”; four gospels according to Mamá, Titi Alicia, Mami, and Tío Lázaro; an “Arrebato” (rapture); and a conclusion called “El Patocidio,” which can be read as a type of apocalypse. The child’s persecution is narrated in detail as he falls victim to the entire town as led by Profesor Nerón (Professor Nero, like the Roman emperor) and an evangelist referred to as “Jode y Rasca” (“bothers and scratches”), an apparent parodic reference to Jorge Raschke, one of the most visible and vociferously antigay religious figures on the island. The anal rape of El Pato (i.e., Ángel Rosado Mangual, who has now become a duck) is carried out by the police with a bottle of Malta India, a nonalcoholic, extremely rich malt beverage manufactured in Mayagüez that is popular with Puerto Rican children. The novel’s end is striking in its double move of horror and redemption, as Ángel’s aunt proceeds to cook the duck in orange sauce, making duck à l’orange. After the execution, the narrator offers a social critique, commenting on the government’s and the general public’s complicity and lack of concern with the situation of homosexuals. This violence leads to a broader pronouncement on the island population’s desire to deny any space for homosexuality, and to an identification of a particular (nationalist, autochthonous) Puerto Rican homophobia.

**Locas and Sinvergüenças** Two final examples of reclaimed language are loca (“madwoman,” “effeminate homosexual, lesbian”) and sinvergüenças (shameless individuals), both of which circulate in varied ways. Loca, registered in Argentina (Sívori 2005), has been popularized by entertainers such as the Puerto Rican drag performer Nina Flowers, who made the term her catchphrase in 2009, on the first season of the television reality show RuPaul’s Drag Race (La Fountain-Stokes 2011b). It is also central to Dominican American and Cuban American conceptualizations (Decena 2011; Peña 2013), as well as to transnational Central American immigrants (Viteri 2014). Sinvergüenza, meanwhile, has been used to express lack of shame and appears as the name of activist organizations, literary works, and academic and activist conferences (La Fountain-Stokes 2011a).
Nonsexist Language and Queer Linguistic Practices

It is important to point out that the reclamation of particular words is only one aspect of a much broader effort to reclaim language as it pertains to the LGBTQ experience in Latin America. Additional efforts include strategies to overcome traditional gender correspondence in speech, as in the example of Latinx. The Spanish and Portuguese languages require speakers to use forms (whether nouns, pronouns, or adjectives) that ostensibly match their gender assigned at birth when speaking about themselves, and they also require gendered forms when speaking about others in the second and third person. Therefore, there is an expectation that each speaker will reveal their personal gender through language and that speakers will also identify the gender of others to whom they are referring or speaking.

Gender-nonconforming persons have historically resisted these practices to varying degrees, particularly in private, but there have been limitations regarding public, formal speech. More recent innovations include the substitution of gender-specific vowel suffixes, moving away from the o referencing masculine and a referencing feminine in favor of e or the universal U, or even the consonant x, perceived as gender-neutral forms. As of yet, these practices are somewhat limited to queer and feminist activists and have not been widely adopted, but their use has generated wide debates. The recuperation of gender-inflected intonation and pronunciation has also challenged mainstream norms.

SEE ALSO Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Jotería Studies; Language; Language in Africa; Language in Europe; Puerto Ricans in the Diaspora; Queer in Latin America; Queer Names and Identity Politics in the Arab World

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Lavender Menace

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Lavender Menace was a New York City–based lesbian feminist collective that coalesced in 1969 in response to homophobia and heterosexism in the women's liberation movement and to sexism in the gay liberation movement. As with many feminist groups at this time, Lavender Menace existed informally, and members are more likely to be known for their participation in Radicalesbians, formed in 1970 by women primarily from Lavender Menace and the Gay Liberation Front (Shumsky 2009). Although short lived, Lavender Menace had a lasting impact on feminism because of its zap action—a theatrical public protest—disrupting the Second Congress to Unite Women and its position paper “The Woman-Identified Woman,” both of which laid the groundwork for lesbian feminism as an identity and politics.

When Lavender Menace formed, the members reclaimed their name from Betty Friedan (1921–2006), leading feminist and a cofounder of the National Organization for Women (NOW), who in a 1969 speech called lesbians a “lavender menace.” Jo Freeman writes in a 1975 analysis of the women’s liberation movement that “Friedan was using McCarthy scare tactics to ‘purge’ NOW of what she called the ‘lavender menace’” because she believed that “lesbians were trying to take over the organization” (99). Established in 1966 and supporting hundreds of state and city chapters by the mid-1970s, NOW worked in legal and political spheres to challenge sexism on a wide range of issues, from the gendered wage gap to violence against women. Friedan, then president of NOW, feared that if feminism were conflated with man-hating lesbianism, it would impede the organization’s efforts to achieve equality between women and men. Friedan’s 1963 book The Feminine Mystique and her articles in mainstream magazines and newspapers characterize homosexuality in a negative light as well (Gilmore 2013; Pomerleau 2010; Poirot 2009). Also catalyzing Lavender Menace was Susan Brownmiller’s New York Times Magazine article titled “Sisterhood Is Powerful.” This 1970 overview of the women’s liberation movement makes a parenthetical reference to lesbianism as “a lavender herring, perhaps, but surely no clear and present danger” (140). Brownmiller claims that she meant to repudiate Friedan’s construction of lesbians as a threat to feminism, but others found it dismissive, patronizing, and insulting (Jay 1999).
Context of the Group’s Formation

Sponsored by NOW and held in New York City, the Second Congress to Unite Women brought together several hundred participants from across the political spectrum. On 1 May 1970 a group of about twenty women interrupted the event (Jay 1999; Echols 1989). After gaining control of the stage and the sound system, the activists bared pale purple T-shirts with the phrase “lavender menace” and carried signs reading, “The woman’s movement is a lesbian plot!” The group also passed out a draft of a manifesto-like document titled “The Woman-Identified Woman,” a position paper that makes “the primacy of women relating to women” critical to women’s liberation (Radicalesbians 1971, 83). They then turned the evening into an open dialogue and consciousness-raising session among all participants that focused on lesbianism and the hegemony of heterosexist culture. Altogether this action brought sexuality to the fore and demanded that NOW—and the women’s liberation movement more broadly—recognize the significance of lesbians in feminist activism and the need to actively challenge homophobia.

Lavender Menace Member Rita Mae Brown (standing, far right) at the Second Congress to Unite Women, May 1970. Lavender Menace gained notoriety when they interrupted the Second Congress to Unite Women on 1 May 1970 in order to bring attention to homophobia within the National Organization for Women and the role of lesbians within the women’s liberation movement.
Congress attendees appeared to heed these concerns, adopting a resolution that affirmed lesbianism as a way of relating to other women and as significant to feminist politics (Echols 1989). Then, in 1971, NOW amended its official position on sexuality with the resolution “Lesbian Rights,” which outlined the range of oppression lesbians faced and concluded by averring that "NOW recognizes the double oppression of women who are lesbians ... that a woman’s right to her own person includes the right to define and express her own sexuality and to choose her own lifestyle, and ... that NOW acknowledges the oppression of lesbians as a legitimate concern of feminism” (NOW 2000, 334).

Although Friedan is often singled out as the source of NOW's homophobia, resistance to lesbianism characterized the group more generally. At the national level, NOW privileged heterosexuality. When it was founded, the organization's political program foregrounded marriage and equality between husbands and wives, and discounts in NOW membership for married couples limited marriage to a heterosexual union (Gilmore 2013). Also erasing lesbianism, NOW’s statement of purpose adopted in 1966 emphasized women’s roles as mothers and caregivers but made no mention of sexuality as a topic of activism. Moreover, New York's First Congress to Unite Women (1969) omitted the homophile group Daughters of Bilitis as a sponsor (Orleck 2015), and the second congress excluded lesbianism from its agenda (Jay 1999). Some actions within NOW were interpreted as actively homophobic. For example, in 1969 Friedan asked prominent lesbian Rita Mae Brown (1944–) to leave her position as editor of NOW's newsletter. And Del Martin (1921–2008), cofounder of the Daughters of Bilitis and an active NOW member, faced resistance from NOW board members when she attempted to bring sexuality within NOW's purview (Gilmore 2013; Pomerleau 2010).

**Impact of the Group**

Lavender Menace's disruption of the Second Congress to Unite Women reverberated widely, and “The Woman-Identified Woman” circulated throughout the nation (Poirot 2009). Participant Karla Jay considers the zap action the “single most important action organized by lesbians who wanted the women’s movement to acknowledge [their] presence and needs” and claims that it “completely reshaped the relationship of lesbians to feminism for years to come” (1999, 137). Most immediately, Lavender Menace influenced discourses about sexuality within feminism, which it did primarily through “The Woman-Identified Woman” (Garber 2000). This statement, attributed to Radicalesbians when published in 1971, was one of the first to explore the political facets of being lesbian, thus setting a foundation for lesbian feminism as a philosophy and way of being in the world. Because the piece de-emphasizes the role of romantic and sexual relationships and instead explores the revolutionary potential of women-centric interactions, it constructs lesbianism as a political choice and, therefore, as open to all women.

In addition to redefining women's relationships, “The Woman-Identified Woman” suggests
that lesbianism represents the acme of feminism. By defining “woman identification” in opposition to women who relate to men, this piece implies that any affiliations with men inherently reinforced patriarchal power and, by extension, that lesbians are the vanguard of the women’s liberation movement. From this perspective, only a separatist agenda would do. Such a program alienated many women—heterosexual and lesbian—causing some groups to fracture and revealing some of the heterogeneity within lesbian and feminist communities.

While Lavender Menace’s zap action and “The Woman-Identified Woman” marked a significant moment in the women’s liberation movement, the prominence of NOW and New York City may overemphasize the group’s effects on feminism in the 1970s. New York City was an important site of feminist activism and, as such, has weighed heavily in national histories of the movement. Studies of feminism, for instance, tend to portray a gay/straight split as pervasive. There were widespread debates about sexuality, but a closer look at different cities reveals a range of feminist practices, coalitions, and tensions (Clark 2007). Not all lesbians experienced hostility from NOW, and some local chapters actively welcomed lesbians and addressed issues of sexuality in their political programs. Especially in smaller cities, NOW chapters may have offered women their only connection to feminism, making members more willing to work through disagreements rather than leave or split up the group (Gilmore 2013). In contrast, some radical feminist groups continued to marginalize lesbians and lesbianism in their political programs (Echols 1989; Pomerleau 2010). Recognizing this diversity in the women’s liberation movement does not diminish the political, ideological, symbolic, and affective weight of Lavender Menace, but it does highlight the way place and time conspired to shape the particularities of this group’s actions and to situate it so visibly in national histories of feminism.

SEE ALSO Combahee River Collective; Daughters of Bilitis; Dyketactics!

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Lavender Scare

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A Cold War campaign targeting gay people in the US government for reasons of national security that paralleled the anti-Communist campaign known as the Second Red Scare.

In 1992 the historian Geoffrey S. Smith coined a new term to describe how anxieties about gender and sexual normativity informed US politics and culture in the years after World War II: the “lavender scare” (318). Operating in tandem with the anti-Communist crusade known as the Second Red Scare, the Lavender Scare exploited and inflamed concerns about national security at the beginning of the Cold War to deny rights to privacy, personal security, and employment to gay men and lesbians, and those suspected as such. While most narrowly “Lavender Scare” denotes the implementation of loyalty-security policies to prevent homosexuals from working in federal civilian agencies, it also encompasses related efforts carried out by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the military, immigration officials, local police, state legislatures, and others to expose and stamp out the “homosexual menace” (D’Emilio 1998). As such, it constitutes an important episode in the construction of the US state, a state that is not simply “straight” but that premises its security on its capacity to exclude a wide range of “others” from recognition and legitimacy (Canaday 2009).

The antihomosexual campaign that lasted from the end of World War II in 1945 into the 1960s was part of a postwar moral panic that erupted in response to broad social, economic, and political shifts. These included the rise of corporate culture and its impact on long-standing ideals of masculinity; the massive social disruptions of the Great Depression and war years; an expanding federal bureaucracy; heightening racial conflicts; the growing visibility of gay men and lesbians in the nation’s cities, in the cultural imagination, and in scientific and medical discourses; and intensifying competition between the United States and the Soviet Union for global influence. In this context, many scholars agree that both the Lavender Scare and the Second Red Scare reflected widespread anxieties about American society more than realistic assessments of the Soviet threat to internal security. The common roots of these crusades were reflected in the parallel ways that Communists and gays were imagined to constitute a threat to the nation: both were morally weak and psychologically immature; both were marked by sexual immorality and gender nonconformity; and both constituted secretive “hidden subcultures” whose loyalties to
their group superseded their loyalty to the nation (Johnson 2013, 63). Senator Kenneth Wherry (1892–1951), one of the foremost promoters of the Lavender Scare, summarized this logic: “You can't hardly separate homosexuals from subversives. Mind you, I don't say every homosexual is a subversive, and I don't say every subversive is a homosexual. But a man of low morality is a menace in the government, whatever he is, and they are all tied up together” (quoted in Johnson 2004, 37–38).

Institutionalizing the Lavender Scare

Concerted efforts to expel gay men and lesbians from federal jobs dated from 1947, when President Harry S. Truman (1884–1972) issued Executive Order 9835 mandating loyalty investigations for all civilian employees and those seeking employment. As the historians Allan Bérubé (1990) and Margot Canaday (2009) have shown, military officials expanded their existing antihomosexual efforts in the same year. In response, the State Department created the Personnel Security Board, which went further, permitting the exclusion of those with “character weakness,” including sexual perversion. In 1950, after Senator Joseph McCarthy (1908–1957) charged that the department was harboring Communists and homosexuals, John Peurifoy (1907–1955), the department’s deputy undersecretary, revealed that ninety-one homosexuals had been fired under this policy. McCarthy’s attention to the issue was fleeting, but Peurifoy’s admission prompted other Republican legislators to take up the charge. Sensing an opportunity for partisan advantage, men such as Styles Bridges (1898–1961) and Wherry participated in a series of Congressional hearings and investigations that aroused public opinion about the homosexuals-in-government “problem” and pressured administrators to expand existing antigay initiatives (Johnson 2004).

Late in 1950, their efforts received bipartisan approval when a Senate committee chaired by the southern Democrat Clyde R. Hoey (1877–1954) issued an influential report titled “Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government.” Despite quite mixed testimony on the question, the report concluded that “those who engage in acts of homosexuality and other perverted sex activities are unsuitable for employment in the Federal Government…. One homosexual can pollute a Government office.” This logic culminated in President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s 1953 executive order that any federal employee could be dismissed on grounds that his employment might be “contrary to the best interests of the national security” (Executive Order 10450). Enforcing this policy required increasing surveillance of American citizens by the FBI, which was responsible for conducting investigations, and local vice squads, who shared arrest records and lists of “known” homosexuals with federal agencies. The “routinization and institutionalization” of the Lavender Scare within the national security bureaucracy made this persecution both less visible and more efficient (Johnson 2004, 5). According to the historian David K. Johnson (2004), more Americans were fired or never hired under these policies because of
accusations of homosexuality than disloyalty or political subversion (see also Charles 2015).

The effects of the Lavender Scare were not uniform. Male applicants and employees seem to have been more severely affected, in part because they were more likely to be arrested under public morals laws, making them more identifiable and providing sufficient evidence for dismissal. Furthermore, anxieties about failing masculinity in the postwar years may well have focused attention on male government employees (Johnson 2004; Cuordileone 2000). In addition, although in the postwar years the civil service became more diverse, white men held the majority of positions. Still, in general, women and African American employees came under particular suspicion in loyalty-security investigations, and further research may demonstrate that this extended to investigations for homosexuality in particular. Certainly, unmarried and professional women were already suspect in the postwar conservative milieu; in this context, accusations that they had “odd-shaped lips” or associated mainly with other women may have been enough to fuel investigations (Johnson 2004, 120; see also Storrs 2013). Similarly, the experience of nongovernment workers who were both black and gay in postwar America, such as the civil rights activist Bayard Rustin (1912–1987), suggests that their compatriots in the civil service might have been particularly vulnerable (D’Emilio 2003).
US Senator Clyde R. Hoey, Head of Committee that Issued “Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government” in 1950. This influential report concluded that those who engage in homosexual activity were unsuitable for employment in the federal government, lending institutional support for the persecution of homosexuals in government service.

Beyond the Federal Government

The Lavender Scare extended to employees of many states, as well as government contractors, private industry, and universities. The Florida Legislative Investigation Committee, popularly known as the Johns Committee, is a notorious example. Created in 1956 to investigate “organizations advocating violence,” the Johns Committee was part of a coordinated attempt in the South to use state power to mount massive resistance to federal civil rights efforts. Its members first attacked the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), accusing it of supporting Communism. When this campaign stalled, committee staff escalated a concurrent investigation of homosexuality, focusing on driving gay men and lesbians out of the state’s universities and public schools. While the staff’s efforts ultimately subjected them to censure and ridicule, from 1957 to 1963 the committee succeeded in terrorizing numerous teachers, engineering the firing of professors at two state universities, and prompting the revocation of teaching credentials of dozens of women and men (Braukman 2012; Graves 2009).

In certain ways, the Johns Committee’s purge of teachers, especially at the primary and secondary level, relied on a different logic than did other efforts associated with the Lavender Scare: gay and lesbian teachers were imagined to pose a moral threat to children rather than to be security risks who might betray national secrets. Yet the Johns Committee shows particularly clearly how changes in the racial, gender, and sexual orders could be linked as attacks on the nation. The committee justified its campaign against the NAACP as a fight against “racial perversion” (support for interracial sex), made necessary by the infiltration of the group by Communists, who allegedly sought to encourage “social mixing,” offered pornography to youth, and sanctioned homosexuality in order to assault American culture from within. Teachers, who at best did not provide proper moral teachings and at worst were pedophiles, were equally dangerous (Braukman 2012).

The Lavender Scare and the Global Order

The United States was not alone in intensifying the persecution of homosexuals, especially gay men, in the postwar years. Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom all created similar campaigns; international organizations such as the United Nations fired gay and lesbian employees; and in France some forms of homosexual conduct were recriminalized (Kinsman and Gentile 2010; Wotherspoon 1989; Johnson 2013). There is evidence that these efforts were shaped, encouraged, and even mandated by US officials, but they also reflected homegrown homophobia and local developments. Canada’s campaign appears
most similar to that of the United States, encompassing increased quotidian policing of same-sex sexuality, immigration restrictions, and a purge of government employees suspected of being gay. But in Canada as well as the United Kingdom, concerns about homosexuals’ “character weakness” conflicted with respect for privacy rights and civil liberties. Consequently, there was more resistance within these governments to such policies, and a quicker move toward liberalization. Even Canada’s infamous “fruit machine”—developed, though never fully implemented, to identify homosexuals through measuring “pupillary response” to pornographic images—was proposed as a more precise and judicious technology than notoriously inaccurate polygraph tests that US officials expressed no hesitation about using (Robinson and Kimmel 1994; Kinsman 1995).

Focusing on the global politics of the Lavender Scare also sheds more light on the international tensions animating US policy. The scholar Robert D. Dean (2001) argues that this “sexual inquisition” enabled conservatives to attack an entrenched foreign policy elite, which they justified in the name of protecting the “free world” from the incursions of worldwide Communism. In addition, ideas about the moral foundations of empire and US exceptionalism legitimated these policies. If, as had long been contended, tolerance for homosexuality was a key cause of the decline of civilizations and empires, then US officials, competing with the Soviets for influence with a newly decolonizing Global South, faced particularly pressing challenges as they grappled with the “problem” of sex perversion at home. The historian Naoko Shibusawa has suggested that, along with Communists, homosexuals were Orientalized, “categorized ... as diametrically opposed to Americans and the West” (2012, 732). This logic infuses R. G. Waldeck’s influential 1952 article “The Homosexual International,” which warned of a “Homintern” that paralleled the Comintern: “Here is why homosexual officials are a peril to us in the present struggle between West and East.... Without being necessarily Marxist they serve the ends of the Communist International in the name of their rebellion against the prejudices, standards, ideals of the ‘bourgeois’ world” (quoted in Shibusawa 2012, 732).

**Unintended Consequences**

The Lavender Scare cost thousands of US citizens their jobs, their peace of mind, and their sense of security. It undoubtedly destroyed careers, families, and friendships. There are stories of suicides. It was multifaceted and multipurpose: an effective strategy for partisan maneuvering and the pursuit of political aims; a means of shoring up a moribund gender and sexual order; an instrument of Cold War governance. Nonetheless, a policy that depended on suspicion, secrets, and fear was likely to have unforeseen and unintended consequences, and these could destabilize the national security state itself.

For example, insinuations about homosexuality within his intimate circle helped bring down McCarthy himself. When, beginning in 1953, the senator accused the now Republican-controlled federal bureaucracy of being soft on Communism, both Cold War
liberals and the Eisenhower administration used homophobia as a tool against him. Slyly questioning his masculinity and circulating gossip about the too-close relationship between his aides Roy Cohn and G. David Schine, they raised questions about McCarthy’s trustworthiness, his autonomy, and his “perversion of power.” While not the only reason for McCarthy’s fall from influence, the ideas popularized within the Lavender Scare made it possible for his enemies to coalesce against him even as they differed over how best to contain Communism (Dean 2001; Friedman 2005).

Furthermore, the intensified policing of the Lavender Scare was intended to suppress growing gay and lesbian visibility, but it also contributed to the emergence of the homophile movement. In an era of extreme state-sponsored homophobia, most homophile groups, including the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, enacted a strategy of respectability politics in defense of homosexuals’ right to exist. These organizations sometimes urged members to avoid “swish” or to dress in gender-normative ways, prioritizing assimilation over queer difference, but their overall commitment was to gaining civil rights and recognition (Loftin 2012). The discrimination and persecution enabled by the Lavender Scare motivated early homophile leaders to organize. Mattachine Society founder Harry Hay (1912–2002) was particularly incensed by the “encroaching American Fascism” embodied in state policy toward “androgyynes” (quoted in Johnson 2004, 170). The Washington, DC, Mattachine chapter made opposition to federal employment discrimination against homosexuals its highest priority, particularly after the scientist Frank Kameny (1925–2011), himself a victim of the Lavender Scare, assumed its presidency. David K. Johnson concludes that “the struggle with the civil service was a driving force behind the gay rights movement” (2004, 212). But this was a long struggle. Not until 1969 did a federal court of appeals rule that homosexuality was not a prima facie reason for being barred from federal employment; not until 1975 did the US Civil Service Commission rewrite its regulations to eliminate the presumption that homosexuality was a distinctive form of immoral conduct; and not until 1995 did President Bill Clinton (1946–) sign an executive order prohibiting the government or its contractors from denying security clearances on the basis of sexual orientation.

SEE ALSO Cold War and Sexuality in Latin America; Communism and Queers in Europe; Treason and Queerness

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Lesbanese (2008; Alissar Gazal)

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Short documentary spotlighting the struggle of the women of Lebanon and their burgeoning sexual identities.

The Israel-Hezbollah War of 2006 was a thirty-four-day conflict that led to the destruction of Lebanese civilian infrastructure, including roads, bridges, electrical facilities, and the Hariri International Airport in Beirut. And although Hezbollah considered the United Nations–brokered ceasefire a victory, the conflict resulted in the deaths of over 1,000 Lebanese civilians and the displacement of approximately 1 million people (Bouckaert and Houry 2007). Alissar Gazal’s short documentary Lesbanese (2008), about the lesbian community in Lebanon, shows how these women maneuver the politics of their daily lives and depicts their survival of and reactions to the Israel-Hezbollah War. It was filmed in Beirut nine months after the war as the conflict’s effects have settled on the country and its people. The documentary opens with a rough filming of an Al Jazeera news report: “If you live in the West,” Gazal begins, “the image you are left with of Lebanon is that of chaos and war, political assassinations, civil strife, and endless death. That is not the Lebanon that I know” (0:10). She transitions with upbeat music to the streets of Beirut, referring to the famous resilience of the Lebanese people and how, as the streets show, they live their days despite the daily chaos and instability of their country.

The Filmmaker and the Film’s Context

Gazal is a Lebanese Australian actress, director, and producer. She identifies as a political artist and activist and uses her art for social and political activism. Politics drives her work in many ways, whether in film or theater, and she employs it to help the Lebanese and Arab LGBT communities in the Middle East and Australia. She considers humor a key tool to be employed when approaching sensitive topics and when seeking to communicate with a minority community. Gazal has served on the management committee of the Arab Film Festival Australia and the selection committee for the Sydney Film Festival.

While many books and films have reported the coming-out stories of the LGBT communities in the Middle East (e.g., Bareed Mista3jil [2009]), Gazal’s documentary fills a gap in these representations as it focuses on Arab lesbian interests, which have yet to be as consistently thematized as Arab male homosexual interests have been. It also offers an
alternative to the representations of nationalist Arab lesbians in the Middle East. The women in this documentary comfortably appropriate and bend certain Western queer ideologies and epistemology, but they do not dwell on the technicalities; instead, they speak of their personal experiences and their attempts to negotiate their sexualities under a variety of local and geopolitical pressures. They are not preoccupied with the theoretical; they instead share their techniques and advice on navigating gender and sexual identities between the private and the public, the difficult and the possible. They help the viewer grasp the queer Arab identity as postcolonial, hybrid, and unfinished. Sexuality is not expressed as defiance or pride; instead, these women address their sexual orientation with the vulnerabilities and survival techniques associated with gender shaming. These interviews validate the presence of these lesbian Arab women in the global queer community as political resistance. For, as lesbian Arabs, they face a dual struggle as they battle oppressive forces within their own communities and resist the global narrative that tries to use their “oppression” for broader military or political goals.

*Lesbanese* is a documentary that, at its core, is an engaged and oppositional political film. Its rough filming and collage production technique reflect a philosophy inspired by anticolonial thought and independent cinema that is anti-imperialist and anticapitalist in nature. Gazal, the film’s director and writer, hails from a generation of filmmakers whose memories of Lebanon’s bloody civil war (1975–1990) remain omnipresent. She seeks to incorporate the economic situation and the political aspirations of the Lebanese people she documents, while depicting the transitional stage from posttraumatic crisis to postrevolutionary catharsis.

Lebanese cinema has a long and unstable history rife with unmet potential and colonialist hindrances. It reached its peak in the 1960s and 1970s with mainstream flicks and folk musicals, but its progress was quickly halted by the Lebanese Civil War, when Lebanese filmmakers became reliant on foreign funding and grew accustomed to the restrictive conditions that came with it (Fahim 2016). Apart from a few Lebanese film producers who managed to receive funding from private investors or institutions, most producers continue to be reliant on foreign funds. Modern Lebanese cinema seems to also explore various topics within the context of the civil war. Even the films that offer a social and economic critique—including films and documentaries on the Lebanese LGBT community, such as Nadine Labaki’s *Caramel* (2007) and Samer Daboul’s *Out Loud* (2011)—seem to revolve around religion and war. *Lesbanese* is no different, for Gazal portrays the intersectionality of nationality, patriarchy, religion, and war as inseparable within the discussion of sexual orientation in Lebanon.

**Depicting Progress in LGBT Rights**

Lebanon is on track to decriminalizing homosexuality, as Judge Rabih Maalouf declared homosexuality “a personal choice, not a criminal offence” in a ruling on 26 January 2017
that challenges Article 534 of the Lebanese penal code, which states that homosexuality is “contrary to the order of nature” and punishable by up to one year in prison (Reid 2017). The progress being made for the rights of LGBT individuals in Lebanon largely stems from the work of activists and human rights organizations, such as Helem, that are featured in Lesbanese and that organize workshops and seminars, while also recruiting famous figures to advocate LGBT rights in an effort to normalize homosexuality among the public. Lesbians tend to be marginalized or underrepresented in discourses of queer representations in the Middle East mainly owing to the assumption that their homoerotic behavior is more tolerated in Arab societies. Lesbians in Lebanon, however, have organized under Meem and other nonprofit organizations to take part in shaping the discourse regarding gender and sexual rights in their country. The lesbians interviewed in this documentary, or the “Helem Girls” as Gazal refers to them in her credits, include eight women: Faten, Jacky, Luby, Mia, Mira, Nadz, Stephanie, and Zeina. They compose a friendly cast that makes the documentary more approachable despite the sensitive topics it tackles. They describe their flirting skills and hangout spots and speak, in broken English and determined body language, of their relationships with their parents and how they live as part of Lebanon’s active LGBT community.

The most revealing footage that gives a hopeful outlook for the future of LGBT communities in religious and conservative societies is the interview with Luby, a seventeen-year-old Muslim lesbian. Her supportive mother spoke of her and her husband’s acceptance of their daughter’s sexual identity, making it clear that it is indeed mainstream society that would not be as tolerant:

I can accept, but our country can’t accept. I can’t go to my parents and tell them: this is Luby’s girlfriend or fiancée [6:50].... We believe in Allah, that is what God willed, it’s not how she chose to be. Nobody wants to be different. It’s not her choice, that is what Allah willed. What can I do about that? [7:40]

In a world that regards homosexuality and Islam as incompatible, Lesbanese shows Muslim parents accepting their lesbian daughter’s sexuality and providing her with the space to express her complex identity freely. That, in turn, provides a space for the veil to play a role in Luby’s personal expression of her gender and sexuality and her manipulation of her identity within Lebanese society, placing an importance on fashion as a signifier of cultural behavior for this subculture: “When I’m on the street, I feel really happy wearing my veil, because ... I believe it’s a protection for me. And I like to feel mysterious. That no one knows the real me unless they get to know me more.... I’m not going to take it off no matter what” (20:05).
Gazal enables another perspective to come forward: the struggle these lesbians share with Lebanese women regardless of their sexual orientation. The women speak of gender discrimination in the workforce and the restrictive fashion imposed by certain companies; they speak of their struggle to meet impossible gender standards and to perform strict gender behaviors. “Everything is politicized,” Mia expressed (20:53), even hairdos and footwear, and not making the right statements with your physical appearance and behavior renders life for these women difficult: “Enough stepping on women! They’ve stepped on women enough. We have a lot of pressure from abroad and life here is difficult, but our generation, the young, want things different now. We want freedom without having people go against us” (24:30).

**Highlighting Differences with Western Queer Communities**

While Gazal shows how the coming-out narrative fails homosexuals in Middle Eastern communities, the women in *Lesbanese*, many of whom belong to religiously conservative families, make no secret of the incompatibility of their end goals as activists in the Lebanese queer community with those of Western queer activists. For instance, Luby, a high school student, makes it clear that “getting married to someone means absolutely nothing to me” (10:30) and that, in fact, marriage equality is not a priority for this Arab queer community, which contrasts with their counterparts in Western queer communities, who strived for years to achieve this right. Maternal and parenthood rights, however, are more relatable and crucial demands for such a family-oriented community. Luby explains with teary eyes that attending her cousin’s marriage revealed to her a desire for children: “For some reason, I looked at my cousin and her husband … now I know that my cousin is looking forward to … raise her kids and to see them grow up, and, you know, be a mother and stuff. I got really bothered, and left that dinner. I couldn’t stay there” (11:30).

The dilemma of queer identifications began with academic confirmations that to discuss gay identity in Arabic is inauthentic, but “there is nothing easy about inhabiting new identities in what is inevitably and irreversibly a postcolonial, globalized modernity” (*Mourad 2013, 2543*). Despite the self-conscious awareness of Western influence, the women in *Lesbanese* comfortably shift from Lebanese dialect to English when discussing their sexual orientation and experiences as lesbians. Luby came out to her father by saying, “I am not like my brothers and sisters, I am not straight, I am gay. Exactly these words” (07:55; emphasis added). These women could have easily chosen to identify as “mithliya” (Arabic for “lesbian”; a more preferred term among the Arabic-speaking LGBT communities), but, even while speaking with their parents, they chose to rely on the English *gay* and *lesbian*. This *Arabish* language has acquired, or begun to acquire, “an imported system valuation and foreign signification brought upon by the colonial experience, and exasperated by the aborted national projects of most postcolonial nations” (*al-Samman 2008, 271*), causing it to lose its cultural specificity. Whether the incorporation
of a postcolonial homoerotic lexicon could also be determined by education in foreign languages or exposure to Western media (as the United States continues to be the largest exporter of culture), or attributed to Lebanon’s socioeconomic background, it is still the case that the adoption of English with or to replace Arabic words means that terminologies of sex, along with other modern terminologies, are much more accessible in English than in Arabic. The equivalent terms in Lebanese dialect are also too derogatory; thus, the adoption of English homoerotic terminology is an attempt to move away from the stigma that terms such as shadhda (queer), mukhannath (pansy), and luti (faggot) carry (Mourad 2013). This is not simply a matter of incorporation or translation; it is the process of expanding the mother tongue to include positive and affirmative terminology of gay and lesbian sexualities. Developing an LGBT-friendly language, then, is among the main challenges for Arab queer activists today. The embedding of Western terminologies and the invention of new words is not a surrender to the West’s imperialist agenda but is about creating new methods of being, as competing demands of queer representations are gradually leading to the shaping of hybrid queer identities.

SEE ALSO Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories (2009); Bayrūţ ’75 (1975; Ghāda al-Sammān); Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; Hajar al-Dahik (1990; Hoda Barakat); Helem; I Luv U But (2012–2014; Fadia Abboud); Meem; Queer Names and Identity Politics in the Arab World

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Lesbian Feminist Encuentros of Latin America and the Caribbean

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The development and early years of lesbian feminist organizing in Latin America via encuentros, or conferences, starting in 1987.

Regional lesbian encuentros, or conferences, have been occurring every few years in Latin America and the Caribbean since 1987. Growing out of regional feminist encuentros and international lesbian organizing, the lesbian encuentros have served as spaces where lesbian women discuss topics of sexuality and gender and share and develop strategies to promote social justice, as well as lesbian rights in the region. Conflict has often ensued over the role of international organizations and individuals supporting the encuentros, and the early meetings faced threats of violence. This entry will trace the origins of the first lesbian encuentro, held in Mexico. It will also briefly discuss the historical and cultural significance of the first three encuentros, held in 1987, 1990, and 1992.

Origins

Beginning in the early 1980s, Latin American and Caribbean lesbians and bisexual women began forming transnational alliances at regional feminist encuentros. Feminist conferences have been held biannually since 1981, when the first was held in Bogotá, Colombia, and they have provided opportunities for Latin American women to share experiences, collaborate with one another, and organize for change. The celebration of 25 November as the Día Internacional de la Eliminación de la Violencia contra la Mujer (International Day of No More Violence against Women) and regional campaigns for abortion rights have been concrete outcomes of these conferences.

Despite the hesitancy of some heterosexual feminists to work with lesbians, women from various countries initiated dialogue on lesbian issues at the first feminist encuentro. Thereafter, at the second feminist encuentro held in Lima, Peru, in 1983, a small group of women, mostly from Mexico, organized an informal workshop titled “Patriarchy and Lesbianism.” Enthusiasm for the workshop surpassed organizers’ expectations, and more than three hundred women attended. The formation of various lesbian organizations in Latin America was a direct outcome of this meeting (Bunch and Hinojosa 2000). For example, in a 2000 interview that was part of an oral history project conducted by the
Mexican organization Colectivo Sol (Sun Collective), Cecilia Riquelme, a Chilean lesbian, described the conflicts at this workshop, where participants became both ideologically and spatially divided between those who identified as lesbian and those who identified as heterosexual.

During the workshop, Riquelme “came out” to herself and committed to become active in lesbian politics. In 1984, she began Chile’s first lesbian discussion group, Ayukilen. However, political repression in Chile during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (1973–1990) seemed insurmountable to Riquelme, and she soon fled the country for Brazil, where she immediately began working with a lesbian organization that helped to organize the 1985 Latin American feminist encuentro. At this meeting, various workshops on lesbianism were part of the official program; dialogue among heterosexual and lesbian feminists increased; and participants first began to discuss the possibility of forming a Latin American lesbian network and holding a lesbian encuentro prior to the 1987 feminist encuentro.

Forging International Connections

Along with meeting one another at regional Latin American and Caribbean encuentros, Latin American lesbians began working with European and US-based organizations like the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and the International Lesbian Information Secretariat (ILIS) in the early to mid-1980s. Strongly critical of discourses of victimhood that essentialized third world women, Latin American lesbians negotiated their need for financial support with their desire to organize and lead their own endeavors according to their own principles and needs. Ultimately, conflicts emerged that would lead Latin American lesbians to limit participation of women from the Global North in the first Latin American lesbian conference.

European lesbians sought to offset economic disparities between lesbian organizations located in the Global South and the Global North by acquiring funds to pay for the travel of women who otherwise would have been unable to attend their conferences. With funds from the Dutch government, ILIS was able to fund the travel of twenty women from the Global South to the 1986 conference in Geneva, Switzerland (Bunch and Hinojosa 2000). As a result, whereas a vast majority of participants in ILIS’s earlier conferences were European, women from over thirty countries attended the 1986 conference. As indicated in an announcement for the 1986 conference, organizers sought to foster “global lesbianism” in the face of rising conservatism.

During United Nations (UN), ILGA, and ILIS conferences, such activists as Claudia Hinojosa of Mexico had been working to advance lesbian rights globally since the late 1970s. Hinojosa and others engaged in this work because they believed that the commonalities of oppression shared by lesbians throughout the world outweighed cultural differences, and
that there was an urgent need to protect lesbians' rights to live freely without fear of discrimination or violence. According to Hinojosa, ILIS spent at least a year contacting and recruiting women from around the world, including women of color from the Global North, to attend the 1986 ILIS conference. While there, with the encouragement of ILIS leaders, lesbians from such countries as Mexico, Peru, and Brazil met in an effort to consolidate a Latin American lesbian network that would focus on promoting lesbian activism within Latin America and the Caribbean. While still in Geneva, the group began to make plans for a Latin American lesbian encuentro to be held in Mexico in 1987, in the week prior to the already planned fourth Latin American feminist encuentro (Bunch and Hinojosa 2000).

Yet, in planning for the lesbian encuentro, Latin American organizers faced issues with funding and recruitment. Funding from governmental and nongovernmental entities was unavailable in Latin American countries. Furthermore, the informal Latin American lesbian network lacked connections with lesbian women in various parts of Latin America and the Caribbean. Thus, as in Geneva, the Dutch government funded scholarships for Latin American women who wanted to attend the 1987 encuentro in Mexico. Sylvia Borren, a Dutch leader in ILIS, also received funding for a recruitment effort within Latin America. Despite their lack of Spanish-language skills, Borren and another woman traveled to Brazil, Chile, and Peru in early 1987 to work with lesbian organizations and solicit leaders to attend the lesbian conference in Mexico later that year. As a result, three women from each country received full funding to attend the conference.

ILIS also provided funds to conference organizers in Mexico. Describing this initiative in the Second ILGA Pink Book (1988) on lesbian and gay rights, Borren justified the need for transnational lesbian solidarity: "Lesbians are beginning to organize in countries where their fight is literally a matter of life and death. I believe we Western lesbians can and should collect resources to support them" (68). Based on the assumption that lesbians shared universal commonalities, Borren's intentions went beyond providing financial assistance to Latin American lesbians, as she also offered organizing advice. In her Pink Book article, Borren described the need for European women from ILIS to advise Latin American women on how to develop strategies to advance rights and increase consciousness-raising around lesbian issues in Latin America. Lourdes Pérez and Alida Castelán, lesbian leaders from the Mexico City–based organization Mujeres Urgidas de un Lesbianismo Auténtico (MULA; Women in Urgent Need of an Authentic Lesbianism) who had attended the 1986 ILIS conference, led the Mexican-based organizing committee, called Latina Americana Lesbian (LAL; Latin American Lesbian). Other members of LAL included women from MULA and Seminario Marxista Leninista de Lesbianas Feministas (Marxist Leninist Lesbian Feminist Seminar) in Mexico City and Patlatonalli in Guadalajara.

Two Latina groups from the United States, Lesbianas Unidas (United Lesbians) from Los Angeles and Las Buenas Amigas (The Good [Women] Friends) from New York City, also raised funds for the encuentro and disseminated information in the United States about the
conference (Romo-Carmona 1997). In their organizational documents, Lesbianas Unidas, a subcommittee of the Los Angeles–based Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos, describes a history of communicating with and supporting Mexico City lesbian feminist organizations since the early 1980s (International Lesbian and Gay People of Color 1986). Based on this history of solidarity and the importance they saw in organizing a regional Latina lesbian encuentro, Lesbianas Unidas worked to support the conference by sponsoring and subsidizing participants from both the United States and Latin America.

While many Latin American organizers appreciated the financial support offered by Lesbianas Unidas, Las Buenas Amigas, and ILIS, controversy soon arose over the level of involvement and the roles that women from these groups should play in the conference. In an interview about conference planning published in the magazine Plexus in August 1987, Pérez voiced Mexican lesbians’ concern over relationships of power between women from the Global North and the Global South, and she questioned whether women from the Global North, particularly white women, would attempt to control the direction of the Latin American conference. Critiquing past experiences of racist interactions with lesbians from the Global North, she noted that “these women are very paralyzed by their racism. There was this pretense, ‘Oh, we’ll send you our money’ or ‘we’ll send you our leftover magazines.’ There’s a total lack of acknowledgement from them of what they do learn from us.” This statement clearly challenges the presumed collaborative intentions of “global lesbianism” as articulated by Borren and ILIS. Mexican organizers resented European women’s presumption that they had nothing to learn from Latin American lesbian activism. Therefore, in order to avoid possible attempts by women from the Global North to unduly influence Latin American lesbian activism, organizers decided to limit the conference to 500 participants, with caps of 100 for US-based Latinas and 100 for non-Latina women.

The First Encuentro

Focusing attention on participants from Latin America, leaders took measures to provide a safe environment for the conference. Organizers were well aware that holding a lesbian encuentro in Latin America in 1987 was a dangerous endeavor because of the prevalence of homophobia, political instability, authoritarian rule, and military dictatorships in the region. Although Mexico was chosen to host the conference because of its relative level of democracy, organizers were concerned about both the threat of police violence and the general climate of homophobia in Mexico. Anticipating possible hostility toward participants, organizers did not openly publicize the conference and kept the location secret until the last moment. Describing precautions taken to protect the safety of participants, Pérez stated, “We must take into consideration at this encuentro that there will be women attending from such violent countries as Argentina, Uruguay, and Chile—we must provide maximum security. Can you imagine what problems a police raid would cost these women? It could mean jail or even death” (Plexus 1987). Pérez's comments pointedly
address threats of antilebian repression, exposing the reality of police violence in Mexico and the risk of extralegal imprisonment or murder in the Southern Cone.

In the end, women from approximately ten countries in Latin America attended the conference, and workshops were offered by Latin American and US Latina lesbian organizations and by ILIS. In workshops, participants discussed such topics as lesbian identity and families, sexuality, political repression, racism and classism, religion, and how to overcome conflicts within lesbian organizations and forge stronger collaborations with the feminist and gay male movements (Yarbro-Bejarano 1993). Attendees also watched films and performed theater, dance, and poetry.

Yet, the conference itself was plagued by the continuance of arguments among Mexican lesbians over priorities and political ideology. At issue were not just political ideologies and North-South relations, but the question of whether bisexuals should be in attendance and whether Chicanas and other Latinas living in the Global North should be allowed voting rights. Some Latin American women felt that Latina women, particularly in the United States, enjoyed privileges that women living in Latin America lacked. However, the approximately thirty US-based Latinas and Chicanas in attendance strongly contested this claim, based on the racial and class discrimination they faced living in the United States. A vote on the issue gave US Latinas and Chicanas full rights to membership within the organization (Yarbro-Bejarano 1993). Despite such turmoil, activists at the conference succeeded in further developing the Latin American lesbian network. They made plans to hold the next encuentro in Peru in 1989 and to create a stronger presence in the Latin American feminist encuentros. Reporting about the conference was widespread internationally in ILIS-affiliated publications and in report-backs throughout the region.

The Second Encuentro

Though activists at the first encuentro had planned to hold the second in Peru in 1989, organizers decided to move it to Costa Rica because of political issues, as well as the climate of violence and general repression directed against the lesbian and gay community in Peru. Considering Costa Rica’s reputation for democratic rule of law, activists assumed that it would be a friendly place to hold a lesbian gathering. However, as in Mexico, threats of violence against the lesbian participants occurred in Costa Rica as well. Las Entendidas (The Understood Women), a lesbian organization based in San José, Costa Rica, took the lead in organizing and planned the meeting for 11–15 April 1990.

However, after conservative organizations in Costa Rica learned about the planned conference via an article publicizing the encuentro in Mujer fempress (Fempress woman), a Chilean women's journal with circulation throughout Latin America, several articles appeared in Costa Rican newspapers with such titles as “An Invasion of 150 Foreign Lesbians, along with a Group of Costa Rican Lesbians Is Expected: They Will Corrupt and
Pervert the Minds of Innocent Young Women” and “Lesbians Coming to Costa Rica to Have a Satanic Orgy” (Reyes 1998, 46). Thereafter, activists faced a severe backlash from several factions, including the Catholic archbishop of Costa Rica, the federal government, and a right-wing paramilitary organization. An article also appeared in the national newspaper declaring opposition to the conference and posting the location of the gathering, as well as the names of organizers (Mogrovejo 2000). The archbishop openly expressed his condemnation at a press conference and requested that the government take action against the conference and its participants (Sagot 1990). As a result, the minister of the interior announced that he would investigate all women entering the country alone and encourage the consulate to reject visas. Fortunately, because organizers leaked false dates for the conference to a local newspaper and because authorities did not reject visas or investigate participants as proposed, many women chose to follow through with their plans to attend the conference and were able to enter the country. There were approximately 100 attendees (Mogrovejo 2000).

Foreign attendees were escorted by organizers from the airport, and the encuentro was held in secrecy at an undisclosed location. Workshop topics included lesbianism and feminism, sexuality, health, internalized lesbophobia, lesbian art, and drag. On the last night of the conference, a group of local men arrived in trucks and surrounded the location, harassing participants and threatening violence. The following day, a small group of activists held a press conference where they denounced the climate of violence fostered by the government and conservative organizations and filed a complaint with the UN Human Rights Commission. The print media reported widely on the press conference and actually portrayed the lesbian encuentro in a more nuanced and less negative way than they had previously (Mogrovejo 2000).

Security and Longevity

Two years later, on 14–16 August 1992, the third lesbian encuentro was held in Puerto Rico, the first that did not face threats of violence. The groups Aquelarre (Witches’ Sabbath) and La Coordinadora del Encuentro Lesbico Feminista (Coordinating Group for the Lesbian Feminist Conference) organized the conference, reaching out to potential participants from throughout the Americas. However, because of the difficulty of securing visas and the cost of travel to Puerto Rico, few people from South America attended. Of the 200 participants, about half were Latina lesbians from the United States (Mogrovejo 2000). Workshops covered such topics as the inclusion of Latina lesbians from the United States, internalized lesbophobia, the ghettoization of lesbians, sexism, and identities.

Since this time, lesbian encuentros have been held every few years throughout Latin America and the Caribbean. Concerns over international funding and influence, as well as tensions between autonomous and institutionalized lesbian organizations, have continued. A more recent conflict involves controversy over whether transgender women should be
permitted to attend the encuentros. Despite these challenges, the encuentros continue to be important spaces for regional sharing and organizing among lesbians throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

SEE ALSO Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Lesbian Mothering and Adoption in Latin America; tatiana de la tierra (1961–2012)

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Lesbian Herstory Archives

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*The oldest, largest historical collection of lesbian material in the world.*

The Lesbian Herstory Archives (LHA) was founded in New York City in 1974. During its first two decades, the collection was housed in writer and LHA cofounder Joan Nestle’s apartment on the Upper West Side. In 1993 the collection was moved to its permanent location: a limestone building in Park Slope in Brooklyn. From the beginning, the LHA has been an all-volunteer organization that makes decisions by consensus. The LHA is guided by a set of principles that differentiate it from more traditional archives (e.g., university or state archives) and instead locate the LHA within a broader lesbian community.

**The Founding**

The LHA traces its origins back to the founding conference of the Gay Academic Union (GAU) in November 1973. The GAU was a professional organization with the mission of supporting individual gay and lesbian academics, while advocating for research and curricular design on topics related to gay and lesbian people. Because the majority of active members in the GAU were gay men, women in the GAU created a separate women’s caucus that organized small consciousness-raising groups—a form of structured discussion that was frequently used by US feminist and lesbian feminist groups in the 1970s.

In 1974 one of these consciousness-raising groups discussed the different ways in which lesbians had been left out of history. This pattern of erasure made the GAU women additionally concerned about the historical memory of their contemporaneous gay liberation and lesbian feminist political movements. To fight against historical amnesia, the consciousness-raising group came up with the idea for a grassroots archive that would collect and preserve material related to lesbian lives and activities. The five cofounders of the LHA—Sahli Cavallaro, Deborah Edel, Joan Nestle, Pamela Oline, and Julia Penelope Stanley—were members of this consciousness-raising group. In 1974 and 1975 the five cofounders put together the LHA’s first newsletter and began to build the collection.

By the end of the decade, Edel and Nestle were the two cofounders still actively involved in the LHA’s daily operations. In the 1970s and 1980s the collection was housed in Nestle’s apartment on Ninety-Second Street. Edel moved in with Nestle in 1976 and lived with the
collection until 1984. Initially, the nascent collection was stored in milk crates in the back room of the apartment. As the collection grew, however, it gradually took over the entire apartment. During these years, thousands of women visited Nestle and Edel's apartment to use the collection or to attend special events known as “at homes.”

**LHA's Principles**

In 1978 Daniel Tsang—an editor of the *Gay Insurgent*—invited Nestle to respond to an article by Jim Monahan, a member of the Chicago chapter of the GAU. Monahan's article argued that university-based special collections were better equipped than community-based archives to preserve and provide access to material related to gay history. In response, Nestle penned “Radical Archiving: A Lesbian Feminist Perspective” ([1979](#)). In contrast to Monahan, Nestle argued that it was politically dubious and “suicidal” to rely on traditional institutions to collect marginalized histories (11).

![photo](https://example.com/lesbian-herstory-archives.jpg)

**PHOTO COURTESY OF SASKIA SCHEFFER**

*Reading Room of the Lesbian Herstory Archives.* As the oldest and largest historical collection of lesbian material in the world, the Lesbian Herstory Archives is a valuable source for research on feminist, queer, and lesbian histories.

Nestle's article concluded with a list of general principles for archiving from a radical lesbian perspective. This list formed the basis of the Lesbian Herstory Archives' principles,
a living document that continues to guide the organization's decision-making. In addition to critiquing the exclusionary practices and “elitism” of “traditional archives,” the principles offer a vision for an archive that is open, “nourishing,” politically engaged, and accountable to its broader community (Nestle 1979, 11). Specifically, Nestle's original version put forth two core principles. The first principle contended that the archive “must serve the needs of Lesbian people,” while the second principle called for a broader network of regional lesbian archives (11). Furthermore, within the first principle, Nestle appended eleven additional principles (labeled a through k) that drew specific connections between the identity of volunteers, the material in the collection, and the broader lesbian feminist politics of the archive. Although some of Nestle's language dates the original principles as a product of its time, such as the provision for going underground if “the community” is in peril, the document presciently concluded with a promise that “some day the archives will have its own space” (11).

The Move to Brooklyn

By the mid-1980s, it was clear that the collection would need a larger and more permanent home than Nestle's apartment. Thus, the LHA created a volunteer coordinating committee to spearhead a grassroots fund-raising effort, which was known as the “building fund.” In December 1991 the LHA raised sufficient funds to purchase a three-story limestone building in Park Slope. One and a half years later, in June 1993, the LHA celebrated the opening of its new location with a parade through the neighborhood. This building at 484 Fourteenth Street continues to be the home of the LHA.

The LHA’s collection occupies two stories and the basement of this building, with the top floor serving as an apartment for the caretaker, a volunteer from the coordinating committee. Unlike most archives, the LHA does not have an appraisal policy: the LHA accepts any and all material by or about lesbians or queer women. As of 2017, the LHA had more than 11,000 books and manuscripts in its library; more than 1,000 titles in its periodical collection; approximately 3,000 cassette tapes in its spoken-word collection; 600 videos in its video collection; 1,000 T-shirts in its T-shirt collection, as well as collections of other ephemeral objects such as banners and buttons; and more than 400 collections of personal papers and organizational records in its special collections. In addition, the LHA has a large photography collection and extensive collections of material organized by topic in the subject, geographic, biography, conference, and organizational files.

As the oldest and largest lesbian collection, the LHA attracts visitors and researchers from across the United States and around the world. Academics, journalists, artists, filmmakers, students, and other interested people routinely use the LHA's collection for their research on feminist, queer, and lesbian histories. Notable projects that were researched at the LHA include John D'Emilio's Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940–1970 (1983), Lillian Faderman’s Odd Girls and Twilight
Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America (1991), Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis's Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community (1993), Ann Cvetkovich's An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures (2003), Marcia M. Gallo's Different Daughters: A History of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Rise of the Lesbian Rights Movement (2006), Victoria Hesford's Feeling Women's Liberation (2013), and Christina B. Hanhardt's Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence (2013). In the twenty-first century, the LHA has also become an object of historical study in its own right, as evidenced by items in this entry’s bibliography. Despite its growth in size and stature, however, the LHA continues to be a fiercely independent archive anchored by the vision of its founders in the early 1970s. In keeping with the spirit of its founding, the LHA is run by volunteers, open to everyone, and supported by small donations from its community.

SEE ALSO Archives in North America

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Lesbian Lands, Women's Lands, and Separatist Communes

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The development of communities by and for the exclusive use of women for the exploration of sexual identity and feminist politics in the United States.

In the opening section of her 1984 lecture titled “Notes toward a Politics of Location,” the lesbian feminist poet Adrienne Rich (1929–2012) recalls comments by the English writer Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) nearly fifty years earlier: “As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world” (Woolf 1938, 166). Although she disagrees with Woolf’s globalizing statements, Rich also seeks geographical belonging and suggests women look to the material body in making a world beyond patriarchy. The desire for a physical space where feminist politics were embedded in everyday experience and women could form an alternative “Lesbian Nation” motivated what became the lesbian separatist land movement.

Definitions

Lesbian separatist lands and communes arose from the proliferation of feminist thought and activism that dominated the decade of the 1970s. Individual lands were often short lived, facing challenges ranging from limited funds to personal conflicts to climate that forced groups to disband. Numbers for the movement are difficult to calculate, but based on the circulation of Country Women, a periodical popular within the movement, estimates suggest 2,000 to 3,000 lands operated between 1970 and 1985, with over 10,000 individual residents. New lands continued to be founded throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and approximately eighty still existed as of 2017. Today's lands face new struggles that call for different models of operation; for example, the aging residents of Alapine, a land in Alabama, work with nearby college students to keep their land operational.

What Makes a Land? In the context of the larger lesbian land movement, “lands” often looked quite different. The iconic version of a land invokes the multiresident, cooperative or collective communities. They had between three and fifteen members and a range of different financial agreements: some pooled all earnings; others built individual sleeping structures and shared the costs of community buildings, or had outside funding sources and sliding-scale member contributions. Organizations such as Lesbian Natural Resources...
assisted new or struggling lands financially. Women on lands had varied income sources, including the WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) program and food stamps, wages, savings, exchange and barter systems, and the occasional inheritance. In Vermont, members of Redbird shared a single one-room unfinished house one winter to reduce heating costs; at Adobeland in Arizona women slept scattered in the open-desert air; the women of Kentucky’s Spiral Wimmin’s Land Cooperative built personalized sleeping cabins; and others refurbished existing farmhouses or barns. Many built homes from their own designs. Besides the collectives, individual women or couples who owned homes or farms were integral to local networks and the lesbian land movement, taking in visitors and participating in goods and service exchanges. For example, Hawk Madrone (1939–), despite wanting to live alone, relied on and contributed to the local network of lesbian lands in southern Oregon; the women from these lands even helped reframe her barn.

Lands were founded all across the continental United States. Some of the most popular areas for these lands were upstate New York, southern Oregon, and parts of Arkansas, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Women chose these locations for their inexpensive land, the climate, a reasonable drive to a major city, or proximity to existing lands. The focus of these women on rural geographies counters prevailing metronormative, or urban-prioritizing, models that presume LGBTQ life thrives only in coastal cities and that LGBTQ people raised in small towns flee to cities for safety, community, and happiness.

**Lesbian or Woman?** The women living on these lands used the term *lesbian* in different ways. Many of these groups referred to themselves as “women’s lands” instead of “lesbian lands,” even if the majority (or entirety) of their members were lesbians. Some of the women in these communities used alternative spellings as a linguistic resistance to the presence of *man* and *men* in language. Alternative terms include *womyn*, *wimmin*, *womoon*, and *womben*. Such usages were the result of the women’s more flexible use of and less emphasis on sexual identity, as well as a focus on their shared identity as “woman-identified” women. The phrase “woman-identified woman” came from a 1970 manifesto by the Radicalesbians, who called for women to focus their energy on relationships with other women. Women-identified women did not necessarily have sex with other women, and in fact many straight women lived on lesbian lands. Women on these lands were often engaged in examining the politics of their own sexual practices, and many were celibate, experimenting, or in the process of coming out as lesbian or bisexual. Thus the designation of these communities as “lesbian” or “women’s” land masked the complexity of the sexual practices of their members.

**Separatism, Women-Born-Women, and Transgender Women** Although definitions of lesbian were somewhat flexible, the term *separatist* carried much more weight. Separatism here refers to the politics of living without men. In extreme forms of separatism, women chose not to raise male children, did not purchase goods or services from male-owned businesses, and asked male postal carriers and deliverymen to stay off their property.
These forms of separatism fueled stereotypes of “man-hating lesbians” and were logistically difficult to practice. Lesbian land communities often struggled with separatist politics when deciding whether to welcome women with male children or to allow male visitors such as adult sons, lovers, or feminist men. Lands often set rules for male visitors based on specific incidents; D.W. Outpost in Missouri, for instance, eventually decided no male children and no male dogs would be permitted after negative experiences with both.

Equally politically charged was the debate over trans women. In 1979 the radical feminist Janice Raymond (1943–) incited a national controversy over trans women in women’s spaces when she publicized that a trans sound engineer named Sandy Stone worked at a women-only recording studio. The result was that some women-only spaces—including women’s music festivals and some lesbian lands—started using the language of “womenborn-women” in their policies specifically to exclude transgender women. The evidence of trans women living on lesbian lands is nearly nonexistent, perhaps because the intimacy of women’s lands meant no woman would try to join a land where she was not welcome. The regular appearance of these policies, however, reveals the vehemence with which lesbian land members defended spaces from men, as well as the ongoing influence of national feminist debates in these communities.

**Feminist Politics**

Understanding the dynamics of lesbian separatist lands requires an overview of the feminist politics that motivated them. During the early years of the 1970s, a flurry of political theorizing and activism took place, bringing feminist ideas into everyday life. The most visible and mainstream feminist political work focused on equal pay, equal access, abortion rights, and the Equal Rights Amendment. White middle-class women steered these efforts to alter male-dominated institutions from within to produce widespread change. Other feminists were less interested in negotiations with patriarchal institutions. Radical feminist organizations such as the Redstockings, New York Radical Feminists, and Cell 16 instead sought the elimination of the sex caste system and rejected or actively disrupted the operation of patriarchal institutions. Some of these urban-based groups practiced forms of separatism and collective living. Yet some radical feminists, despite calling for separation from men, did not advocate or even support lesbianism. This antigay message from radical feminism and mainstream feminism's famous dismissal of lesbians as a "lavender menace" prompted the rise of lesbian feminism. Lesbian feminist groups such as the Radicalesbians and the Furies Collective discussed and theorized about lesbian-specific feminist issues. Meanwhile, other feminists believed the injustices of sexism would be undone through a revaluation of the feminine. This concept coalesced into cultural feminism: a rejection of maleness and masculinity, an embrace of women’s connections with nature, and a globalized view of sisterhood. Cultural feminism focuses on women's individual abilities to heal, on spiritual and personal reflection, and on perceived links
between women's bodies and greater cosmic energies.

These three different responses to mainstream feminism—radical feminism, lesbian feminism, and cultural feminism—were the primary politics motivating many lesbian lands. Their members wanted to escape systems of patriarchal oppression, to empower themselves through healing and self-sufficiency, and to build a life with other women. In some places, black, Chicana, and Native American feminisms or Marxist and anticapitalist ideologies shaped the politics of lesbian and women's lands. For example, La Luz de la Lucha (The Light of the Struggle) was a collective in California for women of color founded on black and Chicana feminist ideas. Many groups also embraced environmentalism, ecofeminism, back-to-the-land ethics, or sustainable food and land management practices. In a sly move of environmental resistance, the members of a land in Tennessee dubbed their organic farming community Okra Ridge Natural Labs in response to the nearby Oak Ridge National Laboratories, an atomic research site.

**Criticisms** The lesbian separatist land ideology garnered criticism within feminism. White middle-class women with the means to leave jobs and relocate to the country were predominant in the land movement, and some argued women from different class or racial backgrounds were excluded. Women of color in particular pointed out the ongoing forms of racism operating within these spaces. Others pointed to the marginalization of earlier generations of lesbians, including 1950s butch-femme cultures, produced by cultural feminist lesbian ideologies. Lesbian land communities reinforced the belief that rural space is empty and available for the taking, perpetuating a settler colonialist mind-set. As discussed previously, lesbian separatist communities were also notorious for policies excluding trans women.

The archives also reveal, however, that the land movement was an early site where white second-wave feminists began to grapple explicitly with the operation of race and class in their politics and practices. The emphasis on the daily practice of political values led to real-world responses: white women financially supporting women-of-color spaces, workshops for reflecting on racial privilege, sliding-scale membership in land communities, and policies that enabled women without resources to own land.

**Examples**

The stories of lesbian separatist lands and communes in the United States appear irregularly in the historical record because of inconsistent documentation, lost or damaged materials, and difficulties finding an archival home. Yet some of their tales still survive.

Individual women shaped lesbian lands to fit their needs. The 1970s and 1980s saw the growth of a thriving feminist and lesbian community in the northwestern corner of Arkansas, near Fayetteville. In 1977 Maria Christina Moroles, also known as Sun Hawk, was
living in Fayetteville with her young daughter. Sun Hawk was a first-generation Mexican American lesbian born in Texas to migrant-worker parents. She had visited a local women's land called Sassafras, which like many lands had all-white residents, but did not stay. A few months later, she fell seriously ill, and the women of Sassafras cared for her and her daughter. During her illness, Sun Hawk had a vision of a land exclusively for women of color. She shared this vision with the women of Sassafras, and they began a series of negotiations, eventually agreeing to divide the land. Sun Hawk and her partner, Miguela Borges, took control of a portion of Sassafras for a separate, women of color–only space where they established Arco Iris, a “spiritual community ... and a survival place for us to relearn many skills and lost traditions of our earth peoples” (Sun Hawk, quoted in Cheney 1985, 30). Arco Iris continues today as a community nature preserve open to everyone.

Some lesbian separatist communities were founded to address specific needs. In 1980 nearly 100 kilometers (60 miles) from Poughkeepsie, New York, a land known as Beechtree was founded as a place for lesbians with disabilities. Founder Concetta Panzarino was inspired by the communities created at women's music festivals and wanted a space for lesbians to live without ableist limits in the country. She purchased property from the feminist Barbara Deming and made modifications to the main house and surrounding acres to make the land more accessible to women with different disabilities. She found the work demanding and sometimes met with resistance: “I have a lot of harassment from the locals and from the county, so it’s been hard for me to find attendants, because I’m a known lesbian disabled activist organizing in the community” (Panzarino, quoted in Cheney 1985, 43). Beechtree’s residents saw rural living as an escape from various and intersecting forms of oppression.

Some women’s lands were founded by a central group of long-term organizers or residents who incorporated short-term visitors into their mission and daily practices. Three different groups of women—a founding board, caretakers, and visitors—shaped A Woman's Place (AWP), founded in 1974 in Athol, New York. The board focused on funding and executive management decisions, while the caretakers lived on the land and were leaders and organizers of various events. Visitors to AWP attended planned retreats and events or came separately for short-term reflection or recuperation, or, in some cases, to escape domestic violence.

Community building was often a priority. The women of Northern California's Mendocino County, living in and around the town of Albion, had a major impact on two communities. The first was local; the network of lands owned by women—some in collectives, some individually—became a powerful force for shaping their extended community. Over several decades their impact grew into informal goods exchanges, sustainable practice sharing, and activism on a range of issues involving the entire community: men, women, heterosexual, and LGBTQ (York and Goodyear 2012). The women of Albion also shaped the nationwide community of rural women through their publication Country Women, the circulation of
which topped 10,000 in the late 1970s. Articles ranged from discussions of sexual identity to histories of inspirational rural women, and each issue included technical advice columns on shoeing horses, fixing pumps, or choosing chicken feed. The cover art for issue 14, “Foremothers,” which appeared in February 1975, reveals the importance of agricultural work and the do-it-yourself ethics espoused by the magazine. *Country Women*'s readership extended beyond exclusively lesbian women, linking readers through feminism, sexual identity exploration, and rural living.

The stories of lesbian women who bought individual homes in the country during the 1970s and 1980s are often part of this history. Many of these women shared the same desires as lesbian land members, seeking to escape urban patriarchal violence, connect with natural energies and cycles, and build skills enabling self-sufficiency. *Weeding at Dawn* (2000), an autobiographical account by Madrone, is one such story. Madrone moved to Myrtle Creek in southern Oregon and established Fly Away Home in the mid-1970s. She lived on the land well into the 1990s. She joined a local network of women's and gay men’s collectives sharing information, goods, and labor.

Although most lesbian lands had folded by the late 1980s, the impact of these communities continues. Many of the land participants developed a stronger sense of themselves and continued political and community activism long after leaving a land. The phenomenon of
rural collective living was not isolated to women: the Radical Faeries embraced a gay male version of rural retreat culture starting in the 1980s, and in the mid-1990s queer, trans, and gender-nonconforming activists interested in rural community building founded the still-active Tennessee community known as IDA. With the increasing gentrification and homogenization of many urban areas, LGBTQ people today are looking again to small towns and rural areas for the opportunities they present. Lesbian lands continue to provide a model for identitybased community living designed to enable personal and political change.

SEE ALSO Boston Marriage and Women’s Romantic Friendships; Rural Queer Communities, US; Rural Queerness

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Lesbian Mothering and Adoption in Latin America

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The status of lesbian-headed families in Latin America against the backdrop of the greater LGBTQI movement in the region.

Lesbian mothering and adoption in Latin America cannot be conceptualized without referring to lesbian social movements and political protest against heteropatriarchal-normative systems that have naturalized notions of parenthood and family around the globe, especially in the West. Lesbian families present a transgressive challenge to dominant meanings and traditional representations of family, although such transgression is not limited to that realm. Lesbian families also translate into a powerful challenge to normative notions of “mother” and “woman” because lesbianism is a dissident way of experiencing sexual identity. As such, lesbianism dismantles the hegemony of imposed heterosexuality and with it a cultural paradigm based on phallocentric views and androcentrism.

The practices of lesbian mothering, as well as the social, cultural, and political barriers lesbian mothers face and the specific legal arrangements that have given access to lesbian adoption, are rooted in geopolitical contexts and vary from country to country in Latin America. However, the cases of Mexico and Argentina are particularly relevant and can be used to branch outward and reflect on the issues facing lesbian mothers throughout all of Latin America; these two countries became, from the 1970s onward, iconic grounds of formally organized lesbian social movements and political protest (Mott 1997). Argentina is considered by many to be the pioneer of the homosexual movement in Latin America (Perlongher 1997; Bazán 2010). Mexico, “due to its vicinity with the United States, where the homosexual movement is extremely well organized and very strong, and thanks to the contact with homophile Chicanos, is the Spanish-American country where gays and lesbians are more organized: they have accomplished public manifestations with more than four thousand maricones [slang for gays] and tortilleras [slang for lesbians]” (Mott 1997, 142; translation by Flor de María Gamboa Solís).
Lesbian Social Activism and Protest in Latin America

According to the lesbian academic and activist Norma Mogrovejo (2000), the lesbian movement in Latin America is intimately bound up with Latin America’s political history. The establishment of authoritarian regimes during the 1960s and 1970s (Brazil in 1964; Bolivia in 1971; Chile and Uruguay in 1973; Argentina in 1976) sparked a reaction through various outraged sectors of the population: guerrilla groups, students, workers and peasants, women, and homosexuals, all of whom claimed respect for human rights and demanded democratization. New concepts of sexual freedom appeared around this time, and homosexual civil society organizations, which were partly influenced by the political claims established by the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City, were emerging with increasing frequency. Nuestro Mundo (Our World), created in 1967 in Argentina—in the midst of a military dictatorship and therefore semi-clandestine—was the first formal group to pursue the defense of homosexuals’ rights in Latin America. In 1971 this group became part of a larger gay and lesbian organization called Frente de Liberación Homosexual (Homosexual Liberation Front), which edited the first homosexual bulletin of South America, Somos (We are). In the same year, in Mexico, two fellow entities emerged: Sex-Pol
and the other, adopting the same name but with a nationality remark, Frente de Liberación Homosexual de México (Homosexual Liberation Front of Mexico), the first gay and lesbian group in Mexico, led by the theater director Nancy Cárdenas (1934–1994), the first public face of the Mexican lesbian movement. In Argentina, according to Stephen Brown (2002), lesbian and gay groups proliferated in the early 1990s, while rooted in the Comunidad Homosexual Argentina (Homosexual Community of Argentina), founded in 1984 and by far the most influential and powerful organization until 1991, when as a result of internal divisions and disagreements both personal and ideological, the group dissolved.

Lesbian-specific groups in both Argentina and Mexico trace their origins to the feminist movement but also became separatists over sexism within the gay-dominated movement (Brown 2002). One of the groups most remarkable for its influential historical role as a pioneer seeking to increase the visibility of the specific lesbian identity was in Argentina: Las Lunas y las Otras (an untranslatable pun literally meaning “The Moons and the Others”), which met for the first time in July 1990. Later, in 1991, the appearance by Argentine lesbian activist and journalist Ilse Fuskova (1929–) on national television as an “out” lesbian “galvanized many lesbians into activism and greater visibility and led to the formation of Convocatoria Lesbian” (Brown 2002, 122). In Mexico, in 1977, emerged Lesbos, which was the first clandestine lesbian group and was led by Yan María Castro (1952–). A year later, Castro and Luz María Medina created the Grupo de Lesbianas Feministas Socialistas Oikabeth (Socialist Feminist Lesbian Group Oikabeth), which sought to give lesbianism a new revolutionary image (Careaga Pérez 2011).

Mogrovejo (2000), after a critical analysis of lesbian activism and protest in Latin America, concludes that there has been a divorce between its theoretical and its organizational levels owing to the lack of a strong social base and amid a global strategy to turn it into a massive and sustainable movement. The reasons for its rather “vulnerable state” (35) can be understood in her view through three main intertwined arguments:

- The historical discontinuities of the links between lesbian activism and heterosexual feminism
- The confrontation of sexual diversity with conservative and Catholic views that are strongly influential in the region, as well as with day-to-day violence and lesbophobia
- The conflation of the personal (love and sex) and the political in the leadership of the movement

In this new century of more political openness, such a “vulnerable state” has been partly overcome because new ways have become increasingly available for the political organization of dissident sexual identities. The participation of out lesbians in Mexico’s formal political structure has served to reinforce public and legal recognition of same-sex marriage and lesbian and gay adoption of children. Nowadays, lesbians in Mexico and Argentina, as in other parts of the world, have integrated into the wider queer movement.
Lesbian Mothers in Action: The Cases of Mexico and Argentina

In 2009 LGBTQI political activism, while embracing human rights discourse, prompted the approval of same-sex marriages and adoption by same-sex couples in both Mexico City and Argentina. (In subsequent years, same-sex marriages and adoption by same-sex couples were approved in eight other Mexican states and gained *writ of amparo* legal protection in the remaining twenty-four states.) The first legally sanctioned lesbian marriages in Mexico were celebrated on 11 March 2010 (Torres 2010). Through a variety of sources, including Sara Espinosa Islas’s book *Madres lesbianas* (2007; Lesbian mothers), several journal articles, content on Facebook sites and other online venues, and networking activities of civil society organizations online (blogs, WordPress sites, podcasts), it becomes possible to access lesbian mothers’ narratives in Mexico and Argentina.

For example, Ana de Alejandro—a Mexican lesbian and feminist mother, blogger, and activist, who uses the internet to advocate for change—wrote an online article titled “Historia de los grupos de madres lesbianas en México hasta marzo de 2013” (History of lesbian mothers’ groups in Mexico up to March 2013). Following Mogrovejo’s historical work on lesbian movements in Latin America (2000) and Gloria Careaga Pérez’s interesting review of lesbian activism in Mexico (2011), de Alejandro’s 2013 article notes that 1986 was the year in which the first group of lesbian mothers appeared in Mexico. The name of the organization was Grupo de Madres Lesbianas (GRUMALE; Lesbian Mothers Group), and it was founded by the aforementioned Cárdenas. Reflecting the intertwining of the personal and the political in social movements, Cárdenas, an emblematic figure of huge political influence on the lesbian agenda, began a relationship that same year with a woman who was a mother.

GRUMALE practically disappeared after the Primer Encuentro Lésbico-Feminista de América Latina y el Caribe (First Lesbian-Feminist Encounter of Latin America and the Caribbean), which took place in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in October 1987, because, according to Careaga Pérez (2011), only one couple sought to sustain it with a variety of activities but with little success. In the words of Chelita, one of the last members of GRUMALE, this group “officially dissolved” (quoted in Mogrovejo 2000, 212) in 1989, after the separation of one of the two couples who had led it.

In 1995, during the Primer Encuentro Nacional de Madres Lesbianas en México (First National Encounter of Lesbian Mothers in Mexico), some of the participants expressed the need to organize another group, so it was under the initiative of Rosa María Ortiz and Guadalupe González (couple and coordinators) that Grupo de Madres Lesbianas II (GRUMALE II; Lesbian Mothers Group II) emerged. The main concern of the group at that
time was to open space for discussion and the construction of what they called “lesbian mothering culture” (de Alejandro 2013; translation by Flor de María Gamboa Solís). In Madres lesbianas, Espinosa Islas ventures into the lives of forty lesbian mothers who participated in GRUMALE II and provides a broad picture of the conflicts surrounding lesbian mothering in Mexico. Most of these conflicts emerged from the different types of access to motherhood experienced by these lesbians: (1) artificial insemination; (2) women who became mothers during previous heterosexual relationships; and (3) women without children who were involved in a relationship with a partner who is a biological mother. Espinosa Islas labeled the first type as “mother lesbians,” the second as “lesbian mothers,” and the third as “mothers by choice.” In all these cases, she concludes, the support of the women’s social networks (family and friends) was crucial to overcoming conflicts.

By 2008 a group of LGBTQI mothers and fathers, all of whom were artists, professionals, and activists, founded the Círculo de Familias Diversas (Circle of Diverse Families). Its main purpose was to create networks for their children’s safety and socialization among equals. Lesbian mothering organizations did not form only in Mexico City. A few groups started to appear in other Mexican cities including Monterrey, where, at the end of 2007, the cultural space called Visibilidades (Visibilities), originally conceived by Olivia Garza, was followed by Lesbianas en Estrategia Social Monterrey (Lesbians in Social Strategy Monterrey). In both spaces the participants exhibited art and shared their views on their experiences as lesbian mothers. A small faction from Visibilidades decided to organize a local support network that eventually became Comunidad de Madres Lesbianas (Lesbian Mothers Community). This group participated in various gay pride demonstrations in Monterrey, which helped make public and visible the subject of lesbian motherhood in the northern state of Nuevo León, a region where machismo and “tradition” flourish.

Lesbian mothers in Guadalajara have established two associations that put forward lesbian mothers’ concerns and needs. The first is Patlatonalli, a name resulting from two words in the Nahuatl language: patlache, a largely untranslatable term that seems to indicate a woman who has sexual relations with another woman, and tonalli, which means “energy” or “life force.” The second association is Diversiles (Diverse Lesbians). These groups have served as points of encounter to tackle the subject of lesbian mothering. Members provide support for each other on Facebook with sites such as Madres Lesbianas México (Lesbian Mothers Mexico). Dos Mamás GDL (Two Mothers Guadalajara), a Facebook page administered by Ale Reyes and Zen Romartz, also has similar goals and moves in the same direction as these other groups.

As for the Argentine case, Micaela Libson, an Argentine academic and researcher, offers a historical account (2013) in which she argues that family-oriented claims in 2000 included not only debates about and laws for the state’s regulation of same-sex couples but also the emergence of lesbian mothers and gay fathers groups. Madres Lesbianas Feministas Autónomas (Autonomous Lesbian Feminist Mothers) was the first one, founded in 2001; it
held its first meetings at the headquarters of La Casa del Encuentro (The Meeting House), a feminist civil society of Buenos Aires. Two more groups—Lesmadres (Lesmothers) and Mis Mamás Rosario (My Mothers Rosario)—established the grounds for the first national meeting of gay and lesbian families, which was held in the city of Rosario in June 2010 and aimed at major legal recognition of their family contexts. Such organizations made visible the existence of co-maternal families, with lesbian mothers representing a “subject able to embody, in light of public opinion, the image that loving stability is not the exclusive heritage of heterosexual couples” (Pecheny and de la Dehesa 2010, 23; translation by Flor de María Gamboa Solís). These three lesbian mothers political organizations are still active, though mostly through websites (blogs), under the consensus that lesbian mothers deserve respect, recognition, and equal opportunities for their children.

In both Mexico and Argentina, lesbian mothers have greatly enhanced their private lives by finding one another online: “Websites and other applications expanded the opportunities for lesbian identity construction, the fundamental building block of counterpublics” (Friedman 2017, 172). By using such technologies and resources, lesbian mothers have been able to forge networks through which they can share experiences and participate with their equals. These women resist heterosexual constructions of femininity, and in doing so they offer models of sexual diversity and legal rights to younger generations. They also demand respect and public acknowledgment of the democratization of sexual identity, mothering, and the family. The cases of Mexico and Argentina are emblematic of efforts to tackle the broader scope of Latin American lesbian mothering and political action surrounding adoption, in as much as those two nations have been the sites of historically pioneering, successful, and highly influential LGBTQI movements across the region. Although lesbian mothering in Latin America still has a long way to go in terms of legal rights and general acceptance by the public, these early activists have paved the way for generations to come.

SEE ALSO Adoption and Surrogacy in Europe; Adoption, Fostering, and Surrogacy (International); Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Lesbian Feminist Encuentros of Latin America and the Caribbean; Parenting Rights in North America

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The Lesbian Music Movement

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The development, heyday, and decline of a grassroots movement to create and showcase music made by lesbian artists for women-only audiences.

Like many other social movements of the twentieth century, the post-Stonewall campaign for gay and lesbian liberation used songs and comedy to reach new audiences, transmitting radical ideas through political performance. But whereas gay men had long-established private parlor and public theatrical roles in cabaret, drag, and Broadway shows, North American lesbians asserted their own separate movement of woman-identified song in the 1970s, claiming stages and retreat spaces through new grassroots music. For over forty years, from roughly 1973 to 2015, “women’s music” served as a euphemism for lesbian music, identity, and activism. Unique to woman-identified lesbian music was a threefold agenda: (1) challenging the patriarchy of mainstream entertainment with a politically informed alternative; (2) empowering women with the technical training once only available to men (so that women-only teams could engineer, record, and produce concerts); and (3) establishing women-only or majority-female sites for performance touring that broadcast the lesbian pride message in an environment where couples and individuals felt safe from male harassment and homophobia.

Concerts, album releases by independent recording companies like Olivia and Redwood, and women’s music festivals boldly named lesbian issues and relationships in every musical style, mobilizing audiences toward political action. In an era informed by radical feminism, before social media, women’s music supporters made concert events into community celebrations of lesbian lives, paving the way for the eventual mainstream commercial success of Melissa Etheridge and the Indigo Girls. Concerts also offered an alternative to bar culture, and thus women’s music acts filled the lesbian calendar year-round at sites such as Mountain Moving Coffeehouse (Chicago), Herizon (Binghamton, New York), the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, Sisterfire, Campfest, the National Women’s Music Festival, Rhythmfest, the Southern and West Coast Women’s Music and Comedy Festival(s), the North East Women’s Music Retreat, Provincetown Women’s Week, and even a women’s restaurant, Bloodroot (in Connecticut). The albums, flyers, posters, and programs from these events now constitute a treasure trove of historic research materials, sought by LGBT archives, university collections, and mainstream museums.
Prehistory: Lesbian Blueswomen and Protest Music

Though the “women’s music” sound and stance remain strongly associated with the radical networks of second-wave feminism, lesbian performance culture had roots in earlier song and drag shows. The earliest known (and recorded) performances were typically located in marginalized but artistically prolific minority communities, including the Yiddish Theatre and the Harlem Renaissance. In the 1920s, some gay male drag shows and Harlem blues clubs featured lesbian stars, such as the cross-dressing Gladys Bentley, or songs with obvious references to lesbianism. Interwar Berlin hosted an astounding range of over fifty lesbian bars. Both Angela Y. Davis (Blues Legacies and Black Feminism [1998]) and Lillian Faderman (Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers [1991]) offer scholarly research on women’s truth-telling blues songs of the 1920s, music primarily performed and recorded by African American blueswomen. From “B. D. [bulldagger] Women” and Ma Rainey’s “Prove It on Me Blues” to “The Boy in the Boat” (with its sly references to lesbian lovemaking), recorded songs acknowledged lesbian realities that blossomed both during the Roaring Twenties and during two world wars that left women alone with one another on the home front. Victorian England, with its ribald underground of sexual clubs and scientific sexologists, likewise produced parlor and cabaret cultures with women in drag as “toms.” Such gender-bending performance is today understood as a precursor to lesbian stage arts.

In 1947 a young woman using the name Lisa Ben began writing the column “Lesbian Lyrics” for Vice Versa, one of America’s first lesbian magazines, which she typed and carbon-copied by hand while working as a secretary in Los Angeles. Ben, who was also a singer and songwriter, later recorded a single for the Daughters of Bilitis, a national lesbian organization. Lisa Ben was born Edythe Eyde in 1921; her pseudonym was an anagram of the word lesbian. In Eric Marcus’s Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945–1990 (1992), Ben declares that she was inspired to start songwriting after feeling appalled by gay male drag performers who made fun of women and butch lesbians. “I thought, ‘well, I'm going to write some gay parodies, and they're going to be gay, but they're not going to be demeaning.'” Later in the interview, she calls herself a “separatist,” qualifying that for her, at that time, this meant “I never sang my gay parodies for straight people” (Marcus 1992, 13–14). Thus, humor and frankly sexual content existed in lesbian music long before the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City.

The women’s music that emerged in the 1970s also drew from the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, which revived and relied on the black tradition of freedom songs. Protest music was often led by women who might not necessarily identify as lesbians but who, like civil rights activist Bernice Johnson Reagon, saw music as a way to take a stand. Written and performed by women willing to go to jail for a cause (addressed by folk singer Malvina Reynolds in her satire “It Isn’t Nice”), women’s freedom songs became a celebrated aspect of antiwar concerts and speeches. But women’s music emerged when artists such as
Holly Near, who toured Vietnam with Jane Fonda, began to name and confront the sexism within the progressive antiwar movement. Throughout the radical 1960s, political action and theory remained dominated by charismatic male leaders, leading frustrated women to break away and form their own cells, newspapers, and bands. In search of original subject matter that reflected women’s authenticity, feminists with roots in the civil rights and peace struggles gradually found one another and began a new musical journey, leaving behind their male comrades.

In 1971 the Chicago Women’s Liberation Rock Band formed in part to critique the often violent tropes in male rock music. The band offered a counterpoint to popular songs that brutalized women. Musician Jennifer Abod recalls that her Chicago bandmate Naomi Weisstein was incensed by the Rolling Stones’ hit “Under My Thumb,” in which Mick Jagger brags about controlling a woman he refers to as “the sweetest pet in the world.” In personal correspondence with Bonnie Morris in 2008, Abod remembers performing on Women’s Equality Day (26 August 1970) for a women-only audience in New Haven, Connecticut: “We played at the DKE fraternity house at Yale University, which we thought ironic since most of us were dykes.” Lesbian and feminist performers took the protest music of the 1960s to a new level of politically charged content, with lived female experiences—and oppression—as the focus.
The 1970s

During the four years between 1971 and 1975, key elements defining *womyn’s music* emerged simultaneously on the East Coast, the West Coast, and in the heartland of the Midwest. The sound of confrontational feminist rock began with *Mountain Moving Day*, a release by the Chicago Women’s Liberation Rock Band and the New Haven Women’s Liberation Rock Band on Rounder Records. It was followed by two provocative lesbian-themed albums, both produced independently: Maxine Feldman’s single “Angry Atthis,” produced by Robin Tyler in 1972, and Alix Dobkin’s LP *Lavender Jane Loves Women*, famously taped in one day in 1973 (thanks to engineer Marilyn Ries’s access to a spoken-word recording studio). Feldman’s song title used a play on words (“angry at this”; Atthis is believed to be one of lesbian poet Sappho’s lovers) to name frustration with not being able to hold another woman’s hand in public. The song ends with a powerful declaration, “Proud of being a lesbian.” Later, Feldman would record her signature song “Amazon,” which became the opening-night anthem for the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival. For her part, Dobkin was determined to use the word *lesbian* as many times as possible in her recordings and concerts, encouraging the hesitating with titles like “Any Woman Can Be a Lesbian,” “Talking Lesbian,” and the humorous “Lesbian Codes.” Both Feldman and Dobkin made clear that their Jewish heritage and identity informed their outsider/resistance status as much as their lesbianism, and Jewish lesbians soon formed a substantial presence in lesbian music, whether onstage, in recording, in festival production, in distribution, or in light and sound work and sign-language interpretation.

![SOURCE: OLIVIA RECORDS](cover_1977_album_lesbian_concentrate.jpg)

*Cover of the 1977 Album Lesbian Concentrate.* This album was one of the first LPs with “lesbian” in its title. Its famous orange-juice can cover directly challenged the antigay initiative then being led in Florida by former juice spokeswoman and beauty queen Anita Bryant.

Two of the most influential record companies in women’s music were founded in 1973:
Redwood Records, started by Near, and Olivia Records, founded in Washington, DC, by a collective of women including Ginny Berson, Meg Christian, Judy Dlugacz, Kate Winter, and Jennifer Woodul. The idea of a lesbian-run recording company was actually suggested by Cris Williamson during an interview with Christian and Berson on the Radio Free Women program. Feminist radio played an enormous role in broadcasting new lesbian artists, often through college stations and the Pacifica Radio network.

Olivia Records (named for the title of Dorothy Bussy’s 1949 love novel) began with a single featuring artist Christian, sales from which raised $12,000 in funding to record Christian’s full-length album, *I Know You Know*. That unquestionably lesbian LP sold five thousand copies in its first two months of circulation, and the income from Christian’s touring then made possible the most successful women’s music album of all time: Williamson’s *The Changer and the Changed*, released by Olivia Records in 1975. *Changer* would sell more than a quarter million copies over the next twelve years. The album awakened four decades of audiences to lesbian-identified music, although the word *lesbian* does not appear anywhere in Williamson’s lyrics. In contrast, Christian electrified fans with songs such as “Sweet Darling Woman,” “Leaping Lesbians,” and “Ode to a Gym Teacher,” and Olivia’s daring 1977 album *Lesbian Concentrate* was one of the first LPs with the word *lesbian* in its title. Its famous album cover, with a picture of an orange juice concentrate can, directly challenged the antigay initiative then being led by Anita Bryant, a singer, beauty pageant winner, and spokesperson for the Florida orange juice industry.

Between 1974 and 1975, the growing popularity of women’s music spawned three more significant institutions, expanding fans’ access to the music while keeping control of production in women’s hands. These new elements were women’s music festivals, women-only sound companies, and album distribution companies. Following initial lesbian conferences at Sacramento State University and the University of California, Los Angeles, the first full-length women’s music festival was held on the campus of the University of Illinois in 1974. It was produced by Kristin Lems (a feminist, though not lesbian herself). Incensed by a recent folk festival that featured no female artists, Lems and her staff countered with a weekend that institutionalized lesbian artists as new stars of women’s music. By 1975, Boden Sandstrom’s WomanSound company and the Goldenrod music distribution network were in place (later joined by Ladyslipper), able to deliver the sound and product of lesbian culture to any venue: stage, park, campground, bookstore, church basement, or private living room. One independent band, the Deadly Nightshade, whose members included lesbians and whose music was overtly feminist, released a self-titled women’s liberation anthem on Phantom Records that enjoyed airplay on commercial radio in 1975 with the song “High Flying Woman.” Popular women’s music artists of the 1970s included Margie Adam, the band Alive!, Gwen Avery, the Berkeley Women’s Music Collective, Ginni Clemmens, Casse Culver, Therese Edell, Maxine Feldman, Sue Fink, Robin Flower, Deidre McCalla, June Millington, Betsy Rose, Woody Simmons, Linda Tillery, Teresa Trull, Willie Tyson, and Mary Watkins.
Competent stage and sound technicians were also new lesbian role models for audiences; however, Olivia Records experienced significant backlash (and a threatened boycott) for employing trans woman Sandy Stone as chief sound engineer from 1974 to 1978. After her identity became known, Stone was forced to resign, presaging the later tension between lesbian separatists and trans women that brought pressure on the woman-only Michigan Womyn's Music Festival beginning in the late 1990s. Lesbian music producers also confronted charges of racism after Olivia's 1975 “Women on Wheels” tour featured the four white artists Adam, Christian, Near, and Williamson. In response, Olivia set up the “Varied Voices of Black Women” tour, with Tillery, Watkins, Avery, and poet Pat Parker. Parker then teamed with white lesbian poet Judy Grahn to record Olivia's spoken-word album, *Where Would I Be Without You*, in 1976.

Despite these ongoing controversies over racism, women-only spaces, and gender identity, the women’s music movement of the 1970s grew as a defiant counterpoint to the limited roles and opportunities for female artists in the male-dominated recording industry. It spread to every city where self-taught producers dared to bring in artists and expanded globally as well by the 1980s with performers such as Libby Roderick in Alaska, the duo Ova in England, the Topp Twins in New Zealand, and Lucie Blue Tremblay, Heather Bishop, and Faith Nolan in Canada. Three lesbian bands emerged from Germany: the Flying Lesbians (recording the song with the title, in English, “I'm a Lesbian, How about You?”), Lysistrata, and Witch Is Which. By the 1990s, the Irish duo Zrazy tackled not only lesbian issues but abortion rights for all women in Ireland. Throughout the global expansion of lesbian music, the mainstream press and rock journalism ignored nearly all these developments, but North American and international lesbian artists were covered by lesbian publications, such as Boston's *Sojourner*, Washington, DC's *offour backs*, and the Chicago-based *HOT WIRE: The Journal of Music and Culture*, edited by lesbian activist and organizer Toni Armstrong Jr.

The transmission of a lesbian-feminist message by women to women included a specific set of practices at events: sliding-scale admission prices for low-income women; sign-language interpretation at concerts and upfront seating areas for deaf or disabled fans; and intentionally diverse stage lineups. Near performed openly lesbian music with Christian at the California Institute for Women, a prison concert arranged by women’s music scholar Karlene Faith (*Near 1990*). With in-your-face lyrics critical of patriarchy and male privilege, few artists expected to please male fans or mainstream critics, and the new issue of separatism fueled endless debate: should men even be allowed at concerts? What about men from the Left, men some women considered comrades and allies? This conflict exploded at the very first festival, the National Women’s Music Festival, in 1974 in Illinois, where performer Christian asked that her audience be women-only. Soon, production companies that had formed to promote women’s music concerts developed broshsheets and flyers to explain, in differing ways, the rationale of women-only space, such as this flyer...
The atmosphere of a women-only event is different. It often allows us to experience a new level of support from other women, and it provides a time to relax with each other without needing to explain or defend our ideas to men. If a performer requests a women-only audience, to develop and sustain communication and intimacy, we must respect that in deciding to produce her. Feminist and lesbian singers often perform materials that makes [sic] them very vulnerable; they have the right to choose their audience.

(MORRIS 2016, 29)

The Festivals

Prior to the expansion of any other feel-good messages about lesbian life and identity, women’s music festivals generated pride by bringing women together in multigenerational events that were a welcome alternative to bar nights for the underage and sober. Festivals also made it possible for a talented pool of artists, musicians, speakers, and producers to earn a living creating entertainment by and for lesbians, and they constructed role models at a time when, in the words of lesbian photographer Joan E. Biren, “There was nothing in the culture that nourished us” (Mosbacher 2002). Biren, producing photographs of lesbian culture under the professional name JEB, captured early portraits of women, including those associated with the Olivia collective, that became iconic reference points within the women’s music business.

The fact that bars had long been one of the only gathering spaces in isolated gay communities played a definite role in fostering alcoholism for the pre-Stonewall generation. The often-lampooned statement that women’s music was “healing” held a real truth for those combating dependence on alcohol and drugs. At least one women’s music festival, Gulf Coast in Mississippi, was deliberately substance-free. Together, the performers, producers, album distributors, and fans supporting this underground-yet-visible subculture forged a network of accessible celebrities at a time when almost no other performers or politicians were out. With the advent of cassette tape releases, women could drive to and from work listening to lesbian music and planning their next trip to a women’s festival. After the first National Women’s Music Festival, the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival followed in 1976, occurring each August for the next forty years. By the mid-1990s, nearly every state had a lesbian-majority women’s music festival meeting annually, including the Alaska Women’s Music Festival, Campfest (Pennsylvania), Camp Sister Spirit (Mississippi), the East Coast Lesbian Festival (upstate New York), Heart of the West Fest (Las Vegas, Nevada), In Gaia’s Lap (Maryland), the Lone Star Women’s Festival (Texas),
SisterSpace Pocono Weekend (Pennsylvania), Tam's Jam in Bellingham (western Washington State), Wimminfest (New Mexico), and many others.

Classically trained musician Kay Gardner (who played flute on Dobkin's *Lavender Jane Loves Women*) explored the roots of female vocals, harmonies, and tonal structures in her work onstage, in workshops, and in her book, *Sounding the Inner Landscape* (1990). Gardner’s argument that women’s music employed different sound structures than men's was an exciting theory in an era of artistic radicalism, when many feminists were rediscovering works by forgotten foremothers. The movement gained theorists, composers, and scholars who lent their expertise to concerts. But cultural research aside, concerts were a novel, affordable date night that couples could look forward to; they were places for newly out and/or single lesbians to encounter each other; and, as largescale community events, they served as a radical awakening for entire audiences. Artists ranging from Near to Dobkin and Casselberry-Dupréé intentionally used the stage to convey information about the civil war in El Salvador, anti-Semitism, apartheid in South Africa, African American women’s music heritage, and wage discrimination.

**Moving beyond Separatism**

By the end of the 1980s, despite a more media-savvy gay and lesbian rights movement, just a few lesbian artists had made the transition from the women’s music subculture to mainstream media visibility. College and radio audiences embracing the music of Tracy Chapman, Melissa Etheridge, and the Indigo Girls were not initially aware of the artists’ sexual orientation, or that all four had played onstage, in their early years, at radical women-only festivals around the country. The leap to what Adam termed “overground” success was clear when short haired, gender-bending k.d. lang suddenly appeared on network television in 1988. The riot grrrl movement of the mid-1990s soon satisfied young women’s desire for an “angrier” sound, but Lucy O'Brien notes that some artists brushed aside the very recent history of feminist music. “The 1990s hardcore girl groups took their success for granted ... a sense of feminism refracted through a younger generation put off by their mothers' acoustic separatist protest” (2002, 161).

By the early 1990s, the vintage/separatist “womyn's music” scene was mocked by both mainstream and lesbian entertainment publications as being out of date or oppressively politically correct. For young fans born in 1974 or 1976—the founding years of the National Women’s Music Festival and the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival—separatism could be rejected, in 1995 or 1996, as their mothers’ generation of lesbian style. By the late 1990s, hip younger artists appealing to bisexual fans and riot grrrls shrugged about their involvement with men. The fading support for a women-only ethic and the mainstreaming of a limited quantity of feminist media also affected independent feminist bookstores, which closed their doors in city after city, hence reducing those alternative spaces where women’s music artists had staged concerts and sold their products. By 1995, young, queer
activists began to stage their own backlash against long-running lesbian music institutions, such as the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, charging that women-only space ignored transgender inclusion.

Concepts like “branding” or “platform” did not exist when, almost overnight, the lesbian music movement and its fan base proved to be a previously untapped consumer niche. Moreover, even at its peak, the women's music movement remained true to its leftist roots —ambivalent about upward mobility and about profiting from its own. Lesbian artists resistant to sharing the stage with men faced difficult choices, as did festivals trying to continue a tradition of showcasing women only. Separatism also meant, for some artists, placing parameters around who might experience the music produced by brigades of women workers. Linda Shear's albums, for example, stated clearly that her music was intended not just for women only, but for lesbians only. The ongoing success of Olivia Travel (formerly Olivia Records), however, today demonstrates the sustainability of a fan base. The original consumers of lesbian music are aging in style, enjoying cruises on the high seas where many of the original Olivia artists continue to perform.

SEE ALSO Daughters of Bilitis; Harlem Renaissance; Lesbian Lands, Women's Lands, and Separatist Communes; Popular Music and Queer Identities

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Available scholarship on same-sex literary discourse in Ottoman Turkey (both in Turkish and Western languages) is scarce and often disappointing in the sense that it almost always embraces an apologetic position, and it is often not based on actual (philological) contact with manuscripts. One reason why scholars have largely ignored this significant aspect of Turkish literary heritage may be that still few primary sources of this tradition have been deciphered from their manuscript forms and made accessible, but the argument can be made that there exists a strong state- and self-imposed censorship toward such “sensitive issues,” at least when it comes to scholarship in Turkish. Studies dealing with same-sex literary discourse in other “Islamic” literary traditions, such as Arabic, Persian, and Urdu, are likewise infrequently encountered. Although more analyses of the topic have appeared since the late 1990s thanks to the growing interest in cross-cultural gender studies, classical scholars continue to withdraw from the subject because of its academic, religious, cultural, and political “consequences.” One notable exception is Dror Ze’evi’s 2006 book *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500–1900*. Using some of the most significant primary sources, Ze’evi adopts a transdisciplinary approach in analyzing the highly diverse sexual realities of the Ottoman Middle East and explains the complex relationship between sex, religion, and law.

### Falsification of Gender

Even some Western researchers have expressed discomfort in dealing with such an issue. For example, J. Christoph Bürgel, a scholar of Islamic literatures, felt the need to make the following statement to his audience before the presentation of his otherwise valuable scholarship on the subject at a conference in 1977: “In this paper I do not intend to be indecent; I do not report a single story for the sake of mere indecency. Nor, however, do I refrain from bringing to the knowledge of the reader what I think is the stuff of which eroticism in medieval Islam was made” (1979, 82). John Boswell noted other interesting examples of the cautious approach adopted by Western scholars of Middle Eastern Islamic literatures when same-sex literary discourse is an issue: “When the Persian moral fables of
Sa’di were translated into English in the early nineteenth century, Francis Gladwin conscientiously transformed each story about gay love into heterosexual romance by altering the offending [English] pronouns. As late as the mid-twentieth century, the ghazels [lyric poems] of Hafiz were still being falsified in this way (1980, 18).

In the overwhelming majority of the scholarship in Turkish, the falsification of the gender of the beloved, as Boswell described, remains the most effective tool in keeping Ottoman same-sex literary discourse veiled. Even those who attempt to make extremely guarded statements about the “possibility” of gay themes in classical Ottoman literature strive to discover a “foreign,” specifically Greek, origin for what was found in Ottoman poetry. According to this rhetoric, what looks like homosexuality in Ottoman poetry is, in fact, nothing more than an unfortunate continuation of the Persian poetic vocabulary that carried into the Ottoman tradition certain Persian homosexual themes. And furthermore, they maintain, these elements had entered Islamic Persian literature from the ancient Greek tradition. This dominant critical approach has resorted to other remedies to cover up a “shameful” part of the Turkish cultural heritage. The fact that neither Turkish nor Persian shows a grammatical distinction of gender was and still is one of the greatest aids for the moralist/Islamist critics, enabling them to translate every pronoun concerning the beloved as she. In a 1991 study titled Divan şiirinde sapık sevgi (Perverted love in divan poetry), researched and published outside the Turkish academe, İsmet Zeki Eyuboglu stated that the only form of love depicted with realism in Ottoman court literature was homosexual love.

Islam in the Ottoman Empire

The question of whether the Ottoman Empire was an Islamic establishment is one that both present-day Islamism and the official ideology of the Republic of Turkey have often answered in the affirmative, although for completely different reasons. Both Islamism and Turkish ideology had their own political rationale, the former struggling to transform nearly everything from the past into an Islamic (and Islamist) icon, whereas the latter contrasted the medieval Islamic past with the superiority of Turkish modernity and secularism. For the Islamists, the Ottoman military, economic, and cultural success was attributed to its “strong” ties with Islam and Islamic ideology. Phrases such as the “Islamic empire,” “Turkey’s Islamic past,” the “splendid Islamic Ottoman times,” and the like are found in the pages of many publications. Yet a careful examination of Ottoman manuscripts regarding the personal details of the sultans, court poets, and others reveals the contrary.

The written remains of the empire expose the fact that the Ottoman cultural and political entity was more practical and this-worldly than religious. This perhaps explains why the Ottoman system was designed to allow Muslims, Christians, and Jews to live together without fear. The so-called Ottoman millet system (of organized religious communities) and total cultural and linguistic freedom could not possibly exist under the modern-day
interpretations of the Islamic canon law called shariʿa. There is no doubt that both Islam and shariʿa had a significant place in the Ottoman system and society, but the Ottoman shariʿa had its own unique principles and was quite different in structure and application from what is called shariʿa today as practiced in societies such as Saudi Arabia. The existence and application of the Ottoman kanun (secular law) since the fifteenth century also confirms the fact that “Islamic law” was not the one and only regulation in organizing the state and society in the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman ideology’s de facto separate application of kanun and shariʿa laws may have been a misunderstanding on its part of what Islam truly is. But it was this misunderstanding that created a cultural and political space where even gay identities and discourses could blossom (sometimes with intellectual manipulations), for otherwise how could one explain the dominant (but still overwhelmingly denied) discursive power of gay literature throughout the Ottoman centuries despite the clear warnings of the Qurʾan: “If two men among you / Are guilty of lewdness, / Punish them both. / If they repent and amend, / Leave them alone; for God / Is Oft-returning, Most Merciful” (4:16).

**Islamic Mysticism**

Among the most significant elements of the misunderstanding and/or intellectual manipulation was Islamic mysticism. Mystical vocabulary came to the rescue of the gay poet by offering a means of expressing his desires symbolically and therefore ambiguously or even equivocally. For centuries medieval “Islamic” poets struggled to create extremely abstract allegories. This abstraction was there in early Arabic literature and later on became even stronger in the Persian, Ottoman, and Urdu poetic traditions. As Annemarie Schimmel noted in her 1975 book *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, some “mystics drew up whole charts to explain the simplest words in a mystical sense” (300–301). This “mystical” vagueness created a poetic discourse that indeed provided a shelter to those poets who sought to refer in their poetry to “immoral” descriptions of and interactions with the beloved. Arslan Yüzgün mentions in his study of homosexuality in modern Turkey that some Turkish gays use “a kind of secret language” when they want to talk to each other in public about their “activities” (1986, 34–35). Secret or coded speech serves as protection from the likely discrimination and threats of dominant normative structures that would condemn and threaten the group. Similarly, the mystical ambiguity not only helped the “Islamic” poets to enrich and circulate their discourses of dissonance freely but also ironically continues to provide present-day moralist and Islamist literary critics with a means to refuse or explain away such “inappropriate” elements in the “Islamic” literature of Ottoman Turkey. One of the most respected scholars of Ottoman poetry, Harun Tolasa, for example, refrained from dealing with the gay beloveds of the fifteenth-century Ottoman poet Ahmed Pada in his 1973 analysis of Ahmed Pada’s divan (poetry collection). It is documented that Ahmed Pada wrote several independent ghazels (love lyrics) for his male beloveds. He even mentioned their names, such as Īshak, Kasem, ‘Ali, and the like, which
are exclusively male names. It should be noted that writing about the beloved with his or her name is extremely rare in the Ottoman lyric tradition. Yet İshak, Kasem, ‘Ali, and others have been transformed into Islamic figures in this book. Although Tolasa states in his introduction that his analysis avoided “subjective ideas and judgments” (1973, 3), his approach could see only mystical lovers and beloveds in the divan of Ahmed Pada thanks to the adoption of a prescribed literary criticism of Islamism based on “Islamic” or “mystical” solutions for almost any given classical poem.

As it was fashionably named in modern historiography, the so-called Ottoman Age of the Tulips (1718–1730) was “a secular trend, which made Turkey seem like a country experiencing a renaissance,” according to Niyazi Berkes in The Development of Secularism in Turkey (1964, 51). The most significant and quite evident change in the eighteenth century was the weakening of the existing religious institutions, along with the fading dominance of Islamic mysticism in literature and other courtly arts. Berkes noted signs of weakening religious authority and an evident laxity in the observation of traditional moral values in the eighteenth century even among the common people. In addition, the orthodox aspects of Sunni Islam were rapidly losing their ethical and moral authority among Ottoman administrators, intellectuals, artists, and poets. The more open representation of sexuality, the switch from imaginary to a more natural imagery, and other critical changes all represented transgressions and departures from both the artistic and the religious canon. Ariel Salzmann depicts the court of Ahmed III as “gay processions to the gardens and palaces” (2000, 97), likely using the word gay in its dual meanings. Refik Ahmet Sevengil indicates that Ahmed III’s grand vizier Ibrahim Paşa used to invite poets into his presence and enjoy their “indecent” writings ([1927] 1990).
Manuscript Page of the Hubanname (Book of Handsome Ones) by Ottoman Poet Fazıl-ı Enderuni. The Hubanname is one of the most significant manuscripts of eighteenth-century Ottoman gay literature, based on Enderuni’s descriptions of “man beauties” from around the world.

Nedim

In his 1994 book *Nedim and the Poetics of the Ottoman Court: Medieval Inheritance and the Need for Change*, Kemal Silay partly argued against contemporary scholarship’s failure to adequately address Ottoman gay literature, especially with regard to the case of Ahmed Nedim (1681–1730), one of the most significant poets of the eighteenth century. Gay expressions in court poetry of the eighteenth century were undeniably prevalent through this revolutionary poet’s open discourse, but he also suggested that there were numerous followers of his discourse within the courtly tradition. Fazıl-ı Enderuni was one of them. His *Hubanname* (Book of handsome ones) is one of the most significant manuscripts of eighteenth-century Ottoman gay literature. Similar to his other works, the book is mostly based on Enderuni’s own experiences and observations—an aspect in itself that constitutes a turning point in the development of court poetry in Turkey. And because the manuscript is based on Enderuni’s descriptions of “man beauties” from around the world (including Istanbul, Anatolia, India, Iran, Iraq, Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Algeria, Tunisia, Armenia, and Albania), it has a unique multicultural and multiethnic character. Yet, there exists almost no scholarly study on this invaluable source. For “moralistic” and various other political
reasons already discussed, to this day no philologist has published either a transcription or a facsimile of this work.

One prevalent aspect of Ottoman gay literature is a discursive practice that could be classified as scopophilia, or an expression of sexuality in which sexual pleasure is derived from looking at objects. An example of this phenomenon can be seen in a few lines by Nedim:

Oh zealot, as long as one’s heart is free from suspicion and hypocrisy

It doesn’t matter whether there is a wine glass in his hand or prayer beads

As long as I can watch the beauty of that rose

It doesn’t matter whether the place where I watch him is a rose garden or a bathhouse

(GÖLPINARLI 1972, 293; TRANSLATED BY KEMAL SILAY)

It is the suggestion of seeing this “rose” in the bathhouse that indicates that the “rose” is a man because there was and still is a complete separation of men and women there. The tesbih, or prayer beads, and cam, or wine glass, are not objects used exclusively by men, although they are most often associated with primarily male-oriented activities. It must also be pointed out that the tesbih is not used only for praying. In fact, it is often fondled and the beads passed through the fingers almost unconsciously. These three elements taken in conjunction leave little room for doubt about the gender of the “rose.”

Nedim continues on every possible occasion to criticize the ascetic for his intolerance of perverted sexual activities and persists in defying the established orthodox religious values with his bitter tone. In the following couplet, he even boasts that his sexual activity is more than a perversion or scopophilia but instead is “normal”:

Oh zealot, if you have any problems in making love to the beauties, ask me

I have in that science done quite some research and I do it very well.

(GÖLPINARLI 1972, 258; TRANSLATED BY KEMAL SILAY)
Nedim was by no means alone in criticizing the ascetic or orthodox Muslim figures and their intolerance of those who enjoyed this-worldly pleasures. It was common in both the Persian and Ottoman poetic traditions for poets under the influence of Islamic mysticism to criticize and even mock the orthodoxy with which it was always at odds. Yet, many of those “mystical” poets were merely imitating common thematic paradigms in their invectives and following preexisting patterns. Furthermore, though they criticized certain religious orthodoxies, the mystics were still religious men. This is what distinguishes Nedim from almost all his predecessors, mystic or otherwise.

Nedim’s voyeuristic perversion is best represented in his poem about the bathhouse, commonly called *Hammamiye*. It is still clear that the object of the poet’s attention is a young man—most likely a *tellak*, or “bath attendant”:

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Early in the morning I woke up, but suddenly my hangover began to bother me

Hardly had I set out for the bathhouse my belt loose, the corner of my turban fluttering

Arriving in the bathhouse in that shape
I found a solitary spot there

Oh my! I saw a beauty, a calamity for the soul
Approaching me, he began to emanate gleams like the sun

His hair was scattered just like his lover’s sleep his look was distracted, just like his lover’s heart

His body was whiter than pure silver, softer than a rose
his posture was straighter than a fresh, young sapling

Was his body a moonlike dough or a sunny confection?
Was his stature a crystal bough or a precious pearl tree?

That stature, that cheek, that perfect proportion, that double chin, those nipples
that beauty and strength, that coquetry, that graceful walk

were all colorful and precious, they were truly flirtatious and alluring
they were from head to toe beautiful like a resplendent face
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A Second Level of Voyeurism

It should be mentioned here that there is also a second level of voyeurism in the consumption of such literary products. As previously noted, the grand vizier Ibrahim Paşa used to invite the poets of the century into his presence to hear and enjoy their “indecent” writings. Thus, listening to such stories that were created as a result of conscious (secret or otherwise) processes of watching brings a second dimension to this perversion. The poet, by writing down such private experiences and presenting them to a third party, exposes these experiences to the public gaze or ear, therefore turning those participants into observers of such sexual activities. In his *Medieval Poet as Voyeur: Looking and Listening in Medieval Love-Narratives* (1993), A. C. Spearing, regarding Western narratives, states that “as readers or listeners to such narratives, we too can be made to feel that we are secret observers; and, in the later Middle Ages especially, the love-poet is often realized as one who looks and tells, himself a secret observer of experiences in which he does not participate” (1).

In a veiled society in which both pre- and extramarital sexual interactions were prohibited, the image of the beloved for the poet was nothing other than blurred fragmentations of the whole. Indeed, this fragmentation was perhaps the main cause for the way the poet looked at the outside world. His eyes functioned like a fixed telephoto lens. Although voyeurism and exhibitionism are perhaps as old as humanity itself and can be found in all societies of all times, the social and ethical restructurings of the shariʿa provided a sexual mechanism in which looking (often with secrecy attached to it) at the other sex became the predominant sexual interaction between the sexes: a man gazing at a woman, a woman gazing at a man, and, most importantly, as far as the courtly poetic discourse is concerned, a man gazing at a man.

**SEE ALSO** Homoerotic Poetry of Abū Nuwās; Ottoman and Persian Miniature Paintings; Sufi Treatment of Same-Sex Relations in Poetry and Prose

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The twenty-first century has seen a rapid efflorescence of discourses, both scholarly and creative, which engage with same-sex sexualities in Africa. In relation to African creative writing, this might be called the “contemporary queer turn.” By presenting a number of experiences and styles, these short-story writers, novelists, memoirists, and autobiographers testify to the complexity and variety of queer sexualities and sensibilities on the African continent—what Pumla Dineo Gqola in the introduction to *Queer Africa* calls the “multiversality of queer subjects and imagination” (2013, 2). Through the variety of narrative approaches, styles, and formal innovations, these writers also evidence the fecundity of the literary imagination of these contemporary queer writers.

Given the growing popularity of the term *queer* among scholars, it is used in this entry not simply as a catchall term for nonheteronormative sexualities but to deploy the political imperatives embedded in the use of the term. There are some caveats. First, the term *queer* is clearly distinguished from *LGBTQI*, which relates to the acquisition of certain rights within a human rights agenda. Second, although *queer* is used by editors of collections (of short stories, life writing, etc.), the authors themselves rarely use the term, preferring instead *gay*, *lesbian*, *trans man* and *trans woman*, and sometimes the more old-fashioned *homosexual*. Finally, *queer* is a highly contested term and its use is very often qualified by the editors who tend to use it.

**The Contemporary Queer Turn**

The term *queer* appears in the titles of many of the anthologies under discussion in this entry, such as *Queer Malawi* (2010), *Queer Africa* (2013), and *Queer African Reader* (2013). The contemporary queer turn in African creative writing appropriates and marks its distance from the Western one by insisting on the highly political nature of the retooling of *queer*. The editors of *Queer African Reader*, Sokari Ekine and Hakima Abbas, who bring together a range of material—academic, testimonial, and artistic—from and about queer Africa and its diaspora, articulate this generally held position with some verve: “We use queer to underscore a perspective that embraces gender and sexual plurality and seeks to
transform, overhaul, and revolutionize African order rather than seek to assimilate into oppressive hetero-patriarchal-capitalist frameworks” (3).

The contemporary queer turn signals a shift from earlier representations of queer sexualities in African creative writing. A number of critics have addressed what Chantal Zabus calls these “early queer gesturing[s]” (2013, 134); examples include the seminal survey articles of sub-Saharan African fiction by Daniel Vignal (1983) and Shaun de Waal (1995) and more recent elaborations in Cheryl Stobie’s survey of bisexuality (2007b), chapter five in Marc Epprecht’s book Heterosexual Africa? (2008), and Zabus’s Out in Africa (2013), one of the first book length studies of same-sex sexuality in African writing. Chris Dunton in his highly influential 1989 article “‘Whyeting Be Dat?’: The Treatment of Homosexuality in African Literature” points out that in a number of texts, when the issue is raised, homosexuality is treated pejoratively and “monothematically” (422). In the urgent nationalist postcolonial project of authentic cultural reclamation, the queer subject is figured as the “Other” of Africa, be it Western (e.g., Wole Soyinka’s The Interpreters [1965], Kole Omotoso’s The Edifice [1971], and Ama Ata Aidoo’s Our Sister Killjoy [1977]) or Arabic (Soyinka’s Season of Anomy [1973] and Ayi Kwei Armah’s Two Thousand Seasons [1973]).

These and earlier literary treatments also often associate same-sex practice with what has been called “situational homosexuality,” produced by the woes of colonial industrialization and the destabilization of traditional social organization, thus stressing the Western production of homosexuality in Africa (e.g., the very early Zidji by Henri Junod [1911] and Peter Lanham and A. S. Mopeli-Paulus’s Blanket Boy’s Moon [1953]). In addition to correlating queer sexualities with “foreignness,” either through its importation or production, early African writers also associate queer identity and practice with mental illness (e.g., Yulisa Amadu Maddy’s No Past, No Present, No Future [1973] and Rebeka Njau’s Ripples in the Pool [1978]) and/or drug and alcohol addiction (e.g., Blanket Boy’s Moon and Maddy’s above-mentioned novel, in which the queer character Joe Bengoe states, “I sold my youth to perversion. I have lived rough. Homosexuality, drug addiction, drinking, and finally madness. The sum total of me is, I am a confirmed disciple of the permissive society’s worst cult” [155]). In these novels, queer sexuality is represented as alien to Africa and alienating to Africans.

A certain ambiguity in these novels’ portrayal of same-sex sexuality is attested by Vignal (1983), Dunton (1989), Epprecht (2008), and Zabus (2013). A few examples will suffice here. In Blanket Boy’s Moon, queer sexual practice is related to the situational homosexuality in prisons and mine hostels and a reaction to the guilt the protagonist Monare feels when he commits liretlo (ritual murder); in addition, the novel contains multiple references to homosexuality, including the “traditional” role of the mosuoe (teacher) at the circumcision school and the organic teenage sexual relations between Monare and his “heart’s friend” Koto (Dunton 1990). Similarly, in the lengthy discussion between the characters Joe Golder, the queer American lecturer in African history, and Sagoe, one of Soyinka’s protagonists in The Interpreters, Joe reminds Sagoe, who insists on
his “comparatively healthy society,” of the “Emirs and their little boys” and “the exclusive coteries in Lagos” (1965, 199). The various chapters of *The Interpreters* are mediated through the consciousness of a number of “interpreters.” With Joe’s poignant chapter in the latter half of the novel, we become aware of the difficulties of being queer in Nigeria in the 1960s: loneliness, violence, and blackmail. In Aidoo’s novel *Our Sister Killjoy*, Sissie, the central character, refuses the sexual advances of a German woman, Marija, and makes claims that lesbianism is alien to African womanhood. Yet, Epprecht (2008) points out that even here, Aidoo balances this disavowal with Sissie’s memory of two girls at her school who were caught in sexual exploration by a white missionary woman; Sissie, through the girls’ defiance, seems to chastise the missionary’s attempt to stifle an organic expression of sexuality among African girls. In all these novels, one can discern a subtle attempt to distinguish between queer experiences that are authentic (indigenous, local, and a healthy part of teenage exploration) and inauthentic (colonial, foreign, and/or produced by the machinery of the colonial state), between African homosexualities and Western ones.

The one creative piece to buck the trend in the generally negative portrayal of queer sexuality in these early literary representations is a short story by Tanzanian D. N. Malinwa. In “Everything under the Sun,” which appeared in a collection of short stories in 1969, two African roommates, Meta and Welimo, quarrel over banal domestic issues: money, unemployment, one of them drinking too much, and the other taking up religion. As the story progresses, the reader realizes that they are lovers. There is no condemnation or judgment on the part of the author, and no hint that their relationship is a product of foreign influence. “The relationship is normalized as a de facto marriage between struggling working-class African men” (Epprecht 2008, 140). Nonetheless, apart from Malinwa’s story, Dunton is surely right when he suggests in his survey of early African fiction that “what remains conspicuous in all these works is the abstention among African writers, and even among the most searching and responsive of these, from a fully characterized and nonschematic depiction of a homosexual relationship between Africans” (1989, 445).

The contemporary queer turn in African creative writing is a powerful response to the early novelistic queer gesturings. Through the postcolonial strategy of “writing back,” it draws attention to both the historical and contemporary presence of a number of African queer sensibilities, thus contesting the claim of the un-Africanness of queer identities; it testifies to the complexity of African queer experience, already complicated by intersections/discontinuities with class, race, gender, colonial/postcolonial histories, and political violence; and it provides readers with fully characterized, nuanced, and “nonschematic” treatments of queer lives lived with varying degrees of difficulty.

There is a dispiriting aspect of this contemporary turn. For the most part, the twenty-first-century flourishing of African queer writing has been brought about by small African independent presses and, in many instances, collaborations with nongovernmental
organizations (NGOs). While this is laudable in terms of attempts to create greater visibility of often occluded or disavowed subjects of the African nation-state, what this means is that many of the books discussed (or referenced) in this entry have had very limited print runs; some are available only on Amazon’s Kindle platform. These important books run the risk of disappearing altogether.

**NO PAST, NO PRESENT, NO FUTURE (1973; YULISA AMADU MADDY)**

The novel *No Past, No Present, No Future* by the Sierra Leonean playwright Yulisa Amadu Maddy (1936–2014) presents a textured account of race, class, and sexuality in an independent African nation, as well as in the diaspora. The novel follows the relationship of three best friends—Ade, Santigie, and Joe—who emerge from drastically different social classes in the fictional African country of Bauya (largely assumed to be based on Maddy’s own Sierra Leone), and eventually migrate to London and later to continental Europe in the well-rehearsed narrative of postcolonial African subjects emigrating in search of educational and economic advancement. Published in 1973, the novel was a contemporary of newly independent countries producing self-reflexive literature concerned with postcoloniality and the newly developing relationships between African nations and the “West,” viewed through the lens of everyday experiences. Maddy’s novel joins this conversation with an emphatic, critical eye on the racial and class dynamics that shift as postcolonial subjects navigate this convoluted geopolitics. This is demonstrated in the dissolving relationship between Ade, Santigie, and Joe, who quickly adopt the Western values of individualistic gain in educational, romantic, and economic pursuits, slowly dismantling their once brotherly bond with one another.

What perhaps sets this novel apart from its contemporaries is its explicit yet nuanced incorporation of queer sexuality, namely in the character of Joe. In many ways, this novel’s representation of gay Africans is just as relevant in the twenty-first century as when the novel was published several decades ago, demonstrating the persistence with which sociocultural stereotypes shape our representations of, and therefore our beliefs about and treatment of, marginalized subject positions. These common tropes include gayness as a European disease imposed on Africans through colonization; gay men as misogynistic; gayness associated with drugs and alcohol; and the characterization of Europe and the West as exceptionally progressive and welcoming toward queer people and therefore the site of necessary escape for sexual liberation and survival. This is evident from Joe’s early gay experiences with Father O’Don, a Roman Catholic priest who runs the mission where Joe, Ade, and Santigie first meet. Joe later has several traumatic sexual experiences with women that cause him to aggressively denounce women. And, Joe’s queerness is openly revealed only once he arrives in London, starting a relationship with a French boy and embracing the sexual
liberation of the West.

At the same time, however, the novel suggests that Joe began his sexual explorations openly in Bauya and that, while not necessarily “out” in a stereotypically Western configuration of gayness, it was common knowledge that Joe was gay both in Bauya and in London, where he goes to school, and those close to him discuss it openly with little disapproval. Furthermore, while Joe faces significant struggles in his life, they are not directly connected to his sexuality. In fact, there are no representations of violence toward Joe because of his sexuality. On the contrary, the novel stages Joe, with regard to his relationship with a white man, as the most well-adjusted of the three friends and proposes that it is actually his sexuality that pulls him through other social and economic hardships and that of all the characters Joe has the most secure future. Additionally, the novel offers direct dialogue about assumptions that Africans are obligatorily heterosexual and offers inroads to arguing for the historic embeddedness of queer sexuality, which is not necessarily perceptible to or resulting from the Western gaze and colonial intervention. This complex, dynamic representation of queer African sexuality remains pertinent today, as these representational tropes continue to play out in contemporary struggles around LGBTQI politics and lived experiences both on the continent and in the diaspora.

This is further evidenced by the fact that, while the novel appears to have received little critical reception at the time of publishing, it later was taken up in more scholarly analysis. In his 1989 article “‘Wheyting Be Dat?’: The Treatment of Homosexuality in African Literature,” Chris Dunton charts how Maddy’s treatment of Joe’s homosexuality shifts from pejorative to sympathetic over the course of the novel, at the same time that it resists indexing Joe’s sexual orientation in a discrete, diagnostic fashion and integrates his sexuality more fully into his lived experience, challenging the conventional sexual morality that runs through much of African literature. More recently, Chantal Zabus’s 2013 book Out in Africa: Same-Sex Desire in Sub-Saharan Literatures and Cultures expands on this analysis. While Zabus demonstrates how Maddy’s portrayal of homosexuality perpetuates many damaging stereotypes such as pedophilia, the Western destruction of African culture and tradition, drug addiction, suicide, and more, she also fine-tunes how Maddy nuances these stereotypes by tracking Joe’s transformation into a selfpossessed, relatively happy, and accepted African gay man—in his words an “Afro-queer.” The complexity and duality embraced by these analyses might help those who continue to engage with LGBTQI African struggles to approach and use the novel as scaffolding for imagining and shaping contemporary activism in and through representation.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Dunton, Chris. “‘Wheyting Be Dat?’: The Treatment of Homosexuality in African
Given the wealth of material that has emerged since the rapid growth of creative discourses on queer(ing) Africa, this entry approaches the material by alternating between a synoptic perspective and a telescopic one, between a zooming out to provide a larger view of the still-growing creative field and a zooming in on particular stories or novels that foreground some of the salient features of this new writing. Also, two other points about the analytical approach: given the paucity of poetry that deals primarily with queer sexualities, the focus is on short stories, novels, and life writing, and the texts are principally concerned with queer sexuality, either through the protagonist’s subject position or the thematization of the topic in African countries and their diaspora.

**Queer Identities in Short Stories**

The first collection of queer short stories in English to appear in Africa was *The Invisible Ghetto* (1993). Collected and edited by Matthew Krouse and Kim Berman and published near the end of the apartheid system in South Africa, these stories focused solely on white queer South African experience. In the contemporary queer turn in African creating writing, the short story has proved to be a very popular form among black writers in Africa south of the Sahara and its diaspora. The form is attractive for a number of reasons. Aesthetically, it is related through its literary forebear, the folktale, to traditional African poetics: it is a folktale for the modern age where capitalism, rapid industrialization, and urbanization have thwarted the communicative potential of the folktale, where the short story captures “the afterglow of storytelling” and the “melancholic beauty of an art form as it disappears” (March-Russell 2009, 26). Historically, the form “has appealed to writers at odds with the dominant values of their society: women writers, colonial subjects, sexual minorities,” often providing these writers with the means of dodging “economic deprivation and political oppression” (March-Russell 2009, 70). Pragmatically, the popularity of the short story form might have something to do with the fame (or infamy, in...
some circles) of the Caine Prize for African Writing, which advertises itself as “Africa’s leading literary award,” with winners often going on to secure book deals with major publishers. Formally, single-author collections of short stories allow the author to inhabit and voice very different subject positions. In Diriyе Osman’s much-lauded *Fairytales for Lost Children* (2013), the writer shifts the narrative voice in his stories from the supportive mother of a lesbian who has never left the coast of Bosaaso in Somalia (in “Watering the Imagination”) to a Somali lesbian woman suffering from schizophrenia (in “Earthling”), from a Jamaican lover of a Somali man (in “My Roots Are Your Roots”) to the highly personal “I” in the more or less autobiographical vignettes. In a similar vein, Makhosazana Xaba voices a variety of female subject positions to produce a nuanced vision of girlhood and womanhood in an evolving South Africa in *Running and Other Stories* (2013). Many of the stories in *Running* deal primarily with experiences of queer women (a fact strangely omitted from the foreword to her collection).

Many stories in both the single- and multiauthored collections place queer sexuality, its acknowledgment, its expression, and its difficult embrace, in direct opposition to family, community, and, in some cases, religion. This marks a shift from much of twentieth-century African creative writing, where family or community, or both, act as important conduits of escape from colonial and postcolonial degradation. Instead, family, community, and religion become sites of conflict and crisis for these new writers. The stories in these collections, being true to their form, are character-driven and thus foreground psychological exploration. Some trace the emotional arc of “coming out” from alienation and shame, which results from a transgression of social and religious norms, to self-affirmation, love, and a kind of liberation from these social strictures; examples include many stories in Osman’s collection, as well as Abbas’s powerful story of a trans woman, “Crimson Waves,” Happy Mwende Kinyili’s “Telling Stories” in *Queer African Reader*, and, more subtly, Wame Molefhe’s “Sethunya Likes Girls Better” in *Queer Africa*. Some trace the uncomfortable relationship between violence, power, and sexuality, as in Rahiem Whisgary’s “The Filth of Freedom” and Barbara Adair’s “A Boy Is a Boy Is a …” in *Queer Africa*. Yet others refuse the not-so-easy consolations of self-affirmative sexual identification: see Xaba’s literary responses to both the canonical Can Themba’s “The Suit” and its contemporary reimagining in Siphiwo Mahala’s “The Suit Continued” in the first and last stories in her collection, *Running and Other Stories*, and Osman’s “Tell the Sun Not to Shine” in his own collection (2013) and also in *Queer African Reader*.

In almost all of the stories, the tropes of transgression (sexual, social, religious) and shame loom large. However, and unsurprisingly, various writers handle these tropes very differently. Two examples will elucidate these differences. In Monica Arac de Nyeko’s “Jambula Tree” (2013), the idea of transgression figures repetitively, but the psychological concomitant of shame is, for the most part, externalized. De Nyeko achieves in “Jambula Tree” a Lukácsian “epic concentration” (*Lukács 1969*, 111): in a few pages, she not only provides a comprehensive exposition of a particular social milieu (the lives of people in a
poor housing estate in Uganda during a civil war) but also uses the inner drama of her characters to pose social problems (class differences, sexual abuse, and most significantly, the social disavowal of same-sex sexual desire). Transgression and shame, the social process and its psychological concomitant, structure the narrative. We are consistently reminded that as adolescents, the two young girls (Anyango and Sanyu) at the center of the story transgressed the social and religious norms of their society by the sexual expression of their desires: “lines we crossed” (2013, 93); “the rules that you broke. That I broke. That we broke” (98); “these are boundaries we should not cross nor should think of crossing” (104). The first-person narrator subtly repudiates community (embodied in their antagonist, Mama Atim) and, to a lesser extent, religion. Family also becomes a source of crisis, as Sanyu is sent away as soon as the girls are “outed” by Mama Atim.

If we follow Theodor Adorno in his assertion in his posthumously published 1970 work *Ästhetische Theorie* (Aesthetic Theory [1997]) that form is a sedimentation of content, it is clear that de Nyeko’s short story is also formally transgressive. It seems to take the form of a letter addressed to Sanyu on the eve of her return after her postouting exile, but it includes social, personal, and geographical details that Sanyu would know already. Thus, it both is and is not a letter; the short story includes other genres within the short-story form—for example, excerpts from the songs sung by soldiers, official letters from Anyango’s school, love letters from her absent father to her mother, and the only letter from Sanyu to Anyango. It is also temporally disjunctive: although the story is set in the present, Anyango haphazardly recalls events from the past that eventually led to that fateful night of their sexual encounter and their being found out. The style blurs the line between prose and poetry; repetition of phrases throughout the short piece (e.g., Sanyu’s name, the “you,” “me,” and “we” in the construction of sentences, and the words green and jambula tree) create an incantatory, poetic, and indeed, melancholic effect. Significantly, like many contemporary African creative writers, de Nyeko refuses the anthropological impulse of earlier African fiction. Local Swahili words remain untranslated (e.g., mandazies, kwepena, dool, etc.) and certain metaphors/similes require local knowledge (e.g., “like the Kabaka subjects who lay prostrate before him” [101], the Kabaka being a famously queer figure in Ugandan history). Language is used innovatively, as when Mama Atim is described as having a “machinegun mouth,” a personal symbol that resonates with the broader political conflict of civil war. In “Jambula Tree,” de Nyeko, in a departure from many contemporary queer stories, places shame, which follows the transgression, outside the protagonist, in their community and in the families who separate them. Although Anyango points out that the couple “Anyango-Sanyu” “became forever associated with the forbidden” (91) and she imagines “shame trailing after me tagged onto the hem of my skirt” (93), she also makes clear that “she was not sorry” (104). At the end of the story, Anyango tells Sanyu (and the reader) that she commissioned “two paintings of two big jambula trees” (105), offering testament to the beauty of a love lost and the hope of its rekindling.

By contrast, in “Earthling,” Osman explores in an extreme way the repercussions of the
internalization of shame. In this third-person narrative, Osman painstakingly and painfully follows the actions and thoughts of Zeytun, a Somali lesbian suffering from schizophrenia, whose aural and visual hallucinations revolve around homophobic images and slurs. At an internet café she imagines that the Nigerian woman sitting next to her is interspersing her conversation with someone in Nigeria with homophobic statements directed at her: “dykes are such nasty creatures”; “Hell, that’s where you’re headed, you dirty bitch”; “lesbians are nothing but cheap whores” (2013, 77–78). On first reading, the reader is shocked, imagining this to be real, but then Zeytun reveals, “She knew she was hallucinating” (78). Osman thus very cleverly forces the reader to experience some of what Zeytun is going through. The painfulness of her hallucinations when she imagines murder threats from pedestrians, starlings, and crows as she makes her way home acquires, then, a startling immediacy for the reader. Although “Earthling” reprises many of the themes in the other stories of Osman's highly praised collection, Fairytales for Lost Children (for example, race; displacement; alienation/shame/abjection; self-affirmation vs. the demands of family, community, and religion; and queer relationships as both sites of refuge from these demands and a space of complex interactions), its main companion piece is the seemingly autobiographical “Your Silence Will Not Protect You,” in which the first-person narrator, Diriye, experiences a number of schizophrenic episodes related to homophobia suffered at the hands of his family. In “Your Silence,” like in “Earthling,” it is only by disassociating from family and embracing a queer identification (through selfaffirmation and a nurturing relationship) that the protagonist can begin to heal. An important difference emerges here in representation of mental illness: in the earlier queer novelistic gesturings, mental illness is a concomitant of queer sexuality, a symptom of a pathological sexual condition, but in the contemporary revisioning, mental illness is the product of homophobia, a psychological torment produced by the stigmatization and ostracism of an intolerant family and society.

Osman crafts a language specific to each of his stories, which may include poetic devices, untranslated Somali words, pidgin, and a globalized slang, described by July Westhale as “linguistic sound patterning as texture” (2013). The collection brings two aesthetic fields into conversation with each other: the visual and the literary. Each short story in the collection is preceded by an illustration that attempts to capture in visual form the central aspects of the narrative to follow, and an Arabic translation of the story title. Because there is no direct translation of earthling in Arabic, a productive tension is created between the supplied Arabic translation (“of the earth,” or “of the soil”) and both the English title and the narrative. Thus, in both de Nyeko’s story and Osman’s there is a clear attempt to destabilize/expand the inherited form. “Writing back” is bidirectional in the “contemporary African queer turn”; writers actively engage both an earlier tradition of African fiction, giving voice to often excluded sexual minorities, and the conventions of the (colonial) Western tradition.

Queer Identities in Novels
Nigeria and South Africa have dominated the production of African queer novels. Referring to what has been called the third generation of Nigerian writers, Pius Adesanmi and Chris Dunton (2005) have pointed to various ways these writers distinguish themselves from the earlier generation, but what has been left out of their analysis is the new elaboration of queer subjectivities. In internationally acclaimed works, including Chris Abani’s *The Virgin of Flames* (2007), two stories in Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s short-story collection *The Thing around Your Neck* (2009), Teju Cole’s *Open City* (2011), and Uzodinma Iweala’s *Speak No Evil* (2018), the queer subject is placed outside Nigeria, perhaps testifying to the Western locations of these writers. There are a few novels that explore queer experience and its concomitants of social opprobrium and homophobia in Nigeria itself. The first is Jude Dibia’s *Walking with Shadows* (2011), which was first published in 2005. Dibia resists what could have been an account of a queer man (Adrian), who has been “outed” by a corrupt colleague, coming to terms with his sexuality, by, for the most part, alternating the focus of the narrative between Adrian and his now estranged wife, Ada. Through the experiences of Adrian and Ada, Dibia is able to address the variety of queer experience in contemporary Nigeria, where homosexuality is illegal and stigmatized, from the ostensibly monogamous and loving relationship between Adrian’s old friends, Femi and Abdul, to the survival tactic of bisexuality adopted by a number of high-powered men; from the occasional queer sexual trysts of Rotimi (a working-class colleague who is sympathetic to Adrian’s plight) to the rearing of a child suspected of being gay; from overt and covert manifestations of the public condemnation of queer subjects to the violent treatment of queer subjects by a highly commercialized and Americanized evangelical Christianity. At least from Adrian, there is no suggestion that homosexuality is a foreign import. In relation to the elaboration of queer sexuality, however, there are some serious problems with the rhetoric employed by Adrian (and, by extension, possibly Dibia). Throughout the text, one can discern a particular “campo-phobia” at play. After Adrian visits a bar frequented by gay men, he says to Abdul, “I’m sort of glad that gay men are finally coming out of hiding. I’m not talking about the divas who are so loud and so effeminate, but the good-looking professional-types” (2011, 119; my emphasis). Adrian is also very moralistic. When he visits his white erstwhile lover Antonio, who tells him that he is HIV-positive, Adrian tells Antonio many times that he is going to die, and later thinks about the situation: “He would not have wished this for even his worst enemy. But Antonio had brought this on himself…. This was part of the reckless lifestyle of many gay men that bothered Adrian” (2011, 198). Where Adrian is quick to condemn certain gay men, he is more sanguine about the homophobic elements in Nigerian society: “The majority of people here still viewed his sexuality as abnormal. Maybe they were right, maybe they were wrong” (2011, 202). In Adrian’s mind, then, the ideal queer subject is straight-acting, monogamous, good-looking, and wealthy enough to escape the homophobic confines of Nigerian society. In drawing attention to the panoply of indigenous queer experience in Nigeria, Dibia’s novel is laudable, but one must be wary of the reactionary queer politics advanced by the text.
In the historical novel *Under the Udala Trees* (2017), Chinelo Okparanta explores the relationship that develops between two young teenage girls, Ijeoma and Amina, and the repercussions for Ijeoma when their relationship is discovered. In the milieu of the Biafran civil war, their relationship is doubly prohibited because Ijeoma is Igbo and Amina is Hausa. Not only does the novel mimic the narrative arc of de Nyeko’s story (which was originally titled “Under the Jambula Tree” [2015]), but here also, family and religion become sites of conflict and crisis for the young lovers, as Ijeoma’s mother quotes verses from the Bible to try and eradicate the “unnatural” behavior of her daughter. By revisiting a sensitive historical period in Nigerian history, Okparanta addresses contemporary queer concerns and the role of women in the reproduction of patriarchal culture.

Nnanna Ikpo’s debut novel *Fímí sì òlétì: Heaven Gave It to Me* (2017) is, by contrast, set in near-contemporary Nigeria. Dreadlocked twin brothers Wale and Wole are human rights lawyers. The first is closeted; the second is as out as one can safely be as a sexual rights activist in the context of Nigeria’s gathering political homophobia. Whereas many of the novels discussed here have a didactic quality, this one allows the richly drawn characters to speak to readers in the contradictory, idealistic, hormonal, and globally connected discourse that characterizes the gay scene in Nigeria and elsewhere on the continent.

When considering the South African queer novel, assertions about the contemporary queer turn have to be somewhat qualified. On the one hand, South African creative writing represents an exception to the largely twenty-first-century phenomenon of the African queer turn, because it has a longer history of engaging with same-sex experience and relationships during apartheid. From Michael Power’s *Shadow Game*, first published in 1972, to Stephen Gray’s *Time of Our Darkness* (1988), issues of cross-class and cross-racial male same-sex relationships are explored in the context of the apartheid state’s racial laws, violence, and surveillance. These novelists often oppose affiliative sexual connections with state networks of power and control, as we see in Gray’s novel, in which resistance, subtle collusion, and a future liberatory imaginary figure in the representation of the relationship between a black teenage boy and a white male teacher.

On the other hand, postapartheid queer novels represent an intensification of the African queer turn. The number of novels produced in South Africa far outstrips the rest of the continent. There are many reasons for this: the relative wealth of South Africa and its writers; a lively local publishing scene; and, most significantly, the legal protections against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation afforded to LGBTQI persons by the 1996 democratic constitution and the Civil Union Act of 2006. However, like the apartheid-era novel, the postapartheid queer novel has been dominated by white male authors, and by a particular form—the male bildungsroman/coming-out story, such as Mark Behr’s *The Smell of Apples* (1996) and *Embrace* (2000); Michiel Heyns’s *The Children’s Day* (2002); and Craig Higginson’s *The Hill* (2005). These “new South Africa novels” are less interested in exploring the possibilities of queer emergent collectivities, which are based on cross-racial
affiliations, than in developing the white queer self against a white patriarchal order embodied in the family, schools, and the army.

There are racial, gender, and thematic exceptions to this dominant trend. Although the contemporary South African queer novel is almost exclusively a male phenomenon exploring the complexities of male gay experience, Shamim Sarif’s *The World Unseen* (2001) deals with the burgeoning relationship between two Indian women in 1950s South Africa. Sarif explores the development of female agency through a same-sex affiliative relationship against the backdrop of the newly introduced apartheid laws and the patriarchal strictures of a traditional Indian community. What is most disturbing about this multipleprize-winning novel is its representation of black people. In Sarif’s novel, black men are represented as either constant but necessary figures of labor, or as rapists. There is not much distance between Sarif’s portrayal of black men and their representation in colonial discourse, and the cross-racial intimacies that were the grounds for resistance to state control in the apartheid-era novels are entirely absent in Sarif’s historical novel.

There are also exceptions to the bildungsroman/coming-out story, where gay sexuality does not occasion much of a crisis for the characters; these include Damon Galgut’s novels and, most notably, Gerald Kraak’s *Ice in the Lungs* (2006), joint winner of the European Union Literary Award. Although very much a new South Africa novel in its linking of queer rights, feminism, cross-racial networks, and human rights, it is, strictly speaking, a historical novel. Kraak uses a doubled temporality in the novel’s narrative structure as he draws global and historical parallels between a group of antiapartheid activists in South Africa in the late 1970s and a group of activists in Stalinist Greece. It is an important novel as “the text reinscribes a gay cultural presence into South African historiography and provides a type of gay cultural history” (Carolin 2015, 50). As it works to script a queer sexuality within the antiapartheid movement and explore both state homophobia and the liberation struggle, it participates in the larger queer global project of cultural recuperation, of giving voice and presence to silenced sexual minorities in the past.

The most significant exception to the dominant trend of white male bildungsroman/coming-out novels in South African writing is the emergence of black writers engaging with queer sexuality, in, for example, Ahraf Jamal’s *Love Themes for the Wilderness* (1996); Tatamkhulu Afrika’s *Bitter Eden* (2002), a historical novel that explores the intimacies that develop between men in a degrading prisoner-of-war camp during World War II; Fred Khumalo’s *Seven Steps to Heaven* (2007); and K. Sello Duiker’s *Thirteen Cents* (2000) and *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001). In their nuanced handling of queer sex and sensibilities, in their destabilization of the new South Africa novel, and in their formal inventiveness, Duiker’s novels set themselves apart from most other South African queer writing, and indeed from queer writing across the continent. Because *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* has already received much scholarly attention, this entry focuses instead, briefly, on Duiker’s first published novel.
*Thirteen Cents*, which was awarded the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize for Best First Book (2001), focuses on the precarious existence of an “ambiguously raced” (Spain 2016, 418) boy prostitute, Azure (pronounced Ahzoo-ray) in postapartheid Cape Town. The first-person, present-tense narration provides the reader with a child’s insight into Cape Town’s world of pimps, gangsters, and pedophiles. There is an uncomfortable sense of immediacy in Azure’s recounting of extreme bouts of violence meted out against him—including his sex work, a gang rape, starvation, and homelessness—which eventually shatter the young boy’s psyche. Duiker’s novel thus represents a “radical negation of the present”—not just in the apocalyptic ending of the novel, where a ball of fire comes down from the sky and the sea devours the city, and where “there is no image … that will secure a positive identity for the future” (Spain 2016, 422) but also in its destabilization of the new South Africa novel through its insistence of continuities with the racial discrimination, power relations, and social inequalities of the apartheid regime. Despite the brutalities and violence of his precarious existence, Azure is able to create spaces and times when he is not dependent on the treacherous adult world for his survival, either through his escapes to Table Mountain or, somewhat surprisingly, through his sex work, which he steers and controls “with a skilled, cultivated self-commodification” as “he takes pleasure in the sensuality, the sex, but also small pleasures the encounters bring, from clean sheets to lingering in showers after the sex” (Spain 2016, 428). In addition to following Azure as he navigates the streets of Cape Town, the locus of contestations of brutal masculine power, Duiker in a very nuanced way has Azure struggling to come to terms with his own identity in the transition from boyhood to manhood, as well as with issues of race and sexuality. Duiker presents us with a typically confused teenage response, as Azure rejects the world of moffies (the pejorative term for gay men in South Africa). “Moffiedom” is associated with exploitation, pedophilia, and sometimes pain, sometimes pleasure for Azure. However, on the mountain he meets a gay man who does not participate in this particular world, and this encounter has a lingering effect on him. Later, although he declares, “I’m not a moffie,” he also says, “I never dream of doing it with a woman” (Duiker 2000, 175). He muses, “It’s strange that I never dream of doing it with a woman” and then asserts that men are “hairy and ugly. What’s there to like?” (Duiker 2000, 176).

In addition to the radical and critical negation of postapartheid Cape Town and the irresolution of the problems the novel raises, another striking element of the novel is its formal inventiveness. Various genres are brought into play in the novel: gritty, urban realism jostles with the magic realism of the sections on the mountain; surrealism, the oneiric, and the dystopian vie for textual attention. It is also a novel that is highly intertextual. The most obvious connection is with Ben Okri’s *The Famished Road* (1991); indeed, the name of Duiker’s protagonist echoes that of the abiku-protagonist, Azaro, in Okri’s novel. The magic realism of the dream sequences and Azaro’s escapades in the forest bear striking resemblance to Azure's experiences on the mountain, and even the warnings that Azure gets from a number of men in the novel about certain people trying to steal his
soul (as he is sacred) mirror the various kidnappings of Azaro in Okri’s novel. However, unlike Okri, Duiker links the shift into the magically real with a disintegration of a child’s psyche, with mental illness. Here, again, mental illness is not linked directly to homosexuality but is the result of “abject violence, trauma, and loss” (Spain 2016, 429). In Duiker’s novel, as in the short stories discussed previously, these textual strategies, in form and content, seem less like postmodern textual games and more driven by a political imperative—to address queer concerns as part of a larger project of social emancipation from poverty, violence, and homophobia.

Finally, Tendai Huchu’s The Hairdresser of Harare (2015) is a rare example of a novel depicting a homosexual protagonist outside of Nigeria and South Africa. It is an even rarer example of a novel that explores the subtleties of a burgeoning friendship between an effeminate gay man (Dumisani) and his heterosexual female coworker, landlord, and friend (Vimbai), whom his family excitedly assumes will become a daughter-in-law. As is the norm for the genre, tragedy eventually catches up with Dumisani, but a fascinating plot twist links homophobia in Zimbabwe to the endemic corruption and racism of the ruling party.

**ONE DAY I WILL WRITE ABOUT THIS PLACE (2011; BINYAVANGA WAINAINA)**

This 2011 coming-of-age memoir chronicles the childhood and maturation of the Kenyan author Binyavanga Wainaina, who has become a public face for African LGBTQ groups. Wainaina grew up in Africa’s middle class as the son of a Kenyan businessman and farm owner and a Ugandan salon owner. The “place” of his title is actually three different places: the Kenya of his childhood, his mother’s homeland of Uganda, and South Africa, where Wainaina went to college and realized his dream of becoming a writer.

The memoir explores sex, sexuality, and gender constructions but eschews explicit investigations for oblique explorations that are deliberately filtered through the perspective of a child—a reticent or a naive, uncomprehending narrator. Although there are direct references to sexual activity, most of the memoir addresses the elusive sites of sexuality and desire, such as the erotic nature of music and dance and the sexual attraction circulated between bodies, while also including accounts of sexual fantasies expressed by the author and other individuals. The narrator’s frequent bouts of masturbation as an adolescent hint at a suspended sexual release. His sexual frustration is tied as much to the lurking presence of dominating father figures in political life as it is to his uncertainty over his gender identification and sexual preferences, which sharply contrast with the actions of other individuals who often belong to lower social classes free of middle-class and elite aspirations and who appear unburdened by religious and colonial inheritances or fixed notions of masculinity and the good life. When Wainaina writes of individuals who publicly embrace their homosexuality or bisexuality, their self-affirmations constitute
courageous acts in the face of opposition. Therefore, Wainaina’s juxtaposed silence charts the social costs of and prospects of “coming out” through proxy figures.

As a child, the narrator explored sexual life and the functions of gender performance through observation, but his adolescence coincides with social turbulence following the introduction of structural adjustment programs and the cessation of the Cold War. The ensuing developments transformed all facets of social and economic life in African countries. Wainaina’s sojourns at South African universities and his subsequent travels on writing assignments offer insights into communities across the continent. While his development as a writer constitutes a major narrative strand, the search for just societies and an emancipation from the flawed foundations of colonialism are significant co-implicated themes. They are interwoven with oblique and overt explorations of sex, sexuality, and sexual embodiments. By scrutinizing sex-gender conventions, Wainaina reveals the ways in which individuals are adapting and transforming configurations of gender, sexuality, and family. For example, Wainaina’s sisters contravene expectations when they bear children outside wedlock. Wainaina thus couples his own unarticulated nonnormative sexuality to observations of ongoing profound challenges to all forms of normativity across multiple scales, from the family to the nation-state and the continent.

In January 2014 Wainaina announced his homosexuality in an open letter to his mother (“I am a Homosexual, Mum”). Labeled a missing chapter to the memoir, the letter has become its complementary counterpoint text. When the memoir is read alongside Wainaina’s public affirmations of his homosexuality and his defense of LGBTQ rights to dignity and sexual expression in Africa, it becomes obvious that the book’s strategic exploration of the links between freedom from sexual and gender constraints and the larger realization of a democratic nation-state with guaranteed freedoms for the individual gestures toward a future community in which such freedoms are acquired.

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Queer Identity in Life Writings

One of the most salient features of the contemporary queer turn in African writing has been the emergence of an abundance of queer life writing. A forerunner of these is Mark Gevisser and Edwin Cameron’s groundbreaking *Defiant Desire: Gay and Lesbian Lives in South Africa* (1995). Although mostly made up of scholarly essays on South African queer experience, the anthology contains an important section on life writing titled “Testaments,” which includes Zackie Achmat’s “My Childhood as an Adult Molester: A Salt River Moffie.” The collection also includes an edited transcript of Gevisser’s interviews with Simon Nkoli (1957–1998), the queer activist and founder of the first black queer organization in South Africa, the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW). Contemporary queer life writings are collected in biographical anthologies or appear as single-author memoirs. The former, in almost all cases, are in collaboration with or supported by NGOs. Notable examples include *Queer Malawi* (2010, edited by Patricia Watson), a collection of stories gathered together by the Centre for the Development of People (a Malawian sexual rights association) and Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (the South African gay and lesbian archive); *Blessed Body: The Secret Lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Nigerians* (2016; edited by Unoma Azuah), a collection of queer nonfiction that resulted from a collaboration with Queer Alliance, a gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender NGO based in Nigeria; and *Rivers of Life: Lesbian Stories and Poems* (2014), which arose from the work of Free Gender, a South African black lesbian organization, and was published, along with *Invisible: Stories from Kenya’s Queer Community* (2014; edited by Kevin Mwachiro), with support from the Heinrich-BöllStiftung, a German political foundation. These collections of queer life writing thus demonstrate the importance of local and global networks of affiliation, not only in helping to provide publishing platforms to often excluded and disavowed sexual minorities—moving these communities from invisibility to visibility, from voicelessness to articulation, from being the objects of discursive representation to self-representation—but also in offering a riposte to the idea that queerness is un-African, a Western imposition. These nonfiction stories do not simply represent an occluded and socially marginalized group but work toward constituting that group.

They also explore what it means to be queer in Africa today. A generational divide is apparent. Older queer people looked to forms of sociality (either civil society groups or gay bars and clubs) as they struggled to escape social isolation and to find a name for their desires, which helped to determine their identities and to forge connections with an established community. Younger queer Africans, more often than not, look to the internet for help and advice. Indeed, one of the seven sections of *Blessed Body* is titled “Facebook Fantasies,” and the collection includes blogs from queer Nigerians (see especially “Stephanie’s Fears (1)” and “The Pains of ‘Transgenderment’ and the So-Called Friends (2)” by Nigerian trans woman Stephanie Adaralegbe). In all these life stories, the African queer
body is represented simultaneously as the site of violence (state-sanctioned or otherwise), blackmail, torture, ostracism, and isolation, and the locus of desire, pleasure, joy, and utopian fantasy.

*Trans: Transgender Life Stories from South Africa* (2009) is typical of the strategies deployed in the queer African anthologies discussed previously and also represents a departure in that it “is the first book of its kind in South Africa, and indeed the continent” to deal with “the experience of being transgender” (Morgan et al. 2009, 3). “Transgender issues,” Liesl Theron claims in the foreword to *Trans*, “have continued to be a taboo subject for discussion” despite the progress that has been made in relation to gay and lesbian rights in South Africa (3). The collection arose from a collaboration with the NGOs Gender DynamiX (a South African organization that focuses on the issues of transsexual, transgender, and gender-nonconforming people) and Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA; originally Gay and Lesbian Archives). The life stories in the collection are edited versions of interviews, which might explain the flattened effect of many of the stories. As if to mimic the diversity of the stories and the complexity of transgender experience and, at the same time, to register a certain precariousness about the project, the collection includes a range of materials in addition to the life stories: a glossary, which “was extremely difficult to compile due to the contested and constantly evolving use of terms by trans people” (Morgan et al. 2009, 12); photographs of a number of the contributors; newspaper clippings that suggest a long history of the representation of trans people in the media; reproductions of artworks from a 2007 exhibition; a summary of discussions with trans men about the relationship between South African culture and masculinity and another summary of a formal discussion with a “reference group” about the silences, the unspoken, in the collected life writings.

Despite the racial, class, and religious diversity of the life stories collected in *Trans*, a familiar arc of experience can be detected: early childhood experiences of a mismatch between body and gender, religious crisis, early adult experiences of struggling to name their identity, with almost all of the storytellers going through a period of being gay or lesbian, acknowledging to themselves that their body does not match their gender, beginning to live as the opposite gender, and finally engaging in the process of transitioning (a double coming out—first a “false” one as a gay or lesbian person and then a “true” one as a trans person). What is striking about the stories in this collection is the lack of what has been called intersectionality; this is not addressed in the summary of the discussion of silences in the collected stories. So, while there has been much progress made in relation to legal protections of sexual minorities in South Africa (including the trans-focused Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act [2004]), these protections have led, paradoxically, to an increasing “ghettoization” of these communities, which seem less interested in forging affiliative connections with other marginalized groups—such as feminist organizations, gay and lesbian groups (in the case of trans), and social movements that attempt to address poverty, social inequality, racism, and other injustices in a broader
politics of revolutionary change—than in creating spaces for self-expression and advocating for the rights of a specific group. Perhaps, one hopes, this is a stage in the dialectical movement of historical change.

Apart from *Blessed Body*, in which many of the stories (all written by the contributors) focus on the telling moment or a decisive event, the other anthologies are similar in that they employ the familiar life writing trope of cradle-to-present narrative. In contrast to these anthologies, the single-authored queer memoirs are strikingly dissimilar from each other. Binyavanga Wainaina’s memoir *One Day I Will Write about This Place* (2011) is the most stylistically accomplished—that is to say, it is the most literary. The lines between autobiography and fiction and between prose and poetry are deliberately blurred. At the beginning of the memoir, the young Wainaina describes a scene at home: “Mum issues instructions. Sharp voices explode: clunking and whooshing and foaming like hands shaking up cutlery in the sink. They bubble like water when it is starting to make glass” (14). Wainaina’s memoir unfolds in a chronologically linear fashion as the Kenyan writer, academic, and activist casts a critical eye on the culture and politics of a number of African and Western countries. The uncharacteristic use of the present tense in the memoir creates an ambiguous effect for the reader; a sense of immediacy, sincerity, and authenticity is destabilized by its dissociated tone. Indeed, dissociation is central to the effect of the memoir, where one constantly gets the impression that the writer is merely observing, merely reporting the events that he is experiencing; this dissociation is ameliorated when his sexuality is revealed. Thus, the form of the memoir is, as Adorno claims, a sedimentation of its content.

A stylistic contrast to Wainaina’s memoir is Nkunzi Zandile Nkabinde’s *Black Bull, Ancestors and Me: My Life as a Lesbian Sangoma* (2008), “an auto-ethnographic text that is part cultural analysis, part memoir, part manifesto” (Hoad 2016, 189). Nkabinde’s memoir is formally traditional, with a past-tense narrative and a chronological unfolding of significant events in her life, and it is straightforwardly realistic. However, it is highly transgressive in locating her queerness in traditional African religion, thus subverting the idea of the un-Africanness of queer identity: “My name is Nkunzi. I am a Zulu woman, a lesbian and a sangoma. This is my story” (Nkabinde 2008, 4). Her memoir blurs the line of the well-worn opposition in postcolonial criticism of the traditional and the modern, as it is the traditional that provides the girding of modern explorations of queer identity. Ancestral calls and her experiences as a sangoma (traditional healer) are inter-articulated with gay and lesbian activism and an exploration of South Africa’s history.

A memoir that stylistically lies somewhere between Wainaina’s and Nkabinde’s is Chike Frankie Edozien’s *Lives of Great Men: Living and Loving as an African Gay Man* (2017). Cosmopolitan in its reach, Edozien’s text eschews the narrative strategy of the chronological unfolding of events, the cradle-to-present model of Wainaina’s and Nkabinde’s memoirs. Instead, Edozien’s memoir is composed of a series of
nonchronological autobiographical vignettes from the Nigerian journalist and academic; in each chapter a personal experience is used to explore a variety of issues, either directly related to queer concerns in Africa and the diasporic communities (bisexuality, homophobia, asylum, familial relationships, etc.), or concerned with broader issues in various African countries (AIDS, the rural/urban divide, class inequalities, etc.). “Forgetting Lamido” is typical of the narrative strategies employed throughout the memoir. Here, a present experience (having sex with his first love on a return trip to Nigeria) provides an opening for him to explore significant aspects of his personal biography (middle-class family life, his first sexual experiences, the development of his relationship with Lamido) and also to address the issue of the ontological dominance of bisexuality in Nigeria: “Get married. Have babies. Then continue with secret boyfriends” (2017, 12). Explanations for this phenomenon include a specifically African idea of maturity (that of being married, which is necessary for professional success), internalized homophobia, a traumatic gay relationship, and most importantly, “the criminalization of gays, and the prescribed fourteen-year jail-term for same-sex marriages, approved by lawmakers and the president in 2014 as a populist gambit ahead of an election they ended up losing anyway” (16). Despite their differences in style, these memoirs, like the stories collected in life writing anthologies, and like the short stories and novels, make clear that the personal—as feminists have always argued—is always political.

The contemporary queer turn in African creative writing not only “shatters the epistemic blindness to African marginal sexualities” (Zabus 2013, 26) but also offers testament to the variety and complexity of queer experience in Africa south of the Sahara, where queer subjects live under varying degrees of social, political, and religious constraint. Where previously African queer subjects were the objects of (often pathological) representation, these short-story writers, novelists, and practitioners of life writing assert their humanity, their daily struggles (finding love, managing their relationships with their family and community, etc.), and their constant battle with homophobia. One can also discern, in this queer contemporary turn, a desire to destabilize inherited forms (both Western and African), to cast a queer critical eye on the postcolonial moment, and to foreground sexuality in the constitution of a queer African imaginary.

SEE ALSO Cinema, African (Anglophone); Cinema, African (Francophone); Literature, African (Francophone); Literature, Caribbean (Anglophone and Creole); Literature, Caribbean (Francophone)

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The Malian writer Yambo Ouologuem (1940–2017) rose to fame and controversy with his 1968 polemical novel *Le devoir de violence* (*Bound to Violence* [1971]). The novel offended 1960s African cultural nationalist sensibilities with its portrayal of a precolonial Africa mired in violence, slavery, despotic rule, incest, and pedophilia, among other ills. *Le devoir* also offers one of the early stark representations of homosexuality in Francophone African literature. Ouologuem first uses homosexual behavior to cement his negative characterization of the despotic Saif dynasty in the fictional Nakem Empire, in what would be present-day Mali. But in a tentatively less damning treatment of homosexuality, the writer proceeds to detail the love affair between the adopted son of the ruler of the dynasty and a Frenchman while the son is a student in France. The depiction of homosexuality in the novel met with pushback, most notably from the Senegalese writer Cheikh Hamidou Kane (1928–). Kane, whose novel *L’aventure ambiguë* (*Ambiguous Adventure* [1963]) secured his position as a notable of Francophone African literature, called out Ouologuem for “a concept of love which is atrocious; homosexuality which does not exist in our culture” (quoted in *Egejuru 1980*, 118).

Until well into the 1980s, Francophone African literary works have upheld such expressions as Kane’s of the “unafricaness of homosexuality” through total silence on homosexuality or stigmatization of homosexual characters as cultural aliens. From these early negative and at best tentative engagements with homosexuality in Francophone African literature, the representation of homosexuality has evolved, through successive generations of writers, toward steadier, more forceful, and more affirming images of same-sex sexuality (*Vignal 1983; Dunton 1989; Zabus 2013; Diabate 2016*). The 1980s also saw the emergence of a dissenting thread that resisted the stigmatization of homosexuality as a foreign import, mentioned transgender characters, and introduced lesbianism. Nonetheless, the thread deploys same-sex sexuality as a metaphor. In the 1990s and the first two decades of the twenty-first century, gradually more assertive writing about homosexuality and lesbianism has centered same-sex sexuality as a theme and queer characters as protagonists.
Through the 1980s: Negative Portrayals, Western Import

Significant and affirming representations of same-sex sexuality were scarce in Francophone African literature well into the 1980s. A culture of silence about same-sex sexuality pervades early Francophone African literature. The African worlds of early Francophone African literature are unequivocally heteronormative. The trope of homosexuality as colonial depersonalization and cultural alienation in some texts occasionally breaks the normative silence on same-sex sexuality. In these latter texts, all novels, homosexual characters represent a placeholder for cultural national anxieties about postcolonial African identities, the perceived corruption of Africans by Western values, and neocolonial subjugation. Ouologuem's *Le devoir de violence* remains the most famous text of this era to have broken the silence on same-sex sexuality. Still, as Chris Dunton (1989) has noted, Ouologuem’s treatment of homosexuality is ambiguous. On the one hand, homosexuality in the novel furthers the negative characterization of the despotic Saïf dynasty, while the homosexual love affair between Raymond Kassoumi, the adopted son of Saif, and a Frenchman relates to the cultural alienation of Raymond. On the other hand, Ouologuem’s description of the homosexual relationship is “thoughtful” and emphasizes “tenderness,” “sensuousness,” and “regard for the other” (Dunton 1989, 436).

In his nuanced engagement with homosexuality, Ouologuem stands out from his literary peers of the 1960s through the 1980s who stigmatized homosexuality unequivocally. The Senegalese novelist Aminata Sow Fall in *Le revenant* (1976; The revenant) and the Congolese writer and scholar V. Y. Mudimbe in *Le bel immonde* (1976; *Before the Birth of the Moon* [1989]), although they devote very minimal space to same-sex sexuality, are also of note for not stigmatizing same-sex sexuality as an imported European perversion. Fall references a transgender and homosexual character. In addition, her use of the local Senegalese term for both transgender and homosexual individuals, *goorjigeen* gives indigenous Senegalese anchors to homosexuality and transgender individuals. In a narrative move that anticipates the lesbian separatism in the first novel of the Cameroonian writer Calixthe Beyala (1987), Mudimbe uses a lesbian relationship as a metaphor for the emancipation of Congolese women from patriarchy.

In a number of 1970s and 1980s novels, the first encounter of the African protagonist with the notion of homosexuality takes place when the protagonist travels to Europe as a student. This discovery furthers the cultural estrangement of the protagonist from Europe. The Guinean writers Camara Laye in *Dramouss* (1966; *A Dream of Africa* [1968]) and Sàïdou Bokoum in *Chaîne* (1974; Chain), the Malian writer Abdoul Doukouré in *Le déboussolé* (1978; The disoriented), and the Cameroonian writer Bernard Nanga in *La trahison de Marianne* (1984; Marianne’s treachery) use the trope of homosexuality to frame the experiences of African students in Europe as journeys into the heart of savage perversion and immorality. In a reversal of the trope of Africa as the heart of darkness,
homosexuality in Europe signifies the “otherness” of Europe. The protagonists in this group of novels are repulsed by homosexuality, except for the protagonist of Chaîne. Bokoum has his protagonist succumb to homosexuality, a symbol of his descent into European perversion and his degradation by Europe.


**LE DEVOIR DE VIOLENCE (1968; YAMBO OUOLOGUEM)**

The Malian author Yambo Ouologuem’s novel Le devoir de violence (1968; Bound to Violence [1971]) covers several centuries of Malian empires, including the Bambara and Toucouleur Empires, between 1202 and 1947, culminating in the fictitious nation-state of Nakem just prior to its independence. The novel charts the oppression of white (in particular, French) colonialism, as well as conflict among Africans, and is steeped in violence and eroticism. The novel won immediate acclaim, garnering the French Prix Renaudot for Ouologuem, the first African writer to be so honored. Although the book’s reputation suffered under accusations that the author plagiarized passages from other works, it is noted for its uncommonly sympathetic representation of homosexuality from this period in African literature.

Any discussion must acknowledge the generally transgressive impulse of the novel, which is set in the fictitious, feudal empire of Nakem that is strangled by rigid social hierarchies. European colonizers entering this field behave no better or worse than the indigenous elite. Because the novel narrates precolonial and colonial life with vying indigenous and French assertions of power, sex is deeply intertwined with power and class politics. The novel’s scenes of rape, bestiality, orgies, and pederasty, along with detailed descriptions of female circumcision, characterize the wantonness of the indigenous feudal lords and the French colonial elite. In France a similar sexual
exorbitance characterizes the ennui of young Frenchmen and the alienation of Africans adrift in the colonial metropolis. Set against these excessive exploits are two sensuous and companionate romances between two couples who seek to overcome their isolation and social constraints.

The novel offers two axes of same-sex desire. The first involves power-inflected acts between older men and young boys; these characterize political degeneracy and sexual exploitation. The second axis unfolds as a relationship between Raymond-Spartacus Kassoumi and the Frenchman Lambert. Born to slave parents, Kassoumi earns a scholarship to study in France. There, he meets Lambert, scion of an affluent family, with whom he has an affair that is interrupted when the latter’s mother demands his heterosexual marriage. Shocked and devastated, Kassoumi turns to marry a woman.

Although the novel subordinates its homosexual affair to other themes, the encounter constitutes a contained micronarrative that acquires amplified meaning because of the emphasis on companionate love in a novel in which sex and sexual desire are so thoroughly interwoven with power and financial incentive. Ouologuem uses Kassoumi not only to explore homosexual love and its social expression but also to solicit a recognition of homosexual love as the same as any other expression of desire. Kassoumi sees the encounter with Lambert initially as a racialized, financial exchange in which he succumbs to the “white man” and later as an expression of African alienation. Ultimately, he recognizes it as a relationship in its own merit outside the representational schemes of a racial or colonial allegory. The vital transformation in Kassoumi’s view of the affair, from his initial apprehension to his sense of profound loss at its end, consecrates Ouologuem’s representation of homosexual love and sets it apart from, say, Wole Soyinka’s *The Interpreters* (1965), in which Africans principally have negative reactions to the homosexual figure.

The reciprocal but censored relationship between Kassoumi and Lambert echoes the mutually reciprocal but illicit love between the former’s slave parents whose euphoric exchanges are reformatted by the formal process of marriage that reasserts social norms: his mother must undergo prenuptial genital infibulation (a type of female genital mutilation) to regain her virginity for the feudal lord’s rights of the first night, and his father must execute a mock punishment for her “infidelity.” Comparably, Lambert’s mother’s insistence on his marriage imposes social restrictions on his relationship to Kassoumi. The parallels between the companionate pairs place homosexual love on par with heterosexual romances; the comparable connections to race and class in the pair also suggest that Ouologuem permits an affirmative reading of homosexuality because the novel reveals how social restrictions and negative representations affect all perceptions of sexuality schemes.

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Dissenting Texts, More Transgender and Lesbian Characters

While Kane rejects homosexuality as a Western import, the early evocations of homosexuality that anchor it in an indigenous African sociocultural context have been by Kane’s fellow Senegalese writers. In addition to Fall in Le revenant, Mariama Bâ in Un chant écarlate (1981; Scarlet Song [1986]) and Ken Bugul in Le baobab fou (1982; The Abandoned Baobab [1991]) casually mention homosexuality and reference goorjigeen (transgender men) in their novels. The casual approach of the three women writers normalizes homosexuality and transgender men in the Senegalese context. The novels of Bâ and Bugul, like those of Fall and Mudimbe before them, are precursors to a group of Francophone African texts of the late 1980s that do not necessarily destigmatize same-sex sexuality or devote significant narrative space to the question. The importance of these latter texts lies in their dissent from the Francophone African literary tradition of troping foreignness and cultural contamination via same-sex sexuality.

Among these dissenting texts are Calixthe Beyala’s C’est le soleil qui m’a brûlée (1987; The Sun Hath Looked upon Me [1996]), the Gabonese writer Angèle Rawiri’s Fureurs et cris de femmes (1989; The Fury and Cries of Women [2014]), and the Malian writer Doumbi-
Fakoly’s *La révolte des Galsénésiennes* (1994; The revolt of the Galsénésiennes). In Doumbi-Fakoly’s novel set in Senegal, a group of LGBTQ citizens join a coalition of women’s groups, but this inclusion has no bearing on the narrative of the novel. Beyala’s *C’est le soleil qui m’a brûlée* and Rawiri’s *Fureurs et cris de femmes* stand out for devoting significant narrative space to same-sex sexuality.

Beyala’s novel, her first, uses lesbian desire to articulate a feminist critique of the postcolonial African nation, as reflected in her native Cameroon. Ateba, her main protagonist, has lesbian yearnings that culminate in her rejection of heterosexuality and her cataclysmic murder of her male lover at the end of the novel. Female same-sex sexuality in Beyala’s novel articulates a political dissent with the heteropatriarchal structure of the postcolonial African nation. The lesbian awakening of Ateba shadows her development of a feminist political consciousness. Throughout the novel, Beyala consistently pinpoints the subordination of women to male sexual pleasure and correlates the heteropatriarchal structure of sex to the subaltern condition of women in the nation. Scenes of heterosex in the novel always reflect the subaltern positioning of women, and Ateba is repeatedly forced down on her knees by her male sexual partners.

Henceforth, Ateba nurtures a political project that reimagines the postcolonial African nation as a lesbian continuum. The new imaginary of Ateba culminates in her act of revolutionary violence against her male lover at the end of the novel. But the narrative indecision of the novel revokes Beyala’s bold representation. The author backpedals on her affirming depiction of same-sex sexuality through various forms of narrative ambiguity. The suggested potential insanity of Ateba, further reinforced by the hallucinatory ending of the novel, and her equally suggested “un-African” ways throughout the novel work to safely contain the lesbian yearnings of Ateba. The suggested cultural and mental alienation of Ateba is a narrative gesture that resignifies Ateba as a social outcast and tentatively stigmatizes her same-sex desire. Beyala returns to the theme of lesbian desire in her second novel, *Tu t’appelleras Tanga* (1988; *Your Name Shall Be Tanga* [1996]), where the homoerotic relationship between the young female protagonist and an older Frenchwoman is also shrouded by narrative ambiguity. In addition, the interracial relationship plays into the narrative of same-sex sexuality as an imported perversion.

Whereas Beyala portrays lesbian yearnings, Rawiri in *Fureurs et cris de femmes*, set in Gabon, explicitly represents a lesbian sexual relationship. Jilted housewife Émilienne has a lesbian relationship with Dominique. Unbeknownst to Émilienne, Dominique is the mistress of her husband, and Dominique initiated the relationship with Émilienne to precipitate the divorce of the couple. But the function of the lesbian sexual relationship as revenge sex limits the discursive reach of lesbian sex. Rawiri’s portrayal of the lesbian relationship as a method to regain firm ground within the heteropatriarchal economy constitutes a major limitation of her otherwise bold novel.
Born in 1961 in Douala, Cameroon, Calixthe Beyala published her first book, *C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée* (*1987; The Sun Hath Looked upon Me* [1996]) at age twenty-three. Her novels have a strong feminist viewpoint, reflecting the powerful maternal influences she experienced during her formative years. Critical reception of Beyala’s work has been mixed. The themes that Beyala addresses in her work have made her a controversial figure both in Cameroon and in Africa. Some critics regard Beyala as the most provocative writer of her generation and applaud her originality, both thematic and stylistic. Some critics are uncomfortable with what her subject matter says of Africa, others have described her work as pornographic, and still others have criticized her for plagiarism.

Beyala’s novels offer a persistent indictment of human depravity in African urban slums, of patriarchal appropriation and misuse of power, and of societies that are not only oppressive to women but encourage women to act as oppressive agents toward other women, especially their girlchildren (Nfah-Abbenyi 1998). Beyala’s twelfth novel, *Femme nue, femme noire* (Nude woman, black woman), reprises the theme of social degradation and patriarchal injustices that inhabit the worlds she creates. One such patriarchal injustice is the idealized portrait of the African woman in Léopold Sédar Senghor’s poem “Femme noire” (*1945*), which Beyala wrests from the poet and deconstructs throughout the novel. She asserted in an interview, “When I restate [Senghor’s] verses, it is to empty them of their patriarchal burden…. I make them coexist with words … that express all the rebellion of the black woman and her ability to be what I call ‘women stars’” (Chanda 2003, 42; translation by Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi).

Irène Fofo, the protagonist-narrator, states that she is only interested in two things—stealing and making love—adding, “I am something new. Something depraved, something dissolute, without scruples, devouring life from wherever it comes!” (Beyala 2003, 63; translation by Juliana Makuchi Nfah-Abbenyi). Irène is the familiar street kid of Beyala’s novels but she is also without a doubt something new, something different. This self-professed kleptomaniac steals a bag containing the corpse of a dead child, runs, and is pursued by the police. She ends up in a neighborhood where no one knows her and spends three months with Ousmane, his wife Fatou, and scores of men engaging in sexual orgies. It is noteworthy that Irène, who has been sexually active since the age of fifteen, now chooses with these encounters to pursue sexual pleasure for its own sake. She is the woman in control, imposing her will and desires on her sexual partners. Irène’s unapologetic pursuit of sexual satisfaction with men and women is transgressive and captures her rejection of the mother who taught her that her behavior would lead her straight to hell, as well as her rebellion against women...
degraded by centuries-old gender expectations who suffer from collective hysteria as a result. After three months of living outside those socially constructed lines that women have been taught to internalize, Irène, who is after all an adolescent, a child who still yearns for her mother’s love and care, chooses to return home to the mother she hopes will save her from a chaotic world. This, however, is not the triumphant return of Beyala’s “women stars,” but that of a girl-child who is savagely beaten and raped on her way home by a group of men. In the end, we are left with a dejected mother, holding her daughter’s head in her lap, a sign of her resignation to what she deems is a woman’s lot in a violent male-dominated world.

Some critics describe *Femme nue, femme noire* as an uncompromisingly bleak portrait that reinforces the image of African women as sacrificial lambs to patriarchal authority. Others maintain that Beyala is an iconoclast whose novel breaks new ground by rethinking the heterosexual Freudian family structure, and by tackling head-on the taboo of speaking openly about sex, especially about African women’s pleasure, a subject that has long been the preserve of male African writers but not female African writers. Some critics praise Beyala’s artistic use of the French language to define African eroticism, while others have condemned the novel as a work of pornography penned solely for publicity and financial gain.

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Despite their tentativeness, the novels of Beyala and Rawiri represent landmarks in the writing of same-sex sexuality in Francophone African literature. As the first novels to devote significant narrative space to nonnormative sexualities, the two texts lent an unprecedented visibility and a voice to same-sex sexuality. In putting the theme to new uses, especially in the feminist novel of Beyala, the two novels also presented readers and students of Francophone African literature with innovative frameworks for thinking about
sexuality. Perhaps the more immediate contribution of *C'est le soleil qui m'a brûlée* and *Fureurs et cris de femmes* lies in jumpstarting more straightforward and affirming narratives of same-sex sexuality in Francophone African literature. In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, Beyala’s *Femme nue, femme noire* (2003; Nude woman, black woman), the Congolese writer Bertrand Nguyen Matoko’s *Le flamant noir* (2004; The black flamingo), the Cameroonian writer Frieda Ekotto’s *Chuchote pas trop* (2005; Don't whisper too much) and *Portrait d'une jeune artiste de Bona Mbella* (2010; Portrait of a young artist from Bona Mbella), the Cameroonian writer Max Lobe’s *39, rue de Berne* (2013; 39 Berne Street), and the Senegalese writer Karim Deya's *J'attends mon mari* (2014; Waiting for my husband) have extended the bold thread started by Beyala and Rawiri and center same-sex sexuality as a theme in its own right.

With *Femme nue, femme noire*, set in Cameroon, Beyala operates a queer subversion of the Négritude poet Léopold Sédar Senghor's (1906–2001) classic poem “Femme nue, femme noire” (1945). Senghor’s poem feminizes and sexualizes the continent, figured alternatively as a mother and a lover. The passive and desubjectified woman in the poem exists through and submits to male desire. The poet derives sexual gratification from the female body but never returns the favor because the heteropatriarchal optic of the nationalist poem does not accommodate female desire and sexual pleasure. In rewriting Senghor’s poem, Beyala continues her literary project, started in her first novel, of sapping the heteropatriarchal foundations of the postcolonial African nation. Irène, the female protagonist of the novel, is a gender-nonconforming young woman who revels in wandering without a destination and engaging in sexual promiscuity with both men and women.

In an unprecedented move in Francophone African literature, the novel includes very graphic, almost pornographic sexual scenes. Sexual orgies and nonnormative sex abound in the novel. The sexual promiscuity of Irène is subversive. Irène deploys sex to queer heteropatriarchal frameworks, make room for female sexual agency, and redistribute sexual subject positions. The sexual orgies she provokes constitute assemblages of desires where sex is then bound to happen in a variety of configurations and women can claim sexual agency for themselves. Irène uses nonnormative sex to poke holes in the dominant heteropatriarchal structure, including the wider political and economic scene exacerbated by neoliberal reforms. She exposes the performative construction of gender, which then sets the stage for a reinterpretation of normative identities. Yet *Femme nue, femme noire* concludes with the death of Irène at the hands of a mob that accuses her of human organ trafficking.

Irène is literally bludgeoned to death. In upholding a type of murder that is meant to obliterate any trace of Irène, Beyala’s narrative revokes the queer sexual female body that it has just enunciated. The narrative acquiesces to the brutal demise of Irène and the community’s negative construction of the queer female body. Likewise, the narrative decision to have an agonized Irène repent and promise that she will abide by the norms of
society further muddles the gender and sexual politics of the novel. Despite her head-on graphic engagement with gendernonconforming sexualities, Beyala ultimately fails to carry through with the bold politics of her novel.

The same tentative politics mar Ekotto's *Chuchote pas trop*. The novel is set in Cameroon and follows the journey of the young female protagonist, Ada, to save Affi, the daughter of her deceased mentor, from sequestration in a forced marriage. The relationship between Ada and her mentor is ambiguous and often borders on homo-erotic intimacy. The only explicit same-sex relationship in the novel occurs between a female European missionary and one of the wives of the local community leader. This use of a foreign woman to introduce same-sex intimacy displaces same-sex sexuality from African societies and constitutes a step back to the representation in early Francophone African texts of same-sex sexuality as a foreign import. As in Beyala’s *Tu t’appelleras Tanga*, the figure of the foreign woman may write off nonnormative sexualities as a foreign and un-African perversion.

In the wake of these dissenting treatments of same-sex sexuality in Francophone African literature came the first openly autobiographical text by a Francophone African author. In *Le flamant noir* (2004), Nguyen Matoko opens up about his homosexuality and details his many sexual adventures as he relocates from the Republic of the Congo to Europe and the United States. The text almost functions like a sociological account that lifts the veil on same-sex sexuality and breaks down for the reader the codes and social realities of these communities.

**Increasingly Straightforward and Militant Treatments of Same-Sex Sexuality**

It was Ekotto's second novel, *Portrait d'une jeune artiste de Bona Mbella* (2010), that finally delivered the first forceful and uninhibited narrative of same-sex sexuality in Francophone African literature. The novel is set in Cameroon and rehearses the same critique of hetero-patriarchy that ferments the queer praxis of Beyala’s Irène. Lesbian lovers Pane and Chantou come together after the former murders the men in her adopted family for turning her into their family sex slave. Images of sexual violation and statements of sexual deprivation in the novel provide the clear impression that heteropatriarchy precludes female sexual pleasure. Ekotto's women exercise subjectivity and agency by refusing to participate in this sexual structure. Lesbianism as framed by Ekotto is a subjectifying act of resistance and reclamation of female sexual pleasure.

Whereas Beyala’s Irène is queer, Ekotto opts to set her characters on a trajectory of lesbian separatism. The separatism in her novels has strong resonances with the separatist feminism and lesbianism of Beyala’s *C’est le soleil qui m’a brûlée*, in which Ateba, the female protagonist of the novel, murders her male lover and symbolically unites with her
girlfriend. That scene resonates to a point with the one in Portrait d’une jeune artiste de Bona Mbella in which Pane brutally murders her sexual violators. Ekotto never shies away from explicit sex scenes. Most importantly, and going beyond Beyala, Ekotto makes a significant narrative decision when she does not conclude her novel with the demise of her lesbian protagonist. Instead, the novel ends with a scene of sexual intimacy that beautifully affirms same-sex love. This positive conclusion is a sharp departure from the brutal demise of Irène in Beyala’s novel. With Portrait d’une jeune artiste de Bona Mbella, Ekotto thus contributed the first affirming representation of same-sex sexuality to Francophone African literature.

Like Ekotto, Lobe has an upfront and destigmatizing treatment of same-sex sexuality. Dipita, the homosexual narrator of Lobe’s 39, rue de Berne (2013) tells his story from a Swiss prison cell, where he is serving a long sentence for a crime of passion against his boyfriend. As in Ekotto’s Portrait d’une jeune artiste de Bona Mbella, the love story at the center of Lobe’s novel works to ground and positively affirm the theme of same-sex sexuality. But unlike Ekotto, Lobe portrays an interracial couple. Arguably, the trope of the interracial couple, which Lobe uses again in La trinité bantu (2014; The Bantu trinity), also set in Switzerland, may not be an effective anchor for the theme of same-sex sexuality in a Francophone African text. The trope has been used by Francophone African writers to prop up the notion that homosexuality is un-African.

Karim Deya contributes the most openly militant novel to this new body of Francophone African literature with J’attends mon mari (2014), a novel that unequivocally champions LGBTQ rights on the continent. Thiossane and Moctar, a persecuted Senegalese gay couple, flee their Senegalese homeland and seek refuge in Europe. Deya sets his novel against the background of the 2008 rise of antigay vigilantism in Senegal. The novel interrogates the new construction in Senegalese society of same-sex sexuality as an import. Deya proceeds to expose the function of homophobia as a political resource for African leaders. The latter use the figure of the homosexual as a scapegoat and opportune diversion from the burning issues of high unemployment, bad governance, and rampant poverty.

The theme of same-sex sexuality has yet to gain a firm foothold in Francophone African literature, and writers rarely feature openly transgender characters in their texts. However, a few works published in the twenty-first century, especially the novels of Ekotto and Deya, as well as the autobiographical text of Nguyen Matoko, are certainly building a foundation for a more prolific and uninhibited treatment of same-sex sexuality in Francophone African literature, including significant inclusion of openly transgender characters.

SEE ALSO Cinema, African (Anglophone); Cinema, African (Francophone); Literature, African (Anglophone); Literature, Caribbean (Anglophone and Creole); Literature, Caribbean (Francophone); Maghreb


Africaines, 1976.


The late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have been marked by important shifts in the field of Caribbean literature. One of these has been the “articulation and inscription of diverse sexual identities” (Donnell 2006, 181). In her 2006 survey Twentieth-Century Caribbean Literature, Alison Donnell locates “the period from the 1990s to the present day as a new critical moment” in which writers have effectively challenged “a significant absence within models of identification ... by writing sexual identities onto the Caribbean matrix” (181–182). Donnell further notes the implications of this, arguing that “writing on this subject can be seen to have called into question the dominant matrix of race, ethnicity, gender, class, and nation through which Caribbean literary forms and cultural identities have been discussed” (181). Other discussions of sexuality and Caribbean writing have similarly located the end of the twentieth century as a particular site of attention. These discussions are not without some differences and contestations. Rosamond King, for example, in her 2002 critical essay “Sex and Sexuality in English Caribbean Novels—A Survey from 1950,” locates a discursive shift in relation to the 1980s, one decade earlier. She argues that texts “published since 1980 spoke into the relative silence around Caribbean homosexuality” (33). According to King, in this most recent period, “Caribbean authors have broadened and enriched our understanding of the region by ‘sexing’ Caribbean literature” (36).

Critical, Historical, and Social Contexts

In highlighting the final decades of the twentieth century as a period of change, Caribbean literary scholars have variously noted a number of important critical, social, and political factors that have shaped the terms of representation of sex and sexuality in recent writing. This period coincided with the emergence and consolidation of queer theory in the academy that served to revise stable and hegemonic categories and notions of gender and sexuality, foregrounding instead a continuum of sexual behaviors and subjectivities and challenging the cultural construction of heterosexuality “as simply there, invisible, beyond question, not requiring explanation” (Smith 1999, 5). The development of queer postcolonial studies and black queer studies also provide important context for
understanding and locating the terms, preoccupations, and concerns of queer Caribbean critical discourses and their particular challenges to white- and Euro-American–centered articulations of queerness. In their introduction to *Black Queer Studies*, the editors comment on a decade of queer studies anthologies produced during the 1990s, noting that “while all of these volumes contain sections on ‘identity’ or present a few token essays by and/or about queers of color, none includes race as an integral component of its analysis” (Johnson and Henderson 2005, 16). Against the background of this particular critical absence, they situate black queer studies as concerned with “provid[ing] insight into the category of ‘queer’ in raced communities” (2).

However, while *Black Queer Studies* as a text primarily focused on African American voices and criticism, the necessary critique offered by Rinaldo Walcott in his contribution to that volume highlights some of the critical stakes for the wider black diaspora and for queer Caribbean writing. In his essay “Outside in Black Studies: Reading from a Queer Place in the Diaspora” (2005), Walcott calls into question the ways that focusing on black queerness primarily in the US context and privileging a particular kind of visibility as a mode of legibility risks foregrounding an understanding that “the possibility for queer life in the Great Free North is so much better than it is in the so-called Third World” (95). For Walcott, this perspective further constitutes an “imperialist stance … of the kind that does not adequately … account for the disjunctures of desires, political utterances and disappointment in various places and spaces” (96). What is potentially left unaccounted for, Walcott suggests, are the multiple and complex ways in which those “in the Third World might sign themselves queer in ways that might not constitute an intelligible speech act” in the context of global(ized) constructions and understandings of queerness emerging from and dominated by contexts and discourses of the Global North (96).

In the Anglophone Caribbean, debates during the early 1990s about heterosexism and homophobia in Jamaican dancehall music and in Caribbean popular cultural production were a key site for discussions of the sexual politics of Caribbean cultural life and creative production. Yet, while these debates were transnational in their scope (occasioned by the consumption of particular dancehall songs in the international cultural marketplace), as Timothy Chin has shown in his analysis of a series of public discussions, newspaper and magazine articles, and scholarly essays, the very terms that defined these discussions demarcated “certain fixed oppositions between native and foreign, indigenous and metropolitan, us and them and so on” (1997, 79). In this relational schema, homophobia (constructed and understood as inherently constitutive of Jamaican and wider Caribbean culture) and homosexuality (essentially linked with foreignness) became distinct representational and conceptual coordinates. The terms of this binary belied the complex lived social and historical presence, reality, and experience of Caribbean queer lives and served to ideologically render Caribbean queerness itself as an unarticulated presence. In other words, the binary terms of this debate rendered queer Caribbean lives and concerns invisible despite the presence and contributions of a number of gay rights groups and
organizations such as the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG, formed in 1998), the Society against Sexual Orientation Discrimination (SASOD, formed in 2003 in Guyana), and the Coalition Advocating for Inclusion of Sexual Orientation (CAISO, formed in 2009 in Trinidad), which have provided keen advocacy regarding Caribbean LGBTQ human rights and freedoms. Within this binary representational schema that Chin outlines, Caribbean literary narratives can be seen as one alternative archive through which the work of imagining the “indigenous gay/lesbian subject” might be accomplished (88). As Chin has argued, it has served as a cultural space that enables “non-binary modes of thinking that resist ... totalizing impulses” (94).

Similarly, in the mapping of the cross-cultural debates about Caribbean sexual citizenship in the Dutch Antilles, Omise' eke Natasha Tinsley (2010) has pointed to key ways in which binary discourses have served to construct the Caribbean, as evidenced by its cultural production and legal realities. Tinsley uses the 2004 Oduber-Lamers legal case in Aruba, which centered on the right of two women married in the Netherlands to have their marriage recognized in Aruba, as a case study to interrogate representations of Caribbean culture vis-à-vis Europe and the Global North. Tinsley highlights how much of this discussion focused on laws and how postcolonial sovereignty (in terms of laws) continues to coalesce around questions of sexual difference. Her observations, in this regard, echo and extend earlier work by M. Jacqui Alexander in “Not Just (Any) Body Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality, and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas,” in which Alexander examines and critiques the “racialized legislative gestures that have naturalized heterosexuality by criminalizing lesbian and other forms of non-procreative sex” (1994, 5). But Tinsley's work also complicates the terms of the discussion by moving beyond the legal context. Instead, she focuses attention on what she terms Afro-Caribbean tradition as a cultural space that demonstrates “a rich history of sexuality—and particularly female same-sex sexuality—that marks (former) Dutch colonies” (Tinsley 2010, 31). In her examination of mati, a term that she argues must be understood as “verbalizing sexuality, not as identity but as praxis, something constantly constructed and reconstructed through daily actions” (7), Tinsley discusses a long history and praxis of same-sex intimacy traced back to Middle Passage crossings. She notes that mati might be understood as derived from “mate,” as in “shipmate”: “she who survived the Middle Passage with me” (7). Drawing on this history, Tinsley argues that “far from standing outside a ‘real Aruban’ lifestyle, these same-sex relationships could also be called on as historically specific Creole formations exemplifying the cultural complexity and transculturating inventiveness of Caribbeanness” (32). Here, Tinsley methodologically returns to the question of the need to examine Creolized forms of relational intimacies and their histories and epistemologies, and she foregrounds how these intimacies are culturally negotiated and signified. She also demonstrates how Caribbean narratives (including literature, ethnography, and history) offer spaces that usefully detail past and continued presences of vernacular sexualities and practices, or what Chin (1997) has called
“indigenous” modes of gender and sexuality, and attends to the ways in which queer Caribbean subjects might “sign themselves” (to use Walcott’s phrase) in particularly distinct cultural terms.

**Poetry and Poetics**

One rich site to which Tinsley turns, for its articulation of other ways of naming Caribbean desire and sexuality and for its signification of a long history of queer Caribbean presence, is the region’s oral poetry. In *Thieving Sugar: Eroticism between Caribbean Women* (2010)—a book that takes its title from the work of the Caribbean poet Dionne Brand—Tinsley’s first chapter focuses on Surinamese Creole poetics, or what she calls mati oral poetry, and examines the tradition of *kot'singi*, translated by the Dutch musicologist A. C. Comvalius as “a crossover genre of the Negro song which in form lies between African and European songs” (quoted in *Tinsley 2010*, 59). Her focus on oral poetry as a space of articulation (as opposed to a singular focus on scribal poetic practice) highlights the fact that struggles around sexuality cannot be seen as separate from other decolonial struggles, including those regarding language and literary form. In the Caribbean, the politics of sexuality, like that of language, has included the demarcation of forms deemed proper and improper. These notions of propriety, cultivated through colonial histories, have rendered both language and sexuality as intense sites of cultural policing. In linking these decolonial struggles, Tinsley suggests that the cultural acknowledgment of sexual difference in Creole terms might contribute to the decolonization of both the politics of language and the politics of sexuality.

Tinsley’s work, like that of critic Ian Smith, calls attention to the need to Creolize sexuality discourse as one way of reflecting and representing the multiplicity of Caribbean genders and sexualities. As Smith argues in his outlining of the Caribbean Creole continuum as a useful trope for discussing Caribbean queerness: “The Creole continuum recognizing the plurality and availability of ‘lects’ ... offers a model consonant with a contemporary sexual continuum that dislodges the ‘homo-hetero’ binary to admit what one might call a plurality of sexiolects, a plurality of desires that combine and recombine according to individual sexual formation” (1999, 8). While Tinsley’s linking of the politics of language and of sexuality foregrounds the importance of terminology, Smith’s work here engages the question of multiplicity and underlines the importance and utility of engaging culturally relevant tropes and metaphors for exploring Caribbean sexualities.

In her reading of mati oral poetry, Tinsley perhaps most directly examines questions of form and metrics and the beautiful use of metaphoric language (such as the use of flower imagery as a way of queering and Creolizing naturalized inscriptions of sexuality and desire). However, she also pays attention to performance, including the use of call-and-response and the significance of ritual performance in the context of communal gatherings such as what is called “the birthday party in the mati tradition—a gathering where women
mark the passage of another year and celebrate their love for each other through ‘dancing, singing, gift-giving, drinking’” (Tinsley 2010, 48). In her examination of these performance elements, Tinsley situates the poetry she examines within a folk tradition. The marking of this relation arguably represents another intersection that might usefully frame broader considerations of queer Caribbean poetry. Representations of the oral and folk traditions have served as means through which poets have marked historical queer presences.

Faizal Deen’s poem “Young Faggot,” for instance, locates its unnamed persona in a calypso, or rather in a bacchanal line. The poem connects present and past, situating its subject as a crossroads figure at the intersections of histories and futures but also between Caribbean worldings and traditions and the “discos of riotous night” (Deen 2008, 153) in the metropole for which he seems destined. Yet, while the poem is keen to inscribe this future destiny, the poetic persona is also narrated as taking with him an embodied legacy:

Your last memory of Trinidad. This steel pan
Jump up 1976. Sounded out from memory.
You will grow bacchic. With this crop-over,
You will learn that joy is something
Earned

(DEEN 2008, 153)

The references to “steel pan” (a musical instrument played as part of Trinidad carnival and a symbol of working-class cultural innovation) and “crop-over” (a popular Barbadian carnival celebration) locate the poetic persona among, and as part of, the mass of Caribbean folk that populate the region’s festivities, as much as the later references to “the hustle. Concrete. The lure / Of the big lights” situate him in the milieu of the nighttime pleasures of the gay northern metropole. In situating these folk and popular spaces alongside and as part of queer histories and memories, the poem marks queer bodies as part of the histories of Caribbean folk and performance traditions but also significantly marks those traditions and spaces as queer, not least of all through its acknowledgment of their challenges to, and departures from, (colonial) norms of respectability.

Life Writing

Life writing as a narrative genre has also played a key role in unsilencing histories of queerness and in calling attention to the diverse and complex ways in which Caribbean sexualities are socially and culturally articulated. Life writing, as used here, refers to an expansive body of texts—including essays, essay collections, autobiographies, journals,
diaries, community histories, biographies, memoirs, and performance texts—through which writers “have made self-representation” (Brown 2011, 276). This idea of self-representation (or self-identification) proves significant in reflecting on the uses of this genre. In much the same way that Helen Tiffin has argued that we might read Caribbean biography as “sites for a semiotics of resistance to English textuality” (1989, 30), queer Caribbean life writing has likewise engaged a practice of semiotic resistance, both to globalizing discourses of sexuality and to Caribbean heterocentrism.

The consideration of Audre Lorde’s Zami: A New Spelling of My Name (1982), provides one useful example. Lorde specifically draws on an Afro-Caribbean term for naming relations between women. She defines Zami as a “Carriacou name for women who work together as friends and lovers” (255). Her definition locates the term specifically within histories of Carriacou gender and sexual relations, yet at the same time Lorde also uses this cultural history as narrative framework for telling her own experience of black queer diasporic life in New York. We might also read Lorde’s text, and the wider body of queer Caribbean life writing, for its experimentation with form and the creative combining of individual and collective narrative and memory. As Lisa Brown notes, Caribbean life writing has been marked by a “relational model of autobiography which subordinates the ‘I’” (2011, 277). Personal histories are documented alongside the inscription of genealogies of queerness, and this provides one narrative site that resists, or writes against, the erasure of queer histories.

Lorde calls attention to this dynamic between individual and collective memory in the very naming of her text as *biomythography*, a term that refuses the singularity of *autobiography*. For Lorde, then, “the individual becomes the collective, as she recognizes the women who helped give her life substance” (Crichlow 2008, 103). In her innovation of this term and her explorations of its possibilities for narrating self and community, Lorde’s work provides a model that has been variously revisited by a number of other Caribbean writers with different elements emphasized and/or creatively reshaped. The use of the concept of the biomythography can be seen, for instance, in Wesley Crichlow’s “History, (Re)Memory, Testimony and Biomythography: Charting a Buller Man’s Trinidadian Past” (2008), which combines academic and narrative prose, and where he extends the framework of the biomythography by using it to narrate men’s lives. Like Lorde’s recuperation of Zami as a way of naming women's intimacies, Crichlow uses the concept of “bullers” to explore histories and communities of men-loving men. Additionally, the influence of Lorde’s work can also be seen in the theater practice of Jamaican Canadian playwright and poet D’bi Young Anitafrika, who uses the concept of “biomyth monodramas” to name her own one-woman performances based on her life narrative.

**Narrative Fiction**

Narratives of queerness in relation to the broader context of histories of the subaltern are
also evident in queer Caribbean prose fiction. While Lorde and Tinsley focus on Afro-Caribbean tradition, the work of writers such as Shani Mootoo and Patricia Powell have served to foreground the narratives of Indo-Caribbean and Chinese Caribbean queer subjects. In this regard, these literary narratives are in dialogue with queer diasporic representations, explored in the work of filmmakers such as Richard Fung (Dal Puri Diaspora [2012]; Re:Orientations [2016]), which have also shown how the racialized context of the Caribbean, with its long histories and processes of creolization, linked to the cultural and labor regimes of the plantation, slavery, and indentureship, must necessarily be accounted for in narrating Caribbean queerness. These texts represent queer gendered and sexual subjects but also inscribe the Caribbean itself as a site of queer intimacies and as a queer space shaped through histories of crossings which “transform racialized, gendered, classed, and sexualized selves [through] ... brutality and desire, genocide and resistance” (Tinsley 2008, 192).

In Powell’s 1998 novel The Pagoda, the protagonist, Lowe, is represented in relation to a number of crossings that mark the negotiation of the transnational capitalist context of the late nineteenth century. These include the economic and social context of indentureship but also Lowe's experience as a shopkeeper in Caribbean plantation society. The novel is set in the 1890s and opens with Lowe writing a letter to an estranged daughter, Elizabeth. This framework of the letter, which structures the beginning and end of the text, not only symbolizes the fact of their estrangement, which is central to the novel, but also signifies Lowe's position as a diasporic subject. Lowe arrives in the Caribbean after taking a ship to escape forced marriage to an old man in China. Although the tale of this journey is set against the backdrop of China’s prohibition on women’s immigration during this time, what Powell offers is not just a tale of cross-dressing. Rather, as Tzarina Prater argues, “Lowe does not cross neatly from one position to another, one nation to another, one sex to another, or from one articulation of sexuality to another. Lowe is not a transsexual figure, nor is he solely a ‘cross dresser,’ lesbian, heterosexual, or homosexual” (2012, 22). As the writing of Lowe’s letter unfolds, we observe Powell’s deliberate and careful plotting of a tale that engages with the complex currents of transnational, class, and gendered identity and marks these as important to an understanding of Lowe as queer diasporic subject and to an understanding of historical queer Caribbean trans/formations.

Yet, while contemporary Caribbean fictions have shown this recurring concern with histories, they also intervene in current debates and discourses about globalization and its ongoing effects with regards to race, gender, and sexual identity. In Mootoo's short story “Out on Main Street” (1993), the main characters' anxieties about performing cultural authenticity become linked with both their place in the diaspora and their queerness. While Powell’s text focuses on indentured diasporas in the Caribbean, Mootoo’s narrative is set in the context of the metropolitan Caribbean diasporas of Canada. The characters in Mootoo’s story narrate themselves with tongue-in-cheek humor as “watered-down Indians—we ain't good grade-A Indians” (1993, 45), thus situating themselves in a complex genealogy of
diasporas. At the same time, they also explicitly link their anxieties about belonging and about cultural exclusion to questions of gender and sexual difference. The narrator of Mootoo’s story says, “And den is a whole other story when dey see me with mih crew cut and mih blue jeans tuck inside mih jim-boots. Walking next to Janet, who so femme dat she redundant, tend to make me look like a gender dey forget to classify” (1993, 48). Much as with several other Caribbean texts, the terms of classifying gender and sexuality are called into question by Mootoo’s characters. However, Mootoo’s narration of the queer gender performance of the two main characters is represented as enmeshed with the complexities of their diasporic and racial belonging. In Mootoo’s narrative, Main Street as textual location becomes more than a setting for the story; it operates as an intersectional space for the exploration of identities—racial, genealogical, diasporic, gendered, and sexual—alongside, and in relation to, each other.

Queer Caribbean writing across the Creole Anglophone and Dutch Caribbean has provided specific sites and “alternative routes for contemplating queerness as political praxis and as social performance” (Cummings 2011, 325). The region’s literature has been marked by a complex engagement with colonial histories of power and with decolonial challenges linked to questions of sexual citizenship, sexual rights, legal recognition, and freedoms. These texts also draw on rich cultural Creole terms and vocabularies as one way of inscribing local specificity, community, and histories. However, in their signification of these Creole and vernacular expressions of gender and sexual difference, they not only inscribe the local concerns and contexts of queer Caribbean lives but also point to the region’s histories of transnational, Creole, folk, and diasporic intimacies that challenge any settled understandings of queerness.

SEE ALSO Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Literature, African (Anglophone); Literature, African (Francophone); Literature, Caribbean (Francophone)

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FILMOGRAPHY

In her rigorous analysis of sex, sexuality, and gender in the Caribbean region, feminist sociologist Kamala Kempadoo argues that “Caribbean sexuality is both hypervisible and obscured. That is, it is celebrated in popular culture as an important ingredient in Caribbean social life and flaunted to attract tourists to the region, yet is shrouded in double entendre, secrecy and shame” (2009, 1). In some ways, this observation is even more applicable to LGBTI identities in the Caribbean. Thus, an examination of the range and diversity of LGBTQ writing in the Francophone Caribbean context might begin with this fraught dynamic that moves between such binaries as visible and invisible, presence and absence, rigid and fluid, liberal and conservative.

Most of the scholarship on literature by gay, lesbian, and queer authors of Caribbean descent has been centered primarily on the work of Anglophone authors. Traditionally, there has been less foray into the Hispanophone and Francophone contexts, but since the dawn of the twenty-first century, pathways have been forged in this area as well. Some of the early anthologies help to illustrate this point. Our Caribbean: A Gathering of Gay and Lesbian Writing from the Antilles (2008), edited by Jamaican author Thomas Glave, remains one of the most powerful examples of LGBTQ writing in the Caribbean, as well as one of the earliest collections to present the work of these authors. In the introduction, Glave raises a number of questions about visibility and invisibility for queer writers from the Caribbean: “How did they dream? What colors would their stories have taken, if one could have seen them? Read them? How would they have sounded?” (3). While this robust collection of stories includes almost every part of the Caribbean, the only Francophone country that is present is Haiti. That Our Caribbean remains one of the most extensive collections of LGBTQ writing, and yet its inclusion of Francophone writers is so minor, is revelatory. Indeed, this tendency seems to also be a characteristic of paradigms pairing queer studies and Caribbean studies. For example, Zoran Pecić’s Queer Narratives of the Caribbean Diaspora (2013) focuses exclusively on the Anglophone Caribbean, looking at authors such as Shani Mootoo and Dionne Brand. Likewise, the collection The Queer Caribbean Speaks: Interviews with Writers, Artists, and Activists (2014) features only Anglophone Caribbean authors. If the Caribbean is queer, these works seem to suggest, that queerness is expressed...
mostly in the English language. As such, the frame of the visible and invisible becomes even more relevant in this context.

Among the most compelling and groundbreaking examinations of same-sex desire in the Caribbean that includes Francophone examples is Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley’s *Thieving Sugar: Eroticism between Women in Caribbean Literature* (2010), in which she examines work by women authors from Haiti, Martinique, Suriname, Grenada, Jamaica, and Trinidad. Tinsley offers new ways to imagine the liberatory poetics of Caribbean women’s writing in relation to contemporary LGBTQ activism in the Caribbean. Like Kempadoo, she also acknowledges visibility and invisibility as a primary mode for analyzing these texts: “Francophone Caribbean histories of sexuality weave complexly between visibility and invisibility” (103). One reason for this dynamic might be that, as anthropologist David Murray argues in *Opacity: Gender, Sexuality, Race and the Problem of Identity in Martinique* (2002), in these regions sexuality is less fixed than the terms *homosexual* and *heterosexual* suggest. To provide a literary history of how LGBTQ writing has figured in the Francophone Caribbean, then, is to study the implicit and explicit ways in which same-sex love is present in these works. Tinsley examines the work of Haiti’s Ida Faubert (1882–1969) as one of the earliest examples of eroticism between women in the Francophone Caribbean. Faubert’s work is a reminder that as early as the nineteenth century, Francophone Caribbean authors wrote attentively about same-sex desire, homoeroticism, and sexual relations between people of the same sex in their literary works. In the twentieth and especially the twenty-first centuries LGBTQ writing in the Francophone Caribbean has taken on a different tenor that is increasingly inclusive and refuses to bow to the conventions of queer exceptionalism.

**Guadeloupe and Martinique**

Guadeloupean author Ernest Pépin’s novel *Cantique des tourterelles* (2004; *Canticle of the turtledoves*) tells the story of two women whose same-sex relationship is one of love and freedom. By focusing on their dynamic as a liberatory force, Pépin evokes the ability of same-sex relationships to challenge social norms and resist restrictive sexual politics. Still, in other books in his corpus, such as the novel *Tamour-Babel* (1996), Pépin’s use of the pejorative term *macommères-sodomites* to refer to gay men is emblematic of a harshly negative and stigmatized view of same-sex sexuality. This reference occurs in a passage containing various “vices” of the Antillean space of the novel, reminding us that stereotypes of sexuality are classed and gendered. Later in his career, Pépin offered a rare example of a gay male protagonist, in the novel *Le griot de la peinture* (2014; The griot of painting), based on the life of the queer American artist Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960–1988), who died of a drug overdose at age twenty-seven. The life and art of Basquiat, who was born in the United States to Haitian and Puerto Rican parents, present a rich universe for Pépin to explore in the novel, which focuses on the artist’s internal world. Pépin’s trajectory
indicates how views toward homosexuality shift over time; as authors moved into the twenty-first century, ideas about how samesex desire figures in their novels shifted and progressed.

For the Guadeloupean author Gisèle Pineau, a rare example of queer love in her novels surfaces in *Morne Câpresse* (2010; The hill of Câpresse), in which two members of an all-women community outside Point-à-Pitre indulge in an illicit love rendered in explicit detail. The love between the women serves as a refuge from their abusive pasts as incest survivors. When the novel announces without fanfare that “these two loved one another,” it is a declaration of love that is physical, spiritual, and emotional as well as liberatory (241; translation by Régine Jean-Charles). Their love transcends and transgresses the relationships of sisterhood that women in the community have with one another. While their love is described with lyric simplicity, their sexual lives are described with meticulous attention to detail. The descriptions of sexual intimacy between the tireless lovers are the most attentive scenes of lovemaking in the novel. There is peace and comfort in the love they have for each other: “At Morne Câpresse, they had found love, peace, and happiness” (247; translation by Régine Jean-Charles). Yet these two women, Sherryl and Zora, must hide their love even in a female-centered community such as Morne Câpresse, which suggests that lesbians have no place in society, even a society of women.

Martinican author Fabienne Kanor’s novel *Humus* (2006) is emblematic of a genre of writing that refutes the idea that same-sex desire existed only in the diaspora. The novel takes as its point of departure a note written by the captain of a slave ship from Nantes, in which he describes an incident during which fourteen enslaved women jumped overboard. The novel imagines the lives and the afterlives of these women, dedicating one chapter to each of them and exploring the possible paths their lives could have taken after the incident. In her essay on *Humus*, Dominique Aurélia points out the variety of the women included in this novel: “These captives are murderous women, infanticidal mothers, servile and traitorous lovers, lesbians and androgynous warriors. In the Before Land, the queen poisoned her own son as well as her rival. The Amazon decapitated hundreds of warriors and the whitey emasculated her incestuous stepfather” (83). One chapter stands out for its depiction of erotic love between women prior to the transatlantic slave trade, and it brings to mind a question Tinsley asks in “Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic”: “What would it mean for both queer and African diaspora studies to take seriously the possibility that, as forcefully as the Atlantic and the Caribbean flow together, so too do the turbulent fluidities of Blackness and queerness?” (2008, 193). With *Humus*, Kanor disabuses the reader of the idea that same-sex relationships are the exclusive province of the diaspora.

**Haiti**

In addition to these few examples from Martinique and Guadeloupe, a number of works concerned with LGBTQ issues emerged from Haiti. Three novels by Haitian authors help to
illustrate the range and diversity of Francophone LGBTQ literature. Myriam Chancy’s *Spirit of Haiti* (2002) is one of the few novels written by an author of Haitian descent that features a queer protagonist. Though written in English, its Francophone contexts of Haiti and Montreal make it useful for this analysis. Set primarily in the northern city of Cap-Haïtien, *Spirit of Haiti* follows the intertwining lives of four protagonists, one of whom is Philippe, who learns that he has contracted HIV/AIDS. Throughout the novel there is a lack of clarity about Philippe’s sexuality; his sexual identity is not emphasized, and his relationship to it is confused as well as confusing for the reader. In this way Philippe becomes a queered body, expressing transgressive sexuality. At times, the novel’s performance of this ambiguity seems to reflect societal discomfort with homosexuality. Reading this as Chancy’s queering of the text means considering her refusal to lock Philippe into categories viewed as normative or deviant and thus blurring the rigid lines of sexual desire. Throughout the novel we are reminded of the widespread homophobia present in the novel’s cultural context. Philippe’s performance of sexuality has sociocultural underpinnings, but the textual reenactment of this sexuality raises additional questions. Are his homoerotic sentiments for his childhood best friend Alexis the result of an intimate friendship between two men, brotherly affection, or sexual desire? Given the ways that homophobia informs the enduring stigma of homosexuality in Haiti, how can we reconcile Chancy’s blurred poetics with the problem of invisibility? When we consider that “same-sex always has been tolerated in both working and elite classes, but remains routinely unnamed [in Haiti]” (Tinsley 2010, 104), is this unnaming upholding or challenging social norms?

The queering of Philippe’s character is also linked to spiritual revelation and divination. His ability to hear voices of the ancestors and spirits and to commune with the past is significant in the larger narrative, making his status as a person living with AIDS secondary. Philippe occupies an otherworldly spiritual realm; he not only lives in a different reality, but also operates in a metaphysical dimension. This metaphysical connection should also be interrogated for its problematic political implications. Must Philippe occupy this supernatural space as a result of the limited possibilities that life in Cap-Haïtien offers a “gay man” (if we are to categorize him as such) living with AIDS? When Philippe tells Alexis, “There are too many voices here ... they are searching for rest. There is no rest here” (180), his words are self-referential; there is no respite for someone aware of his sexuality yet unable to express it fully due to the cultural context he inhabits. Read differently, there is no room for someone unwilling to confine himself to the heteronormative boundaries of sexuality that this particular context demands.

Kettly Mars’s corpus is distinctive for how sex and sexuality figure prominently. The contemporary Haitian novelist has approached the themes of sex, desire, and sexuality in each of her novels, which depict situations of same-sex love between men or between women. For example, her novel *L'heure hybride* (2005; The hybrid hour) features a male protagonist whose fluid sexuality moves easily between binaries throughout the novel. In
his life as a professional gigolo, Rico goes from one sexual relation to another with very little affection or attachment. However, the novel concludes with a disturbing scene of sexual violence between the male protagonist and another young man. The characteristically (for Mars) ambiguous ending further troubles the reader and leaves the incident of rape unaddressed. In contrast to *L'heure hybride*, Mars’s novel *Je suis vivant* (2017; I am alive), offers a lesbian character written with care, nuance, and balance. Marylène, the eldest of the Bernier children, is an artist who, after living in France, returns to be with her family in the suburbs of Port-au-Prince. Her relationship to her sexuality is fraught, but after returning as a sixty-year old woman she feels liberated to express the fullness of her sexuality—desire, preferences, and appetite—in the context of her home. This development is important because it challenges the idea that queer Caribbean people are free to be out in their host countries but must remain closeted in their homelands. Mars’s novel problematizes the notion that nonnormative sexuality is usually left masked for Caribbean natives. That Marylène returns to live in the family home where she was raised further underscores this point. Described by her family as "l’artiste fragile" (the fragile artist), she is judged by them not because of her sexuality but because of her creativity (115). When Marylène enters into a relationship with a younger woman from a poor background, we are reminded that sexuality is intersectional. As the firstborn daughter in an upper-class family, Marylène is also a noteworthy example of a lesbian character for whom sexuality is a vexed site of freedom from the respectability politics of her class.

*Absences sans frontières* (2013; Absences without borders) by Evelyne Trouillot serves as a final example of how LGBTQ plots are written into a text and integral to its development without being the focus of the novel. In this story, a girl being raised by her grandmother and aunt (because her mother has died and her father is abroad in the United States) comes of age in Port-au-Prince. The aunt, Cynthia/Tanza, unsuccessfully hides her sexuality from her family, whose reactions vary. While much is left unsaid by members of the family, each of them reflects on Tanza’s sexuality and expresses their wish that she would not feel the need to conceal her identity as a lesbian. Tanza’s inclusion in the story is consistent with other novels from the Francophone Caribbean in which queer subjects are characters and often protagonists, but their sexuality is not a central identity issue in the plot of the novel. Contemporary authors such as Kanor, Trouillot, and Mars have featured LGBTQ characters without making sexuality central to their novels, thus indicating the presence of queer people in Haiti without making a spectacle or exception of their existence.

**Absence of Transgender Characters**

While the examples mentioned here point to the presence of gay and lesbian characters in a range of novels from various parts of the Francophone Caribbean, there is a notable absence of explicitly transgender characters—major or minor—in this literature.
Transgender people are more present in other popular forms, such as performance art and film. Just as the documentary *Of Men and Gods* (2002), about vodou and same-sex desire in Haiti, in some ways opened a door to more scholarship and cultural representations, perhaps what is needed is a transgender urtext that will open similar avenues of expression in Haiti, Martinique, and Guadeloupe.

Nonetheless, the twenty-first-century novels discussed here demonstrate the emerging and evolving destigmatization of same-sex sexuality as they highlight the range and diversity of LGBTQ writing from the Francophone Caribbean. As David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz have insisted, “The contemporary mainstreaming of gay and lesbian identity demands a renewed queer studies ever vigilant to the fact that sexuality is intersectional ... calibrated to a firm understanding of queer as a political metaphor without a fixed referent” (2005, 1). These contemporary examples are especially instructive to that end. For the characters in Kanor’s, Mars’s, and Trouillot’s novels, sexuality figures as a location of identity that shifts based on race, class, and religious affiliations and highlights the complexities of how these elements interface with one another. These examples are emblematic of Francophone Caribbean LGBTQ writing moving in a new direction that is catching up both to the Anglophone Caribbean and to other genres, such as performance art and film. In her study of the gay Haitian-born poet and performance artist Assotto Saint, Andia Augustin-Billy acknowledges the ways that literary fiction lays the groundwork for LGBTQ issues in the Caribbean. She writes of literary texts that “alongside the characters’ homoeroticism, such fictional representations have tackled issues of gender, sexuality, and performance within the Caribbean context. These works constitute an important foundation in outing closeted sexualities and destabilizing deeply embedded heteropatriarchy” (2016, 82). Today this foundation is being built on and expanded in the Francophone Caribbean and there remains much work to be done.

SEE ALSO Literature, African (Anglophone); Literature, African (Francophone); Literature, Caribbean (Anglophone and Creole)

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João Francisco dos Santos (1900–1976), known as Madame Satã, or “Madam Satan,” was an Afro-Brazilian street hustler and drag performer and a well-known figure in the bohemian world of Rio de Janeiro in the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s. Later in life, he became an iconic representative of the classic malandro, a dapper urban rogue of bygone years who survives on street smarts. His ambiguous gender performance and the unabashed affirmation of his own homosexuality at a time when Brazilian society marginalized nonnormative gendered and sexual behavior have made him a cultural reference for Brazilians seeking nonconformist figures from the past.

**Early Years**

Born in the town of Glória do Goitá in the impoverished backlands of the northeastern Brazilian state of Pernambuco in 1900, dos Santos was one of seventeen children born to descendants of slaves. His father died when he was seven. Desperate to survive with such a large family, his mother swapped dos Santos to a horse trader in exchange for a mare a year later. Within six months he ran away with a woman who planned to set up a boardinghouse in Rio de Janeiro. She offered dos Santos room and board for long hours of work shopping for food, preparing meals, washing dishes, and cleaning the residency. He later commented that he received no affection and labored as if he were a slave. This speaks to the ways that the harsh conditions of slavery, legally abolished in 1888 in Brazil, persisted for many of the poorer descendants of slaves, even after abolition (Durst 1985).

Dos Santos escaped this arduous employment at age thirteen and lived on the streets of Rio de Janeiro for the next six years, surviving on odd jobs. At age eighteen, the madam of a brothel in the downtown bohemian neighborhood of Lapa hired him as a waiter. At the time, it was common to take on young effeminate men in such establishments as cooks, housekeepers, or servants—or even as occasional prostitutes for those clients who preferred a young boy rather than a female companion for a sexual liaison (Green 1999).

Dos Santos grew of age in the fast-paced life of bars, brothels, and malandros in Lapa. The
neighborhood was a crisscross of winding streets and one- and two-story buildings with large portals that opened onto tenements, bordellos, and rooms that could be rented by the hour. Corner bars and cabarets offered cheap beer and entertainment for working-class men and government employees who could meet so-called fast women or prostitutes for brief relationships. It was also a space where effeminate men might find a willing masculine partner for a furtive sexual encounter.

Dos Santos quickly adapted to this environment becoming a dandy and petty criminal. Dressed in the typical style of a malandro—silk shirts with rhinestone buttons, a white tie, shoes with Mexican heels, an expensive white panama hat, and hands filled with rings—he cut a sharp figure. He once described himself as someone who liked to join in the singing and carouse in bars and cabarets. He respected others but knew how to wield a knife when provoked.

The Life of a Malandro

In a city with high unemployment among men of color, many malandros survived by gambling, hustling, pimping, stealing, composing samba songs, or running some smalltime racket. Masculinity and virility were hallmarks of this urban prototype, and in this regard, dos Santos was an anomaly. He was known as being a “passive” homosexual—namely, the penetrated partner in the act of anal sex—which coded him as effeminate and frail, yet his agility with a knife; a strong, firm body; and a proclivity to take on others in street fights when insulted or attacked earned him a reputation as a dangerous adversary. Thus, dos Santos’s “passivity” destabilized his image, as his physical “virility” seemed to contradict what was considered his feminine essence because he was receptive in anal sex. Over the years his standing grew as a person of inordinate strength who could confront numerous attackers at the same time. Yet if he roamed the streets of Rio during the day as a tough malandro, by night he sometimes performed in drag in a local cabaret, where he sang and danced, in a slinky red dress and long hair falling over his shoulders.

Homosexuality was not criminalized in Brazil in the early twentieth century, yet traditional social norms, influenced by medical-legal discourses, Catholic morality, and pervasive notions of “appropriate” masculine and feminine gendered performance, marginalized effeminate men who engaged in same-sex behavior. Social spaces in downtown Rio de Janeiro at Tiradentes Square and in the movie district, known as Cinelândia, were favorite places for frescos (faggots) to congregate, although they ran the risk of violating “public decency,” affronting “proper moral behavior,” or being considered vagrants because they were unemployed. Because laws that punished sodomy had been removed from the criminal code in the 1830s, same-sex sexuality was not illegal per se. However, the police and other government officials used these public decency and vagrancy statutes to restrict public displays of nonnormative gender performances associated with homosexuality. As a way to keep flamboyant effeminate men off the streets, police officers would engage in
periodic roundups, charging them with these legal violations. Those who could afford to pay bribes avoided arrest. Others usually spent a few days in jail, where they were humiliated by the guards and other prisoners and then released.

Dos Santos easily moved in and out of this downtown world, constantly risking run-ins with the police. In the mid-1930s he shot dead a night guardsman, whom he alleged had called him a *viado* (faggot), and was sentenced to a sixteen-year prison term. He was released on appeal based on a claim that he had shot the man in self-defense. His conviction merely added to his reputation as a person who should not be crossed.

**Becoming Madame Satã**

Dos Santos became Madame Satã quite by chance. In 1938 friends persuaded him to enter a Carnival costume ball competition held in a downtown theater near Tiradentes Square, the popular public cruising area for homosexual men. For the occasion, he designed a sequin-decorated costume of a flying bat and won first prize in the contest. Several weeks later, the police picked him up for vagrancy. When the booking officer asked him to give his name, he facetiously offered the moniker Madame Satã in a direct reference to the title of the recently released Hollywood musical comedy *Madam Satan*, directed by Cecil B. DeMille, about a woman disguising herself as a temptress to win back her wayward husband. His peers began to tease him by using the name, and eventually it stuck. He later admitted that he had not liked it at first but soon became used to the name, considering it rather distinguished and beautiful.

Stories about his physical prowess and confrontations with the police, as well as his combative encounters with other street hustlers, made him a larger-than-life figure in the underworld of downtown Rio de Janeiro. Between 1928 and the late 1960s, he spent more than twenty-seven years in prison. He then retired to a quiet life in a remote area of Rio de Janeiro, where he lived in a small house and enjoyed fishing in a nearby lagoon.

**Image Resurrected**

In 1971 his image was resurrected by *O Pasquim*, a weekly left-wing cultural newspaper that offered lively copy about Rio de Janeiro’s “beaches, babes, and beer,” while constantly trying to avoid being shut down by government censorship during the harsh years of Brazil’s military dictatorship, which ruled the country from 1964 to 1985 (Cabral et al., 1971) Rediscovering Madame Satã as a relic of Rio’s forgotten bohemian past of the 1930s and 1940s, the editors of the oppositionist magazine reveled in this quixotic figure who was an aging queen yet still exuded the bravado of a streetwise and knife-wielding hustler. In a two-part feature article, with Madame Satã on the cover wearing a trademark panama hat and flashy rings, he recounted his past. His ambiguous gender performance confounded and fascinated the public. As a result of the publication’s national circulation, he became
known to a new generation of leftists and countercultural adherents who were intrigued by his personification as both a masculine and feminine man. Madame Satã simply did not conform to hegemonic Brazilian gender and sexual codes that still considered most homosexuals to be “passive” sexual beings, whereas their “active” partners remained normatively masculine and therefore nominally heterosexual. As a result of this media exposure, he enjoyed a renewed flash of fame before dying destitute in 1976 (Machado 1976).

The Brazilian filmmaker Karim Aïnouz’s feature film Madame Satã, which premiered at the Cannes Film Festival in 2002, once again revived interest in this colorful figure. The film retells dos Santos’s early life in the Brazilian Northeast and in the brothels and on the streets of Rio de Janeiro before he assumed the name Madame Satã. The movie lyrically captures Rio’s colorful underworld in the 1920s and 1930s, when effeminate men of humble means, some of whom cross-dressed as women, lived alongside prostitutes, pimps, and petty thieves at the margins of society.

For some scholars and activists in the Brazilian LGBT movement, Madame Satã represents the fate of thousands of Brazilian men of African descent, who, in the aftermath of the abolition of slavery in 1888, were drawn to the capital of Rio de Janeiro, where they faced a hard life. Most found menial jobs to survive but others chose hustling and petty crime to get by. With few biographies or known histories of poor and working-class homosexuals from the early twentieth-century, Madame Satã has become a symbolic stand-in for those men of humble origins who engaged in same-sex sexual and romantic relations with other men, while defying social norms and public censure.

SEE ALSO Camp; Fin de Siècle Sexuality; Performance Artists in Latin America; Urban Queerness

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FILMOGRAPHY

Mädchen in Uniform (1931; Leontine Sagan)

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Weimar German film that was one of the first to portray lesbianism on-screen.

Produced in 1931 in Weimar Germany, Mädchen in Uniform (Girls in uniform) is a critically acclaimed, feature-length film drama directed by Leontine Sagan. The film was based on the play Gestern und Heute (Yesterday and today), written by Christa Winsloe, and there was a commercially unsuccessful remake of the film in 1958 (also titled Mädchen in Uniform) that was directed by Géza von Radványi (see Mayer 2012). Mädchen in Uniform has become a cult classic and has received critical acclaim from feminist film critics and scholars working within the disciplines of lesbian and gay film criticism and queer cinema studies. Mädchen in Uniform has been read as a key film in representing the spirit of the Weimar Republic, which made a space for new expressions of gender and sexuality, only to be eradicated once the Nazis came to power in 1933.

Plot Summary

Mädchen in Uniform tells the story of Manuela von Meinhardis (Hertha Thiele) who enrolls in a Prussian girls' boarding school where strict discipline is exercised by the authoritarian headmistress Fräulein von Nordeck zur Nidden (Emilia Unda). Even though the other students welcome Manuela, she feels very uncomfortable with the school's militaristic regime until she meets Fräulein von Bernburg (Dorothea Wieck), a teacher in the school. While the other schoolmistresses advocate using extreme discipline in the education system, von Bernburg favors showing compassion to the students. Manuela falls in love with von Bernburg, and the narrative also implies that this is mutual during a famous scene in which von Bernburg puts all the students to bed with a kiss on the forehead but bestows one directly on Manuela's lips. As time progresses, von Bernburg's relationship with Manuela becomes more intimate, and the teacher shows several acts of kindness to the student, such as giving her gifts of clothes. The senior faculty, however, learn of von Bernburg's compassion and kindness toward Manuela and the other students, and she is instructed never to speak to Manuela again. As a result of this, von Bernburg resigns from the school. Manuela is devastated and attempts to commit suicide but is saved by the other students of the school. The film ends with a chilling scene in which the students watch, in complete silence, the headmistress walking along the school corridor.
The German film Mädchen in Uniform is the story of a schoolgirl, Manuela, who falls in love with her teacher Fräulein von Bernburg (Dorothea Wieck) at her all-girls boarding school. It is one of the first films to represent lesbianism onscreen.

Critical Responses

Mädchen in Uniform has been the subject of sustained analyses within the field of feminist cinema studies and lesbian and gay film criticism. The film has been acclaimed for its feminist agenda—not only identified through an auteurist reading of its female director but for the way in which its narrative makes an implicit critique of patriarchal order (Mayer 2012; Rich 1981). The textual details of the mediation continually represent the tension between the hard regime of the school and the femininity of the schoolgirls. For example, the film's opening sequences juxtapose the exterior world of monuments—symbolizing the military, authoritarian regime—against the femininity of the schoolgirls who are forced to live in such an environment. Similarly, the softness in the representation of von Bernburg (the lighting often making the edges of her costume appear to glow) has been read as the film's celebration of femininity set in juxtaposition with the masculinist principles of the school (Dyer 1990).

However, it is within the field of lesbian and gay film criticism that the film has been identified as iconic. Mädchen in Uniform is remarkable for being one of the first films to represent lesbianism onscreen. Not only is the relationship between Manuela and von
Bernburg the main plot, but there are innumerable shots of the schoolgirls cuddling together in beds in which the sundappled imagery suggests the beauty and naturalness of their romantic attachments. The textual details of the film engage the spectator in the scheme of lesbian eroticism—especially in the scenes featuring Manuela and von Bernburg. For example, when Manuela is first seen by von Bernburg, she is standing at the top of a staircase (the usual cinematic coding for eroticizing the female body), and she is lit from the right so that her white collar gleams and she appears radiant. There is a reaction shot of von Bernburg that demonstrates that Manuela has taken her breath away, indicating the response that the spectator should also have toward the beautiful girl (Dyer 1990).

*Mädchen in Uniform* has also received attention for the way it addressed the political models of homosexual identification advocated by activists at the time: the gender liminal, in-between model and the gender conformist type. The in-between model, identified by the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935), advocated for the identification of gays and lesbians as a type of third gender: bodies that fell between the gender binary and therefore, by implication, also outside the scheme of heteronormativity (see Steakley 1975). While this offered a form of emancipatory politics, which explained homosexuality through a medical discourse, it did little to support an assimilationist agenda in which gays and lesbians could argue for their similarity to heteronormative society in everything but their sexual object choice. Photographs of the original play (*Gestern und Heute*) show von Bernburg played by Margarete Melzer, a female actor who conformed much more to the butch type of gender liminality that was advocated in the Hirschfeld model. By contrast, the film presents a much more feminine-coded von Bernburg and thus can be read as advocating for the assimilationist agenda of gender-conforming lesbian women.

Yet, as well as validating lesbian desire on the screen and affirming assimilationist lesbian politics, *Mädchen in Uniform* is also important for demonstrating that the progression of lesbian and gay rights has been far from linear. If one reads *Mädchen in Uniform* as a cultural barometer of Weimar Germany, then the 1930s were considerably more accepting of same-sex sexual desire than subsequent decades (Dyer 1990). In later years, *Mädchen in Uniform* was condemned by the Roman Catholic Church and banned in Germany. Similarly, US releases saw the more explicit sequences of same-sex passion edited from the film. It would not be until the 1970s that the uncensored version was available in the United States and that the film was available for consumption again in Germany.

**SEE ALSO** *Egymásra Nézve* (1982; Káro Makk); *Hena Maysara* (2007; Khaled Youssef); *Situational Homosexuality*

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Maghreb

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The historical and modern European perceptions of the geographic region of North Africa as an exotic land steeped in homoeroticism.

Maghreb is an Arabic term that denotes “the place where the sun sets” and thus also the modern-day country of Morocco, being the most Western point in the Arab world (save for Western Sahara and Mauritania). The word is based on the root gharb, which means “West”: it is opposed semantically to the Mashriq (the eastern part of the Middle East: Lebanon, Palestine, Syria, Jordan, Iraq). The Maghreb has come to signify a constellation of North African countries stretching from Mauritania to Libya (Maghreb Studies Association 2017). The epithet Maghrabi can refer to a Moroccan or more generally a North African person; however, many scholars have declined employing the term to refer to North Africans as it erases regional specificity and identity. It was furthermore a favored term of colonial organization, preferred because it allowed easy reference to a large geographical area that the French governed as protectorates (Tunisia, Morocco) and settlement colonies (Algeria). Ethnically, the Maghreb is quite diverse, a confluence of Berbers (whose presence predates that of the Arabs and the arrival of Islam), Berber Jews, Arabs, sub-Saharan Africans, Turks, Sephardic Jews, and Europeans (during colonial occupation and settlement).

North African Homoaffectivity

Travel writers have long noted, with curiosity and sometimes fascination, the homoaffectivity that animates male friendships and relationships in North Africa. Homoaffectivity, which can take many forms, refers to signs of affection between members of the same sex; in North Africa and more generally across the Middle East, it can anecdotally be seen in tender and often nonsexual gestures like arm or hand-holding, frequent touching, and effusive salutations involving kisses. Although this homo-affectivity is characteristic of female relationships just the same, European observers noted its presence between men because of its comparative absence in European male-male relations. Some have countered that this line of demarcation is not so black and white, with southern European (and French) customs of salutation having more in common with Mediterranean customs than with northern European ones. Although this North African homoaffectivity is not necessarily synonymous with homosexuality, it is not exclusive of it
either. However, many travel writers now in the canon of gay literature dwelled on this homoaffectivity and saw in it the potential for homosexuality, blurring these lines intentionally in their recollections.

Nacira Guénif-Souilamas has detailed an important history of North African homoaffectivity, eventually describing how the condition of immigration caused this homoaffectivity to go underground and risk erasure in diaspora: North African men hid these customs out of fear that their homoaffective customs would be confused with homosexuality by European observers (Guénif-Souilamas and Macé 2004). Tahar Ben Jelloun wrote a psychiatry dissertation (published in 1977) about how this warm homoaffective tradition was imperiled by the immigrant experience; he documented a startling incidence of North African manual workers complaining of impotence, an impotence he traced to the sexual and affective rejection these men faced in France, along with the resulting impossibility of imagining, let alone creating, a future in France through progeny.

European Perceptions of the Region

While Europe was not hospitable for North African homoaffective customs, the Maghreb in contrast provided sanctuary for European sexual dissidents at a time when the climate in Europe was resolutely homophobic. The French author André Gide (1869–1951), for example, found in the Maghreb a forum to explore his nascent homosexuality, unavowable in Europe; he contrasted the Maghreb and Europe, saying of the first that it was a place where one could finally give free flow to desire and come alive, as opposed to the second, with its rigid moral duties and emphasis on sanity and productivity, eventually leading toward a kind of bodily death. He explored these themes both in fiction and in an autobiography, where he recounted the discovery of his own homosexuality during travels to the Maghreb, alongside the likes of the Irish poet and playwright Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) (Gide 1935). However, Gide eventually grew tired of the dynamics of tourism, finding many potentials for abuse in it, eventually penning an opus renouncing travel entirely (Gide 1988). For other gay writers such as Jean Sénac (1926–1973), Jean Genet (1910–1986), François Augiéras (1925–1971), Pierre Herbart (1903–1974), and Daniel Guérin (1904–1988), their experiences in Africa, the Middle East, and other colonial possessions caused them to develop an anticolonial inclination that had little to do with the depoliticized exoticism cultivated by other gay travelers (Aldrich 2003).
instilled a more lax legal climate. The city's previous immortalization in Orientalist art, as well as its “open” seaside location and its proximity to Europe, made it a desirable travel destination. In particular, gay men fleeing stifling moralities and sexual persecution in Europe found in Tangier a sanctuary of sorts that could play host to experimentations both literary and sexual. There were two sides to this coin, however, and the condition of sexual refuge often concealed differences of class and the exploitative nature of a tourist economy. The sexual “availability” of young men concealed dire economic straits, with many—but certainly not all—young North African men turning to homosexuality out of economic necessity, as famously recounted by Mohamed Choukri (1935–2003) in his memoir *For Bread Alone* (1987).

Calling the phenomenon of gay writers descending on Tangier “literary colonization,” Marie-Haude Caraës and Jean Fernandez (2002) studied the perceptions authors such as Roland Barthes (1915–1980), Paul Bowles (1910–1999), Truman Capote (1924–1984), Samuel Beckett (1906–1989), and Tennessee Williams (1911–1983) had of the city: they determined that Tangier had no meaning for them as a site other than being a place where desires could be satisfied and fantasies realized. Caraës and Fernandez’s aim was to penetrate through the “ideological games” inherent in such literary illusions that end up leading to distorted visions of North Africa in which inequalities between travelers and natives disappear.

One of these visitors, Bowles, an American writer, played a central role in ushering in new Moroccon voices through the translation and recording of oral narratives, as in his collaboration with Mohammed Mrabet (Mrabet 1986). After earlier visits there, Bowles moved permanently to Tangier in 1947 and lived there with his wife, Jane. He was closely associated with the cosmopolitan aspect of Tangier and was a friend of Beat generation writers who were drawn to the city for its literary, narcotic, and, less avowedly, sexual freedoms (Jordison 2010). Bowles was a friend to such renowned Moroccan writers as Choukri and had enigmatic if not ambiguous relationships with several Moroccan interlocutors. The scholar Brian T. Edwards (2005) unpacks these in a comprehensive study of Jane and Paul Bowles, which examines American and hippie Orientalism and, in particular, the shifting erotics of collaboration and the politics of translation in Bowles’s sometimes vexed relationship with Mrabet. The Moroccan writer Tahar Ben Jelloun made accusations of manipulation (insinuating that Mrabet had been exploited) in a thinly veiled allusion to the Bowles couple in *Leaving Tangier* (2009). Ben Jelloun organized that novel around his characters’ desperate attempts to flee Morocco for the “forbidden land”: the Spanish coast visible from seaside Tangier. Ben Jelloun depicts in detail the financial desperation of young men with few prospects in their home country and the creative schemes some Moroccans resort to in order to secure papers. Gay men and older women are the usual targets, as they help facilitate the entry of their lovers into Europe, after which the Moroccan men branch off in new directions, often marrying European women to gain nationality.
Choukri (1997) profiled, in Arabic, the “paradoxical” couple formed by the Bowleses, interviewing Paul at length about his rapport with the Beats, his approach to travel, the ever-changing persona of Tangier, and the fact that the version of the city Moroccans know has little to do with that memorialized by Westerners. In a study devoted to the resonance of Tangier among writers, Michael K. Walonen (2011) describes the almost contrary representations of the city found in Moroccan as opposed to expatriate literature (of Paul and Jane Bowles, William S. Burroughs, Alfred Chester, and Brion Gysin). In that study, Walonen expounds on the power imbalances and gender dynamics that turned Tangier into a sexual marketplace. Edwards and Walonen, however, also allow room for an alternative account of Bowles's presence and influence in the country: as an anthropologist, musicologist, and oral historian who put Moroccan writers on the world literature map.

Choukri had close contact with writers now saluted as part of the gay literary canon: he documented his meetings with Tennessee Williams and Jean Genet (on two occasions), with two of these interviews published by Bowles in the United States. Genet (1910–1986) was especially important to Choukri and, in a way, to Moroccans in general, as he was widely seen as a “friend of the Arabs,” having been in political solidarity with the Palestinian and North African liberation movements; his body was eventually buried in Larache, Morocco (Choukri 1992). Such was Genet’s connection to Morocco that the famed Spanish gay writer Juan Goytisolo, himself a longtime resident of Marrakech, requested to be buried next to Genet’s tomb, a dream realized at Goytisolo’s death in 2017.

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From France, the Maghreb was often perceived through a strongly sexual lens, as has been reported in historical works published in the twenty-first century. In his 2007 study of the medical history of colonial Algiers and the Algiers school of psychiatry, Richard C. Keller divulged how French experimental psychiatrists sought to pathologize North Africans, as well as the religion of Islam itself, as sexually “perverted” and too permissive; North African cultures and religions and even the climate of the region was in their view conducive to sexual criminality, widespread sodomy, and bestiality. Todd Shepard has argued that a segment of the French intelligentsia and press—in seeking to sever France from a deep and increasingly problematic colonial implantation in Algeria (1830–1962)—cast French Algerians of European origin who had settled and populated the land (the pieds noirs) as sexually perverted and overly obsessed with machismo. This perversion resulted, in this version of history, from having been in contact with North Africa and North Africans. Represented this way, pieds noirs were prone to see their reckoning with the French general Charles de Gaulle (who wanted Algerian independence) and Algerian liberationists in terms of homosexual domination and a machismo contest. Meanwhile, 1960s and 1970s leftists in France found in the Arab male an erotic model for combat against colonialism (Shepard 2006).

Tourism

In the postcolonial period, North African economies in Morocco and Tunisia at the least
were and are strongly driven by tourism, with some arguing that colonial dependencies and inequalities are perpetuated through it. As the openly gay Moroccan novelist Abdellah Taïa (2009) has recounted, his country seems designed for tourists. Locals are strangers in their own land; taking European friends out for a tour, Taïa was stopped and violently interpellated by police officers who suspected he was defrauding tourists. Writers now part of the gay literary canon—from Oscar Wilde to Joe Orton (1933–1967) to Roland Barthes (1915–1980)—did not always pay attention to the power differentials inherent in tourism to North Africa, and more particularly sex tourism, focused as they were on experimentation and self-expression both literary and sexual (Orton 1986). In a substantial tome analyzing both visual and literary media, Joseph Allen Boone (2014) details what he calls the “homoerotics of Orientalism” that led the Maghreb, and the greater Middle East, to become such a focal point for fantasy and fictional projection. He also spelled out the flagrant lack of awareness around class and race privileges that characterized Euro-American travelers’ behavior in the region. Tourism in the Maghreb has also revealed the ways in which an increasingly ageist and youth-obsessed gay culture has led to middle-aged and older gay men pursuing greater sexual opportunity in the Global South. Barthes (2010) kept a diary of his encounters with young Moroccan men, just as he bemoaned his frustrated desire for younger men in Paris. In his memoirs (published in 2005), the former French minister of culture Frédéric Mitterrand confessed to sex tourism in Thailand and hosting young Moroccan boys in France.

Journalistic and semi-academic essay collections have delivered voyeuristic accounts of clandestine North African homosexualities in the Maghreb and its diaspora. Adopting the first-person, sometimes anonymous, perspectives of white travelers, these books tell stories of trysts in casbahs, riads, and hammams, while also describing in highly essentialist tones the timeless patriarchal laws that govern sexual attitudes in the region: chapters, some as short as four pages, bear titles such as “Moroccan Boys and Sex,” “An Italian in Morocco,” and “Arab Men in France” (Schmitt and Soefer 1992; Luongo 2007).

The View from Within

Because much of the extant literature on the Maghreb and homosexuality has been written by authors who do not hail from North Africa, it has become difficult to get a sense—outside of representation and absent projection and fantasy—of what North Africans themselves make of their own (homo)sexualities. There are indeed North African specialists who have tackled the social and cultural import of homosexuality. Abdelhak Serhane titled his 1995 study of North African sexuality “circumcised love,” to describe how sexual impulses can be thwarted in the name of traditional values regarding marriage, such that sexual energy is redirected to other avenues, including homosexuality. The Algerian-born Malek Chebel (1953–2016) staked out a career as an anthropologist of sexuality, using his multifaceted background in psychoanalysis, ethnology, and even political science to
become an authority on matters of sexuality in the Arab world. Although criticized by some for his occasional lack of academic caution and his liberal translations (Lagrange 2008), he was one of the first to carefully document the heritage of homosexuality in North Africa (Chebel 1988, 1995, 2006). This openness to divulging the normally guarded sexual customs of the Arab world, as well as his efforts to advance an Islam des lumières (enlightened Islam), won him a faithful French audience; he frequently made the rounds of talk shows and wrote op-ed pieces. More recently, an innovative collection on homosexuality in the Maghreb and its diaspora has shed significant light on lesbianism (often eclipsed by male homosexuality in this literature), as well as the ways that sexual “dissidence” in the Maghreb is actually less dissident and more widespread and integral to the social fabric than previous scholarship has found (Lachheb 2016).

Oftentimes, the language of choice for expressing sexuality in the Maghreb has been French, even after decolonization and Arabization programs in the realms of media and education. Jarrod Hayes argues in Queer Nations (2000) that, with their newfound independence, the countries that make up the Maghreb often defined identity in exclusionary terms, focusing on the unifying bonds of religion and language despite the diversity of the populations that used to inhabit the land prior to decolonization (conspicuously not included in this newfound unity). He notes, however, that Francophone Arab writers from the Maghreb carved out a counter-narrative that allowed for diversity to (re)emerge, a narrative that focused especially on sexualities that did not align with nationalist goals: in this way the Maghreb was an assembly of “queer nations” (the title of his literary study). Hayes importantly sheds light on the way that these writers shared stories about sexuality that had the potential to “queer” a queer studies field that has not always been in conversation with postcolonial studies and thus has unquestioningly accepted certain assumptions about sexuality that reveal a “Western” bias. Since the late twentieth century, writers with North African origins such as Taïa, Rachid O., and Nina Bouraoui have come “out” as openly gay, no longer speaking of homosexuality as a substitutive or juvenile phenomenon that one abandons after marriage. They have delivered highly autobiographical stories about their sexual coming-of-age in North Africa, their relationships with Europeans and perspectives on sex tourism, and their sometimes disappointing attempts to find sexual liberation in Europe (Taïa 2004; O. 1995; Bouraoui 2000).

**Cross-Dressing**

One of the more understudied aspects of North African gender expressions is the phenomenon of female-to-male cross-dressing in the Maghreb. Tahar Ben Jelloun recounted in his prize-winning book L'enfant de sable (1985: The Sand Child [1987]) the fictional tale of a young woman who was raised male by her father. He had already had seven daughters, and in order to escape inequalities related to inheritance laws, he had obliged his daughter to wear traditionally masculine clothes, although she later abandoned
this wardrobe at the moment she decided she wanted to be a mother. The Swiss-born Isabelle Eberhardt (1877–1904), an “exile” from Europe, made a nomadic life for herself in Algeria, occasionally dressing up as an Arab cavalier (horseman); she converted to Islam, married an Algerian, was at one point determined to be a spy and agitator by the French government, and died in Algeria swept away by a flash flood at the age of twenty-seven. Her life inspired a 2005 collection of short stories penned by Leïla Sebbar titled *Isabelle l’Algérien*, or, in English, *Isabelle the* [male] Algerian.

Male-to-female cross-dressing has more recently been explored on-screen. The Franco-Moroccan stand-up comedian Gad Elmaleh developed the comedic persona Chouchou, a charismatic immigrant with a thick accent who dabbles in sex work, it is suggested ([Allouache 2003](#)). The filmmaker Liria Bégéja cast the famed actors Sami Bouajila and Roschdy Zem in the roles of cross-dressing sex workers in her 2001 film *Change moi ma vie* (Change my life for me). Zem’s character, once a decorated athlete whose career was prematurely cut short, meets a struggling actress played by Fanny Ardant when she collapses in a park at night. Looking for the person who saved her life, Ardant comes to discover that Zem engages in sex work in women’s clothes, out of economic necessity.

SEE ALSO Ethnopornography; Ethnopsychiatry; Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa

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**FILMOGRAPHY**


Malaysia

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The status of LGBTQ rights in this Southeast Asian country, including major Malaysian literary and cinematic works on LGBTQ themes.

Since the start of the twenty-first century a growing body of scholarship on queer studies has emerged from the Global South on a range of subjects including queer arts and practices, queer identity formation, and activisms and protest movements. Malaysia provides an interesting terrain for the study of queer identities. While queer scholarship on Malaysia is sparse, these are significant interventions in understanding how queerness is articulated in Malaysia. This short entry is divided into three sections: the first section discusses the sociocultural background on same-sex sexualities in the country; the second covers Body 2 Body, a pathbreaking anthology of queer writings from Malaysia; and the third examines queer representations in Malaysian cinema.

Sociocultural Considerations

Malaysia is a constitutional monarchy in Southeast Asia with a predominantly Muslim population, but it also includes Buddhists, Christians, and Hindus. As a former colony of the British Empire, its laws are shaped by the colonial-era laws, which is also true for many other former colonies in Asia and Africa (Dasgupta 2017). Postcolonial Malaysia is framed by the tension between religion and traditionalism. Same-sex sexual activity in Malaysia is punishable by twenty years in prison and further corporal punishment. The criminal ban on nonprocreative sex (anal and oral) also applies to heterosexuals, though it is used almost exclusively against queer people. Walter Williams (2007) noted that Malaysia’s Penal Code, Section 377 also specifies punishment by flogging, which is administered with a bamboo cane. Furthermore, Sections 337 and 337a prevent any homosexual man from escaping conviction and prohibits all forms of “gross indecency”; this vague wording allows discrimination against and prosecution of queer people. The Malaysian government has over the years tried to silence any discussion of same-sex rights, and none of the political parties offer any proposals for LGBT rights.

Despite these legal restrictions, scholars such as Sharon Bong (2011) have chronicled numerous instances of same-sex Malaysian couples living together in an arrangement culturally similar to marriage, if not legally so. While some of them encounter resistance,
for many, acceptance of their same-sex “marriage” by their families offers a mode of resilience. Some of the narratives collected by Bong are testaments of the struggles that queer men and women face. In particular, she narrates the story of Dave, who came out to his parents and was met with hate speech and domestic violence. Dave’s experience of being both criminalized by the state and infantilized by his family is not atypical in a country where unmarried men are not seen as adults. The tyranny of the family that is hostile to queerness can be also traced back to an entrenched patriarchal system and the hegemonic construction of masculinity (see also Mellstrom 2003). When families do demonstrate support for their relatives’ same-sex relationships, the family home can become a space for same-sex couples to affirm their relationship in a ceremony or receive other forms of support.

Religion is another important aspect through which gender and sexual identity in Malaysia is policed. Human Rights Watch (2015) reported how shariʿa (Islamic law) was invoked to prohibit trans women from cross-dressing and to subject them to assault and extortion. One of the most prominent cases of homophobia and a national-level discussion on homosexuality happened with the 1998 arrest of a policeman, Anwar Ibrahim, accused of corruption and sodomy. This case can be clearly read as religiously motivated homophobia. Despite his claims of innocence, he was jailed. The former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad weighed in, declaring that homosexuals should not hold public office in Malaysia (Kanaraju 2007). Due to the intense public discrimination against nonnormative genders and sexualities, advocacy work on behalf of LGBTQ people must occur under the guise of sexual health awareness; the PT Foundation (founded in 1987) is one of the leading organizations in this regard, regularly organizing events for queer people in Malaysia.

**Body 2 Body**

In terms of the queer literary output from Malaysia, one of the most notable texts is the pioneering anthology of fiction and nonfiction *Body 2 Body*, edited by Jerome Kugan and Pang Khee Teik. The collection’s twenty-three chapters, most of which are autobiographical, present a rich and varied representation of queer life in Malaysia that is the first of its kind. Kugan and Teik begin their introduction to the volume by recounting that in 2003, while visiting a university, the minister of national unity and social development declared that universities were being run by “soft men” and highlighted the need to toughen up the effeminate boys of Malaysia. Ultimately, some universities responded by implementing boot camps run by army men, after which many boys “threw fabulous parties in camouflage drag” (Kugan and Teik 2009, 2). The rest of the book follows in this vein of humor and pathos as the contributors describe the daily struggles involved with being queer in a homophobic society. Themes include coming out to family, being trapped in oppressive community structures, and escaping violence and stigma.

Brian Gomez’s “What Do Gay People Eat,” the first story, is an account of a father waiting to
welcome his son’s boyfriend and wondering how to entertain him. Written in a humorous style, it brings up many issues around “naming” and recognition. The father relates that hearing the phrase “Prasad and his boyfriend” still makes him feel strange, but over the course of the story, his ignorance turns to acceptance and even advocacy when he confronts a homophobic man in a barbershop. Another notable story is Zed Adam’s “The Old Fig Council,” a surreal tale about animals and humans that opens with the death of a man in a pink shirt in the forest and the animal council swinging into action to see that the guilty accused of murder is punished. It is an allegorical tale of homophobia and redemption.

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Screenwriter and Producer Raja Axmi Raja Sulaiman during an Interview for Her Movie Dalam Botol, 2011. Despite its sometimes misinformed and unrealistic treatment of the trans characters, Dalam botol was nevertheless hailed as one of Malaysia’s first queer feature films to become a box-office success.

Most of the stories deal with middle-class English-speaking characters, and the perspective of the editors is quite urban-centric. The characters are mostly young and work in white-collar jobs or go to college. Their language (peppered with Malaysian colloquialisms such as lah and appa) situates the stories in a Malaysian context, giving them local authenticity. Despite the urbanity and affluence of the characters, the stories deal with issues of state repression, violence, and struggles with community intolerance. The chapters also celebrate love and eroticism. As the first, pioneering queer literature collection, Body 2 Body is an important addition to the narrative of same-sex sexualities in Malaysia.

Queer Cinema
Cinema plays an important role in social activism by representing the sociocultural realities of the contemporary moment to imagine new possibilities of living. Through subversion of heteronormativity, it provides a “queer” way of experiencing popular culture. Cinema in Malaysia, as in other countries of the Global South, becomes a site where the boundary between tradition and modernity is contested. There are numerous films produced in Malaysia that offer representations of queerness as a form of resistance, provocation, and possibilities. Khir Rahman’s *Dalam botol* (2011; In a bottle) is hailed as one of Malaysia’s first queer feature films to become a box-office success, despite its queer aesthetics and support for nonheteronormative lives. The film tells the story of a gay couple, Ruby and Ghaus, whose relationship begins to falter after Ruby undergoes a sex reassignment surgery. Rejected by her lover, and following a personal tragedy, Ruby sets off on a path of self-discovery. Despite the movie’s sometimes misinformed and unrealistic treatment of its trans characters, Joe Yan (2013) argues that it marked a significant moment in Malaysian cinema. Prior to this, filmic representations of gay and trans characters had been limited to supporting characters or those providing comic relief; with this film, queer characters moved from the periphery to center stage. The film is credited with “normalizing” queerness by depicting transsexuality and homosexuality as viable alternatives to heterosexuality. A more critical view is taken by Alicia Izharuddin (2011), who argues that the film perpetuates the conflation of being gay and being trans, where sex reassignment surgery is seen as the ultimate goal, and that the film has been used by a homophobic media as a cautionary tale. According to her, Malaysian independent films are engaging much more positively with LGBT issues than feature films such as *Dalam botol* have.

There are a few other films that also have been significant in the nascent queer cinema movement in Malaysia. Osman Ali’s documentary *Bukak Api* (2000; To open fire), which tells the story of mak nyahs (Malaysian male-to-female transsexuals), was banned soon after its release due to its sympathetic portrayal of sex workers and trans people. Andrew Hock Soon Ng (2012) argues that the film challenges the national construction of identities by directly and indirectly attacking the country’s attempts to modernize and erase “what it deems vulgar and anomalous” (119). In reference to the film’s use of reenactments to achieve authenticity, Hock Soon Ng maintains that although this compromises the film’s “truth value” (2012, 125), it was essential in order to capture the voices of disenfranchised groups who are constantly subject to policing and surveillance.

Mien Ly is another important figure in Malaysian video art, whose work is hailed by scholars such as Izharuddin (2015) for challenging patriarchal and hetero-normative society in Malaysia. In addition to her work as a filmmaker, she is also an activist who set up a filmmaking cooperative, organized a sexuality arts and rights festival, and is a regular speaker at international queer and lesbian feminist conferences and film festivals. Two of her films, *My Confession Diary* (2005) and *2 Boys, 2 Girls and a Beat-Up Car* (2009), are hailed as landmark films with themes of female sexuality and cultural transgressions that have contributed to the dialogue of decolonization and feminist articulation of queer theory.
in Malaysia. Izharuddin (2015) argues that these films have an ethnographic quality that subverts the normative paradigm of First World feminists and male ethnographers speaking for the subalterns.

The films discussed here provoke political dialogue about how queerness is treated in Malaysian culture and society. At the same time, they also represent a radical approach in the ways survival and protest strategies are being rethought, through popular culture and art, by the country’s queer communities. Notwithstanding the criticisms of these films and their representational politics, it is important to understand the activism inherent both in the making of the films and the viewing of them by the general public in the context of the increased surveillance of queer bodies by Malaysian state authorities. In that regard these kinds of films offer a critical discourse around queerness and also (demanding) multiple interpretations.

**Influence of the Internet**

To conclude, it is essential to mention the growth of virtual communities in Malaysia, especially in places like Kuala Lumpur. New media and information technology have had a significant role in the development of queer communities and queer socialization all over the world, and Malaysia is no different. The lack of open and friendly public spaces for LGBT people has prompted an increase in website/webzines and social media spaces for community building and consciousness-raising. Yunmei Wong (2013) argues that while the growth of information technologies in Malaysia has allowed certain social processes to accelerate the building of forums and online communities, it has also led to a rise in Islamic fundamentalism through the policing of these digital spaces. Nationalism and religion are important aspects of identity and belonging in Malaysia. The struggles of LGBT people to be recognized as citizens of the country is ongoing. In addition to political and civil lobbying, art and public culture have begun to play an important role in offering critical discourse and dialogue.

SEE ALSO *New Media in Asia; Section 377 and Section 377A; Section 377 in South Asia*

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Marches on Washington

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The series of national marches on the US capital by the LGBTQ community between 1979 and 2017.

Marching on the US capital has become a rite of passage for social justice movements seeking to capture the transformative power of Martin Luther King Jr.'s “I Have a Dream” televised speech from the Lincoln Memorial as it beamed into American living rooms in 1963. Since then, various movements have sought to issue similar clarion calls from that location in Washington, DC, asking Americans to join in the struggle against injustice. For the LGBTQ community, these gatherings have held an added allure. While many LGBTQ individuals fled their hometowns to more supportive urban enclaves, others remained in small towns and rural communities where being “out” posed a physical danger and an economic hazard. For a community that has had to fight discrimination, violence, stigma, and the invisibility of the closet, these mass gatherings have been a potent way to break down the deep sense of isolation.

In 1965 about a dozen lesbian and gay pioneers took their inspiration from those civil rights marchers who had donned their Sunday best to demand dignity and justice two years earlier. The effort was led by Frank Kameny (1925–2011), who had been dismissed from his position as an astronomer in the US Army Corps of Engineers' Army Map Service in Washington, DC, for being gay. Kameny formally appealed his firing by the US Civil Service Commission in what was the first-known civil rights claim based on sexual orientation pursued in a US court (Chibbaro 2006). Kameny's march was also backed by Jack Nichols (1938–2005), cofounder of the Mattachine Society of Washington, DC, which was established in 1950 as one of the first major homosexual political organizations in the United States.

The group of ten protesters consisted of seven men and three women, representing the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, the first lesbian civil and political rights organization in the United States. In addition to Kameny and Nichols, the group included Gail Johnson, Gene Kleeberg, Judith Kuch, Paul Kuntzler, Perrin Shaffer, Jon Swanson, Otto Ulrich, and Lilli Vincenz. On 17 April 1965 that small gathering of gay men dressed in dark suits and lesbians in conservative dresses held a picket line outside the White House and the Pentagon calling for an end to the government's ban on employing “homosexuals.” That
was the last time such a rigid dress code would accompany a call to rally in the nation's capital. The antiwar movement, feminism, and the growing counterculture made such assimilationist strategies anathema to movement leaders who believed in mass action. And just around the corner was the brutal confrontation at the Stonewall Inn in New York City in June 1969 that would become the emblematic start of the modern movement for LGBTQ rights.

A decade of steady cultural and political gains followed the Stonewall rebellion where bar patrons fought back against the routine practice of police harassment: groundbreaking literary works; gay visibility on national television; the formation of national religious, political, and legal organizations; and the first “out” gay person elected to office. And with that progress came a national backlash led by the former beauty queen and Florida orange juice spokesperson Anita Bryant (1940–).

First National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, 1979. An estimated 100,000 people attended this march in Washington, DC

First National March, 1979

While many raised the possibility of a national march, Harvey Milk (1930–1978), San Francisco city supervisor, is generally acknowledged as the first to call for a gathering in Washington, DC, which he did during his 1978 Pride Week speech. A series of false starts and regional disagreements stalled the planning, but Milk's assassination in November 1978 broke the logjam, and national coordination began. The march, officially titled the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, was structured to ensure
diverse leadership, with 50 percent women and 20 percent “Third World” leadership. With a relatively short time to organize, an estimated 100,000 marchers strode down Pennsylvania Avenue and passed the White House on 14 October 1979.

The impact was profound. “After Stonewall, the 1979 march on Washington took us to a new level. It put us on the map as a large and serious movement,” said Leslie Cagan (1947–), a longtime social justice organizer who attended and would go on to organize the next big march in 1987. “Even for those who lived in urban centers, this was a new experience. We were just finding out that we really were everywhere” (quoted in Smith 2000, 442). Cagan had a long history of working on peace and justice campaigns, including Mobilization for Survival, an effort to end the nuclear arms race and the reliance on nuclear power. In the aftermath of the March 1979 disaster at the Three Mile Island nuclear power plant in Pennsylvania, Mobilization for Survival was able to draw 100,000 protesters to Washington, DC. Cagan’s experience and connections proved valuable as the support for a march began to grow.

**Second National March, 1987**

The beginning of the AIDS epidemic and its disproportionate impact on the US gay population was cause for even greater mobilization. The governmental indifference in the midst of the plague galvanized the community and drove the desire to march to the doorstep of President Ronald Reagan (1911–2004), who was unwilling to say the word AIDS let alone muster government resources to save lives. In the midst of march planning, the community was served another devastating loss as the US Supreme Court upheld the right of states to ban sodomy in 1986. The *Bowers v. Hardwick* decision drew outrage and bolstered attendance at the 1987 march—also called the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights—inspiring civil disobedience action in conjunction with the march. More than 600 people were arrested in a demonstration in front of the Supreme Court. While the 1979 march drew mostly from the urban core, the 1987 march brought in people from smaller communities as the number of marchers swelled to 500,000. For those who traveled from rural communities and small towns, the march was an antidote to the isolation and an inspiration that led to grassroots organizing beyond the major urban areas where LGBTQ people fled to escape the closet.

The election of Reagan’s vice president, George H. W. Bush (1924–), as president in 1988 prompted virtually no change in either the government’s AIDS policy nor its hostility toward the LGBTQ community. Jesse Helms (1921–2008), a Republican senator, pushed homophobic amendments, and the Far Right launched antigay crusades in state legislatures ranging from Montana to Florida. In Colorado, voters in 1992 passed a ballot measure that repealed all existing nondiscrimination protections, including those involving sexual orientation, and prohibited the passage of future laws. The action triggered a national boycott of Colorado led by civil rights organizations, major companies, and celebrities.
Within seven months of its announcement, the Colorado boycott had garnered a coalition of more than 100 groups. About sixty US municipalities severed ties with Colorado, and sixty companies canceled meetings and conventions. New York City divested its stock holdings in all Colorado companies. Ziff-Davis Publishing canceled plans to relocate to Colorado, a move that cost the state an estimated $1 billion in revenue over five years. That grassroots fire helped to reignite the push to converge on Washington in greater numbers than before.

**Third National March, 1993**

The decision was hotly debated, and a date was set after a lengthy process of local, state, and national convenings that required gender parity and 50 percent people-of-color representation from each of seventeen geographic regions. The platform of the 1993 march differed little from the previous march and included these seven planks:

1. We demand passage of a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender civil rights bill and an end to discrimination by state ... military; repeal of all sodomy laws and other laws that criminalize private sexual expression between consenting adults.

2. We demand massive increase in funding for AIDS education, research, and ... medical research and health care.

3. We demand legislation to prevent discrimination against Lesbians, Gays, ... adoption, and foster care and that the definition of family includes the full diversity of all family structures.

4. We demand full and equal inclusion of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Trans... system, and inclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender studies in multicultural curricula.

5. We demand the right to reproductive freedom and choice, to control our own ... discrimination in all forms.

6. We demand an end to racial and ethnic discrimination in all forms.

7. We demand an end to discrimination and violent oppression based on actual or perceived sexual orientation, identification, race, religion, identity, sex and gender expression, disability, age, class, AIDS/HIV infection.

("PLATFORM" 1993)

But tensions that had been brewing between what could be broadly defined as assimilationists versus liberationists had bubbled to the surface. Liberationists saw the planks and the detailed demands contained within each as aspirational. To them, the document announced the LGBTQ movement as part of the civil rights lineage. Assimilationists described the platform as a utopian leftwing laundry list that would be used as fodder by the Far Right to discredit efforts to secure equal rights.

The march’s official title attempted to accommodate both sides and navigate the bisexual activists’ demands for visibility: March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation. A long and contentious vote kept the newly emerging word transgender out of the title; instead, gender expression was embedded into the march preamble.

As the organizing for the march proceeded, something unexpected began to unfold in the
presidential election that would change the tenor of the march. Bush was expected to win reelection handily, but the Democratic governor of Arkansas, Bill Clinton (1946–), began to surge. He was dubbed the Comeback Kid, and young people were drawn to his campaign, which reached out with an accessible, youthful message that embraced the LGBTQ community.

By the time the march kicked off on 25 April 1993, the dread and anger that had sparked the organizing was eclipsed by a sense of hope and possibility. That optimism was a factor in drawing a record-breaking 1 million marchers to the capitol building in an event that drew more media coverage than any previous march (Smith 2013). The 1993 march sparked the exponential growth of local and state organizations and the hope that national legislation finally had a chance to move forward. But those expectations were snagged in the gridlock of federal politics, and the need to carve out progress at the local and state level began to gain greater currency.

**Twenty-First-Century Marches**

In 1998 a newly formed federation of statewide LGBTQ organizations called for fifty state marches called Equality Begins at Home. The grassroots action was widely seen as a counterpoint to the call for another national march in 2000. The latter event, dubbed the Millennium March on Washington for Equality, rejected the organizing model of the earlier marches and introduced corporate sponsorship. The march served as a flash point for the old tensions between assimilation and liberation. Law enforcement estimated the rally crowd at 200,000. Other related events drew strong attendance as well, but the event ended with significant debt (Gallagher 2001).

By the time rumblings began for another march to be held in 2009, many questioned whether marches were worth it. Democrat Barney Frank (1940–), the first openly gay member of the US Congress, famously discouraged people from participating in the 2009 march on Washington by insisting that the march was “a waste of time at best” and “an emotional release” that does little to cause change. “The only thing they’re going to be putting pressure on is the grass” (quoted in New York Daily News 2009).

But crowds returned, sparked in large part by the passage of a series of state amendments banning same-sex marriages. The 2009 National Equality March was in some ways a recalibration following the Millennium March. Speaking slots were largely reserved for new and emerging movement voices and the primary organizing push came from a cadre of activists who saw the LGBTQ organizational establishment as too reluctant to push the administration of President Barack Obama (1961–) on issues. The event relied on grassroots networks organized largely online to get marchers to the capital and drew a crowd that matched the previous march with an estimated 200,000 in attendance.
Another march, held on 11 June 2017, came in the aftermath of the election that put businessman Donald Trump (1946–) in the White House. Despite a few public pledges to support LGBTQ rights, Trump's campaign included prominent Far Right anti-LGBTQ activists, and his vice presidential pick, Mike Pence (1959–), had ushered in one of the most homophobic laws in the country. Feeling threatened, members of the LGBTQ community felt compelled to demonstrate for their rights. They also drew inspiration from the successful Women’s March—a January 2017 event that was initiated by a call from “a grandmother in Hawaii” via social media—with a New York–based gay activist making a similar call for a demonstration for LGBTQ rights. While many organizations debated whether to support an effort so antithetical to the organizing structures of the past, most took the lesson from the Women’s March and got onboard. Through social media, the call to march was changed from being the sole province of organizations with the infrastructure to support the effort to a process that relied on catching lightning in a bottle with a viral post. Despite limited resources and a short window to mobilize, the march drew a crowd estimated by organizers at near 200,000.

The evolution of march organizing from grassroots infrastructure to individual call to action makes Frank’s question a salient one. What is the value of these mass marches in the nation’s capital? How should their value and impact be measured? Although marches are often measured by attendance and media coverage, a more accurate analysis has to take into account the ripple effects. The same structure that mobilized hundreds of thousands to march became the seeds of new national, state, and local groups. And for a community that lived in isolation and fear of government hostility, marching to the center of political power was potent and life changing. Many of the items on the agendas of the 1987 and 1993 marches that seemed so distant and unimaginable are now the law. And the prevalence of state-based LGBTQ advocacy organizations can be traced back to the local activists who returned to their hometowns to fight for basic protections. The success of a march is not in the immediate fulfillment of its demands. It sets a goal for a community to aspire to collectively. It creates an army of activists who know they are not alone. And for many it is the first time they see people who affirm that their lives and liberty are worth fighting for.

SEE ALSO Daughters of Bilitis; Mattachine Society; Pride Parades and Marches; Stonewall Riots, International Effects of

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Marriage Migration in Asia

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The migration of LGBTQ persons for reasons of marriage between Asian countries.

Since the turn of the twenty-first century, the social, economic, legal, and cultural impact of intra-Asia marriage migration has received considerable attention from a wide range of scholars and policy makers. Most intra-Asia marriage migration reflects the movement of women from less developed to wealthier countries. Major migrant destinations include Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan. These societies share similar demographic features, such as low fertility, an aging population, and delayed age at first marriage. Among these migrant-receiving societies, the percentages of foreign-born migrants are higher in the city-states of Hong Kong (39.1%) and Singapore (46.0%) (UNDESA 2017); the figures remain relatively low in Taiwan (5%), South Korea (3.1%), and Japan (1.8%) (Iwabuchi, Kim, and Hsia 2016).

Governments in these emerging migrant-receiving societies generally consider marriage migrants to be legitimate citizens, while other migrants are seen as temporary residents. One possible reason for this distinction is the strong emphasis on the values of marriage and family in these societies, as well as the practice of filial piety, rooted in the historical influence of Confucian ideology (Wang and Hsiao 2009; Yang and Lu 2010). Consequently, the LGBTQ social movement and the same-sex marriage legalization process in these societies have raised heated debate, with some challenging the general public and policy makers to reflect societal changes and others arguing for continuity in traditional Asian values and everyday practices on gender, kinship, marriage, and the family.

More than two dozen countries had legalized same-sex marriage globally as of 2018, and another nineteen countries recognized civil unions and common-law marriages; none of these countries, however, is located within Asia. According to a 2016 survey on attitudes toward the LGBTQ population conducted by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), 48 percent of respondents from fifteen countries in Asia did not agree that same-sex marriage should be legalized, while 26 percent held more positive attitudes toward same-sex marriage (Carroll and Robotham 2016). In comparison with other continents, Asia appears to be more open (26%) than surveyed countries in Africa (19%) regarding the legalization of same-sex marriage, yet Asia falls behind the
Americas (35%), Europe (41%), and Oceania (56%) (Carroll and Robotham 2016). In a similar fashion, Europe is the only geographical region in which no country criminalizes consensual same-sex sexual conduct, while twelve countries in Asia and thirty-three in Africa continue to hold discriminatory laws that are considered a violation of human rights in other countries (Wilkinson et al. 2017). Importantly, the abovementioned reports identify wide variation across different subregions within Asia, calling for a subtle understanding of the ongoing LGBTQ movement across Asian societies that are in various stages of social, economic, civic, and religious development.

This entry situates the ongoing LGBTQ movement in the context of intra-Asia marriage migration, with a primary focus on population movement within or toward Asia. The entry begins with the prospects and challenges facing the LGBTQ movement in three subregions: East Asia, Southeast Asia, and South Asia and others. Next, the entry presents Australia’s experiences of accepting same-sex relationships as the basis for immigration as the starting point for further evaluating Taiwan’s potential for accepting queer migration, given that it is the only migrant-receiving society in Asia that is on its way to legalizing same-sex marriage. To engage with the nexus of the LGBTQ movement and intra-Asia marriage migration to Taiwan, the entry proposes a few points of concern through delineating the differences between potential same-sex intra-Asia intermarriages that are romance-based and tend to be socioeconomically homogenous and the current phenomenon of intra-Asia heterosexual intermarriages that are proportionally commercially arranged and hypergamous (Chang 2014).

**East Asia**

Since the late 1990s, the LGBTQ movement—both at local and transnational levels—has made major progress in East Asia, showcasing visible queer spaces and communities, especially in large cities. Ever since the first pride parade took place in Taipei in 2003, regular pride parades and festivals in Taipei, Shanghai, Tokyo, and Seoul have become occasions to further publicize these cities’ growing LGBTQ populations, creating a public dialogue for formal recognition of sexual minorities and the diversity of gender identities. Generally speaking, countries in East Asia demonstrate tolerant attitudes toward same-sex marriage due to their advanced economic development and the influence of Buddhism (Adamczyk 2017a). In 2016, 33 percent of respondents in Japan and 31 percent in China expressed positive attitudes toward the legalization of same-sex marriage (Carroll and Robotham 2016).

Homosexuality is considered legal in most countries in this subregion, except within certain segments of society, such as the South Korean Army (Hancocks and Suk 2017). In Japan and Taiwan, registration of same-sex partnership is possible at the municipal level. In Taiwan, the legislature proposed bills legalizing same-sex marriage as early as 2003. The Taiwanese constitutional court recognized marriage rights for homosexual couples in May 2017,
mandating that the civil law be amended accordingly within two years. In China, several proposals for legalizing same-sex marriage were denied in the National People's Congress between 2003 and 2016 (Jeffreys and Wang 2017). In Hong Kong, the first wave of the LGBTQ movement (1979–1991) successfully decriminalized male homosexual conduct, while the current phase, the fourth wave, has encountered significant setbacks both within Hong Kong's LGBTQ community and from Christian groups that promote monogamous heterosexual family values (Kong, Lau, and Li 2015). In summary, efforts to legalize same-sex marriage accompanied rapid modernization and democratization processes across East Asia, but obstacles posed by various factors have led advocates to seek recognition and political support on the global stage.

**Southeast Asia**

Across the booming economies within Southeast Asia—that is, those belonging to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)—concern about human rights, including media freedom and legal recognition of the LGBTQ population, has been noted in recent years (Mosbergen 2015; Wilkinson et al. 2017). A majority of ASEAN countries consider same-sex sexual conduct to be legal. The exceptions are Malaysia, Myanmar, Brunei, Singapore, and the South Sumatra and Aceh provinces in Indonesia (Carroll 2016; Manalastas et al. 2017). Based on data from the World Values Survey, the percentages of respondents rejecting LGBTQ individuals as their neighbors were lowest in Vietnam, Singapore, and the Philippines (around 30%); slightly higher in Thailand (40%); and the highest in Malaysia (59%) and Indonesia (66%) (Manalastas et al. 2017).

Despite Southeast Asia's historically diverse indigenous expressions of gender, a lack of full attention toward human rights can be attributed to the pursuit of economic advancement and the work-in-progress democratization of countries like Myanmar and Laos. Islam plays a significant role in Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia, where same-sex sexual behaviors are framed as a moral problem (Adamczyk 2017b; Carroll 2016). Singapore, the city-state with the highest gross domestic product (GDP) and a higher proportion of foreign-born immigrants, simultaneously propagates strict laws (including the possibility of imprisonment) and tolerant attitudes, suggesting a somewhat problematic contrast. Since 2008, the annual Pink Dot event organized by and for the Singaporean LGBTQ community has gained popularity and corporate sponsorship (Wilkinson et al. 2017). According to one local LGBTQ activist describing the current penalty against male homosexuality, “Singapore is a case study of what happens when you have economic success without human rights” (Mosbergen 2015)—a situation in some ways similar to Hong Kong’s. As China and Laos attempt to copy Singapore’s laws and regulations against the queer community, the LGBTQ populations in this subregion may fall into increasingly disadvantageous social and economic positions.

Singapore's strict laws and penalties against homosexuality make it an unlikely destination
for same-sex transnational couples. Among the high proportion of foreign-born migrants to Singapore, interracial or interethnic transnational gay or lesbian couples may face immigration restrictions. Foreign-born partners either have to leave the country and return regularly for visa renewals, or they must rely on renewable work permits that allow them to stay for an extended period to be with their native partners. Under Singapore’s Immigration Act, persons with AIDS or infected with HIV are “members of the prohibited classes” and cannot immigrate to Singapore (Singapore Statutes Online 2008). In contrast, Thailand and Vietnam, two other ASEAN countries that will be considered aging societies by 2030 (Lee 2017), have begun to show less restrictive attitudes toward LGBTQ populations. In September 2015 Thailand enacted a groundbreaking Gender Equality Law intended to protect LGBTQ individuals from gender-based discrimination (UNAIDS 2015).

South Asia and Other Asian Countries

Compared to East Asia and Southeast Asia, countries in South Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, and elsewhere in Asia that criminalize same-sex sexual conduct outnumber those that acknowledge it by law (Carroll 2016). Potential reasons for this disparity may include the lack in some regions of rapid economic development, the strong influence of religion in some countries, and the distraction of nation-building in young democracies. Consequently, these countries have little potential to become destinations for same-sex partnership migration. One exceptional case is Israel, which recognizes some same-sex civil partnerships and has hosted the Tel Aviv Love Parade since 1997, making Israel the most LGBTQ-friendly nation in the Middle East (Hodges 2017).

Australia

Along with Canada, Belgium, and the Netherlands, Australia, in 1985, became one of the first countries to accept same-sex partnership migration. Between 1997 and 2004, 272 gay men from countries in Asia successfully settled in Australia through same-sex partnership applications, outnumbering foreign-born gay partners migrating from the United Kingdom and Ireland, other European countries, North America, and Africa (Yue 2008). Movements for LGBTQ rights gradually emerged in several Asian countries during this period, even as Australia’s multicultural immigration policies shifted to the post-9/11 border-control ideology, when Australia’s welcoming public attitude toward Asians was replaced by intolerance and hostility. However, such transitions, at both the state and the societal levels, did not stop Asian gay and lesbian partnership migration to Australia. The largest pools of visa applications came from Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines (Yue 2008). With Australia’s legalization of same-sex marriage in December 2017, the demographics of same-sex marriage migration may experience further changes in the years to come.

Asian Queer Migration to Taiwan
Taiwan's progress in legalizing same-sex marriage, beginning in May 2017 with the Taiwanese constitutional court's decision, is a major breakthrough for the LGBTQ rights movement within Asia. Over its three-decade experience of accepting marriage migrants and migrant workers, Taiwan is slowly learning to become a host society. As Taiwanese civil laws are amended by May 2019, there may be a rise in same-sex marriage registrations involving a non-Taiwanese spouse. In other words, the potential legalization of gay marriage may become a new pull factor in immigration flows to Taiwan.

There are a few possible scenarios for Taiwan's future. First, foreign-born LGBTQ migrants who are current alien resident card holders may decide to apply for citizenship under the Immigration Act through marriage registration with partners who are Taiwan passport holders. Second, considering that large numbers of foreign students, foreign visitors, and migrant workers in Taiwan come from other Asian countries, Taiwan may become an even more favorable travel, study, and work destination for LGBTQ individuals from other parts of Asia. Third, based on the assumption that legalization of same-sex marriage will lead to more positive attitudes toward the LGBTQ population (Hooghe and Meeusen 2013), more foreign-born LGBTQ migrants may consider extending their stay in Taiwan without marrying a local. They might decide to continue living in Taiwan because its social and legal systems are expected to become more gay-friendly after the law is enacted.

Taiwan's experience of hosting female marriage migrants from China and Southeast Asia differs from its hosting of same-sex spouses from elsewhere in Asia or from Western countries. Two key characteristics that distinguish the former from the latter are the intermarried couples' socioeconomic backgrounds and patterns of assortative mating. While intra-Asia transnational marriages are usually composed of female marriage migrants from humble backgrounds who “marry up” in a richer country (though most Taiwanese husbands are also from humble backgrounds), queer marriage migrants are more likely to be educated individuals marrying Taiwanese partners with above-average social capital. While both are considered nonconventional family forms in Taiwan, the marital power dynamics of the former conform to the traditional Asian practice of female hypergamy (or marrying a person of superior caste or class). Although most same-sex couples follow the practice of status homogamy (i.e., marrying a person of similar socioeconomic background), same-sex marriages involving an immigrant spouse pose challenges to traditional Asian family values.

In addition, Taiwan's current immigrant integration policies and programs are designed for Southeast Asian and Chinese marriage migrants, whose needs in gaining formal education in Taiwan, becoming part of the labor force, raising bicultural children, and so forth, are specifically addressed. In order to host LGBTQ immigrant spouses, the Taiwanese government will have to create an LGBTQ-friendly social, economic, cultural, and civic environment, which may involve substantial crosssectoral coordination, especially with the medical and health-care system. Taiwan will also have to establish legal processes for
surrogacy and adoption for both local heterosexual and LGBTQ couples.

Social integration among immigrants and the issue of prejudice and discrimination remain major challenges for emerging migrant-receiving societies like Taiwan. When the first waves of Southeast Asian marriage migrants and blue-collar migrant workers arrived in the 1990s, they suffered from significant prejudice and everyday discrimination in the community and in the media. It took more than two decades for the society to gradually acknowledge migrants’ contributions, especially marriage migrants who married into Taiwanese families (Chang, Chen, and Fu 2015). Research indicates that legalization of same-sex marriage in Europe is associated with positive attitudes toward the LGBTQ population, which may lead to a gayfriendly social atmosphere (Hooghe and Meeusen 2013). For the moment, we do not have sufficient evidence to predict whether such a scenario may apply to Taiwan and other East Asian migrant-receiving societies as well. It may take years before there is social acceptance of LGBTQ families, especially migrating spouses, in the region, both at the community and at the societal levels.

SEE ALSO Australia and New Zealand; Defense of Marriage Act (1996); Dissidence in Singapore; Family Law in Asia; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Latin America; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Taiwan; Marriage, Universal, in Europe; QT v. Hong Kong Immigration Department (2017); W v. Registrar of Marriages (2013)

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The history of the struggle to legalize same-sex marriage in the countries of Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay.

Despite its reputation as a highly conservative region with strict gender roles and prominent machismo, Latin America has defied stereotypes in its implementation of same-sex marriage rights. Outside North America and western Europe, it is the region of the world where this right has been expanded the furthest. In effect, by early 2018, 80 percent of Latin Americans lived in a country in which same-sex marriage was accessible to all citizens.

**Historical and Cultural Context**

A genealogy of same-sex marriage in Latin America must take into account broader cultural and historical aspects of the regulation and understandings of sexuality in the region. While generally perceived as having rigid regulatory social and legal systems, sexuality in Latin America has historically been rather fluid. The colonial enterprise attempted to impose strict ideas about sexuality that were prevalent in Europe on societies that had very fluid understandings of sexuality and what amounted to appropriate sexual behavior (Williams 1986). However, because processes of postindependence state formation in nineteenth-century Latin America were characterized by top-down dynamics that were not completely successful in transforming preexisting social relations, a gap between expected social norms and their compliance has historically survived. Most countries instituted a separation between the dominant Catholic Church and the state in the mid-nineteenth century, and while the church has continued to play an important role in dictating and upholding social mores, adherence to these norms has for the most part been limited to the public sphere. A significant degree of sexual freedom in intimate personal relations has therefore survived. Freedom in personal sexual relations has been reinforced by criminal codes that, at least in most Latin American countries, have not criminalized homosexuality since independence. With few exceptions, such as Chile, Latin American countries modeled their criminal justice systems at independence after the 1804 Napoleonic Code, which did not criminalize homosexuality.

**Sexual Rights**
Given that consensual same-sex relations in Latin America have not been criminalized, even under military rule, the politics of sexual rights, unlike elsewhere around the world, have not revolved around struggles to expand the basic negative right to practice one’s sexuality freely. Early efforts made by activists to wrest rights from the state focused on basic positive rights: the right of sexual expression. While homosexuality has not been a crime, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries most countries enacted legal provisions that prohibited undertaking activities in public that would violate “morality and good customs” (Green 1999).

These provisions were generally adopted by municipalities and were systematically used by police forces to harass, detain, and extort homosexuals who violated the cultural norm of ensuring discretion in public. Within a generalized context of social mobilization in the region and abroad, Latin American homosexuals began to organize—as early as 1967 in Argentina—to demand an end to state violence and for the right to express one’s sexual and gender identity in public. Inspired by mobilization in western Europe and North America, gay and lesbian movements not only began to force national debates on the legal regulation of sexuality, but they gained, in many countries, the right to demonstrate collectively. Starting with Mexico in 1979, gay pride parades began to be held in several countries across the region (de la Dehesa 2010). Even in countries (in Central America and the Andean region) with stricter regulatory systems and higher levels of intolerance, states began to allow gays and lesbians to socialize in public and commercial places, such as restaurants and bars, as a result of pressure exerted by activists.

**Same-Sex Partnership Recognition**

The evolution of sexual rights in Latin America has most obviously varied cross-nationally. However, in several countries, the enactment of same-sex marriage rights was preceded by the extension of socioeconomic benefits to same-sex couples, a process that was counterintuitively linked to the advent of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. As the epidemic reached its climax and started to take its toll, before antiretroviral drugs became available in the mid-1990s, partners of those affected in many cases were unable to access medical services, visit their loved ones on their deathbeds, or keep the material possessions they had built together. Because most welfare systems at the time, with few exceptions, did not offer universal coverage and were based on a patriarchal logic, family members could only have access to them through heads of households. Most gays and lesbians therefore lacked coverage. As a result, as early as the mid-1990s in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, gay activism managed to wrest some medical, pension, and inheritance rights from the state (Díez 2015).

The logical next step, in the eyes of many activists, was to demand formal relationship recognition for same-sex couples through civil unions. After sustained mobilization in the face of stern opposition from socially conservative forces, subnational governments in
three of the four federal systems—again Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico, with the fourth being Venezuela—extended same-sex civil union rights. Federal systems provided the opportunity to press for these rights in jurisdictions in which state and nonstate conservative opposition was weaker and policy processes more accessible, such as the cities of Buenos Aires and Mexico City and the Brazilian states of Rio de Janeiro and Rio Grande do Sul. In Brazil, the extension of these rights took place through the judiciary. In Argentina and Mexico, on the other hand, the enactment of civil union laws was accomplished by local legislative assemblies, though the laws were later challenged in the courts. Several other states followed suit, and by 2018 ten countries had enacted similar legislation.

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Brazillian Gay Couple Celebrate Their Union at a Civil Registry Office in Jacarei, Brazil, in 2011. Same-sex couples in Brazil had been allowed to enter civil unions since 2004, but it was not until 2013 that they could legally marry. That year the Brazilian judiciary ruled that it was discriminatory to prevent same-sex couples from getting married and granted all civil unions marriage status.

### Same-Sex Marriage

Following the approval of civil union rights, gay and lesbian activists in Latin America began to push for same-sex marriage with some of the strongest and most visible activism occurring in Argentina and Mexico. By early 2018, same-sex marriage had been approved in five Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, and Uruguay, constituting more than 80 percent of the region’s population.
The processes by which these reforms occurred have varied and can be placed in three categories. In the first category are countries in which reform undertook a regular legislative process: Argentina (2010) and Uruguay (2012). In both countries, well-organized activists pushed for reform in national parliaments, and, after gaining support from sitting leftist presidents, reform was enacted, albeit with significant national debate. A characteristic shared by both countries is a lack of confessional parties and high levels of popular support for same-sex marriage.

Brazil and Colombia belong to the second category in which same-sex marriage rights were achieved through judicial processes. In both countries, significant opposition in national parliaments, mostly from socially conservative, religious politicians, repeatedly blocked any attempts at pursuing marriage rights through the regular legislative route. In Colombia, after the senate failed to comply with a ruling from the Constitutional Court ordering the congress to legalize same-sex marriage, the court ruled in 2016 that all Colombian couples, regardless of gender, could access marriage. Brazil’s legalization effort followed a two-step process through the judiciary. In 2011 Brazil’s supreme court ruled—based on lower-level court decisions that had granted civil union rights to same-sex couples—that marriage rights should be expanded to the entire population. Brazil’s National Justice Council (a court of cassation) followed suit and, in 2013, ruled that civil unions were discriminatory because they established an alternative system for gays and lesbians. The court thus ordered all civil unions in Brazil to be granted marriage status.

Mexico, given its unique type of federalism, represents a third, hybrid, category. Mexico is the only country in the region in which family law is administered by subnational levels of government. As a result, same-sex marriage reform has been both fragmented and judicialized. The approval of same-sex marriage in Mexico City in 2010 was followed by a strong backlash both from several states and from the federal government, which pushed the issue to the judiciary. After a complex process involving the granting of civil judicial injunctions called writs of amparo, Mexico’s supreme court issued a series of rulings on same-sex marriage. These involved the upholding of Mexico City’s reforms; the legal obligation of all states to recognize marriages performed in Mexico City; the unconstitutionality of explicit prohibitions of same-sex marriage by states; the granting of individual amparos to numerous same-sex couples, setting precedents in certain states; and, finally, in 2016, ordering all judges in the country to concede any amparo submitted by any same-sex couple.

**Explanations and Prospects**

The speed and scope with which same-sex marriage politics has unfolded have attracted a great deal of scholarly attention, most of which has focused on explanations for why same-sex marriage has been approved in some countries and not others. Political science research points to several factors. First, there appears to be an important association...
between levels of economic development and support for same-sex marriage. While public opinion does not always translate into policy, same-sex marriage has generally been approved in the countries that are most economically developed and that show the highest levels of support for such reforms (Corrales 2015). Research also shows that activism and well-organized, visible gay and lesbian social movements have been the main drivers behind reform (Encarnación 2016), and it should come as no surprise that same-sex marriage is legal in countries in which these movements are oldest. Argentina, the first country to have adopted same-sex marriage, saw the formation of the region’s first homosexual organization, Nuestro Mundo (Our World), in 1967. However, mobilization is not sufficient: the building of alliances with both state and nonstate actors has also been important (Díez 2015).

Scholarship also shows that three political institutions are important to understanding cross-national variation in same-sex marriage recognition. Federalism has allowed activists to access policy arenas in which favorable conditions exist, even when national forums are closed to them. This was the case in Brazil and Mexico (Marsiaj 2006). In addition, the existence of moderate, socially progressive political parties seems to be key in same-sex marriage recognition. In contrast to the more confrontational leftist parties found in countries such as Nicaragua and Venezuela, moderate parties like those in Brazil and Uruguay have provided important allies that have helped push for marriage reform (Corrales 2015). The third institutional factor has been the existence of strong and autonomous courts that have allowed for policy reform when legislative routes were blocked (Schulenberg 2012). In several countries in the region, socially conservative actors have gained strong political representation in national parliaments, making them what political scientists call “veto players.” These actors, associated for the most part with evangelical and Catholic groups, have been very successful in blocking legislative reform. However, these veto players have been circumvented in countries with strong judiciaries, such as Colombia and Brazil, where activists have been successful in persuading courts to declare traditional definitions of marriage unconstitutional. Same-sex marriage, then, is more likely to be approved in countries in which a combination of these factors exists.

The future of same-sex marriage in Latin America took an unprecedented turn in early 2018 when the Inter-American Court of Human Rights opined, upon a reference submitted by the Costa Rican government, that same-sex marriage is covered by the regional Convention of Human Rights and, as such, should be extended to all citizens. The ruling was binding for all twenty-four signatory countries and paved the way for making same-sex marriage a reality throughout the region. However, given the strong opposition in countries in which same-sex marriage has not yet been approved, governments are likely to ignore the ruling. As a result, a process of international judicialization is likely to unfold over the issue of same-sex marriage in Latin America.

SEE ALSO Argentina’s Gender Identity Law; HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean;
Human Rights and Marriage, Same-Sex, in Taiwan Activism in Latin America; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Taiwan; Marriage, Universal, in Europe; Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa; Marriage Migration in Asia; QT v. Hong Kong Immigration Department (2017); W v. Registrar of Marriages (2013)

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Marriage, Same-Sex, in Taiwan

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The path to LGBT marriage equality in Taiwan, which became the first Asian country to recognize this right in 2017.

On 24 May 2017 the Justice of the Constitutional Court in the Judicial Yuan in Taiwan ruled that it is against the constitution to bar same-sex couples from getting married. This ruling in favor of same-sex marriage is regarded as a landmark decision for LGBT movements both regionally and globally. In the domestic sphere, the ruling not only extends the freedom to marry to nonheterosexual citizens of Taiwan but also emphasizes the equal rights of citizens regardless of sexual orientation. In the global context, media outlets often highlight the fact that Taiwan is the first country in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage because the ruling presents a historic moment for marriage equality movements across continents and encourages LGBT movements in other Asian countries.

Background of Activism on Legalizing Same-Sex Marriage

Although some social recognition of same-sex partnerships or nonheterosexual family units can be identified at various times, and among different ethnicities in Taiwan, the Civil Code recognizes marriages only between a man and a woman. This legal recognition privileging heterosexual couples rendered sexual minorities largely unseen in the governmental domain. Although the law never explicitly targeted and punished sexual minorities, the legal invisibility of sexual minorities still functioned as a kind of punishment by denying the existence and needs of sexual minorities.

In 1958 a lesbian couple first challenged the law by applying for a marriage license at the Taipei District Court, but the court rigidly decided that marriage was a union between a man and a woman. In 1986 Chia-wei Chi and his male partner also applied for a marriage license, and their case was also denied for the same reason. In response to Chi’s petition, the government maintained that “homosexuals are rare cases of abnormal deviants who mainly seek to satisfy their sexual desires against social morality” (quoted in Chien 2012, 188; translation by Hoching Jiang).

Although same-sex marriage did not become a major topic of social debate in Taiwan until the second decade of the twenty-first century, local LGBT movements and organizations
have been growing in response to various incidents related to LGBT experiences since the 1990s. Over the years, the topic of same-sex partnerships and marriage recognitions arose sporadically in public discussions. For example, the anthropologist Chi-nan Chen wrote an opinion piece in 1985 discussing the diversity of traditional marriage practices such as “ghost marriage” and arguing for the legalization of same-sex marriage (Chen 1986, 39–42). The Taiwanese filmmaker Ang Lee won several major awards for his works The Wedding Banquet (1993) and Brokeback Mountain (2005), both of which have explicit queer content. While his films did not directly address same-sex marriage, they encouraged public conversation and raised awareness of LGBT rights. In addition, an abundant number of literary works addressing same-sex sexualities have been published since the 1990s (Chi 2017), such as Eyu shouji (1994; Notes of a Crocodile [2017]) by Miaojin Qiu and Mo (1996; Membrane) by Ta-wei Chi.

The writer Yu-sheng Hsu and his same-sex partner openly held their wedding in 1996, and many celebrities and politicians attended the event to express their support. Over the following two decades, many gay and lesbian couples also made their same-sex weddings known to the public. To them, getting married was both a personal desire for recognition of their families and an activist act amounting to a demand that the government recognize their marriages and provide fair legal protection. The government, however, refused to do so. The Justice of the Constitutional Court dismissed Chia-wei Chi’s case without a further review in 2000, and the Taipei City Government also ruled against another gay couple’s petition for same-sex marriage in 2011 (Taipei City Government 2011).
Given these failures in court, local LGBT activism has been growing ever more vibrant and vocal in efforts to educate citizens about sexual minorities. Evidently, such activities have had an effect. In the 1980s the government viewed the family represented by Chia-wei Chi and his partner as a deviant sexuality, but social attitudes had shifted by the 1990s, when same-sex marriages started to be celebrated openly.

**Marriage Equality Movements in the Twenty-First Century: From Deviants to Equal Citizens**

Legalization of same-sex marriage was first proposed by the politician Bi-khim Hsiao in 2006. The Legislative Yuan, Taiwan’s parliament, quickly blocked this motion, on its first review. Yet, same-sex marriage was neither a major activist goal nor a hot topic among the public in 2006. The failure of the proposal was not regarded as a failure of the LGBT movement either.

There was, however, a growing activism to support lesbian and gay families more broadly in the first decade of the twenty-first century, leading to a more organized advocacy for the legalization of same-sex marriage. Among the major LGBT organizations, Taiwan LGBT Family Rights Advocacy took a grassroots approach to changing the social environment by representing LGBT families and educating the public about LGBT families. Another organization, Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights (TAPCPR), which comprises several LGBT and feminist organizations, focused on changing the Civil Code. The group worked with Chia-wei Chi to apply for a constitutional review for the third time in 2015, and the case finally went to the First Court in 2017. TAPCPR also worked with politicians to propose an amendment to the Civil Code in 2013. Its draft of the amendment sought to recognize various family structures, including same-sex marriage, civil partnerships, and multiple-person families ([TAPCPR 2013](#)). However, only same-sex marriage passed the first round of the bill review, and the amendment did not go further after the review.

After the victory of the Democratic Progressive Party in the 2016 elections, LGBT organizations soon began working with a few gay-friendly politicians to propose a new amendment to the Civil Code to recognize same-sex marriage. Subsequently, intense debates about same-sex marriage took place throughout Taiwan on a massive scale. Prior to this effort, same-sex marriage had been neither a major topic of the LGBT movements nor one of general public discussion in Taiwan. Same-sex marriage became the theme of
the Taipei, Taiwan, LGBT pride march only in 2013. The intense public debates happened only after the proposal of the marriage equality bill in 2016.

Since 2013, LGBT movements have followed two major approaches to achieve marriage equality in Taiwan. First, activists prompted politicians to propose the amendment to the Civil Code. Second, legal challenges were made to compel the government’s recognition of same-sex marriage, leading to the constitutional review in 2017.

Coincidentally, after the bill of marriage equality successfully passed the initial board review at the Legislative Yuan in December 2016, the Justice of the Constitutional Court took up Chia-wei Chi’s case from 2015 and issued Judicial Yuan Interpretation 748, demanding that the government recognize same-sex marriage. In this May 2017 ruling, the court not only insisted that the freedom to marry applies to same-sex couples but also recognized the socially and legally disadvantaged status of sexual minorities. More importantly, although Taiwan’s constitution does not explicitly address sexual orientation in considering the right to equality, the ruling states that “sexual orientation is an immutable characteristic” and that different legal treatments based on sexual orientation shall be governed by the right to equality in the constitution. Hence, the ruling specifies the right to equality for sexual minorities beyond the provision regarding the freedom to marry.

**Debating the Legalization of Same-Sex Marriage in Taiwan**

During the second decade of the twenty-first century, conservative Christian groups were actively campaigning against various LGBT issues (Da and Kao 2016; Huang 2017). Citizens associated with other religions tend not to take a religious stand either supporting or opposing same-sex marriage. Yet, some public figures in the Buddhist and Mazu communities emphasize the inclusiveness of their beliefs and advocate for LGBT rights (Lai 2012; Yang 2017).

However, because less than 5 percent of the population in Taiwan identify themselves as Christians (Fu et al. 2015) and most of the citizens do not share the Christian negative view of homosexuality, anti-LGBT Christian groups strategically present themselves only as concerned parents or professional elites, such as teachers and doctors, while intentionally playing down their religious backgrounds. They also form numerous groups in the name of protecting family values and a “traditional” definition of marriage. The local religious context makes the case of the same-sex marriage movement in Taiwan significantly different from those of other countries, such as the United States and South Korea, where religious texts are used literally against sexual minorities. Anti-LGBT groups in Taiwan ironically have to keep their Christian identities in the closet while appropriating cultural authorities to endorse their repressive views of sexual minorities.
Anti-LGBT groups put forward many reasons for opposing the legalization of same-sex marriage. They claim that homosexuality is unnatural, that gay men are a high-risk population for contracting HIV/AIDS, and that LGBT people cannot possibly be good parents, for example. These opposition groups object not only to acknowledging same-sex marriage but also to other policies and proposals enabling sexual minorities. To support their points, anti-LGBT groups often cite dubious research. However, the research studies they reference are either conducted by conservative religious institutions with clear biases or are obvious misinterpretations of more accepted studies. In addition, regional anti-LGBT groups in East Asia borrow discourses from North America and Europe, translating the information into Chinese to spread these ideas across borders.

The anti-LGBT attacks polarize social opinions, but they also paradoxically motivate LGBT individuals to act collectively and call out distortions of information. A common and effective strategy taken by LGBT activists is to expose how anti-LGBT groups willfully disseminate false information that directly contradicts knowledge supported by academic communities and professional associations around the world. Therefore, the global and regional circulation of LGBT information (or misinformation) also supports the pro-LGBT side.

In addition to the debates about legalizing same-sex marriage, the anti-LGBT groups also frequently attack the Gender Equality Education Act of 2004 and potential policy changes concerning conversion therapy. Their strategy is to repeatedly demonize sexual minorities with the aim of pushing the public to adopt a more conservative stand on LGBT issues. Anti-LGBT groups do not have a systematic approach, so they challenge the interests of sexual minorities on many fronts, not only same-sex marriage. Yet, across the many topics raised by the anti-LGBT groups, a central question is whether sexual minorities are equal to their heterosexual counterparts under the law. The debates do not necessarily concern the legalization of same-sex marriage but are rather about whether LGBT people are full citizens in a larger legal and civic sense. Although some LGBT individuals join the movement to legalize same-sex marriage out of a desire to get married, many participate mainly to counter the activities of anti-LGBT groups. Thanks to anti-LGBT attacks, the debate surrounding the legalization of same-sex marriage also becomes a platform for LGBT activists to educate the public about LGBT issues.

Moreover, in comparison with the same-sex marriage movements in many other countries such as the United States, where important material resources and access are closely tied to marriage licenses, Taiwan’s same-sex marriage debates have relatively few discussions of resource distribution and class inequality. Although the material aspects of marriage have been underlined by activists and scholars (Ding and Liu 2011; Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association 2016; Tseng 2013), the material aspect of marriage never became a focal point in the debate. A possible explanation for this omission could be that social inequality is less severe in Taiwan. For example, Taiwan has a universal health-care system in which all
citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation and marital status, have access to health care. In addition, Taiwan already has laws protecting sexual minorities from discrimination in employment and education. In other words, the oppression of sexual minorities in Taiwan is not closely associated with opportunities for class privilege and social mobility. Yet, many activists in the movement still raised issues of social inequalities in connection with sexual minorities in such areas as aging, disability, and labor. In short, it is not a distinct desire for marriage and material resources tied to marriage licenses that mobilizes LGBT communities in Taiwan to participate in the marriage equality movement; it is resistance to homophobia. The debates are more about equal citizenship for sexual minorities than about the right to get married, definitions of marriage, or ideas of romantic love embodied in marriage.

**Marriage Equality and LGBT Movements in Retrospect**

According to the Academia Sinica report *Taiwan Social Change Survey, 2012* (Chang, Liao, and Tu 2013), 52 percent of citizens supported the legalization of same-sex marriage before same-sex marriage came to the center of public discussions. This fact provides a critical reminder of the importance of looking beyond the marriage equality movement itself. One has to consider what the LGBT movements have done to change the overall social attitude that prevailed before 2013, as these efforts helped shape the debates and clearly contributed to the constitutional review in favor of LGBT rights.

It can even be argued that it is because the LGBT activists in Taiwan have been steadily working on educating the public about sexual minorities, instead of focusing on particular laws, that the marriage equality movement could obtain a 52 percent support rate before the amendment to the Civil Code was proposed in 2013. As strange as this may sound, the achievement of marriage equality in Taiwan happened because the LGBT movements in Taiwan never prioritized it. Finally, looking beyond the same-sex marriage movement and the celebration of being the first nation in Asia to recognize LGBT marriage equality, Taiwan’s LGBT movements provide a critical example of effective activism not centered on the legal domain. LGBT activists and their allies have a strong motivation to transform society, and the changes in the law that have occurred in the second decade of the twenty-first century appear to be at least a partial fulfillment of the broad goals advocated for by these movements.

**SEE ALSO** Family Law in Asia; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Latin America; Marriage, Universal, in Europe; Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa; Marriage Migration in Asia; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity; Tongzhi Literature, Taiwan; QT v. Hong Kong Immigration Department (2017); W v. Registrar of Marriages (2013)

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Marriage, Universal, in Europe

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The legal and political landscape influencing recognition of same-sex couples, either in marriage or state-recognized partnerships.

Couples whose relationships the state officially endorses enjoy legal benefits, social recognition, and enforceable solidarity. Marriage has been the standard framework organizing these rights and responsibilities for European couples. Yet, until the late twentieth century, prevailing definitions precluded nonheterosexual couples from marrying. This left them in legal limbo and exposed them to discrimination. Before the 1980s, European same-sex couples had little, if any, possibility to organize inheritance, pension sharing, eviction protection in joint leases, foreign residency permits, joint health care, hospital visitation, child custody arrangements, shared parental authority, and hundreds of other formalities affecting their daily lives. LGBT Europeans and their allies pushed for reforms to overcome this systematic marginalization.

In 1989 Denmark became the first European country to create registered partnerships for same-sex couples providing some—but not all—of the rights and responsibilities associated with marriage. Other countries, sometimes after heated political battles, followed suit by creating regimes parallel to marriage for same-sex (and sometimes also different-sex) couples including Norway (1993), Sweden (1995), Iceland (1996), the Netherlands (1998), France (1999), and Belgium (2000). In 2001 the Netherlands became the first to open marriage to same-sex couples. Since then, the number of European countries formalizing same-sex relationships has increased rapidly. By early 2018, of the 48 countries in Europe (the 47 Council of Europe members plus Belarus), 15 (12 of which are members of the European Union) had marriage equality, and 11 others had registered partnerships. In addition, Austria had also legalized same-sex marriages, with the change taking effect at the beginning of 2019. Demographic data suggest that same-sex couples take advantage of these legal regimes to secure their relationships at different rates depending on the context (Waaldijk 2017). Table 1 provides details about the legal situation in each country.

Governments and civil society groups have resisted these advances. Opponents often argue that the state should not recognize same-sex couples because doing so would make it easier for them to raise children. Many had already, in fact, been creating families for decades
despite these hostile legal contexts. Responding to reactions against same-sex parenting, some European countries—examples include France, Germany, and Switzerland—gave same-sex couples legal recognition even as they explicitly prevented (and in some cases continue to prevent) them from adopting or having access to assisted-reproductive techniques.

**Types of Recognition**

Three legal regimes, each with decreasing levels of protection, may be available to same-sex couples depending on the jurisdiction. Marriage is typically the most expansive, internationally recognized, and symbolically charged and is therefore the most controversial. Indeed, many states developed the second type of regime, registered partnerships, precisely because they sought to distinguish marriage as uniquely limited to different-sex couples. Finally, in the most restricted way, same-sex couples may fall under the category of informal cohabitation that institutions may take into consideration when dealing with family affairs.

Each regime's content varies across national contexts. The contributors to a 2017 working paper edited by Kees Waaldijk note that, independent of the type of regime, certain policies, such as tenancy continuation and treating couples as a single fiscal unit, are more widespread than others, especially joint adoption and automatic recognition of nonbiological parents. This suggests that states are more willing to provide rights to same-sex couples but resist protecting their parent-child relationships.

**PACTE CIVIL DE SOLIDARITÉ (PACS)**

The Pacte Civil de Solidarité ([PACS; Civil Solidarity Pact; enacted November 1999](#)) is a legal provision in the French civil code (Book I, Title XIII) establishing a contract “between two adult people of the same or different sexes to organize their lives together” (Article 515-1; translation by Michael Stambolis-Ruhstorfer). Like other laws passed in various jurisdictions in the late twentieth and early twentyfirst centuries to create legal regimes for same-sex couples, the PACS provides some—but not all—of the rights and responsibilities of marriage. Specifically, it allows for the filing of joint tax returns, requires signatories to be financially responsible for each other, and secures their housing in joint leases. By default, however, it does not join their assets or guarantee inheritance unless the couple also has a will. The PACS also does not allow joint or second-parent adoption, does not offer certain retirement protections in case of death, and does not allow for spousal visas in the case of binational couples. Furthermore, the contract is easily canceled, unlike marriage, and is therefore both more flexible but also less protective.

Despite these limitations, the PACS created the first significant opportunity for French
same-sex couples to shield themselves legally before the legalization of same-sex marriage in May 2013. Some same-sex couples prefer the PACS to marriage. Indeed, according to the Institut National d’Études Démographiques (National Institute for Demographic Studies), 10,437 got married and 6,262 got PACSed in 2014. It has also proven very popular for different-sex couples. In 2014, 224,878 got married and 173,728 got PACSed. More broadly, the PACS represents a historical reconfiguration of French family law akin to the instantiation of civil marriage (1792), the legal recognition of children born out of wedlock (1972), or the possibility of shared parental authority after divorce (1978).

By the time the French parliament passed the PACS, the issue of legal recognition for same-sex couples had already roiled French politics for over a decade. Although gay and lesbian activists had been discussing options since the 1960s, the AIDS crisis laid bare the severe inequality of people whose relationships were not recognized. As gay men died of AIDS, landlords evicted their partners from shared apartments. The state and its agencies refused to acknowledge any spousal ties, prohibiting inheritance, life insurance protections, and a variety of other guarantees for spouses of the deceased. Furthermore, the Court of Cassation refused (in 1989 and 1997) to extend common-law marriages to same-sex couples. Reacting to this situation, French LGBT and some AIDS organizations made various demands, ranging from a limited-scope contract to full marriage equality, that were met with fierce opposition from politicians across the political and intellectual spectrum. Opponents denounced what they saw as a threat to children—many opponents both on the Left and Right decried parenting by same-sex couples—and warned that legal recognition would undermine heterosexual marriage and social order more broadly. The PACS emerged as a result of many compromises on and the merging of multiple competing proposals from these acrimonious, prolonged debates. Lawmakers removed its radical potential, which would have allowed any two people, including brothers and sisters, to sign a PACS. They also diminished its symbolic potential by requiring couples to register in court administrative offices rather than in public city hall ceremonies, as is done for marriages. They ensured, however, that the PACS would conform to French universalist ideals by not limiting it to same-sex couples.

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**Table 1: Legal Recognition of Couples in Europe (as of 2017)**

**Notes:** *Overall score* is sum of formal recognition of same-sex couples where marriage (=100), registered partnerships (=10), informal cohabitation (=1). The specific legal rights/responsibilities of registered partnerships and informal cohabitation vary across contexts. RPs are generally more formal and have stronger protections.
Regional Differences

As Table 1 shows, legal recognition is uneven across Europe. It is higher, for example, within the European Economic Area. All but six (Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania), which are former Communist and central and eastern European countries, have some kind of registered partnership. Countries with the lowest level of recognition, and in many cases none at all, are outside the European Economic Area and concentrated in eastern Europe. However, political past and geography are not explicit predictors of formal recognition (Waaldijk 2017). Indeed, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, and Hungary—all former Communist central European countries—have registered partnerships. Furthermore, in contrast with their western European neighbors, Italy, Monaco, Andorra, Switzerland, and Lichtenstein have all refused to allow same-sex couples to marry.

Explaining the causes of this uneven change is complex. Social scientists point to a variety of factors, including social movement tactics, political institutions, constitutional structures, public opinion, the role of experts, and international pressure. All can shape legal outcomes in nationally specific ways (Ayoub 2016; Kollman 2013). Recognition of informal cohabitation does not appear correlated with later legalization of more formal rights (Waaldijk 2017).

Supranational European Law

International European decision-making bodies have been a key avenue through which advocates of same-sex relationships have tried to advance their cause when they have been unsuccessful in their home countries. They have attempted to leverage these bodies to put pressure on their own governments. European-level mobilization brings international scrutiny, creates awareness of lesser known situations, and links efforts between European counterparts (Tremblay, Paternotte, and Johnson 2011).

European Court of Human Rights The European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) is the court of last recourse for citizens of the forty-seven member states of the Council of Europe. These countries are signatories to the European Convention on Human Rights, which LGBT activists say guarantees their right to protect their families. They often draw on Article 8, which guarantees a person the “right to respect for his private and family life,” and Article 14, which establishes a principle of nondiscrimination. The ECHR gives signatory states a large margin of appreciation on matters relating to sexual orientation in general, and same-sex couples in particular. Nevertheless, a slowly evolving body of case law has increasingly mandated similar treatment of same-sex and different-sex couples. The court has determined, however, that states need not open marriage to same-sex couples but ought to provide them some formal recognition, especially if unmarried different-sex couples enjoy legal protections and obligations outside of marriage.
A series of judgments has led to this legal situation. After a period in which the court dismissed cases dealing with same-sex couples, in 2003, in the case of Karner v. Austria, the court found that Austria violated the rights of the plaintiff by failing to extend the legal protections of unmarried “life companions” when he was threatened with eviction from his home after his partner’s death. This failure to treat same-sex and different-sex unmarried couples equally violated the convention. Judges later reiterated this relatively limited—but important—recognition in 2010, in the case of Schalk and Kopf v. Austria. The ruling maintained that stable same-sex relationships fall within the definition of “family life” but also determined that failure to open marriage to them does not violate the convention. Part of the judges’ decision-making in Schalk was based on their perception of a lack of international “consensus” on the issue.

The ECHR later found in the case Vallianatos v. Greece (2013) that states cannot exclude same-sex couples from registered partnerships if it creates such regimes for different-sex couples. Shortly after, in the case of Oliari v. Italy (2015), the court found that Italy had violated the plaintiff’s rights by providing no formal legal alternative to marriage. Italy responded by legislating registered partnerships for same-sex couples. This ruling could significantly advance legislation in other countries because it states that all same-sex couples must have some form of recognition. In subsequent decisions, such as Taddeucci and McCall v. Italy (2016) and Pajić v. Croatia (2016), the ECHR has begun to stipulate that such partnerships, even if they take different forms, should include some key rights, such as residence permits for foreign partners.

The ECHR continues to fall short of finding marriage discrimination in violation of the convention. Indeed, in the case of Chapin and Charpentier v. France (2016), the court upheld much of its ruling in Schalk. The “specific legal framework” afforded to such relationships, therefore, can be distinct from marriage.

Some see the ECHR as a relatively slow-moving and narrow avenue for creating change. Indeed, although it has increasingly ruled in favor of same-sex couples, its tendency toward prudence and its reliance on national trends in recognition—or not—of formal rights to make decisions can lead to limited outcomes. Furthermore, states implement the ECHR’s rulings unevenly. Nevertheless, its judgments have created new rights for same-sex couples. More broadly, by applying the definition of family to same-sex couples, the court’s discourse enhances perceptions of LGBT families (Johnson 2013). In addition, the cultural and legal effects of ECHR decisions have resonated beyond Europe by serving as a reference for decision-makers considering changes to marriage laws in other parts of the world (see Chiang 2017 for the case of Hong Kong).

**European Union and Court of Justice of the European Union** The European Union (EU), through the legislative process and through the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), has also played a role in shaping family law for its member states. Advocates and
lawmakers of EU countries have attempted to mobilize antidiscrimination language in fundamental EU documents to carve out recognition for same-sex couples. Article 10 of the EU's Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (2007) specifies that in “defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall aim to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.” Furthermore, Article 21.1 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2000) states that “any discrimination based on any ground such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited.”

Although this language is clear in its intent, the EU leaves much latitude to member states in how they implement its directives. That leeway has led to limited concrete equality in family rights across the EU. The CJEU has dealt with fewer cases on same-sex couples than the ECHR, and most have related to discrimination in employment, specifically pensions for same-sex partners, the movement of people within the EU, and spousal immigration rights. Their outcomes have been somewhat favorable but relatively limited in scope. For example, in the case of Jürgen Römer v. Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg (2011), the court found that same-sex spouses in registered partnerships should have the same spousal pension rights as different-sex married couples. In 2017 the CJEU first examined the issue of whether same-sex marriages legally contracted in one member state must be recognized by another when a couple moves there using their EU free movement rights, in a case brought by Adrian Coman, a Romanian citizen married to an American man, and specifically involving the effect of same-sex marriage laws on family reunification of spouses of EU citizens. The pending decision had the potential to significantly change same-sex marriage recognition in the EU.

**Advocacy and Organizing**

Marriage equality has consumed much activist energy but has not been a consensual goal within LGBT movements nationally or on the European level. Debates within and across movements have centered on whether the goal should be to redefine heteronormative institutions completely and do away with the need for marriage altogether, to make tactical gains for certain rights but not full marriage, or to prioritize other issues, such as antigay violence.

Activists fighting for LGBT families have adopted different strategies depending on the country and the specific legal, cultural, and political circumstances there (Paternotte 2011). In general, they seek to change attitudes about same-sex couples and their children by creating positive public representations. They also engage in lobbying, judicial action, street protests, media outreach, and party politics to create favorable outcomes. In many countries, especially those in western Europe, LGBT advocacy organizations established
inroads into mainstream political parties where they pushed leadership, to varying degrees of success, to adopt pro-LGBT family stances. Many parties, including those on the Left, resisted their demands. In other places, especially parts of central and eastern Europe, activists have faced a political and cultural climate that has been relatively more hostile.

LGBT activists have also created international organizations in Europe to federate their efforts, share their expertise, and advocate for same-sex couples in international institutions. Examples of these movements include the European branch of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA-Europe), an international nongovernmental umbrella organization founded in 1975 that lobbies national governments, the Council of Europe, and the European Union; Rainbow Rose, an official part of the Party of European Socialists since 2006 that emerged out of European left-wing LGBT activists in the 1990s; and the European Parliament’s Intergroup on LGBT Rights.

**Resistence and Backlash**

The growing formalization of relationships between same-sex couples has led governments and social movements to try to prevent their spread. In some regions, especially in central and eastern Europe, lawmakers have sought to modify gender-neutral language in their constitutions or statutory law, which were drafted before the concept of same-sex spouses. They feared that courts would interpret this language in favor of same-sex couples. They did so either via the legislature or through referenda, hoping to mobilize negative public opinion. These include Armenia (2015), Croatia (2013), Hungary (2012), Latvia (2006), Montenegro (2007), Serbia (2006), and Slovakia (2014).

Other countries also considered statutory or constitutional bans. Romania attempted to modify its civil code (2008, 2009) and constitution (2013) to explicitly prohibit same-sex marriage. In 2015 Slovenian voters ultimately defeated a proposed same-sex marriage amendment, with 63.5 percent voting against. Some countries, such as Belarus, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Russia, and Ukraine had already specified marriage as a heterosexual institution in their constitutions before recognition for same-sex couples was common. These constitutional hurdles will likely make future legalization of marriage for same-sex couples more difficult.

Growing marriage and relationship recognition has led activists and lawmakers to target progressive legislation on sexual orientation and gender issues across Europe. Parliaments in Russia (2013) and Lithuania (2010), for example, have passed laws that ban so-called gay propaganda, making it difficult for advocacy organizations to positively represent LGBT families. A coordinated international effort to shore up heterosexist social expectations and undermine gender and sexual equality gained momentum in the second decade of the twenty-first century and is present in all European regions, including western Europe. For
example, protests against same-sex marriage and "gender theory" in France, Italy, Russia, and other countries have strengthened the ties between conservative social movements across the continent (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017). These movements typically draw on rhetoric about protecting children, preserving the “traditional family,” and resisting the loss of national identity to make their claims. Activists opposed to LGBT families have created organizations to resist change, such as the European Center for Law and Justice.

**Measuring and Accounting**

Observing whether and how European countries and supranational institutions recognize—or not—the rights and obligations of same-sex couples is complex, so scholars have organized international efforts to keep track. Indeed, given the lack of reliable centralized information and the array of complex national and international family law frameworks, which constantly evolve, civil society actors have had to fill the gap. Notable examples include the FamiliesAndSocieties research project, ILGA-Europe, the European Commission on Sexual Orientation Law, and the Commission on European Family Law. These organizations provide valuable and timely information on legal changes at the national and European levels. Some also provide demographic and statistical data about LGBT families across Europe. Such information can be important in shaping legal outcomes, as policy makers seek to understand how same-sex couples fare in other contexts.

SEE ALSO Adoption and Surrogacy in Europe; Adoption, Fostering, and Surrogacy (International); Anti-Gender Movement in Europe; Boston Marriage and Women's Romantic Friendships; Defense of Marriage Act (1996); Family Law in Asia; Female Husband; Human Rights in Europe; Kinship in Europe; Lesbian Mothering and Adoption in Latin America; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Latin America; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Taiwan; Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa; Marriage Migration in Asia; Parenting Rights in North America; QT v. Hong Kong Immigration Department (2017); Queer Domesticity in Europe; Russian Gay Propaganda Law; W v. Registrar of Marriages (2013)

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Institutionalized same-sex relationships between women in various African cultures.

Historically, African societies featured a great diversity of gender and sexual arrangements, including institutionalized bond friendships and woman-woman marriages (gynegamy). The large-scale introduction of Judeo-Christian and Islamic traditions has tended to reduce this variation but has not obliterated same-sex practices. Whether physical attraction and erotic intimacy played a major role in these relationships is a matter of controversy. Accounts of woman marriages have been found in 40 of the over 200 societies that have been documented in the anthropological literature. They occurred mostly in southern Sudan, Kenya, and southern Africa (including Namibia), as well as in southern Nigeria and neighboring Benin (Karsch-Haack [1911] 1975; Morgan and Wieringa 2005; Murray and Roscoe 1998; Tietmeyer 1985).
Comparing practices over such a vast area and in different periods is obviously difficult. The variety in institutions and practices is great, and the literature, though interesting, is scant. The problems are enhanced by the divergent perspectives and motivations of the authors documenting these practices. In their writings, the first wave of adventurers, traders, missionaries, and colonial administrators often voiced support for the colonial subjugation of the African communities they visited. Their exoticizing and often deeply racist perspectives are echoed in the work of the German armchair anthropologist Ferdinand Karsch-Haack (1853–1936), who collected their accounts of same-sex practices. He published his voluminous overview of same-sex life in “primitive” cultures in 1911. The number of societies for which woman-woman intimate relations are recorded may be an underestimation, as most ethnographers, missionaries, and imperial bureaucrats were men who may not have had access to the lives of women. As most of them regarded same-sex or same-gender practices negatively (as vices, perversions, or sins), women living in such unions may not have been forthcoming with details of their circumstances. Thus, Karsch-Haack wondered why he found so many fewer instances of women having sex with other women than cases of men having sex with men. It may be related, he suggested, to the fact
that women are so often pushed to the background, whereas men place themselves in the foreground, so that even those women who are “tribadically inclined” ([1911] 1975, 452) lived their lives in privacy. Nevertheless, the accounts the early writers give are full of details, and by reading them carefully, important insights about past woman-woman intimate relations can be gained (Blackwood and Wieringa 1999).

The second group of authors documenting same-sex practices, including woman marriages, were the early professional male anthropologists, such as E. E. Evans-Pritchard (working in the 1930s but publishing on woman marriages in 1970) and Melville J. Herskovits (1937). Their descriptions contain various accounts of physical intimacies. A third group of authors consists of women anthropologists working after World War II (1939–1945) until the 1980s. These mainly Western middle-class women tended to ignore or deny sexual intimacy between the partners where it may have occurred. Judith Gay, who analyzed mummy-baby relations (bond friendships between older and younger girls) in Lesotho, referred to this issue when she noted the “reticence” with which her informants discussed this topic with a “stranger whose disapproval they fear” (1979, 35).

The last group consists of African women themselves documenting their own lives (such as Nkabinde 2008) or that of women in their own societies (such as the researchers in Morgan and Wieringa 2005). Their present-day accounts of same-sex intimacies are reflexive and rich; most of them self-identify as lesbian, although they qualify that term to suit their own realities.

There is a great variety of institutionalized woman-woman relationships. This entry describes four main types: the autonomous woman-woman marriage, the dependent woman-woman marriage, bond friendships such as mummy-baby relationships, and same-sex relations based on possession by ancestral spirits.

**Independent Woman-Woman Marriages**

In several societies wealthy or powerful women who wanted to establish a compound of their own could do so. Women could gain wealth by farming, pottery making, divining and herbalism, increasing their livestock, or brewing beer. This practice of independent women marriage has been recorded for many societies all over the African continent, such as the Fon (in present-day Benin), the Nuer (in present-day South Sudan), the Nandi (in present-day Kenya), and the Igbo (in present-day Nigeria). The female husband would pay the appropriate bridewealth, and the marriage rituals would be recorded in her name. The main reason cited was the desire to get heirs to inherit her land and other forms of wealth and (ritual) power and to continue the line.

Among the Lovedu and the Venda (both in present-day South Africa), women who were traditional healers had a high prestige and could accumulate wealth accordingly (Krige
Among the Koni (in present-day Côte d’Ivoire), there are indications that a woman chief had to be a female husband. The female husband acquired status and control over the goods, money, and children her partner produced. Sometimes the female husbands were rich widows (as has been documented, for instance, in Mombasa, Kenya). In other cases, they were women who had never married. Barren Nuer women, for instance, were automatically classified as men, as Evans-Pritchard (1945) noted, and could thus easily marry other women.

Shilluk (in present-day South Sudan) princesses and the Lovedu queens should also be categorized here. Lovedu queens were barred from marrying a man; because of their high status they were seen as men themselves (Krige 1974). The Shilluk princesses were not so strictly limited, but if they married a man of lower status (possibly because of a shortage of available men of their own rank), they would lose their royal title. If they married a woman, by contrast, they could keep their title and privileges (Tietmeyer 1985).

**Dependent Woman-Woman Marriages**

In dependent woman marriages, a woman marries another woman to get heirs for a man, usually her deceased husband or son, so that their lineage can continue. Evans-Pritchard (1970) recorded such “ghost” or fictive woman marriages among the Nuer. The children in this woman marriage then belonged to that male relative of the female husband and continued his line, even though he might have died before they were conceived. Other groups such as the Lovedu, the Kikuyu (in present-day Kenya), and the Nandi also knew of ghost marriages (Tietmeyer 1985; Krige 1974). In other cases an infertile woman or a woman who had no sons herself married a younger woman who would bear sons for her husband in the name of the female husband. In this way her status in the extended family as a wife would be raised, particularly if her sons were the only sons the male husband had. The female husband could thus be wife to her husband, mother to their children, husband to her wife, and father to the children of that wife. In the latter case, she would also profit from the labor of her wife and children. In both cases the woman would exhibit the gender conduct thought proper for her role, as either wife/mother or husband/father. Denise O’Brien (1977) called this type of woman marriage “surrogate.”

**Bond Friendships**

A marriage is not the only institutionalized form in which two women can be tied. In a bond friendship, two young women express their affection for each other. These long-lasting friendships, which may exist side-by-side with a heterosexual marriage of one or both bond friends, are sealed in a particular way, either through a pledge, a ritual, or a (mostly asymmetric) gift. The partners in a bond friendship use fictive kinship or marriage terminology. The partners support each other through life and may share intimacies.
Elongation of the labia is one of the genital practices young girls in bond friendships may engage in. Not all girls who want their labia to be elongated are in a bonded relationship. Some researchers claim this is a painful practice intended only to increase the sexual pleasure of any future male partners. Others insist the practice is at least partly based on erotic intimacy between the girls. As Karsch-Haack recorded, missionaries and colonial administrators vehemently opposed these and other erotic practices girls might engage in. They were variously described as “perversities” or “a terrible vice” ([1911] 1975). A present-day form of such bond friendships is the mummy-baby relationship that schoolgirls may engage in. The “mummy,” who is usually older, ties the relationship with her “baby” with a gift. Thereafter they support each other. A “mummy” derives great status from having one or more “babies.” Sometimes these relationships break up when the girls leave school and get married. But they may also continue. Siza Khumalo (2005) found that these relationships in Swaziland were based on physical, mutual affection. But other anthropologists, such as Gay, insist that because these female relationships are compatible with heterosexuality, there is no space for the “genital pleasures of homosexuality” (1979, 43).

An early example of such a bond friendship is the oumapanga or oupanga (both terms are used) relation described by Karsch-Haack for the Dama/Namara in present-day Namibia. The girls were described as committing “bad acts” with each other such as mutual masturbation but also to “remain loyal to each other till death” ([1911] 1975, 475–476). The missionaries were vehemently opposed to this custom. Nowadays the word oumapanga is used for any kind of friendship.

Possession by Male Ancestor

Not only because she has acquired great wealth may a woman healer decide to marry a wife. It also may be that she is possessed by a male ancestor spirit who demands a wife for himself, an “ancestral wife,” as Nkunzi Zandile Nkabinde (2008) analyzes for her own Zulu culture (in present-day South Africa). Such healers, upon the request of their male ancestor, can have sex with an ancestral wife. A healer can also have an ancestral wife in a relationship that is predominantly a spiritual bond. Both roles can also be combined, so that the wife of the healer is both her lover and her spiritual wife. Among present-day Zulu woman healers, attraction to the partner is a major reason for choosing the particular wife they married. Even if it is their dominant male ancestors who indicate to them that they must marry a wife, it is they themselves who choose their wife or negotiate the choice of a wife with their ancestors. Nkabinde explicitly describes how she is able to explore aspects of her sexual identity because of relationships with both her male and female ancestors.

Characteristics of Woman-Woman Marriages

Woman marriages are mostly associated with patrilineal (following the male line of
inheritance) and patrilocal (following the husband's location after marriage) societies, in which female husbands take/took up a vacant male position. But there are also accounts of women contracting a marriage with another woman in societies characterized by matrilineal (following the female line of inheritance) or dual descent (women inherit from their mother's lineage, men from their father's lineage) rules, such as the Igbo in present-day Nigeria. There is overwhelming evidence that the main purpose of such marriages was the production of heirs, so that the wealth or position of authority of the woman who contracted the marriage (the female husband) or the person in whose name the marriage rituals were performed and the bridewealth paid (a husband or son) could be inherited. In some cases, a woman who still had a heterosexual marriage also contracted a marriage with another woman, making her a wife in one compound and a female husband in another compound that she herself set up. In such settings, the female husband also acquired a higher status as the wife in her heterosexual marriage. A very prosperous female husband might marry several wives, raising her status just as a polygynous man would. As the female husband controls the labor power of her wives and their children, polygyny allows her to become even wealthier (Tietmeyer 1985; Wieringa 2005).

A woman-woman marriage has advantages for the wife as well. Single women with children out of wedlock acquire a safe haven and enjoy greater sexual and social freedom. In general, woman-woman marriages are characterized by less domestic violence. Economic reasons also play a role. Most wives of female husbands are poorer than their partners, who often give a higher bridewealth than men would (Wieringa 2005).

As Ifi Amadiume (1987) demonstrated, the decline of this practice among the Igbo is largely the result of colonial and postcolonial leaders being unable or unwilling to deal with the dual gender system in which women have structural power. In other societies the spread of monotheistic religions and modern marriage laws has undermined the traditional woman marriages. Postcolonial laws do not recognize the customary rights of the partners; the inheritance rights of their children are often denied. They are considered to be the illegitimate offspring of the generally much poorer wives, and not the legitimate heirs of the rich female husbands. Although the institution of woman marriage is declining, it has not disappeared. In Kenya among the Kalenjin (namely, the Nandi, Kipsigis, and Keiyo), Namibia (the Damara), and southern Africa (Zulu healers), these traditional forms of woman marriages persist side-by-side with modern, generally urban, LGBTQI movements.

In a woman marriage the roles of genitor (biological father) and social father are separated. The genitor has no rights over the children that the woman he has impregnated has given birth to. In the case of a dependent marriage the genitor might be the husband (if the wife has borne no sons) or a relative to replace the deceased male. In other cases the genitor is an outsider, formally selected by the female husband. Sometimes he is awarded for his services. Usually the wife also has a say in who will become her male lover, allowing her a sexual autonomy most heterosexually married women do not enjoy.
Physical Intimacy

Several anthropologists, including Amadiume (1987), Eileen Jensen Krige (1974), Gay (1979), Elisabeth Tietmeyer (1985), and Regina Smith Oboler (1980), insist that there was no sex between the partners in woman marriages. This is contradicted by the work of other observers of those relationships. Herskovits, who conducted fieldwork among the Fon, wrote that it is not to be doubted that "occasionally homosexual women who have inherited wealth or have prospered economically establish compounds of their own and at the same time utilize the relationship in which they stand to the women whom they ‘marry’ to satisfy themselves" (1937, 338). To Karsch-Haack ([1911] 1975) it is undeniable that, for instance, the "macroclitorideae" (women with elongated labia) he describes engage in a sexual practice, particularly the "born tribads" among them. He pointed to the extensive references to the "mutual masturbation" involved in producing the "Hottentot apron" as it was called in those days (Hottentot being a commonly used name for Khoisan people to which the Nama also belong). He also gives detailed descriptions of the various kinds of dildos women used, such as the double dildos the women of Zanzibar seemed to have enjoyed playing with. The present-day accounts of African researchers also include various forms of physical intimacy.

It is clear that considerations of wealth, prestige, and inheritance were among the major factors leading to female husbands establishing their own compounds with one or more wives. However, erotic intimacy also played a role. Part of the denial of the role sexual intimacy may have played may be related to how "sex" was defined by both the partners in the woman marriage and by their anthropologists (Kendall 1999). If sex was defined only as penile penetration, the possibility of a sexual relationship between the women partners can be ruled out. Yet such practices that were observed as "grinding" described among Lesotho women, deep kissing, or mutual masturbation are considered sexual practices today, as they were by early observers.

A woman marriage was an attractive option for some rich or powerful women to establish their own compounds. In addition, in dependent woman marriages the female husband gains power and prestige. For the wives in such unions the relationships had advantages as well. Wife beating hardly seems to have occurred in woman marriages, and the social relationship between the partners was more equal and more intimate than in most heterosexual unions. Oboler observed an "atypical" degree of harmony between the partners, with the wives in these arrangements enjoying a much greater degree of (hetero) sexual autonomy and "real affection" between the partners (1980, 79), an observation affirmed by Nkabinde (2008).

SEE ALSO Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara; Female Husband; Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa; Ubuntu
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Masculinity in Iranian Cinema

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Portrayals of luti, shahid, fokoli, and other masculine archetypes from the Pahlavi era to contemporary times.

Iranian commercial cinema developed and proliferated during the Pahlavi dynasty (1925–1979), when modernization became the focus of the nation. The Pahlavis saw vulnerability in Iran’s lack of modernization, and they championed a strong Western model of hegemonic masculinity. Western knowledge became cultural capital, while traditional customs and religious knowledge were delegitimized and feminized. Reza Shah (r. 1925–1941) even banned tribal and traditional clothes. With the exception of clergy, adult men were to be clean-shaven and wear Pahlavi hats with Western-style jackets and trousers. The tension between the demands for modernity and the resilient tradition of Iranian chivalry has shaped the different masculine identities and resulted in such colorful characters as the tough-guy hero, the revolutionary martyr, and the Westernized dandy.

Although Iranian movies traffic in many types of masculinity, a persistent reaction to the hegemonic masculinity can be traced in the different archetypical male characters from before and after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. In the 1950s and 1960s, the government encouraged historical adventure films with heroes such as Rostam and Amir Arsalan, who entertained with romance, promoted a glorified past, and were loyal to the monarchy. Meanwhile, a different kind of character, a tough guy, or luti, was becoming the dominant masculine hero.

Luti

The term luti goes back to the tenth century and is related to the Persian and Arabic word lavat, meaning “sodomy.” The Qur’an identifies the citizens of Sodom as “the people of Lut.” Love for youth and pederasty were common in ancient Persia, as in ancient Greece, and historically, active dominant tough guys who engaged in sodomy were often described as lutis. Over the centuries, the term luti became more closely associated with two marginalized groups: “dervishes and entertainers” and more recently “urban Robin Hood–type bandits” (Floor 2010). Many of the attributes of these two groups—such as being an entertainer and abandoning worldly possessions, or fighting oppressors and defending the needy—are part of luti films.
Lutis are generally outsiders, on the fringe of society, either alone or in a gang. Their transgressive lives often come under attack, and they resort to fights in order to establish their masculine power and authority. They live in a homoerotic community. The luti practices wrestling in the traditional gymnasium known as the zurkhaneh (the house of strength), to become a pahlavan (hero). He follows the code of javanmardi, the ancient principles of chivalry and manliness.

Neighborhood strongmen could be protectors or bullies, friends to the poor and fighting tyrants, or thugs hired by the wealthy or the government to break rebellions. In the movies, this dual role manifests itself in distinct characters of the heroic luti and the villainous lat.

The heroic luti follows the javanmardi code of honor, works alone, defends the weak and women, and respects elders. He is merciful, stoic, humble, chaste, and truthful. Heroic lutis have an inner purity, and their cause is ennobled by spiritual righteousness. The villainous lat, by contrast, is often boisterous and brags about his strength. He leads a criminal gang, bullies the weak, and can be hired as a mercenary. The macho characters of luti and the lat become the clashing archetypal protagonist and antagonist of the tough-guy films.

Lutis, like historical adventure heroes, hark back to past traditions. But unlike historic warriors, who are meant to affirm modern progress and loyalty to the monarchy, the lutis represent the struggles of the lower class in a changing society. The “lovable rogues of the luti tradition stood for all the forgotten and alienated victims of urban growth: vagabonds, smugglers, extortionists, blackmailers, dealers, cut-throats, gamblers and pickpockets” (Sadr 2006, 117). Luti films were most popular with working-class male youth.

Lutis appeared in the 1960s melodramas derogatorily called film-e abgushti—what Hamid Naficy translates as “stewpot films” (2011–2012, 2:197). These are not tough-guy movies, but their characters exhibit javanmardi qualities. Mohammad ‘Ali Fardin (c. 1930–2000), a handsome former world-class wrestler, often played a happy-go-lucky working-class character who is chivalrous and supportive of anyone in need. In popular movies such as Aghay-e ghar-e bistom (1964; Twentieth-century man) and Ganj-e Qarun (1965; Croesus’s treasure) by Siamak Yasami (1925–1994), Fardin finds himself helping rich women in trouble—accidents that turn into romances and possibilities of breaking the class barrier. These films spoke to the dreams of the working class as well as to the working class’s economic struggles and attachments to traditional beliefs. They glorify the poor as honest and authentic while ridiculing the wealthy as materialistic and corrupt. But as with many luti films, they ascribe problems to personal weaknesses and not to sociopolitical conditions. Instead of offering a social critique, the stewpot lutis ultimately subscribe to political conformity.

Dash Mashti and Jaheli
Naficy identifies two types of films in the tough-guy genre: *dash mashti* and *jaheli*. “The *dash mashti* films concerned premodern, rural toughs from the turn of the twentieth century…. On the other hand, the *jaheli* films … dealt with the life and times of modern toughs after the Second World War” (2011–2012, 2:270). Naficy argues that “the cinematic shift from *dash mashti* to *jaheli* accompanied a gradual shift of societal paradigms within society from religious traditionalism to secularism and Western-style modernism” (2:294). He also associates the making of dash mashti films with the late 1950s and the jaheli with the early 1960s, although the timeline is not so clear cut.

Dash mashti films, such as *Dash Akol* (1971) by Masud Kimiai (1941–), have their dress code, which included a felt hat, a long coat, a large handkerchief manufactured in Yazd, a machete, a chain, and woven cotton shoes (Naficy 2011–2012). The dash mashti goes to *zurkhanah* to exercise and hangs out in traditional coffeehouses. He displays the ascetic qualities of dervishes, such as renouncing material possessions.
Jaheli films are the most popular and emblematic of the tough-guy genre. Whereas dash mashti movies are optimistic and see poverty as a virtue, jaheli films are pessimistic and see poverty as a vice. Jahels (the tough guys in the jaheli films) mimic the modern dress code of the hegemonic masculinity, but they make the Western fedora hat, jacket, and pants their own. They wear the clothes loosely, keep their mustaches thick, and never wear a tie.

Kimiai’s *Qaisar* (1969), a major box-office and critical success, is the quintessential jaheli film. The cast became the “who’s who” of tough-guy movies. The film’s opening sequence—crafted by Abbas Kiarostami (1940–2016) with tattooed images of pre-Islamic warriors from the Iranian epic *Shahnameh* and the sounds of the *zurkhaneh*—sets the tone of *javanmardi* by idealizing the past heroic tradition. The film is a reaction to modernization and an elegy for the disappearance of the traditional values of chivalry and manliness. The tension between the past and present is embodied in the protagonist Qaisar, who has to fight alone against the thugs responsible for the death of his sister and brother. Qaisar, with all his contradictions, posits *javanmardi* as an answer to the pressure of modernity and the alienation of lower-class young men in prerevolutionary times. By tapping into a manliness that is rooted in tribal identity, the martyrdom of Shi’a imams, and the mythic warriors of the pre-Islamic epics, Qaisar becomes an ideal model of masculinity. Films such as *Qaisar* constructed desires and codes of combative behavior that young men idolized, prompting them to see such films over and over again.

*Qaisar* was not made with a political message, but critics and viewers read it as a national allegory. The rebellious hero answered the anxiety and rage of men caught under the Pahlavis’ oppressive regime in the 1970s. Angry young men such as Qaisar, like the leftist Latin American hero Che Guevara (1928–1967), foreshadowed the revolution. Moreover, given the notion of *vatan* (homeland) as a female body, it is easy to see how protecting the purity of a woman can be politicized and extended to defending the motherland. Qaisar, like other luti heroes, must defend the honor of his sister. Thus, the luti working to restore the honor of his family becomes the revolutionary who restores the honor of his country violated by the oppressive regime and its Western allies.

*Shahid*

The revolution arrived in 1979, with the overthrow of the Pahlavi dynasty and the ascent of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–1989), who established the Islamic Republic of Iran. Many things perceived to be “Western” were considered contrary to Islam. Even though many of the values of the tough-guy genre were similar to what the new Islamic Republic endorsed, the regime did not want to be associated with the commercial cinema. The government decided to promote an Islamic citizen and to produce revolutionary films that would be an antidote to what it regarded as the immoral films of Hollywood and the Pahlavi era. The cinema—now funded by the regime instead of the box office—was to carry a spiritual and revolutionary dimension as “sacred defense.” But it was only after the Iran-
Iraq War (1980–1988) that directors such as Ebrahim Hatamikia (1961–) in Deedehban (1990; The scout) made the exemplary fictional movies of sacred defense. By the mid-1990s, around a quarter of Iran’s films were about war.

In these films, a new masculine hero combined javanmardi with innocent youth, spirituality, and self-sacrifice. He was modeled after the real war heroes whose pictures were plastered all over, and streets, alleyways, and freeways were named after them and their honorific, shahid (martyr). Shahids were not meant to be superstars but ordinary men who were raised to a higher purpose by their Islamic calling. The martyr heroes were honest, humble, and righteous. Their dress code replaced the Western hat and clothes of earlier masculine films with a khaki military uniform, no makeup, shaggy hair, a beard, a gun, and a bandanna often emblazoned with Qur’anic text. In the Islamic Republic, the woman’s veil further differentiated the sexes. The battlefront became the zurkhaneh, as the shahids confronted a corrupt, heretical Iraqi enemy who used the latest technology and was cleanshaven and arrogant. Yet these films did not have the nationalist sentiments of the Pahlavi era.

The spiritual journey in these films is twofold. On the one hand, the films feature a communal story of a jihad to spread justice against imperialism and oppression. The martyr is to sacrifice himself for the collective subjectivity—a hypermasculine, homoerotic brotherhood of soldiers who are often volunteers in the paramilitary Basij militia. The dissolution of the hero’s ego results in his immersion in the utopian umma (the unified Muslim community). On the other hand, the movies are also spiritual journeys of self-realization—a jihad of self against internal and external temptations. To purify the soul, the soldier renounces worldly possessions and carnal desires and follows the path of love to God.

The audience is meant to witness this journey from mundane to sacred, going through the spiritual transformation with the film’s hero and crew. In fact, the word shahid is a Qur’anic word that means “to witness,” in addition to its more common meaning “martyr.” As the sacramental experience gets witnessed, as in an Islamic dhikr (remembrance), viewers are inculcated in becoming shahids.

Another transformation that started in postrevolution films was the conversion of lutis into Muslim heroes. Early on, those involved in the prerevolution commercial cinema tried to refashion themselves as pious revolutionaries and martyrs. With the biggest box-office sales up to that time, Barzakhya (1982; The imperiled) by Iraj Ghaderi (1935–2012) was a good example of a commercial movie co-opting revolutionary zeal; it featured leading prerevolution commercial actors such as Fardin. In the film, a group of convicts escape prison and try to leave the country, but they have a change of heart after Iraq’s invasion. They decide to stay and sacrifice their lives for their country. The success of the movie led to many negative reactions by the conservative press and government. Many
prerevolutionary filmmakers and actors were banned as a result.

But the idea of converting thugs to Islamic heroes did not stop. For example, *Ekhrajiha (2007: The outcasts)* by Masoud Dehnamaki (1969–), a reactionary veteran, is another successful incarnation that broke box-office records. In Dehnamaki’s comedy, a luti thug named Majid is reformed into a real man by becoming a shahid. As in many Sufi stories, the change begins with the demands of earthly love. To get his girl and prove his manliness, Majid goes to the warfront and learns the true Islamic *javanmardi* value of self-sacrifice. He also ends up with the higher love of God.

**Fokoli**

Meaning “dandy” in Persian, the word *fokoli* derives from the French term *faux-col*, as in “detached collar.” It is used pejoratively to refer to a man who is superficially pretending to be modern by wearing a tie and Western clothes. It epitomizes the criticism of artists, intellectuals, and clergy who saw the cause of Iran’s social ills in the passive reception of Western values and the loss of Iranian identity. Fokolis are usually portrayed as weak, ineffectual, and effeminate. They satirize poor imitations of Western ideas. Their “effeminacy marks the surplus homoeroticism that escaped society's heteronormative preferences” (*Naficy 2011–2012, 1:301*).

The role of the dandy has been understood by scholars in different ways. Some, such as Fakhr al-Din Shadman (see *Gheissari 2010*) and Sivan Balslev (*2014*), describe the fokoli as the negative manifestation of the authentic modern intellectual. The fokoli, then, allows the intellectual elites to divert criticism of their Westernization and Western-educated hegemonic masculinity to those who are not properly educated or really modern. Others, such as Naficy, consider the fokoli’s performative act as what the postcolonial studies scholar Homi K. Bhabha calls mimicry. Naficy differentiates mimicry as a form of resistance that “threatened the Islamic, patriarchal, secular, and heteronormal orders” from false imitation (2011–2012, 1:277). In cinema, a further challenge from this gender-bending ambivalence and hybridity can be seen in the performative behavior of cross-dressing.

Fokolis usually appear opposite lutis, as in *Jahelha va zhogoloha* (*1965; Tough guys and gigolos*) by Hossein Madani (1926–). Unlike the luti, who is usually lower class and advocates traditional values, the fokoli is often middle class and favors Western modernity. There is also a degree of latent homosexuality in their ambiguous behavior.

Fokolis are often remasculinized into a jahel through the power of love and marriage. One example is *Jooje fokoli (1974; Baby dandy)* by Reza Safai (1937–), which harks back to *Qaisar*, as if the hero is the son of Qaisar’s brother. He has studied medicine, but he has become a hippie and a rock musician who needs to be restored into a real man. By falling in love and going literally to the Jaheli Institute, he takes his rightful place as his father’s son,
reinforcing the patriarchal masculine identity. The transformation is both external and internal. He cuts his long hair, changes his beard to a jaheli moustache, wears a jaheli suit and fedora hat, and begins talking like a luti.

**The Forgotten Man**

In cinema, the jahel and shahid became the standards against which other masculinities had to be measured. But these hypermasculine films were also subject to frequent criticisms. Secular intellectuals and conservative clergy alike denigrated the luti films as trite and degenerate. Iranian war films often failed at the box office, and critics described them as formulaic and clichéd.

Around 1969, an alternative new-wave cinema was born that presented different masculinities and the complexity of Iranian men. Modernity, Westernization, and urbanization—as well as the changing role of women—destabilized the patriarchy. The traditional solutions and behaviors no longer proved adequate. Men began having a hard time adjusting to the changes both at home and in public. This situation continues to this day.

The new-wave films address this crisis. They portray a common man with his insecurities and vulnerabilities. There are subaltern men forgotten by society, men searching for their identity and place in society, men who are unable to live up to the standards of the dominant masculinity or to fulfill their patriarchal role, and men with conflicting and contradictory wishes. Examples of such prerevolutionary films include *Postchi* (1972; *The postman*) by Dariush Mehrjui (1939–), *Ragbar* (1972; *Downpour*) by Bahram Beyzaie (1938–), *Aramesh dar hozur deegaran* (1973; *Tranquility in the presence of others*) by Naser Taghvai (1941–), and *Tabiate bijan* (1974; *Still life*) by Sohrab Shahid Saless (1944–1998).

After the revolution, and especially during the Iran-Iraq War, such critical films could not be made. But by the 1990s, filmmakers again challenged the narrow discourse of masculinity that was imposed by the government and the cinema of sacred defense. Iranian men paid greatly for the devastating eight-year war with Iraq, which ended in a stalemate. After the war, and with the death of Khomeini in 1989, the country was looking for a new start. Yet there were hundreds of thousands of returning veterans who had neither accomplished their goal nor could adjust to the changing civil society that was exhausted by the war. Directors such as Hatamikia and Mohsen Makhmalbaf (1957–), who had promoted the cinema of sacred defense, turned to the problems of veterans. Their films depict not the idealistic shahids but veterans suffering from physical disabilities, posttraumatic stress disorder, or the effects of chemical warfare. They cannot find jobs or pay for their medical ailments. They are sometimes estranged from their wives and families. In films such as Makhmalbaf’s *Arousi-ye khouban* (1989; *Marriage of the blessed*), veterans become the
forgotten men, forewarning of a society that was losing its revolutionary ideals. The films render a country that is turning materialistic, corrupt, and bureaucratic. They question the war and the treatment of the soldiers—not just by the secular society but also by the government.

The secular middle-class intellectual, who during the Pahlavi era was part of the hegemonic masculinity either supporting the regime or the leftist opposition, also became a disenfranchised, forgotten man. He may have endorsed the revolution but now could not find a place for himself in the Islamic Republic. While not portrayed as a fokoli, he was still weak, incompetent, confused, oversensitive, and ineffective. Hamid Reza Sadr defines the character of intellectuals with four traits: “deep insecurity, political cynicism, personal mistrust, and self-destruction” (2006, 253). Mehrjui’s *Hamoun* (1990), a popular and influential film, was the first major movie to present an authentic representation of intellectuals after the revolution. Hamoun, the protagonist, is in a midlife crisis, caught in the conflicts between the lower and middle classes, as well as between modern and traditional values.

At the time of the election of Mohammad Khatami (1943–) as president of Iran in 1997, 68 percent of the population was under thirty. The youth, who were a major part of Khatami’s
landslide win, also came to be a new face of the Iranian cinema in such movies as *Mercedes* (1998) by Kimiai and *Nafas-e amigh* (2003; *Deep breath*) by Parviz Shahbazi (1962–). Some films portray this new generation and their demands as a threat, whereas others look for a more authentic depiction of the youth's hopes and disillusionments. In these films, the young are stuck in "Guyland" limbo, unable to become true adults or to achieve the social expectations of the patriarchal system. They cannot find jobs, leave home, or raise families. Instead, they go around aimlessly, getting involved with sex, drugs, alcohol, underground parties, or petty crime. The youths’ hopes were derailed after Khatami was not able to fulfill his promises. They became disaffected rebels who had lost hope—rebels without a cause. For them, “manliness was defined in terms of rebellion and defiance of all moral ties to others” (Sadr 2006, 250).

Throughout his career, Kimiai has depicted different masculinities. In 2000 he introduced a pro-reformist hero in *Eteraz* (The Protest), which was a response to his earlier film *Qaisar*. Amir, who has been in prison for an honor killing, represents the jaheli values of Qaisar. But in *Eteraz* these values come with terrible consequences. Amir is hired by the regime as a thug to attack students, such as his brother Reza’s friends. Reza, by contrast, is practical, compassionate, and rational. He tries to convince Amir that there is no place for such acts as honor killings in the new progressive society.

Unlike the action-driven *Qaisar*, *Eteraz* is about dialogue and reason. The college students spend a great deal of time debating the role of being a citizen and the current political situation in Iran. A new generation of men does not need to resort to the bygone traditions to define their identity. Films such as *Eteraz* show that, even with all their difficulties and uncertainties, Iranian men have a chance to refashion themselves in a world that is out of the shadow of luti, shahid, or fokoli.

SEE ALSO *Shifting Sexual Norms in Nineteenth-Century Iran; Transgender Identity in Iranian Cinema; Transgendered Subjectivities in Contemporary Iran*

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Established in Los Angeles in 1950, the Mattachine Society was the first major homosexual political organization founded in the United States. By the 1960s, Mattachine societies stretched from San Francisco to Chicago and from Denver to New York City. Far from constituting a uniform ideology or single organizational model, Mattachine was an elastic vehicle of the homophile movement. Mattachine's birth in Los Angeles was rooted in imaginative interconnections between Marxist philosophy, Communist Party structures, and homosexual community building. Later Mattachine societies were committed to public education, law reform, and building relationships with medical experts. In the mid-1950s a periodical called the *Mattachine Review* was launched. It functioned as an organ of homophile communication across North America, Europe, and beyond. Starting in the late 1960s, Mattachine societies increasingly collapsed with the advent of gay liberation.

**Beginnings**

Harry Hay (1912–2002) was a driving force behind the Mattachine Society's creation. Though born in England, he grew up primarily in Southern California. After attending Stanford University, Hay moved to Los Angeles, where he joined the Communist Party. Starting in the early 1930s, Hay variously worked for the party as an agitprop actor, community educator, and union organizer (*D’Emilio 1998*). In 1948, at a Communist Party event in support of Henry Wallace’s presidential campaign, Hay realized that many of the men present were gay. They joked about forming a group called “Bachelors for Wallace,” which would support the candidate in exchange for sexual privacy legislation (*Faderman 2015*). This experience inspired Hay to pursue the creation of a homosexual political organization. For nearly two years, his attempts to interest friends and acquaintances in such an endeavor were unsuccessful. In 1950, however, Hay connected with Bob Hull and Chuck Rowland, who had also been involved in the Communist Party. They had similar ideas regarding the need for homosexuals to organize themselves against oppression. Hay hosted a series of political discussions with these and several other men at his Los Angeles home that ultimately led to the formation of the Mattachine Society (*D’Emilio 1998*).
As the Mattachine Society crystallized in 1950, its structure and concerns reflected the leftism of the founding members. In organizational terms, the society was loosely modeled on the Communist Party. There were five orders of membership, each with separate cells. Power and responsibility ascended from the first order at the bottom of the pyramid to the fifth order at the top. Consisting of the founders themselves, the fifth order provided centralized leadership and set policies for Mattachine as a whole (D'Emilio 1998). The organization was highly secretive, and members of separate cells and orders were largely unknown to one another. The group’s very name referenced the Société Mattachine, a secret fraternity of unmarried men in early modern France whose membership apparently held clandestine dances, wore masks, and employed satire as a form of social critique (Faderman 2015). Given the political climate of the United States in the early 1950s, secrecy was necessary for the vast majority involved. Public exposure carried the risk of job loss—even criminal prosecution. Joseph McCarthy, a US senator from Wisconsin, was leading a movement to root out Communists and subversive elements within American political and sociocultural institutions, and efforts to purge homosexuals from the federal government were proceeding apace (Johnson 2004).

Mattachine’s founders generally conceptualized homosexuals as an oppressed cultural minority. Influenced by Marxist theory, they regarded the homosexual minority’s lack of collective consciousness as a central political problem (D’Emilio 1998). Here the organization faced difficult contradictions. How could it raise awareness among homosexuals while remaining secretive and embracing principles of anonymity? How could Mattachine foster pride in a gay, minority culture from behind a mask? While never resolving such contradictions, the early Mattachine Society did achieve a degree of success by leafleting in gay hangouts, forming discussion groups, and taking militant stances against police entrapment (Faderman 2015). Drawing members from across Southern California, the organization may have achieved a total participation of 2,000 people by 1953 (D’Emilio 1998).

**Reorganization**

Ironically, the success of Mattachine Society’s founders resulted in a coup. New members did not necessarily share the politics of the group’s leaders. While initially helpful in terms of establishing a political organization, many regarded Mattachine’s foundational connections to the Communist Party as a serious liability (D’Emilio 1998). A new cohort of members began to demand that Mattachine make anti-Communist declarations. In the face of increasingly contentious debates over the organization’s future direction, Hay, Rowland, Hull, and other leaders resigned (Faderman 2015). Starting in 1953, a new, more conservative leadership consisting of Hal Call, David Finn, Ken Burns, and Marilyn Rieger significantly reorganized Mattachine. Headed by a coordinating council, Mattachine adopted an organizational model rooted in regional area councils, which consisted of task-
oriented chapters (D'Emilio 1998). Moreover, the society’s new leaders rejected the notion that homosexuals were an oppressed cultural minority. Instead, they viewed gay people as no different from the general population except for their sexual preferences (Faderman and Timmons 2006).

In the mid-1950s Mattachine increasingly focused on education in two main ways. First, the organization sought to educate gay people regarding responsible citizenship and desirable behavior. Mattachine increasingly prescribed the conduct of its members, who were encouraged to act in accordance with hegemonic sociocultural norms and institutions. Second, Mattachine endeavored to educate the general public by participating in medical and scientific research into human sexuality. Through collaborations with experts in fields such as psychiatry and sexology, the society sought to dispel false ideas about homosexual deviancy (Meeker 2006). The organization became less interested in discussion groups and largely oriented itself toward lobbying experts. While originally including a minority of lesbians, in this period Mattachine lost many of its female members, to the extent that only a token element remained (Gallo 2006). The organization’s center of gravity also shifted northward from Southern California to San Francisco and the Bay Area (Alamilla Boyd 2003).

**Mattachine Review**

The year 1955 saw the launch of *Mattachine Review*, a monthly periodical spearheaded by Call. A journalism graduate from the University of Missouri, Call had been fired from the *Kansas City Star* on account of a homosexual morals charge (Meeker 2006). His journalistic experience was indispensable, particularly as the *Review* faced multiple challenges regarding content creation, printing services, distribution, and finance. In the mid-1950s it was no small feat for a small group of activist volunteers to regularly produce a viable periodical with national aspirations that contained possibly illegal homosexual content.

*Mattachine Review* has been a source of scholarly disagreement. Rodger Streitmatter (1995) suggests that the periodical primarily sought to aid in the assimilation of homosexuals and that its “conformist philosophy” was echoed by its “bland design.” He also emphasizes that the *Review* often denigrated homosexuals as emotionally immature, selfish, and irresponsible. Martin Meeker (2006) offers a more generous interpretation. He emphasizes the *Review*’s vital role in bringing geographically far-flung gay people into association during a repressive political era and suggests that content now interpreted as conformist was not necessarily seen this way by queer readers in the 1950s. Perhaps more salient for these readers was the *Review*’s exciting new “universe of information about sexualities” (Meeker 2006, 57).

Scholarly arguments aside, it is clear that the *Review* contained content that criticized the criminalization and pathologization of homosexuality. For example, the *Review* published
articles that drew on history and anthropology to demonstrate that homosexuality was not an aberration of Western modernity, but rather an enduring facet of the human experience. Here gay people were constructed as rights-bearing subjects, given homosexuality’s apparent status as a transhistorical, cross-cultural phenomenon (Churchill 2009). Also notable is that Mattachine Review received thousands of letters from readers across North America and abroad, which demonstrate that the publication helped many people formulate and express demands regarding their right to live gay and lesbian lives without condemnation or interference (Loftin 2012).

Dick Leitsch of the Mattachine Society, 1965. Leitsch was head of the New York chapter of the Mattachine Society during the 1960s, a time when some chapters pursued a more militant agenda. Leitsch helped organize the New York chapter’s “sip-in” to challenge discrimination against gay customers in bars in April 1966, which was one of the earliest acts of gay civil disobedience.

Expansion

Starting in the mid-1950s, the Mattachine Society spread across the United States. Chapters were formed in New York City, Washington, Chicago, Philadelphia, Boston, Detroit, and Denver (D’Emilio 1998). Mattachine also exerted at least some international influence. For example, Canada’s first homophile organization, the Vancouverbased Association for Social Knowledge, was modeled on the Mattachine Society of San Francisco (Warner 2002). Although circulating primarily within the United States, Mattachine Review was also read by Canadians, Europeans, Australians, and occasionally people living in the Global South.
The periodical facilitated interconnections between Mattachine societies in the United States, homophile organizations in western Europe, and farflung readers from the Middle East to Southeast Asia (Churchill 2009; Rupp 2011).

In 1961 Mattachine Society's national structure disintegrated. Mattachine societies on the East Coast resented the San Francisco group's national leadership and control over membership dues. Specifically, New York Mattachine began leveling accusations of financial mismanagement and misappropriation. The response of San Francisco Mattachine was to dissolve the national organization altogether, leaving local groups to fend for themselves (D'Emilio 1998). Weaker chapters that relied on national support, such as those in Boston and Denver, soon collapsed. A positive consequence was that Mattachine societies, particularly on the East Coast, were now free to pursue an independent direction.

**Renewed Militancy**

Washington Mattachine is a case in point. An early version of the organization, founded by Buell Dwight Huggins in 1956, not only pursued ambitious goals of law reform but critiqued the federal government's antigay employment policies. Huggins was scolded, however, by Mattachine's national office in San Francisco. Indeed, he was instructed to abandon such militancy and stick to research and education. The group atrophied in 1958 (Johnson 2004). In 1961, under the leadership of Frank Kameny, and without interference of a national office, Washington Mattachine was reborn. The revitalized organization militantly asserted that homosexuals deserved full US citizenship and that it would “speak on their behalf to end the injustices they experienced, particularly at the hands of the federal government” (Johnson 2004, 184). A former civil servant fired because of his homosexuality, who had unsuccessfully taken the federal government to court, Kameny conceptualized homosexuals as an oppressed minority that faced discrimination comparable to that faced by ethnic and racial minorities (Churchill 2009).

Mattachine's national dissolution also created room for the creation of the East Coast Homophile Organizations (ECHO) in 1963. Kameny and Barbara Gittings were driving forces behind this group, which sought greater coordination between homophile organizations from New England to Washington (Faderman 2015). ECHO ultimately laid the groundwork for the 1966 establishment of the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations (NACHO), which funded court cases involving bar raids, discriminatory immigration policies, and the unlawful dismissal of gay military personnel. Additionally, NACHO contested federal employment policies, demanded law reform, and encouraged the establishment of homophile organizations beyond East Coast metropolises, from Kansas to Florida (D'Emilio 1998).

**Gay Liberation**
At the close of the 1960s, gay liberation crystallized in California and the northeastern United States. This movement generally rejected homophilism and the Mattachine Society. A new wave of activists eschewed expert knowledge in favor of their own experience; spurned secrecy in favor of gay pride; renounced the legitimacy of the US nation-state; and sought revolutionary alliances with movements such as Black Power, women’s liberation, and Third World decolonization. In the radical fervor that surrounded the Stonewall riots of 1969, even the most militant Mattachine members appeared outmoded. In the 1970s Mattachine societies increasingly collapsed. Obituaries penned by gay liberationists were often condemnatory and unfair. In striving to assert the radical novelty of their movement, gay liberationists generally failed to acknowledge the courage and important political work of homophile forebearers, as well as the radical beginnings of the Mattachine Society.

SEE ALSO Daughters of Bilitis; Gay Liberation Front; Human Rights Campaign; Lavender Scare

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Alternative therapies are conspicuous by their absence in the historiography of homosexuality, and vice versa: homosexuality is not an issue for historians of alternative medicine. It was therefore possible for American sexologist and medical historian Vern L. Bullough in 1974 to assert that “quacks,” as he called them, had contributed nothing to the sexual debate apart from anti-masturbation propaganda (102). Bullough's attitude is prevalent among sexologists, who generally view medical practice solely in terms of conventional, or orthodox, medicine—focusing on psychiatrists and other physicians who diagnose disease, conceive therapies, and fight against AIDS at the side of groups demanding emancipation. There is evidence, however, of the ascendance of complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) in the queer community in the twenty-first century (Smith et al. 2010).

CAM has a history that long predates the rise of Western orthodox medicine in the nineteenth century. Two of the oldest forms of CAM are traditional Chinese medicine and the traditional system of Indian medicine known as Ayurveda, which have been practiced for thousands of years and attempt to harmonize the mind, body, and spirit to promote overall health. The therapeutic use of water to cure illness, known as hydrotherapy, stretches back to ancient Egyptian, Greek, and Roman civilizations. German physician Samuel Hahnemann (1755–1843) created the system of alternative medicine known as homeopathy in 1810. Yet, as Western medicine developed a clinical, pharmaceutical-based approach to the treatment of illness, these long-standing traditions were brushed aside in the West as unscientific and untested. Taking its cue from legal and religious attitudes toward nonnormative sexualities, the psychiatric and medical establishments of the late nineteenth century pathologized any same-sex sexual behavior—or any non-procreative sexual behavior, such as masturbation—as evidence of mental illness. Homosexuality was considered a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association until 1973.

CAM in the West

CAM’s position as an outlier in Western medicine, combined with its more holistic approach, was useful to patients who feared being persecuted and pathologized by
conventional medicine because of their sexuality. The seminal works of homeopaths and hydrotherapists were produced in the decades prior to the emergence of the psychiatric or psychoanalytical definition of homosexuality. In the writings of Hahnemann and his followers and those of the trailblazers of modern hydrotherapy, discussion of nonnormative sexuality did not go beyond mention of excessive sexual desire or onanism, conditions that they recommended be treated with the help of homeopathic medicines and lifestyle changes (Hahnemann 2003; Farrington 1890; Kent 1897; Hughes 1902; Royal 1923; Kneipp 1923). Homeopaths interpreted sexual problems as being part of a larger, usually psychosomatic, issue (Nash 1907; Royal 1923) but without resorting to terms such as sodomy or homosexuality. Even injuries in the anal and genital areas were merely associated with “sexual excitement” (Clarke 1902, 1160). Women who felt no desire to participate in heterosexual intercourse were diagnosed with “exhaustion,” yet no other inferences were made about them (Clarke 1902, 583).

**CAM as a Refuge for Homosexual Patients** This unwillingness to judge their patients may have stemmed from the fact that homeopaths and naturopaths in the United States and Great Britain—whether physicians or laypeople—were themselves subjected to extensive observation and persecution by the authorities and bodies that represented the medical profession, such as the American Medical Association. Therapists who were hounded in this way constituted ideal contacts for patients who either could not express their sexual interests out of fear of persecution or could not define their interests due to their lack of awareness of modern research in psychiatry or sexual sciences. The therapies proposed by alternative medical practitioners since the 1850s mostly boiled down to physical fitness training in the guise of naturism, saunas, and sunbathing (Juette 1996; Heyll 2006). Given that these treatments may have allowed patients to contact others of similar orientation, they doubtless contributed a great deal more to the alleviation of patients’ “psychosomatic symptoms” than conventional medications or electric shocks.

The term homosexuality was not mentioned in Anglo-American homeopathic journals until the 1960s. It was only the influence of psychoanalysis (which was increasingly prevalent) that made people consider how homeopaths ought to treat patients. Besides mentioning some specific medications, “lack of emancipation” was defined by homeopaths, who were influenced by psychoanalysis, as being the main problem facing homosexuals (Tufo 1964, 33). European homeopathic physicians and lay healers worked in a similar way to their American colleagues and concentrated on what would be seen today—or from a contemporary orthodox perspective—as vague diagnoses that allowed them and their patients scope for a variety of interpretations (Hering 1889; Mittelstaedt 1902; Donner 1932). The affinity between alternative therapies and the Lebensreform (life reform) movement in Germany and Switzerland enabled homosexual patients who were wrestling with their sexuality to take refuge in naturism.

**CAM and the Sexual Reform Movement** CAM and the sexual reform movement
occasionally worked closely together in central Europe. German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) joined forces with Reinhold Gerling (1863–1930), the most important popularizer of naturopathy, to combat the criminalization of homosexual desire from the late 1890s (Herzer 2017). The alliance between sexual reform activism and naturopathy withered following the Eulenberg affair in Germany: a very public scandal, it involved accusations of homosexual conduct within Kaiser Wilhelm II’s inner circle between 1907 and 1909. The negative publicity generated by this affair caused the main players in the world of naturopathy to increasingly adopt chauvinistic and conservative political viewpoints.

**Association with the Nazi Eugenics Program** When the Nazis came to power in Germany in the 1930s, they implemented a program of eugenics in which persons who did not align with the Nazi definition of the ideal Aryan, or “master,” race were targeted for reeducation, sterilization, or extermination. While this program was primarily race-based, undesirable persons included homosexuals, the mentally ill, and those with physical disabilities. In this environment, homeopaths and naturopaths were merged with analysts who had been relegated to the position of “Aryan mental health practitioners” (arische Seelenheilkunde) to form a Nazi-oriented “labor association” (reichsarbeitsgemeinschaft), and this had a huge impact on the homeopaths’ notions of sexual therapy.

Doctors and laypeople in Nazi Germany were obliged to adhere to the Nazi eugenics philosophy, so the target of every therapeutic concept in sexuality was the creation of the perfect Aryan man or woman. To simplify daily therapeutical work, the CAM doctors and laypeople adopted a system of konstitutionsbiologie, or constitutional biology, which viewed the “body and the psyche as intimately connected and biologically pre-determined” (Frame 1997, 18). Under this system, women with small body frames were prone to sexual problems, while men with wide pelvises were prone to melancholy or “sexual inversion”—the term used at the time for homosexuals. The goal of homeopathic theory, then, was to “cure” homosexuals so that they conformed to the Aryan ideal. Even after the defeat of the Nazis in 1945, one could encounter therapists who took this approach with their homosexual patients (Gallavardin 1958, 1986; Bailey 1998; Raba 1998).

**CAM after the Depathologization of Homosexuality** As the Western medical establishment depathologized homosexual desire in the 1970s, the LGBTQ community relied less and less on CAM. Homeopathy in the realm of sexual therapy is nowadays restricted to treating impotence (Vithoulkas 1988; English 1996; Scholten 2014), while ways of thinking that are based on sexual pathology have also disappeared from classic naturopathy (Schäfgen 2010). In the 1980s, naturopaths in the United States found themselves compromised in the eyes of the gay community because of their exaggerated promises of therapies to cure AIDS (Young 1992).

A special role in alternative healing cultures in the Anglo-American world is assumed by
neo-shamanism, which influenced prominent American gay rights activist Harry Hay (1912–2002), among others (Timmons 1990). Hay and others combined pre-Columbian tribal traditions with modern Western esoterics in the founding of the Radical Faeries, a spiritualist movement that resonated with some of the undergirding principles of alternative medicine (Thompson 1987; Hennen 2008). The focus in these subcultures is on self-optimization with the aid of transcendental powers; the overcoming of gender boundaries constitutes an intrinsic part of self-perfection (Wallis 2000). This also applies to the neo-Druids in Great Britain (Wallis 2004), whose joining of spirituality with reverence for nature appealed to those in the gay community interested in new spiritual paths (Tan 2005).

**CAM Outside the West**

Beyond the Western world (in India, for example), CAM, and especially homeopathy, continues to play a major role in the health-care market, and this is where the treatment of HIV/AIDS constitutes an important area of activity (Fritts et al. 2008; Taneja et al. 2014). Homeopathic remedies are not as effective as modern drugs in clinical trials, but they serve as a valuable alternative for those who cannot afford more conventional treatments, or when they are combined with retroviral therapies. Moreover, homeopathic dietetics are seen as helpful for stabilizing the body’s defenses against HIV.

Ancient Ayurvedic texts, such as the Carakasamhita and the Susrutasamhita, describe same-sex desire as part of life (Sweet and Zwilling 1993). It only came to be pathologized in India in later centuries, particularly during the years of British colonial rule. Influenced by theosophy, the Indian national movement imported Western naturopathy from 1900 onward (Jansen 2016).

Within the context of legal decriminalization, the treatment of same-sex desire is nowadays disappearing from the repertoire of Indian homeopathy and naturopathy. Yoga, a technique exported from India to the West, is often used to optimize the muscles in the pelvic floor and is hugely popular in the gay and lesbian subculture. In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) sources written from 200 BCE to 200 CE, sexuality is seen as a positive and health-promoting factor in human life (Chou 2000; Mann 2011).

This general view changed when Western terms and methods entered Chinese medical discourse and paved the way for the pathologization of sexual variants (Sang 1999). When Communist leader Mao Zedong established the modern People’s Republic of China in 1949, he also established a narrowed tradition of TCM that was exported to Western countries and that referred to Communist ideology in its methods and theory of science (Taylor 2005). Adherents of TCM in the United States occasionally tried to “cure” homosexuals in the years before the depathologization of homosexuality (Ng and Lau 1990). Acupuncture was commonly used in such treatment (Bivins 2000).
SEE ALSO Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM); Psychoanalysis in Argentina; Psychopathia Sexualis (1886; Richard von Krafft-Ebing)

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Meem

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Activist and support group for queer women and trans people in Lebanon from 2007 to 2014.

From 2007 to 2014, Meem was a support group of more than 400 lesbian, bisexual, queer, and trans people in Lebanon. “MEEM” is an acronym for “Majmouaat Mou’azara lil-Mar’a al-Mithliya” (Support Group for Lesbian Women). The word meem is also the phonetic pronunciation of the letter m in Arabic. This entry contextualizes the establishment of Meem within the history and the legal context of queer activism in Lebanon, designating its inception as an effort to acquire a safer space that centers the experiences of women and feminist issues. This entry also highlights the different components of Meem’s queer politics, its grassroots work, and its publications.

Homophobia in Lebanon’s Legal System

Homophobia in Lebanon operates partially through a state-sponsored legal imperative. Originally introduced during the colonial rule of the French Mandate (1923–1946), Article 534 of the Lebanese penal code criminalizes “unnatural sexual intercourse” with up to one year of prison. Together with the normative discourses on sexuality in the local context of Lebanon, this law shapes the current realities of queer subjects that live under the threat of homophobic oppression and police violence (see Gagné 2012). Yet, reports of police crackdowns on gay cruising areas in 2012–2014 document how Article 534 is ambiguously and discriminatorily applied because it almost exclusively targets marginalized queers from working-class, migrant, refugee, and/or transfeminine identities. Such cases of police arrests and raids reveal that homophobia in Lebanon is inseparable from the patriarchal, capitalist, racial, and sectarian violence constituting the machinery of the state (see Mikdashi and Puar 2016).
History of LGBT Organizing in Lebanon

Since the 1990s, queer organizing in Lebanon has mainly revolved around the work of two organizations, Helem (an acronym of the Arabic “Himaya Lubnaniya lil-Mithliyin” [Lebanese protection for LGBTs]; the word helem also means “dream”) and Meem, founded in 2004 and 2007, respectively. The start of a formally organized LGBT movement in Lebanon is traced to the late 1990s—the post–civil war period—which witnessed the emergence of new social identities and practices in Beirut (Gagné 2012). This period is characterized by the reconstruction of the city (particularly its city center, downtown) led by the private company Solidere, the creation of new spatial orderings, neoliberalization, increased consumption, globalization, the migration/return of people from the diaspora, and the emergence of a new body politic. As such, the landscape for queer leisure spaces in Beirut, “homosexual spheres,” and “venues of conspicuous gay consumption” emerging in the postwar period materialized with the beginning of the queer activist movement (see Merabet 2014; Gagné 2012).

The genesis of the LGBT movement began with the creation of an online mailing list on Yahoo in 1998 and the registration of a website called gaylebanon.com in 1999, which was launched by gay activists (Bareed Mista3jil 2009). Also, the hashtag #gaylebanon was used as a channel name in IRC chat rooms. A few years after, ClubFree was founded as an underground LGBT group, and its space hosted meetings, movie screenings, and, importantly, strategy discussions about lobbying and advocacy for gay rights in Lebanon. In 2002 another LGBT group, Hurriyat Khassa (Private Liberties), was founded and registered as a nongovernmental organization aiming to lobby against Article 534 of the Lebanese penal code (Makarem 2011).

In 2004 Helem was founded as the first officially registered, “aboveground” LGBT organization in the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. Because Helem was a rights organization, its strategic activities included advocating to abolish Article 534,
education, raising awareness about HIV/AIDS, managing a hotline and a community center in Beirut, and organizing public activities and events centered on fighting homophobia in Lebanon, such as the International Day Against Homophobia (Moussawi 2015).

The precursor to Meem originated when Helem branched out with the group Helem Girls in 2006. As a reaction to the invisibility of lesbians and the maledominated space of Helem, three female members of Helem created a women-only email list, and on 16 December 2006 they organized their first offline lesbianonly meeting in a member's house, attended by twentyeight women (Bareed Mista3jil 2009). This group also published a zine called Suhaq (a derogatory Arabic term for lesbians that denotes the act of “grinding” or crushing”). On 4 August 2007, after a few meetings, the group decided to create a grassroots organization called Meem. Meem was founded on the idea that there was a need to have a safer space that centers the experiences of women and feminist issues and that operates with less visibility and with a less hierarchical organizational structure than Helem (Moussawi 2015).

**Meem's Organizational Structure**

Meem's activism focused on community building and delivering support and a safer space for queer women in Lebanon. To protect the privacy and the anonymity of its members, the Meem collective was underground and was not officially registered. It operated under the legal support of a sponsor organization in a rented apartment in Beirut, which was the community House of Meem or the Womyn House (or simply “the House”). The House was a volunteer-run, closed and safer space open only to Meem members. It hosted meetings and various events, such as workshops, discussions, dinners, game nights, and parties. It also offered free counseling sessions.

Among the safety rules of the house was that photos were not allowed and that a screening process was obligatory for all people interested in becoming a member. The membership screening consisted of a series of steps that started with email and instant messaging, moving to a face-to-face meeting in a café, with many precautions taken to maximize security. These strict membership rules were available online for potential members, and they were aimed at safeguarding the members' confidentiality and trust. Moreover, adopting a supposedly nonhierarchical structure, Meem operated through coordination terms of around two years in which members selected one or two general coordinators through consensus.

**Meem's Queer Feminist Politics**

Meem initially endorsed a rule that banned discussions about religion and (Lebanese) politics. It centered instead on community building and serving, through social gatherings and discussion meetings, as a support group for lesbians (and to a lesser extent trans
people, given the gender-normative character of lesbian spaces). In the following years, Meem shifted its organizing strategy from the “lesbian support group” model toward the “queer activism” model. The queer critique of identity politics became increasingly prominent given some members’ experiences and knowledge of how homophobic oppression does not operate independently from sexist, classist, sectarian, white-supremacist, and transphobic violence.

While keeping its focus on members’ anonymity in its spaces, Meem produced two major publications and actively participated in public events. Meem hence operated through the spaces “infiltrated” by the Meem community in the activist scene in Lebanon, such as protests and leftist groups (Moawad and Qiblawi 2012–2013). This elucidates how Meem embraced a strategy of being “ambiguously visible” (Lynn 2010) that challenges the binary conceptions of visibility/invisibility and of coming out/being closeted (Moussawi 2015). Meem also problematized Western LGBT rights discourse, which deploys a strategy of visibility that centers the post-Stonewall model of coming out of the closet. Meem’s strategy thus did not operate within legal frameworks, and yet it did not distance itself completely from advocacy work.

In many instances, queer activists from Meem adopted an intersectional approach in their activist work with regard to the local gendered, classed, sectarian, and racist normativities. By embracing a critique of imperialist discourse as crucial for their local grassroots activism, Meem members articulated an understanding of queerness that is MENA situated and that disrupts the homogenization of sexual identities. To illustrate, some Meem members founded, in several starts from 2007 until 2009, the feminist collective Nasawiya (meaning “feminist” in Arabic). In 2012 Sawt Al Niswa (Voice of the Women), a Beirut-based, feminist online space, also emerged from some individuals in the group. Meem and Nasawiya situated their queer organizing models in their own located context and engaged in grassroots anti-racism and anti-sexism campaigns. Emerging from Nasawiya, the Anti-Racism Movement and the Migrant Community Center organized several events that challenged racism in Lebanon, including direct actions, demonstrations, dinner nights, and parades involving migrant workers in Lebanon.

The 2006 Israeli invasion of Lebanon is a noteworthy case to illustrate LGBT and feminist activists’ intersectional approaches given their involvement in the relief and humanitarian efforts in support of the displaced communities (Naber and Zaatari 2014). Moreover, Meem was decidedly involved in the BDS movement (the campaign of boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel) and in adopting a vocal critique of Israel’s pinkwashing, which is “the cynical promotion by Israel and its supporters of ‘free’ LGBT bodies as somehow representative of Israeli democracy, obfuscating the reality of apartheid and [the] occupation” of Palestine (Pinkwatcher 2012). For example, Meem endorsed in 2011 the call for the member organizations of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Youth and Student Organisation to move their general assembly
conference out of Israel. Meem members participated in local and international conferences, and they invested in collaborations with other LGBT groups in the MENA region.

**Meem's Publications**

Meem produced two main publications. The first was *Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories* (2009; the title roughly translates to “express mail”), a collection of autobiographical stories by queer women and trans people from Lebanon that discussed sexuality in relation to several themes, such as sexism, trans identities, family, religion, emigration, class, activism, community, and relationships. Notably, Meem’s second publication, the weekly online magazine *Bekhsoos* (which translates as “concerning,” implying subcultural LGBT terms used in Lebanon, such as the verb *bi khoss* or *bit khoss* [to be concerned], which means “to be gay/lesbian”), revealed potentials for gayifying Arabic and disrupting visibility. *Bekhsoos* provided a MENA-situated platform for developing a groundbreaking queer feminist discourse. By guaranteeing the anonymity of its contributors, online spaces allow queers to forge new ways of politically engaging with the public sphere. *Bekhsoos* was hence an “ambiguous visible” place that produced knowledge about gender and sexuality and subverted lesbian invisibility (see quotes from Lynn in Moawad and Qiblawi 2012–2013). It offered a place for online discussions between different groups and complemented the offline editorial meetings in the House.

Our understanding of Arab subjectivities in the era of globalization and the digital age should be read through models that add complexity to the rigid binary of West/East. Indeed, the new generation of Arab blogger-authors who consider the internet a virtual space for staging political change relate to English (or the interplay of English and Arabic) “not as a foreign language but rather as the language that is constitutive of their cultural landscape and their subjectivities” (El-Ariss 2013, 147). Furthermore, with regard to the topic of (homo)sexuality, many queers in Lebanon--including the authors of *Bareed Mista3jil*--are more likely to feel less uneasy and less constrained when they speak about sexuality in English or French as opposed to Arabic (Mourad 2013).

*Bekhsoos* was particularly invested in translating terms from English and in creating new Arabic terms for nonnormative sexual and gender identities and practices, and hence subverting the hegemony of English. *Bekhsoos* made possible the engagement with this creative process and encouraged writing in Arabic, as Edi, a former Meem member, explains in a 2016 interview:

> **When I entered Bekhsoos our challenge was to bring Arabic to Bekhsoos and Meem, which was an English dominated space, either in how people talked or in**
Most people did not have the tools in Arabic, and a lot of people are not comfortable to call themselves suhaqiyeh [a derogatory term for lesbian in Arabic, originating from the word suhaq, which denotes the act of “grinding” or “crushing”] or shazzeh [another derogatory term for lesbian in Arabic, meaning “deviant” or “queer”] while they are comfortable to use lesbian or gay. So this is about the identitarian dimension of language and how it verbalizes identities and how you feel your identity through the linguistic terms you choose. Why is it easier to say vagina and not kess [an Arabic word for vagina] except when we are insulting or joking? We don’t have political experiences that removed the stigma and the shame and reclaimed these words ... in a world where the topic of sexuality is still a taboo ... so language is political. And Bekhsoos played that role in writing, translating and hosting from other Arab feminist platforms.

(CHAER 2016)

In this formulation, Edi clarifies how new ways of relating to Arabic were being produced in *Bekhsoos* through making people become intimate or “comfortable” with Arabic as a language for sexuality.

There were many reasons for the closing of Meem in 2014, including internal clashes surrounding issues of group dynamics and invisible power hierarchies. Yet the temporariness of the collective should not be read as the demise of the queer movement in Lebanon. Meem’s political project had an enormous impact, and many of its former members became part of an unorganized queer activist community involved in various activist projects and networks.

**SEE ALSO** *alQaws; Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories (2009); Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Helem; Internet Queer Sites in the Middle East; Lesbanese (2008; Alissar Gazal); Pinkwashing*

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Metelkova Mesto (Slovenia)

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A center for artistic subculture and queer life in Ljubljana.

Metelkova mesto (Metelkova City in Slovenian) is the autonomous social and cultural center of Ljubljana, Slovenia, and the heart of queer life in the city, with its two noncommercial gay and lesbian clubs—the Tiffany and the Monokel—and an LGBT library called Lezbična knjižnica (Lesbian Library). Spread out over 12,500 square meters (3 acres) and several run-down buildings of a former Yugoslav military barracks, Metelkova mesto draws hundreds of students, artists, and tourists to its vibrant alternative-culture nightlife.

The site of Metelkova mesto has a military history that goes back more than 100 years. It was originally commissioned by the Austro-Hungarian army in 1882. After World War II (1939–1945) the military barracks were taken over by the Yugoslav National Army. At the end of the 1980s, during the process of Yugoslavian disintegration, a strong peace movement emerged in one of its republics, Slovenia. This movement initiated the idea of transforming the military barracks into a center of alternative and independent culture. The push for such a transformation intensified after 1991, when Slovenia declared its independence and the Yugoslav army moved out of its barracks.

The gay and lesbian movement that emerged in Slovenia in 1984 was part of this initiative, known as the Mreža za Metelkovo (Network for Metelkova). While the city of Ljubljana initially discussed the possibility of turning the former military barracks into a social and cultural center, it unilaterally decided in September 1993 to demolish the place for the possible development of new shopping malls on the site. Once the news became public, the activists of Mreža jumped over the large wall around Metelkova, squatted the place, and prevented the demolition with their own bodies. “It took only a few hours,” said one of Mreža’s activists, “to turn a hundred years of repression into the most creative studio in Europe” (quoted in Velikonja and Greif 2012, 135; author’s translation). Soon Metelkova’s seven buildings turned into clubs and places where exhibitions, concerts, parties, readings, lectures, speaking engagements, and other events were organized daily. In many ways it became reminiscent of Christiania, the autonomous neighborhood in Copenhagen. At first, the city of Ljubljana reacted by cutting off the electricity, heating, and water and by filing a legal suit against Mreža za Metelkovo. For that reason, activists initially illegally siphoned
water and stole electricity from the nearby power grid, but eventually Mreža reached an agreement with the city and the suit was dropped.

By the mid-1990s Metelkova mesto had become the center of the gay and lesbian movement in Slovenia, with a vibrant mixture of queer parties, political activism, and cultural events. For many LGBT people it is a safe haven from the outside world. This does not mean, however, that outsiders have not tried to intervene—be it the neighbors, who often complain that the music in the clubs of Metelkova is too loud, or the police, who have raided the place numerous times for no apparent reason.

Yet, in recent years societal acceptance of gays and lesbians in Slovenia has increased significantly. Throughout the 1990s, about 60 percent of Slovenian citizens claimed they would not like “a homosexual” to be their neighbor; by 2016 this percentage had dropped to 28 percent (Toš 1999; 2016). Furthermore, the Registration of Same-Sex Partnerships Act from 2005 was upgraded in 2016, allowing same-sex couples to enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples, with the exception of the right to joint adoption and artificial insemination (Kuhar and Mencin Čeplak 2016).
Today the city of Ljubljana prides itself on having such an alternative center, which is now a draw for tourists. This is also one of the reasons why Metelkova mesto is losing the radical (queer) edge it used to have in the 1990s, but it nevertheless remains “a symbol of civil disobedience in defense of the public nature of urban spaces and in combating asocial activities of the capital” (Močnik 2005; author’s translation).

SEE ALSO Friendship Societies in Europe; Gentrification in Europe

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Mexican Revolution and Sexuality

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The impact of the 1910 revolution on Mexican gender norms.

The Mexican Revolution (1910–1920) brought about the downfall of a regime that had held onto power for three decades, destroyed the bases of an oligarchical state, and cemented a new government apparatus where the voices of workers and peasants could be heard. The uprising began when it became known that President Porfirio Díaz (1830–1915) intended to be reelected for a sixth time. A peaceful electoral movement was born with the aim of opposing “reelectionism” and supporting the candidacy of Francisco I. Madero (1873–1913). The state’s repression of leaders and activists turned the initially nonviolent movement into an armed revolt. With the electoral route closed off, the revolution attracted new players willing to take up arms. Urban and rural mobilization opened spaces for transgressive expressions of gender and sexuality. Sources offer scarce material centering a narrative on such transgressions, but it is possible to gain some glimpses into transmasculine identities and expressions of male homosexuality and lesbianism that developed among those who participated in the Mexican Revolution.

In central and southern Mexico’s rural areas, traditional campesinos (poor peasants) from tightly knit communities formed a people’s army under the command of Emiliano Zapata (1879–1919), demanding the return of communally owned lands that had been taken from them. In the north, mine workers and cattle herders, railway and textile employees, all joined the ranks of Francisco “Pancho” Villa (1878–1923) and other military leaders protesting against various injustices. The wide cross-section of society entering the armed struggle made the Mexican Revolution a complex military and political issue; the demand for the state to respect democratization and democratic institutions was just one of its many components.

As such, the Mexican Revolution was not a unified movement with a single program shared by different political actors but instead gave rise to agrarian protests, workers’ demands, and a mobilized middle class. Nationalism also came to the fore at various junctures. To complicate matters further, the struggle not only pitted rebels against the former government and those supporting a continuation of the regime but also gave rise to infighting among the revolutionary forces due to socioeconomic, cultural, and regional differences and, of course, for ideological and political reasons, too. War and the presence
of death on the battlefield eroded moral and social conventions, creating an atmosphere that tolerated strategic and even permanent transmasculinity. However, homosexuality and lesbianism were strongly chastised. Male homosexuality was associated with effeminacy and lack of character, and lesbianism was considered immoral.

The 1917 Constitution was passed by representatives from across Mexico showing their support for Venustiano Carranza (1859–1920), who led the triumphant faction of the revolutionary movement. It gave the new government a regulatory framework, but it did nothing to halt the armed conflict. Peace was not restored until 1920, and it was only then that a new state apparatus could be built. The reconstruction process was understandably mired by internal conflicts and resistance; nationalist economic policies, the redistribution of farmland, and clampdowns on the clergy were rejected by foreign business owners, holders of large estates, and the Catholic Church, respectively, all of whom felt that their interests were under threat.

It is relevant to note, given the subject of this entry, that liberal clubs (public social organizations) were instrumental in instigating the Mexican Revolution, having complained about politicians’ and public officials’ corruption and abuses since the turn of the century, as well as having defended workers’ rights. Newspapers critical of the government ensured that liberal clubs in cities across Mexico remained active. The liberal clubs and periodicals are known as the liberal movement, an urban mobilization that preceded the Mexican Revolution. Regeneración, one of the most influential newspapers at the time, was owned by the Flores Magón brothers. The editors and writers—both men and women—working for this newspaper and other publications took a stand against government-sponsored persecution, imprisonments, and the destruction of printing presses. Women participated actively in the movement; however, the liberal political program took a conservative stand on gender and sexual morality that upheld women’s place in the home and traditional modesty as the norm.

**Strategic and Permanent Masculinization among Revolutionary Fighters**

Studies on the Mexican Revolution have focused primarily on its ideological and political aspects, overshadowing the internecine conflicts among various factions. The war was not fought continually throughout the decade, nor was the violence all-consuming; instead, it broke out at certain times and in certain places, although the sporadic violence still left a dreadful toll of dead and injured. The majority of those who lost their lives were young men. But the violence on the battlefield was not the sole cause of death; epidemics and diseases also killed many people. The war caused immense hardships, including food shortages, enforced displacements, and family breakups.

Without a doubt, the Mexican Revolution utterly transformed Mexico’s society, economy,
and politics, but one aspect that was left intact was Mexico's rigid gender hierarchy, even though many women played an active role in every revolutionary group. Their participation varied depending on the various stages of the conflict, geography, and ideological perspectives, as well as family and community networks. Rural women often joined armies and thus made the largest contribution; female schoolteachers also became involved, albeit to a lesser extent, as political activists, drafting and distributing documents, giving talks, and spreading ideas about justice and democracy in urban and rural areas. This participation transformed many women's horizons, but changes were minimal and almost always peripheral because masculine authority in the public sphere and in family life became stronger over time during the revolutionary movement. The war exacerbated soldiers' masculine authority and normalized sexual violence against women, who tended to be perceived as spoils of war. The revolutionary state's policies later celebrated women's subordinate status in the home and as guardians of domestic harmony and well-being; legislation consolidated the authority of fathers and husbands in the home; and the idea of women's suffrage was rejected out of hand and shelved for years.

Yet, the revolution also brought about greater sexual freedoms. The social upheaval disrupted gender norms, and despite its horrors, war brought about a new flexibility in social conventions and a relaxing of moral strictures. Enforced or voluntary displacements tore apart communities and families, and although these changes were calamitous for people's day-to-day lives, they also created new opportunities. The constant specter of death spurred some people to grasp the moment and express their sexuality in defiance of traditional dictates.

First of all, the war mobilized female soldiers or soldaderas, poor women from the cities and countryside who were displaced both within and outside of their family networks and therefore attached themselves to the armies. They looked after the fighters' basic needs for food and supplies and offered emotional and sexual companionship, sharing rare moments of relaxation with the soldiers when they drank or smoked marijuana together; some also engaged in prostitution. Firsthand sources on soldaderas are very rare, and they present the point of view of reporters, writers, and photographers, who tended to portray these women as passive and sexually available to men. No register of affection or sexuality among soldaderas has emerged.

A lack of firsthand sources makes it impossible to document daily life on the battlefields. But it is true that, although the mobilization maintained the gender hierarchy and reaffirmed women's subordinate role, in some cases it broadened horizons for Mexican women. For the first time, many women left their towns and communities and were forced to confront new challenges; mobilization often began within family networks, though these did not always remain active. The death of a friend or husband led to many women being abandoned and having to fend for themselves. Josefina Bojórquez, who famously inspired Elena Poniatowska's 1969 novel ¡Hasta no verte Jesús mío! (Here's to You, Jesusa! [2002]),
left her hometown in Oaxaca alongside her father to join the guerrilla forces but soon found herself on her own. Her story as a female soldier and poor immigrant in Mexico City illustrates the sexual violence and hardscrabble life endured by rural women dragged from the countryside to the city as a result of the armed uprising. Rosa Bobadilla took a very different route after joining the armed struggle beside her husband in the ranks of Zapata’s army. On becoming a widow, she was given the rank of her deceased husband to become “Coronela Rosa Bobadilla viuda de Casas” (Colonel Rosa Bobadilla, widow of Casas) and took command over men while preserving her feminine identity, unlike other women, who disguised themselves as men during the war.

Adopting a masculine appearance was a strategy adopted by some women who joined the war to escape sexual violence and to become more proficient at using weapons and in other military duties, such as spying and transporting ammunition. As recounted in Leonor Villegas de Magnón’s memoir The Rebel (1994), María de Jesús González, a secret agent in Carranza’s armed forces in northern Mexico, passed herself off as a man to carry out certain missions; once her duties were completed, she discarded her male disguise and resumed her female identity in women’s clothes. Bojórquez—who inspired Jesusa Palancares, the main character in Poniatowska’s novel—also wore trousers to protect herself from sexual violence and harassment. Masculinity as a survival strategy at times of conflict was a temporary measure for women such as González and Bojórquez.

A notable exception to this temporary adoption of a masculine identity was the case of Amelia/o Robles, who retained his male identity and appearance throughout his life. The young Amelia Robles left her hometown to join the ranks of Zapata and, over the course of the fighting, adopted a masculine identity. When peace was restored, he chose not to revert to his previous female identity; instead, Amelio Robles continued with his masculine name, appearance, body language, and social behavior. His community and former comrades in arms recognized him as a man and helped him integrate into the new postrevolutionary state as a participant in rural organizations; he was even recognized as a veteran of the Mexican Revolution. All his official papers, identity cards, and documents confirm his existence as man and record the male version of his name.

The term transgender obviously did not exist in the revolutionary period, but it is a useful way of understanding Amelio Robles’s masculinization, a process achieved by adopting the right body language and attire. Robles did not participate in Zapata’s agrarian movement for ideological reasons; his motivation was to join the guerrilla forces and show off his excellent horsemanship and knowledge of firearms. He earned the support of his fellow guerrilla fighters, who knew about his gender shift and helped him keep his masculine identity. The change in Robles’s identity was in one sense a transgression of the established gender norms, but at the same time it reinforced the hegemonic power of masculinity: Robles behaved like a rural man of the time by being authoritarian, violent, and promiscuous, as well as the provider for a conventional family. This earned Robles respect
within the community, but the gender issue remained a source of curiosity and aggression, forcing him to defend himself stoutly, sometimes even resorting to violence.

**Condemnation of Homosexuality**

![Manuel Palafox, Adviser and Personal Secretary to Emiliano Zapata](https://c.alfam.com/paul_fearn/alamy)  
© PAUL FEARN/ALAMY

**Manuel Palafox, Adviser and Personal Secretary to Emiliano Zapata.** Palafox was rumored to be homosexual, which was used to discredit him and reduce his influence over Zapata’s political and military decisions during the Mexican Revolution.

Unlike Amelio Robles’s masculine identity, which was accepted, effeminization and homosexuality among men were repudiated, not only among Zapata’s troops but also in urban and rural society in general. This rejection of male homosexuality can be seen in the rumors about the sexual preferences of Manuel Palafox, one of Zapata’s advisers and personal secretaries. Pointing to his supposed homosexuality was a means of discrediting him to reduce his influence over Zapata’s political and military decisions. Although it is not possible to analyze Palafox’s sexual preferences, his case demonstrates that homosexuality was considered a character flaw or a personal weakness that undermined a person’s reputation. Zapatista leaders were suspicious of Palafox; his urban background was a
source of distrust, and his bad temper and ability to conduct political machinations for his personal benefit made him enemies. These factors led Palafox to break from the Zapatistas and join the federal forces.

*Homosexuality* was not a commonly used word in the early decades of the twentieth century in Mexico. Men of homosexual persuasion were derogatively called *maricones, jotos, or pederastas* (pederasts; *pederastía* could refer to homosexual activities with underage boys or adults), and *safismo* (Sapphism) was used to refer to women with lesbian tendencies. Male homosexuality was informally referred to by the number 41, in allusion to the national scandal known as El Baile de los 41 (Dance of the 41), in which a raid on a house party in Mexico City in 1901 revealed more than forty men dancing together, many dressed in women’s clothing. The press (Catholic, opposition, and one-cent publications) used various degrees of sensationalism in describing the persecution of guests who had been present at this elegant party. Newspapers focused on the effeminacy of the transvestites, their poses, clothing, and makeup, and detailed the public humiliation and punishment administered to those in attendance. The episode became notorious because one of the guests was rumored to be Ignacio de la Torre, son-in-law of Mexican president Porfirio Díaz. De la Torre’s participation was covered up, and the press omitted his name from among those listed as *maricones*. In any case, El Baile de los 41 became ingrained in the urban imaginary that consolidated the association between effeminacy and homosexuality in the narratives on sexual heterodoxy and led to the coining of this Mexicanism to refer to homosexual men.

As a colloquial urban expression, the number 41 does not appear to have been used among the predominantly rural revolutionary forces to refer to homosexual men. However, the expression was used by Ricardo Flores Magón (1874–1922), the most powerful leader of the Mexican Liberal Party, who referred disparagingly to Antonio I. Villarreal (1879–1944), his former comrade in arms, as “El Coronel 41” when he was promoted to colonel by the forces supporting Francisco I. Madero. Flores Magón and Villarreal parted ways after years spent working together to establish the Mexican Liberal Party, and on *Regeneración*, the newspaper directed by Flores Magón to which Villarreal was a regular contributor. Their activism as journalists and members of the opposition led to their persecution, imprisonment, and exile.

Villarreal and other members of the Mexican Liberal Party distanced themselves from liberalism to join Madero’s government, while Flores Magón dug in his heels, veering toward an anarchist struggle against the state, capitalism, and, of course, Madero’s government. The political rift developed into an open feud. Flores Magón and his inner circle remained in the United States, where many leaders of the Mexican Liberal Party had sought exile, and he continued as director of *Regeneración*. Villarreal, Manuel Sarabia, and other former collaborators returned to Mexico and worked with Madero’s triumphant government, a move that Flores Magón considered an act of betrayal against the liberal
cause and a personal affront. Flores Magón sought to discredit Villarreal and Sarabia by
referring to their unconventional sexual preferences in various articles published in
Regeneración, going so far as to detail the circumstances of Villarreal’s sexual relations with
another man and threatening his political foes with evidence to bring them into further
disrepute. Whatever the details of Villarreal’s and Sarabia’s sex lives, it is remarkable that
homophobia was used openly by their political enemies as a weapon to humiliate and
dishonor them.

Similarly, Flores Magón brought people’s attention to the lesbianism of Juana Belén
Gutiérrez de Mendoza (1875–1942) and her love affair with Elisa Acuña y Rosetti (1872–
1946) with the aim of humiliating these women, who were his former allies in ideological
struggles. Gutiérrez de Mendoza had been a notable opposition journalist in the early
twentieth century. She established various newspapers—printed intermittently due to
oppression and closures—in which she criticized the government’s abuses of power. When
Vésper appeared in 1901, directed by Gutiérrez de Mendoza and with Acuña y Rosetti as
editor in chief, it was received with great praise in the pages of Regeneración, which shared
a similar ideological perspective with Vésper. Gutiérrez de Mendoza and Acuña y Rosetti
were jailed, persecuted, and exiled because of their journalistic and political affiliation with
the Mexican Liberal Party. In 1903 they took political refuge in the United States and
settled in Texas, where Flores Magón and other victims of political persecution also sought
exile; the bonds between the activists and their families strengthened during this period of
daily contact. Soon after returning to Mexico, Gutiérrez de Mendoza and Acuña y Rosetti
separated from Flores Magón’s faction and joined the group led by Camilo Arriaga (1862–
1945), another cofounder of the Mexican Liberal Party. Flores Magón considered this
political switch to be a betrayal and then set about publicizing their lesbian relationship. He
stated that he had previously kept quiet about the private lives of Gutiérrez de Mendoza
and Acuña y Rosetti to avoid the risk of bringing the liberal cause into disrepute but
changed his mind when they abandoned the Mexican Liberal Party. Flores Magón objected
to how the couple flaunted their lesbian relationship. Their affair was wellknown, both in
Mexico City’s liberal circles and in the Cárcel de Belén, the jail where they were imprisoned
on political charges. Cirilo Mendoza, Gutiérrez de Mendoza’s husband, was aware of his
wife’s lesbianism, a fact that further outraged Flores Magón. The names of Gutiérrez de
Mendoza and Acuña y Rosetti had appeared for many years in the credits of numerous
publications and at the bottom of political documents. Apart from working together on
Vésper, they also published Fiat Lux, another newspaper critical of the government. The
attempt to revile these two journalists came to nothing, just as in the cases of Villarreal and
Sarabia; all four figures continued their work in journalism and politics. Gutiérrez de
Mendoza and Acuña y Rosetti were members of Hijas de Cuauhtémoc (Daughters of
Cuauhtémoc), a women’s political club that supported Madero’s movement. However,
Gutiérrez de Mendoza later distanced herself from Madero’s movement and joined Zapata’s
agrarian struggle.
The Mexican Revolution maintained the social order and gender structure with few changes, but war and disorder did bring flexibility to some areas of social behavior, opening space for more heterodox sexual expression. The postrevolutionary period, however, engendered urban modernization and social reform. Educational policies relied heavily on female teachers and educated female volunteers to carry out literacy campaigns and rural education; women's suffrage was discussed in the public arena and established (with restrictions, and mostly for short periods) in four states of the republic. Such reforms, along with urban expansion, had complex effects on gender and sexual conventions; despite some openings for women that developed in cities, male authority and heterosexual conventions continued to be the norm. Nevertheless, male homosexual identities and sociabilities discreetly pervaded Mexico City, and probably other urban centers, as nationalist postrevolutionary culture celebrated heterosexual complementarity and derided homosexual, lesbian, and transgender identities, using the number 41 as a synonym for male homosexuality.

SEE ALSO El Baile de los 41; Bars, Working-Class, in Mexico

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Migrant Queer Communities, US

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The cultural perceptions of, and challenges facing, queer migrants to the United States historically and in the twenty-first century.

While mobility is part and parcel of the human condition, the traversing of national boundaries became more salient with the emergence of the modern nation-state, the spread of colonialism, the rise of capitalism, and the development of new communication and transportation technologies. In many ways, the modern migrant is a product of the collisions of and encounters between worlds. Crossing political boundaries for various purposes has created legislation, sociocultural practices, and imaginaries around the idea of the “migrant.” The migrant is often portrayed as a perpetual “other,” a social stranger, an outsider to the national order of things and persons, as well as an anomalous entity in relation to the normative flow of events and histories.

Since 2016, the old adage regarding the United States as a nation of immigrants has been the subject of vociferous debate and rancor. Populist attitudes and ideas have gained new currency and, therefore, have reignited long-simmering debates about “illegal” immigrants. Migrants—particularly those from Africa, Asia, and Central and South America (including the Caribbean)—have been the target of xenophobic characterization. The classification of good versus bad immigrants in popular culture and discourse has taken a racialized and racist turn with the favoring of Christian and European migrants (like those from Scandinavian countries) over Muslim and “Western” ones. Images and ideas of the unscrupulous and infectious Chinese, the criminal Mexicans, and the terrorist Muslims have always permeated the American popular imagination, with an unsettling resurgence in the post-9/11 era.

Tentatively and strategically, this entry contextualizes migrant subjects as always already queer by virtue of their anomalous position to the national order unless they are filtered through the heteronormative frames of marriage and family. The family reunification aspect of the US Immigration Act of 1965 is an example of a sexual, gendered, and racial slant on naturalizing migrants, rendering them more acceptable and more easily woven into the national fabric. The following discussion focuses on same-sex–desiring and/or gender-insubordinate transnational border-crossing subjects. Therefore, queer is used in this entry not merely as an umbrella identity category, but to characterize the
nonnormative sexual and gender practices that often fall into or are loosely, if not erroneously, translated in Western categories such as *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, and/or *transgender*. *Queer* also refers to the formation of institutionalized and informal networks between and among these subjects and their allies as they are manifested by everyday struggles and public activism. Therefore, queer migrants encounter even more extreme forms of abjection and estrangement both within their “home” community and in their place of settlement.

The deployment of *community* in this entry does not always connote physical contiguity or proximity; instead, to use the words of Benedict Anderson (2006), it is about “imagined” sense of togetherness and belonging (Manalansan 1994). The aim here is to document instances and situations where migrants—specifically, queer Latino and Asian migrants—both imagine and practice a sense of community or a coming together both in the sharing of common everyday experiences of homophobia, xenophobia, sexism, racism, and so on, and in the practices of collective action through institutional means such as activist groups and organizations.

The idea of queer migrant communities might suggest nonintegration and unassimilable qualities as well as their monolithic contained nature. However, queer migrant communities are porous and never completely cut off from their ethnic communities or the mainstream society. Queer migrant communities have messy, tenuous, and subordinate relationships to heteronormative migrant, American, and gay communities, particularly around homophobia, racism, and xenophobia. *Mainstream* here refers to the dominant features of lifestyle practices, institutions, and identities that have been labeled as generic *migrant*, *gay*, and/or *American*. It also refers to the powerful influences that dominant groups exert on marginalized groups, such as migrants, and the ways in which the mainstream itself is shaped, resisted, or integrated into migrant queer communities.

Queer migrant communities are shaped by the larger historical settlement patterns of various national migrant groups as well as shifts in immigration law, policy, and attitudes. This entry focuses on the repercussions for and unfolding of American immigration after the promulgation of the 1965 Immigration Act, which was originally designed to bring in more European migrants through family reunification but enabled unprecedented immigration from Africa, Asia, Central America, and Latin America that eventually led to what has been called an “immigration crisis.”

**Queer Migrants in US History**

Eithne Luibhéid (2002) astutely suggests that deviant sexuality (abstracted as morality) has become one of the integral nodes for disciplining and controlling the movement of bodies across national borders. The place of queer migrant subjects in US immigration law and history has gone through dramatic transformations, particularly in the late twentieth
and early twenty-first centuries. Immigration laws including a series of Chinese exclusion acts in the midto late nineteenth century and the McCarran-Walter Act of 1952 built immigration controls that weeded out aliens who were deemed undesirable for social and moral reasons that usually revolved around sexual degeneracy. The 1967 case Boutilier v. Immigration and Naturalization Service is seen as a landmark case in which homosexuality was conceived as moral turpitude and a sign of a “psychopathic personality.” The case formally codified homosexuality as a legal ground for exclusion, expulsion, and deportation of migrants, but an underlying fear of deviant sexuality has been a feature of immigration law since the nineteenth century, when the Page Act of 1875 categorized Asian women as prostitutes (Luibhéid 2002). Until 1990, applicants for visas to the United States had to sign a form testifying that they were not criminals, Communists, or homosexuals. The AIDS pandemic created an additional complicating factor, as HIV became one of the exclusionary illnesses, although provisions were made for humanitarian purposes. After 1990, due to efforts led by congressman Barney Frank (1940–), “homosexual” was struck out as a category of excludable people. The pathbreaking Supreme Court decision in Obergefell v. Hodges (2015), the so-called gay marriage decision, opened new doors for queer migrants to be admitted as spouses through family reunification.

Queer migrant communities are not always visible in actual sites of physical settlements, such as neighborhoods. They arise out of various conditions, problems, and challenges through the establishment of everyday practices, institutions, and political action. Historically, these communities emerged at the intersection of various events, processes (such as gentrification), and institutions. By the late 1970s, American society was seeing and becoming more aware of the social consequences of the civil rights movement, the sexual revolution of the 1970s, the structural consequences of the 1965 Immigration Act, and the proliferation of multiculturalism discourses, including the opening up of public debate about “gay rights.” This period saw the dramatic development of lesbian- and gay-focused public spaces and events such as bars, pride parades, organizations, clubs, media representations, and, most importantly, residential and social urban spaces that have come to be known as “gayborhoods” (e.g., Greenwich Village in New York City, the Castro in San Francisco, and Boystown in Chicago). The idea of a monolithic mainstream gay and lesbian community, particularly in the cities, acquired a physical manifestation through the gayborhood. However, such neighborhoods were seen to be largely devoted to a particular gay- and lesbian-identified group that was primarily middle-class, white, and privileged. Therefore, while this period signaled the ascendancy of a group of gays and lesbians, migrant queers were left behind in its wake.
Identity and Cultural Translation

Various scholarly works and research strongly suggest specific themes and clusters of issues that confront and beset queer migrants (Córdova Quero, Goh, and Sepidoza Campos 2014; Luibhéid 2008b; Luibhéid and Cantu 2005; Decena 2011; Di Feliciantonio and Gadelha 2016; Epstein and Carillo 2014; Hirano 2014; La Fountain-Stokes 2007; Lewis 2012; Manalansan 2003, 2006; Mai and King 2009; Peña 2007, 2013; Sharif 2015). These include issues of identity and cultural translation, including queer migrants' tenuous relationships with categories such as “gay” and “lesbian,” public visibility and recognition, access to material and cultural resources, quotidian and structural experiences of racism and xenophobia, and legal and health issues. Identity categories, particularly those from the Global South, are not easily translatable to hegemonic gay and lesbian identities. Literal translations of these categories into “gay” and “lesbian” do not adequately address the cultural and quotidian incommensurability of queer migrants of color or of non–Euro-American origins. Cultural translation and negotiation is one of the main problems that queer migrant communities face in engaging with subjects, institutions, and practices in the mainstream gay community. According to popular notions about all immigrants and their lives in the United States, queer migrants are expected to integrate or assimilate into mainstream notions, including those related to mainstream gay and lesbian culture.
However, categories do not just function as nomenclature but are markers for specific sets of cultural beliefs, ideas, practices, and histories. The clash of such identity categories and sex/gender systems among queer migrant communities is not solved with mere label changes but by analyzing the intersecting historical relations of gender, race, class, and ethnicity. In other words, it is important to see how these various hierarchical relationships and structures shape the ways queer migrants constitute themselves as individuals and as collectivities both in everyday life and in public realms.

Latinos and Asians, who constitute the largest numbers of immigrants to the United States, are also primary subjects of numerous studies about LGBT migrants (e.g., Asencio 2011; Avivi 2015; Cantú 2009; Cotten 2012). According to these studies, the tensions between racism and sex/gender systems are both major barriers to attaining social acceptance and gaining visibility and organizing forces in the creation of alliances and coalitions. In addition, there is a popular, if not insidious, construction of immigrants and immigrant communities as tethered to “traditional” practices such as religiosity and familism, which are almost always read as “backward,” “premodern,” and, therefore, homophobic. Scholarly research has shown that while migrant queers have strong family ties, they are no more homophobic or unaccepting than “all-American” families. Although space constraints do not allow for a longer discussion, it is important to note that studies have shown that the equation of migrant/foreign communities with homophobia is facile and often a misrepresentation of the complexities of culture, kinship, and family ties.

Racist tensions and the clash of sex/gender systems occur in queer migrants' everyday lives (Sharif 2015). Asian queers, for example, have to contend with and confront “Orientalist” stereotypes that feminize and/or exoticize them, even in the mainstream gay community. Such stereotypes portray these queers as premodern and unassimilable gay/lesbian subjects. With white masculine “straight-acting” gays as icons of the American mainstream gay male community, it is not surprising that lines like “No fats, femmes, or Asians” on popular gay sexual networking sites like Grindr have become ubiquitous. Asian trans women and feminine cisgender (those whose gender identity corresponds to their assigned sex at birth) lesbians are seen as epitomes of Orientalist imaginaries. Latino queer cисgender men and women are beset by a racialized ideology of machismo that locates their gender presentation sometimes at odds with their sexual practices and gender presentation (Cotten 2012; Decena 2011; Manalansan 2003). Drag culture and emergent trans women communities are often conflated. Even worse, drag queens who participate in Western camp culture are seen as modern, while trans women in migrant communities are often portrayed as the embodiment of migrant cultural lag, representing a premodern and non-Western gendered homosexuality. The tensions between racialized ideologies of gender and sexuality locate migrant queer populations in an abject place within the American LGBT landscape. This dire situation is slowly being alleviated by the rise of transgender activist movements in the United States and other parts of the world.
Migrant Queer Spaces and Organizations

As mentioned above, the emergence of migrant queer communities can be seen in terms of the creation of public spaces and events focused on specific ethnoracial groups and the establishment of activist groups, social clubs, and nonprofit organizations that cater to the social, political, and economic needs of queer migrants (DasGupta 2012; Torres 2014). Cultural incongruities, racism, and homophobia in everyday life and in public spaces became the fuel for creating coalitions and organizing politically. The need to make themselves visible in order to acquire a political voice has led queer migrants (and their allies) to form such community organizations as Amigas Latina (Latina Friends), Latina Gay Asian and Pacific Islander Men of New York, Asian/Pacific Lesbians and Gays, the National Latina/o Lesbian and Gay Organization, Kambal sa Lusog (Comrades in Arms), Trikone (Enlightenment and Balance), Khush (Happiness), and the South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA). These queer migrant community organizations were founded as responses to specific crises and issues, such as AIDS, immigration, and social visibility and power. It is also important to note that “Asian” and “Latino” are panethnic labels, and that there have been organizations that focused on specific ethnic groups, such as Kambal sa Lusog (Filipinas/os) and SALGA (South Asians) among “Asian” gay and lesbian organizations. These various organizations disseminated information to and about their queer members and advanced more complex, sensitive, and correct representations of the lives, needs, and aspirations of their community members. Through cultural shows, pamphlets, reports, and street activism, these organizations harnessed political energy and cultural creativity in the service of queer migrants.

AIDS, Asylum, and the Future

The AIDS pandemic was a crucial historical watershed for queer migrants, particularly in the late 1980s when the tides of the disease reached the shores of communities of color, including migrants. By the mid- to late 1980s, affected populations had expanded from mostly white, middle-class gay males to the poor, immigrants, and people of color. Government agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that were tasked with tracking and helping prevent the spread of the disease were confronted with the disjunction between sexual practices and American sexual/gender identities (Wat 2001). The category “MSM” (men who have sex with men) was created to classify men who do not identify as gay. This was an attempt to capture a cohort of men who were mostly migrants and/or racial minorities, but it failed to specify the ethnic distinctiveness of affected populations in order to address their particular problems. At the same time, the MSM category unintentionally marginalized queer people such as migrants who are seen as living anachronously in a distant past, unable to identify as gay or lesbian.

It was precisely these contentious moments and situations that spurred the establishment
of ethnicspecific nonprofit and community organizations, such as the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS and the Latino Commission on AIDS. These organizations were responsible for addressing the issue of the pandemic in their respective communities and were especially instrumental in delving into the complexities of the lives and practices of their queer members living in the margins of both gay and ethnic communities. The determined and vociferous collective actions of these groups compelled governmental agencies to provide resources to migrant communities.

With the election of President Donald Trump, the problems of asylum and undocumented immigrant status have galvanized collective political action in migrant gay communities. Various political gay organizations and activists such as Yasmin Nair have focused their attention on the immigration status of queer constituents. Strategies for resolving undocumented status through asylum petitions or marriage entail many difficulties. For several decades, asylum cases based on sexual orientation have been one of the conduits for queer migrants to stay in the United States, but studies have shown that there are still major restrictions and problems because of the intricacies of the legal procedure and the mercurial qualities of immigration/asylum laws (Berger 2009; Corrunker 2012; R. Lewis 2014; Murray 2014; Romero 2005; Seif 2014; Shuman and Hesford 2014; Spijkerboer 2013; Vogler 2016). Immigration via family reunification, which was previously limited to immigrants' biological kin and heterosexual spouses, was radically transformed after the Supreme Court's Obergefell decision that enabled queer migrants to attain residency, and eventually citizenship, through their same-sex spouse (Hidalgo and Bankston 2009). That said, there are formidable trials ahead.

Queer migrants' political and social gains in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries are now facing several crises that may severely limit, if not obliterate, them. Since the 2016 presidential election, drastic and dramatic shifts in immigration laws and eruptions of blatant racism, xenophobia, and antihomosexual rhetoric have placed migrant queer communities and queer migrant individuals in peril and may radically transform the conditions of their presence in the United States. Conversely, these untoward events and situations may be the fuel for a major revitalization of activist coalitional efforts that will enable their cultural and political survival.

SEE ALSO Migration to Europe; Neoliberalism in Latin America; Refugees and Asylum in Africa; Refugees and Immigration Policies

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Migration to Europe

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The history of, reasons for, and challenges to LGBT migration to Europe.

LGBT migration is understood as the forced relocation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer people across national borders to escape persecution, violence, or stigmatization based on their gender expression, gender identity, or sexual identity. Yet, this definition falls short in acknowledging that more often than not, queer migration is the result of a conjunction of intersecting push factors. Contributing vectors of movement may include economic well-being, educational opportunities, access to health care (including treatment for HIV/AIDS), religion, or family relations.

The migration of gender and sexual minorities is hard to measure and, in comparison to the movement of other societal groups, scarcely researched. As opposed to nationality, binary genders, or religious affiliation, LGBT identity is seldom covered in European nations’ census data. Furthermore, most authorities do not systematically collect statistics about LGBT immigration (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017a), and state policies, as well as research frameworks on migration, have historically been based on the assumption that all migrants are heterosexual cisgender people (Luibhéid 2008). Increased advocacy, media attention, and research has begun to move the plight of LGBT refugees from the margins to the center stages of Europe’s migration-related discourse. Their heightened visibility comes against the backdrop of the European refugee reception crises and growing media attention since 2015, when over 1.2 million first-time asylum applications were filed across the European Union within the space of a single year.

Historical Background

Historic LGBT migration in the European context was not a one-way street. Rather, it comprised complex patterns of migration to, away from, and within Europe. Among the earliest such phenomena studied are mideighteenth- to mid-twentieth-century movements by white privileged Western Europeans, many of whom were artists and authors, to places such as Italy in the Mediterranean European South, where same-sex intercourse was subject to fewer legal sanctions. Possibly due to the influence of literary notions of a sexual utopia in the imagined homoerotic afterglow of classical antiquity and the Renaissance, the Mediterranean became a place of homosexual pilgrimages. Often, the trip was enough to
convince such “pilgrims” to make the Mediterranean their permanent home. Against the backdrop of an industrializing North, homoerotic photos of nude young Mediterranean boys and men by visiting photographers such as German Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden (1856–1931) assisted in the Western European constructions of fetishized, exoticized, and racialized “Others” in an allegedly sexually permissive South. Among those who found legitimization for their same-sex desires by expatriating to Mediterranean homosexual subcultures, such as those on the Italian islands of Capri and Sicily and in Venice, were prominent individuals such as British politician and poet Lord Byron (1788–1824), German steel manufacturer Friedrich Krupp (1854–1902), and Irish author Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) (Aldrich 1993).

Similarly, many “Oriental” colonial territories in North Africa, the Middle East, and Asia were from “Occidental” European viewpoints regarded and consequently used as sites that, far from the moral norms imposed at home, permitted same-sex encounters and longterm relationships (e.g., Said 1978; Aldrich 2003). Examples include the French colony of Algeria in the 1830s and the French-Spanish colony of Morocco in the early to mid-twentieth century, especially the city of Tangier, which became infamous as a place of “easy” sexual encounters and of sexual exploitation for European and North American homosexual men as recently as the 1980s.

Simultaneous to these expatriations, Western European cities also became centers of LGBT life and immigration, including London in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries until the 1895 trials and conviction of Wilde on charges of “gross indecency” generated international publicity and negatively impacted Victorian attitudes toward same-sex relationships and nonnormative gender appearances. Postrevolution Paris, comparatively liberal and infamously flamboyant, was another destination that attracted prominent foreign queer expatriates well into the twentieth century, including American writer and art collector Gertrude Stein (1874–1946) and authors James Baldwin (1924–1987) and Robert McAlmon (1895–1956). Interwar Berlin during the Weimar Republic (1919–1933), which featured a relatively visible, diverse, and decadent subculture comparable in size to today’s, became home to many LGBT expatriates, such as British American poet W. H. Auden (1907–1973) and British novelist Christopher Isherwood (1904–1986), who resided in the city from 1929 to 1933 (Tamagne 2004).

Starting in the mid-twentieth century, the rise of fascism and Communism—both hostile to nonnormative sexualities—spurred a migration of LGBT persons from European countries. Gay men targeted by the Nazi regime during the Holocaust of World War II fled to the United States and Latin America, although the number of these queer emigrants and their plights remain largely unknown. Following the conclusion of World War II and the start of the Cold War, LGBT rights were often framed in dichotomous terms of an LGBT-phobic East versus a sexually liberating West. Whereas Soviet ideology in some instances portrayed homosexuals as victims of capitalism and the embodiment of bourgeois existence, laws and
practices on homosexuality, as well as LGBT histories, varied widely across the countries of the Eastern bloc. While queer people left countries under socialist rule for reasons of discrimination, it is often not discernible whether gender or sexual identity was a prime motif. We know, however, that the migration of LGBT people from East to West, such as that of Vienna-based Polish activist Andrzej Selerowicz in the 1980s, had an influence on both the Western LGBT “liberation” and the development of LGBT cultures in the East (Szulc 2018).

During the 1970s and 1980s many European countries outside the Communist bloc started to shift toward a more liberal approach, resulting in comparatively stronger legal protections and societal acceptance of Western-conceptualized LGBT rights and identities. However, great disparities in societal acceptance of LGBT people exist in the different European regions, including within the European Union. Numerous countries in northern, western, and southern Europe are ranked highest on the Rainbow Index by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) Europe, which records European countries' legal LGBT standards; many central and eastern European countries and countries in the Caucasus ranked lowest (ILGA 2017a). Thus, most contemporary LGBT immigration from outside Europe, as well as from several countries of central and eastern Europe, is to northern, western, and southern European Union member states (e.g., Mole et al. 2014; Stella et al. 2017). Reducing this phenomenon to an East/West divide on LGBT rights, however, both inaccurately brands eastern European cultures as inherently trans- or homophobic and misleadingly presents them as homogeneous entities (Szulc 2018).

Impact of European Colonialism

Since the 1980s, LGBT-related research on European colonial history has emerged that examines the ways in which European colonialism’s mechanisms of geopolitical control featured gendered dimensions and were implicitly—in some cases also explicitly—concerned with the sexuality of colonial and colonized populations (Aldrich 2003; McClintock 1995; Stoler 2002). European colonial history is relevant for understanding contemporary LGBT migration for three main reasons.

First, though historical contexts differ for each country, European colonialism has had a significant impact on the heteronormalization of many societies that today are hostile toward LGBT people. Current laws that criminalize homosexuality in African, Middle Eastern, and Asian countries are in many cases directly rooted in the European colonial legacies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For example, the British-authored Indian Penal Code of 1860, which classified homosexuality as an unnatural offense, served as the basis for the constitutional documents of many British colonies, which retained similar classifications as of 2017 (Sanders 2009). Similarly, sumptuary laws prohibiting cross-dressing are often European legacies.
Second, in European discourses and asylum procedures, trans- and homophobia are frequently portrayed as uniquely non-European phenomena (Giametta 2017; Spijkerboer 2017). In light of Europe’s history and present, however, this does not hold true. Moreover, many indigenous societies had featured comparatively fluid understandings of gender and sexual identities before imperial politics exported European cultures of patriarchy and compulsory heterosexuality. Examples are wideranging and include the kingdom of Buganda (in present-day Uganda) under Kabaka Mwanga II (1866–1901), who was known to engage in sexual relationships with male servants, which was accepted until Europeans imported Christianity (Murray and Roscoe 1998). European colonial history had highly gendered dimensions, such as heavy reliance on a constructed “masculinization” of colonizers as strong rulers and a contrasting “feminization” of nonwhite colonized populations, irrespective of their gender, as weakly submissive “Others” (e.g., Sinha 1995; Rutherford 1997). The colonial powers’ anxieties concerning colonial sexual practices prompted attempts to regulate not just the practices of colonized populations but also those between colonial officials and locals. The goal was often to maintain clearly defined and racialized hierarchies between “colonizers” and “colonized” (Stoler 2002).

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRADLEY SECKER.

Gay Refugee from Iran Awaiting Resettlement in Turkey. A refugee named Danial shows the scars from when he sold his kidney to pay for his passage to Turkey. Those who live in a climate of hostility toward LGBT persons—particularly in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa—sometimes resort to extreme measures to migrate to areas of greater tolerance in Europe and North America.
Third, today's migratory movements toward Europe are to a considerable extent the outcome of an uneven geopolitical order and world economy that European colonial history has contributed to, if not created. In the prevalent absence of critical reflections on European colonial and migration history in most European countries' educational curricula, long upheld imaginations of many European societies as ethnically, racially, religiously, linguistically, and culturally homogenous continue to persist. Especially pre-World War II immigrations to European countries and the realities of people of color have been ignored in the collective memories and national identities of most European countries. One of the results is widespread problems with social exclusion and structural racism, which significantly impact the lives of many LGBT immigrants.

**Reasons for Migration**

Over 175 million LGBT people (2.5% of the world population) are considered to live under persecutory regimes ([ORAM 2012](#)). As of 2016, over seventy countries criminalized same-sex relations; of these, fortyfive targeted both women and men, and eight were reported to impose the death penalty as punishment ([ILGA 2017b](#)). Thirty-two of these states are in Africa, twenty-three in Asia. While most legal provisions and state-sponsored human rights violations target LGB persons, several countries also have laws that penalize cross-dressing and transgenderism.

In addition to persecution based on laws with penalties that include lashing, life imprisonment, and death, LGBT individuals who do not perform their genders and sexualities in ways that are reconcilable with their environments' sociocultural master narratives frequently face various forms of physical and sexual abuse, the denial of basic human rights, and discrimination in education, employment, health care, and housing. Across all continents, a variety of methods are used in attempts to straighten or exterminate deviant genders and sexualities, including arbitrary detention, coercion, torture, so-called honor killing campaigns, and “corrective” rapes of lesbians. The Trans Murder Monitoring Project, which collects and analyzes data on transgender homicides, documented 2,343 murders of transgender persons worldwide from 2008 to 2016 ([Transrespect versus Transphobia Worldwide 2017](#)). In trans- and homophobic contexts, such injustices usually go unreported due to state officials' intentional or reckless complicity and impunity for perpetrators.

Given this climate of hostility—particularly in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa—some LGBT persons seek asylum in European countries. LGBT immigrants may also be admitted for reasons shared by other immigrants, including reunification with family members already in Europe, study at a European institution of higher learning, or because they have job skills that immigration policies deem desirable.

In post–World War II Europe, cities such as Amsterdam, Berlin, Copenhagen, Madrid,
London, and Paris that have gained international reputations for their LGBT scenes attract LGBT visitors, students, workers, and retirees from many corners of the world. Legal pathways for residing in these and other places in the European Union, however, tend to be reserved for privileged non-European citizens (“third-country nationals”) who meet the high eligibility requirements for the US-inspired EU Blue Card, who are university students or researchers, who are already long-term residents in the European Union and may consequently apply for permanent residency, or who have family ties in the European Union.

**Immigration through Asylum**

Applying for asylum is an increasingly politicized legal pathway to immigration in Europe. The legal instrument defining refuge and governing asylum internationally continues to be the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (Geneva Convention), an outcome of World War II. Temporally and geographically expanded through the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, it defines a refugee as someone “who is unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership of a particular social group.” Asylum seekers are those whose petitions for protection are in process.

It is known that LGBT refugees who manage to file asylum applications across the European Union come from at least 104 countries, many of which are located in eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East, among them Cameroon, The Gambia, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Pakistan, Uganda, Russia, Senegal, and Syria (Jansen and Spijkerboer 2011). Turkey, a gateway to the continent, does not formally grant asylum to non-European citizens, but it has awarded temporary protection to almost 4 million refugees, who constitute 3 to 5 percent of its population (European Commission 2018). After Turkey, the European Union member states are the second-most-important hosts of refugees in Europe. However, the capacity to request asylum in Europe is usually dependent upon reaching its soil; ironically, in many cases this entails entering its territories illegally. In spite of widespread criticism, there are hardly any humanitarian visa or resettlement programs in place in the European Union, where less than half a percent of the total population constitutes refugees (Spijkerboer 2017).

Though gender and sexual identity were not explicitly included as grounds of persecution at the time the Geneva Convention was drafted, international jurisprudence and legislation since the 1990s has clearly established that LGBT-based persecution may fall into the category of persecution caused by belonging to a “particular social group.” European countries pioneered such an interpretation; in 1981 the Dutch Judicial Division of the Council of State deemed persecuted homosexuals a group that is worthy of protection under the Geneva Convention, and other countries such as Germany soon followed. Since
then, a solid body of LGB-related asylum case law has developed across Europe. Jurisprudence on gender identity-based asylum is more recent and frequently relies on principles that were developed through LGB asylum cases. Moreover, gender identity-related asylum is often wrongly registered as sexual identity-based requests for asylum, partly due to lack of awareness among immigration officials (Berg and Millbank 2013; Jansen and Spijkerboer 2011).

As of 2018, asylum seekers fleeing from persecution on the grounds of sexual identity (since 2004) and gender identity (since 2011) theoretically qualified for refugee status in all twenty-eight countries of the European Union (Qualification Directive 2011/95/EU). Case law of the Court of Justice of the European Union, most relevantly the cases X, Y and Z v. Minister voor Immigratie en Asiel (2013) and A, B and C v. Staatssecretaris van Veiligheid en Justitie (2014), has offered guidance in the interpretation of European Union law. In addition, the European Court of Human Rights, impacting forty-seven countries, has adjudicated on LGBT migration-related cases (most notably M.E. v. Sweden 2014 and O.M. v. Hungary 2016), primarily invoking Articles 2 (right to life), 3 (prohibition of torture), 5 (right to liberty and security), and 13 (right to an effective remedy) of the European Convention of Human Rights. Related jurisprudence is continuously pending before both courts.

In 2012 it was estimated that globally fewer than 3,000 people annually were awarded refugee status based on LGBT-based persecution (ORAM 2012). As of 2018, however, no reliable aggregate data exist in this regard. Reasons for the lack of statistics relate to the marginalization of LGBT issues in largely heterocentric state apparatuses, as well as to alleged concerns around data protection and confidentiality of sensitive information that LGBT refugees share in asylum processes (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017a). Beyond that, conclusive data on LGBT asylum can be hard to collect because LGBT asylum seekers do not necessarily cite LGBT-related grounds in the initial asylum-claiming stages; sometimes it is at a later stage, or they claim asylum on entirely different grounds.
An LGBTI Refugee Pleads for Help While Stopped at Greece's Border. The capacity to request asylum is usually dependent on reaching the host country's soil, which has prompted repeated waves of illegal migration to Europe.

However, reports by civil society institutions, lawyers, and the media indicate that the number of LGBT asylum seekers is significant and that either the frequency of claims or their prominence is steadily on the rise. Authorities in three European countries (Belgium, Norway, and the United Kingdom) and civil society organizations in many countries of the European Union collect limited statistics, which due to their great discrepancy hardly serve as good indicators for generalizations. For instance, in 2016 LGBT organizations in Poland estimated the annual number of LGBT asylum claims to be two or three, in Greece thirty-two (of whom seven were transgender applicants), and in the Netherlands up to 1,000 (FRA 2017a).

The most comprehensive study of LGBT asylum in the European Union estimated in 2011 that, in total, up to 10,000 LGBT asylum claims are annually registered in the European Union (Jansen and Spijkerboer 2011). Given that statistically a considerable share of the more than 2.5 million asylum seekers who lodged first-time asylum applications in the European Union between 2015 and 2016 must be gender and sexual minorities, many of whom originate from LGBT-hostile environments, it is likely that these numbers are much higher in 2018.

**Asylum Challenges** To qualify for protection in Europe, queer refugees need to
demonstrate through interview proceedings and the provision of documentation that they face a well-founded fear of persecution that results from their membership of a particular social group (i.e., on account of being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender). In most countries in Europe, the burden of proof rests entirely on the asylum seeker.

Late disclosure of being queer, for example, has much more serious consequences than merely complicating data gathering; immigration authorities frequently interpret the late disclosure of an asylum seeker’s LGBT-based persecution as harming their credibility. In many cases, adjudicators in Europe deny asylum to LGBT refugees who fail to disclose their LGBT-related persecution at the first possible instance (Jansen and Spijkerboer 2011). Late disclosure may result from queer refugees’ lack of awareness about their asylum rights, or from their limited experiences and anxiety in articulating non-European LGBT identities to foreign, usually straight and cisgendered immigration officials or to their interpreters, who often are from LGBT refugees’ regions of origin. Lastly, fears of trans- and homophobic reactions from European asylum authorities, in some cases caused by internalized suspicion vis-à-vis authorities in general, can be a contributing factor.

Until recently, discretion reasoning, though firmly rejected by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2012), allowed adjudicators to reject LGB asylum applications on the basis that LGB refugees can avoid persecution by acting “discreetly” about their sexual identities if they are returned to their home countries. In 2013 such reasoning was found to be inconsistent with European law standards and is therefore illegal in the European Union (X, Yand Z v. Minister voor Immigratie en Asiel 2013). However, immigration lawyers indicate that it continues to be applied in practice, and research suggests that cultures of disbelief replace discretion reasoning (Millbank 2009).

Queer asylum claims are frequently rejected on the basis of negative credibility findings, which deem claimants insincere about their identities. In the United Kingdom, for example, civil society findings indicate that 98 to 99 percent of LGBT asylum claims from 1999 to 2009 failed, compared to 73 percent on all other grounds (Yoshida 2013). Negative credibility assessments frequently relate more to the credibility expectations and prejudices of the assessors than to the LGBT identities of asylum seekers. They particularly illustrate the uneven power structures at play in asylum proceedings, where “the decision-maker and not the applicant has the power to name, the authority to decide who the applicant ‘really’ is and what sexuality ‘really’ means” (Berg and Millbank 2009, 208).

Although European Union law stipulates that immigration officials who interview asylum seekers should be trained in LGBT refugees’ issues (Procedures Directive 2013/32/EU, Art. 153a), authorities’ credibility assessments are often based on Eurocentric sociocultural norms and heteronormative Western understandings of stereotyped LGBT belonging. European asylum realities thus often implicitly coerce queer claimants into revealing their selves and experiences in ways that are reconcilable with European immigration case
workers’ expectations about how LGBT refugees need to act, feel, and be. LGBT asylum seekers, then, to confirm their own genuineness and to consequently increase the chances of a legal immigration status, understandably perpetuate these assumptions by living up to them (Gartner 2015).

European asylum law and practice have frequently reduced gender and sexual identity to psychology and sex. Past examples of this included the use of sexual arousal tests by authorities in the Czech Republic and Slovakia in 2010 and 2012 that required LGB asylum seekers to watch pornography while machines measured their physical reactions, and the acceptance in the United Kingdom, for example, of photographic and video evidence that demonstrated queer asylum seekers’ intimate contact with persons of the same sex. Similarly, the application of forensic psychological testing to determine LGBT belonging continues to be an issue, as evidenced by case law of the European Court of Justice (F. v. Bevándorlási és Menekültügyi Hivatal 2016). Though supranational case law now imposes limits on how authorities may verify asylum seekers’ sexual orientation and makes clear that self-identification must be the starting point (A, B and C v. Staatssecretaris van Veiligheid en Justitie 2014), it remains unclear how far authorities can go to test claims. Trans refugees have been found to face comparatively fewer challenges in establishing their credibility. Reasons include the low prevalence of such claims and higher rates of success in establishing credibility in cases where trans refugees’ bodies conform to a binary visual typology (Berg and Millbank 2013).

Other common credibility challenges that queer refugees face across Europe relate to adjudicators’ expectations about coherently articulated and linear coming-out stories (irrespective of whether these are founded more on Western illusions than on LGBT refugees’ individual pasts), lack of knowledge about local queer scenes in the receiving country (irrespective of their exclusive structures or the financial burdens that preclude LGBT refugees’ participation in them), previous marriages (including forced ones), and children (Berg and Millbank 2009; Jansen and Spijkerboer 2011).

Whereas European Union law theoretically requires member states to ensure that precise and up-to-date information is obtained from various sources (Qualification Directive, 2011/95/EU), the reality of insufficient evidence impacts various aspects of LGBT asylum claims in Europe. Among them are contentious “internal flight” argumentations, which are applied across European Union countries to return LGBT refugees to their countries of origin based on the justification that LGBT-based persecution can be overcome by relocating to another part of the home country (Jansen and Spijkerboer 2011). Similarly, except for Italy, most courts and authorities in the European Union consider the nonapplication of anti-LGBT laws as an indicator that “persecution” does not take place in a given country. However, the mere existence or enforcement of laws is a very limited indicator to establish evidence for or against persecution; Brazil, for example, has the highest number of trans murders worldwide despite a comparatively progressive legal
LGBT regime. More generally, European Union member states' immigration authorities continue to rely on rudimentary, sometimes dubious, and often non-LGBT-specific country background documentation, including media reports and arbitrarily chosen online sources, rather than on substantiated research evidence. This is acknowledged by the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), which published a guidebook for European immigration authorities on researching the situation of LGB asylum seekers' countries of origin (EASO 2015).

Imperfect as the empirical data on LGBT migrants who reach the European Union is, it still far outstrips our knowledge of LGBT migrant experiences in transit countries such as Egypt, Libya, Kenya, and Turkey, where the vast majority of refugees' journeys end without reaching Europe. Often, such transit places differ insubstantially in their hostility toward LGBT migrants (Human Rights Watch 2017; Wesangula 2017; Özcan et al. 2017; Grungras et al. 2009).

**Immigration through Family Reunification**

Since the late 1970s the most common way of immigrating to the European Union with authorization has been through the use of family reunification laws. Whereas heterosexual European Union citizens and residents, though in many cases also under tight controls, are often awarded the right to have their spouses immigrate or migrate internally, the legal situation for queer couples has been particularly complex and inconsistent. For example, the European Union's freedom of movement and family reunification laws, which govern family-based immigration and internal migration, do not define the term *spouse* in terms of gender or sexuality, so individual countries in the European Union have been afforded comparatively wide discretion to determine LGB family-based immigration in accordance with their own family laws (Free Movement Directive 2004/38/EC; Family Reunification Directive 2003/86/EC). In 2018, however, the European Court of Justice in a landmark ruling shed some light on the interpretation of *spouse* in queer immigration cases (Coman and Others, C-673/16). Though limited to same-sex couples who married in a European Union country, the court held that third-country nationals who are same-sex spouses of European Union citizens cannot be refused rights of residence and free movement in the European Union, including in member states that prohibit same-sex marriage or civil partnerships. For third-country nationals who have been granted asylum in the European Union, practices differ because member states are largely left with the prerogative to allow or deny their partners the right to join them. Also at the Council of Europe level, which legally impacts forty-seven countries on the continent, a 2016 binding judgment by the European Court of Human Rights held for the first time that family member residence permits may no longer be granted exclusively to opposite-sex spouses. Thus, theoretically, all forty-seven signatory states must ensure the eligibility for family-based residence permits of binational same-sex partners, whether through marriage, civil partnerships, or
LGBT Immigrants' Reception in Europe

The reception of LGBT migrants in Europe varies tremendously depending on the sociopolitical and economic context of the host countries. Overall, however, once arrived in Europe, many LGBT migrants discover that the social discrimination they faced persists, albeit in different forms. In 2013 a survey of 93,000 LGBT persons across member states of the European Union found that over 26 percent of all respondents, and 35 percent of all trans respondents, had suffered violent attacks or threats in the previous five years, and that such incidents were rarely reported to local authorities (FRA 2013). In addition, immigrants' and their descendants' backgrounds, names, ethnicities, and religions trigger various forms of serious discrimination and exclusion, as is evidenced in a survey of over 25,000 minority respondents across the twenty-eight European Union countries (FRA 2017b).

LGBT immigrants are subject to multiple forms of intersectional discrimination based not only on their ethnic, cultural, or religious backgrounds but also on their LGBT belonging. Thus, particularly severe forms of social exclusion from the general populations of the host societies often go hand in hand with marginalization in European LGBT scenes, as well as queer migrants' diaspora communities. Research in these contexts is sporadic; it has shed light on the experiences of, for example, queer refugees in London's LGBT scenes (Giametta 2017) and queer Russians in Berlin's Russian diaspora community (Mole 2018).

Especially since 2015, however, LGBT refugees' solidarity networks have been established in several European countries. Though many of these implicitly or explicitly reproduce European "liberation" narratives, many also create comparatively safe spaces for LGBT refugees. An example is WelcomeOUT, an annual refugee-focused pride event in Uppsala, Sweden. Despite its arguably contentious (sub)title—Welcome Here, Welcome Home, Welcome Out—the initiative empowers LGBT refugees and increases their visibility with the Swedish public. Since 2016 it has enabled over 200 LGBT refugees from across Sweden to connect with and empower each other, and it has inspired the establishment of a similar project in France.

In addition to having to navigate racist and trans- or homophobic community settings in Europe, major issues that queer migrants and refugees face include language challenges, (mental) health challenges (Messih 2016), limited legal access to work opportunities during and after the often years-long asylum proceedings, which may result in poverty (Allsopp et al. 2014), and a lack of safe and appropriate housing. Due to frequent reports of trans- or homophobic abuse in reception and detention, in many European reception settings, LGBT refugees are considered a vulnerable group, which may give them access to special accommodation (FRA 2017a). LGBT-only refugee shelters, however, exist only in a
handful of European cities, including Amsterdam, Berlin, Bologna, Cologne, and Nuremberg.

The is no standard LGBT migration story. Migration, gender, and sexuality are open-ended, fluid processes, which makes the experiences of LGBT people who migrate to Europe as heterogeneous and diverse as their backgrounds and identities. Migrants' contexts of origin, ability, class, gender, race, and religious affiliation always impact their migratory decisions and realities. The sociopolitical climates in their receiving countries are equally decisive for their experiences, and these climates diverge greatly in the different regions and countries in Europe, and even within the European Union. After all, Europe consists of around fifty countries with widely heterogeneous histories, languages, politics, economic realities, and approaches to LGBT issues.

For most of history, the migration of LGBT people to Europe has taken place at the very margins of law, research, policy, and scholarship. And yet, despite their comparatively low numbers, LGBT refugees are increasingly coming to the forefront of European migration debates. Since the 1980s, European legal systems have accommodated claims by refugees who flee from persecution due to their gender and sexual identities, a minority of whom are ultimately granted asylum, most often in Western European countries. In spite of Europe's historic role in causing LGBT persecution and its present sociopolitical realities, LGBT refugees' claims are often instrumentalized in the perpetuation of dichotomous imaginaries of a “liberating West” and an “oppressive non-West.” European asylum law, too, operates on such logics, which in the asylum processes frequently causes LGBT refugees to reduce the complexity of their individual stories to confirm simplistic Western stereotypes about LGBT belonging and persecution.

Cultures of refugee victimization, xenophobia, and particularly anti-Muslim sentiments and racism seriously impact LGBT migrants’ experiences with society at large in many European countries. Simultaneously, cultures of trans- and homophobia complicate many LGBT refugees’ lives in refugee accommodations and diaspora communities. And yet, for many LGBT refugees, despite its widespread historical amnesia and the resulting structural discrimination against minority populations, Europe may provide safety from persecution on a continent that, in global perspective, has the best record of LGBT rights assurance.

SEE ALSO Chechnya, Detention Camps in; Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara; Diasporas, Queer; Human Rights in Europe; Imperialism and Colonialism; Maghreb; Marriage, Universal, in Europe; Marriage Migration in Asia; Neoliberalism in Latin America; Offences Against the Person Act (1861); Refugees and Asylum in Africa; Refugees and Immigration Policies; Section 377 and Section 377A; Section 377 in South Asia; Spectra Project; Wilde Trials, International Significance of

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Militarism and Sexualities in the Asia-Pacific Region

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The policies of various countries in Asia regarding the inclusion of LGBT individuals in their armed forces.

The Asia-Pacific region includes some of the most militarized zones on the planet, hosting the huge standing armies of India, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Korea (South Korea), and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea), as well as the smaller armies of Taiwan, Vietnam, and Mongolia. There are also US troops stationed throughout the region. China is second in the world in military expenditure, Japan is fifth, India is eighth, and South Korea is also in the top ten. Several countries in the region require a period of military service of their young men (including Singapore, Vietnam, Taiwan, Mongolia, North Korea, and South Korea). When societies are preoccupied with military matters, this preoccupation impinges on every aspect of government policy, civil society, and interpersonal relations—including sexuality and gender identity.

Modern nation-states have always been concerned with the sexuality and reproductive capacities of their citizens. This can involve introducing sexual hygiene measures; policing the boundaries of sex and gender; promoting heteronormative family forms that facilitate the reproduction of citizens, workers, and soldiers; regulating marriage and divorce; controlling access to the means of reproductive control; and managing the size of the population through either pronatalist policies or population limitation, also known as biopolitics (Foucault 1990; Mackie 2009; Mackie and Tanji 2015). Where a nation-state's policies have a particular focus on the military, this will also have corresponding effects on gender relations and the management of sexuality. In a militarized society, governments manage the sexuality of all citizens, not just soldiers, by promoting particular heteronormative family forms; policing the boundaries of binaristic masculine and feminine gender identities; promoting the reproduction of children (potential soldiers and supporters of the military); placing the heteronormative family at the center of national identity; and positioning women and children at the “home front” as needing to be protected by the military.

Military Management of Sexuality

Military institutions have always managed the sexuality of soldiers and civilians (Enloe
1983, 1989, 1994, 2004). Military forces manage the sexuality of soldiers in their training by (directly or indirectly) providing access to brothels, providing prophylactics, testing soldiers and sex workers for sexually transmissible diseases, regulating marriage, prohibiting same-sex sexual activity, and excluding homosexuals from service in the military. Military training fosters aggression, often expressed in misogynistic and homophobic terms. This entry presents a survey of these dynamics in selected countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Until relatively recently, most armies were exclusively masculine institutions. Citizenship has historically been connected with military service, which originally was expected of males only. Most militaries have prohibited the participation of women or openly gay or transgender service personnel, though women have served in militaries at times, particularly during national liberation struggles, and some women have “passed” as male soldiers (Jayawardena 1986; Mackie and Tanji 2015; Crozier-De Rosa and Mackie 2019). In China the premodern legend of Hua Mulan, the cross-dressing woman warrior, has been reworked over the centuries, and has also appeared in twentieth-century Anglophone adaptations (Crozier-De Rosa and Mackie 2019; Kingston 1977; Bancroft and Cook 1998).

In places where armies are stationed, service industries develop around the bases, including entertainment and sex industries that often involved women providing sexual services to male soldiers (Mackie and Tanji 2015). While gay men could not be open about their sexuality in military institutions until recently, they may seek out gay bars or other entertainment services when off duty, as some Allied soldiers reportedly did during the occupation of Japan from 1945 to 1952 (McLelland 2005). While the presence of LGBT personnel in military institutions in many Anglophone societies is well documented, there is less known about many other parts of the world. Much more research is needed, but the existing scholarship is summarized below (Sinclair 2009; Bérubé 1990; Riseman et al. 2018).

**LGBT Military Index**

The LGBT Military Index, created by the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies, ranks countries according to their inclusion of LGBT service personnel in the armed forces, as well as related policies and best practice. The index scores countries with respect to five categories: inclusion, admission, toleration, exclusion, and persecution. For inclusion, they look at:

- the presence of an organization supporting LGBT personnel within the armed forces;
- the type of recognition same-sex unions receive from the state;
- the recognition, support, and financial benefits granted to same-sex couples;
- antidiscrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression;
- whether armed forces are represented at pride events;
whether armed forces make a political claim supporting the rights of LGBT individuals;
whether the state recognizes a legal change of gender on official documents; and
whether crimes against an individual because of his or her (perceived) sexual orientation are considered an aggravating circumstance.

The category admission considers whether individuals are permitted to serve regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Tolerance looks at whether the state supports a joint statement of the UN Human Rights Council on the rights of LGBT persons and the criminalization of male or female same-sex sexual activities. The exclusion category assesses whether service is banned based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and whether the armed forces consider homosexuality, bisexuality, or transgender status to be a pathological mental disorder. Finally, the category persecution scores countries based on restrictions on expression of sexual or gender identity and on the presence of incitement to hatred by a public official. Taking all the categories into account, the index then provides a score for each country, with a higher score meaning that the country ranks well for LGBT inclusion (Polchar et al., 2014).

In the Asia-Pacific region, Australia and New Zealand score highest. The lowest scoring countries are Iran (with a score of 6), Malaysia (20), and several Central and West Asian countries—Kazakhstan (21), Bangladesh (24), Azerbaijan (30.5), Turkey (30.5), and the Russian Federation (32.5). Armenia and Iran are reported to have official incitement of hatred against LGBT people (Polchar et al., 2014).

The inclusion of LGBT people in a nation’s military may depend on whether homosexuality is legally proscribed. Several former British colonies in the Asia-Pacific region inherited the British antisodomy laws that prohibit male same-sex sexual activity; female same-sex sexual activity is seldom mentioned in these laws. The antisodomy laws were repealed in New Zealand in 1986 and in the last of the Australian states in 1997. They were repealed for a time in India but later reinstated, were ruled unconstitutional in Hong Kong in 2005, and still exist in Singapore and Malaysia (Sanders, 2015; Kirby, 2011).

**Military Bans**

Australia removed its ban on gays and lesbians in the military in 1992. Since 2003, same-sex partners of military personnel have been treated the same as heterosexual partners for most purposes. From 2010, the ban on transgender service personnel in the Australian Defence Forces was lifted, and some individuals have transitioned while in service (ABC TV, 2014). Military personnel have regularly participated in uniform in the pride parade at the Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras in Sydney since 2013 (Riseman, 2017; Riseman et al., 2018).

Taiwan removed its prohibition on gays in the military in 2002 (Palm Center, 2002). Thailand removed its prohibition on gays and transvestites in 2005 (Immigration and...
Refugee Board of Canada 2008); transgender women can be exempted from military service on grounds of gender identity disorder (UNDP and USAID 2014b). The Philippines removed restrictions in 2010 (Polchar et al. 2014). In Vietnam, men must do military service, and women may do military service. There are no explicit laws against homosexuality in Vietnam, but in the past homosexuality has been addressed in campaigns against “social evils” (Newton 2015), and it is classified as a mental disease for the purposes of determining suitability for military service (Nguyen Thi Huyen Linh, personal communication; UNDP and USAID 2014c, annex 3).

Japan does not have any explicit ban on gays and lesbians serving in its Self-Defense Forces, and there are no laws against same-sex sexual activity in the country. Same-sex marriages are not recognized in Japan, so gay and lesbian partners would be unlikely to be able to access benefits for same-sex partners. There is no national law prohibiting discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in Japan, although there is some case law (Taniguchi 2006).

In 2007 two soldiers in Nepal’s army were accused of having a lesbian relationship and were discharged. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reports, however, that gays and lesbians can now serve openly in Nepal (UNDP and USAID 2014a, annex 2). In May 2017 a soldier in South Korea was punished under the Military Criminal Act 92 (6), which prohibits members of the military from engaging in sexual activity with members of the same sex (Amnesty International 2017). North Korea reportedly mandates celibacy for the first ten years of military service (Hassig and Oh 2009). Currently, Australia and New Zealand are the only countries in the region that allow the service of transgender personnel. As for the trans community in South Korea, gender reassignment surgery is permitted only for individuals over twenty years old, and only if they have either completed or been exempted from military service (Young 2008; Yi and Gitzen 2018).

When evaluating policies on the inclusion of LGBT personnel in militaries, it is also necessary to consider actual practices, or how officially LGBT-friendly policies are actually implemented. In Singapore, for example, gays are prevented from going to command school or serving in sensitive units. In many other countries, even if there is no prohibition of gays and lesbians in the military, once in service they may still be subject to contradictory policies or homophobic attitudes from their peers (OutRight Action International 2009).

SEE ALSO Military Law and Policy in the United States; Military/Navy in the United Kingdom; MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia; Sex Tourism in Asia; Sex Work in Asia; Tongzhi

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Military Law and Policy in the United States

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The evolution of military law and policy regarding LGBTI persons serving in the US armed forces.

LGBTI individuals have always been in the US military. Much of that history, however, has been marred by policy that has been anything but kind to those wishing to serve their country who also happen to be LGBTI. On 14 March 1778 Lieutenant Gotthold Frederick Enslin was the first person dismissed by the US military by order of George Washington. Washington’s order, drafted after Enslin was caught in his quarters in bed with another man, noted that Enslin was “to be dismiss’d with Infamy. His Excellency the Commander in Chief approves the sentence and with Abhorrence and Detestation of such Infamous Crimes [as sodomy] orders Lieutt. Enslin to be drummed out of the Camp tomorrow morning by all the Drummers and Fifers in the Army never to return” (Washington 1778). It would take more than 200 years for this policy to change for gays and lesbians, so that they could serve first under the cloak of officially sanctioned secrecy provided by the “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy of 1994, and finally as openly homosexual in 2011. In 2016 transgender people joined the ranks of those allowed to serve openly, although those rights were subject to court challenges that were ongoing as of 2018. Intersex individuals were summarily dismissed as unfit for service by military custom and policy; they remain understudied in literature on military policy. While the differences between lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex individuals are acknowledged, for brevity the terms gay and homosexual are used interchangeably throughout this entry, unless a particular policy targets a certain portion of the LGBTI community.

World Wars I and II

Much like the ill-fated Lieutenant Enslin, other homosexuals were discharged from the military over the next approximately 140 years, but there was no explicit US military policy of exclusion until World War I (1914–1918). Many sources report that the first military law against sodomy appeared in the 1916 Articles of War, but no mention of sodomy or any variation thereof exists in the 1916 articles. It is in Article 93, “Various Crimes,” that later revisions of the articles address the topic, but there is no mention of sodomy in the 1916 version. Nor is sodomy listed in the “Punitive Articles,” “War Offenses,” or “Miscellaneous Crimes and Offenses.” The closest one gets is Article 95, “Conduct Unbecoming an Officer
and a Gentleman,” which has been used since the time of Lieutenant Enslin.

The US military realized it had omitted sodomy almost immediately after the 1916 articles were published. The House of Representative held a hearing in June 1916 to determine if any changes needed to be made to the Articles of War. US Army Judge Advocate Brigadier General Enoch H. Crowder (1859–1932), testifying about the prisoners held at Fort Leavenworth, said the prison at that time “included men who had been convicted of unnatural crimes, sexual perverts” (Revisions of the Articles 1916, 25). Knowing that it would take a long time to revise the 1916 Articles of War, especially given that the United States entered the war in 1917, the US military found a quicker way to codify antisodomy provisions.

The first official US military policy was actually a 1917 US Army manual, with more service-wide policies to come in the 1920 Articles of War (a revision of the 1916 version). In 1917 Secretary of War Newton D. Baker (1871–1937) authorized corrections to the original 1916 Articles of War via an army manual that explicitly prohibited “assault with intent to commit sodomy” (A Manual for Courts-Martial Courts 1917, 271). Sodomy was defined as “sexual connection with any brute animal, or in sexual connection, per anum [or, byway of the anus], by a man with any man or woman.” The definition made clear that “both parties are liable as principals if each is adult and consents.” In other words, consent still meant punishment, and both heterosexual and homosexual sodomy was banned. Only the adult would be held accountable if the other actor was a “boy of tender age.” Because the military believed sodomy was such a heinous act, “the evidence should be plain and satisfactory in proportion as the crime is detestable” (271–272). The manual lumped sodomy into the same category as murder, rape, robbery, and manslaughter. The punishment for sodomy included dishonorable discharge, forfeiture of pay, and/or jail time. The military relied on the 1920 Articles of War for most of World War II (1939–1945), but there were a couple of variants in policy and implementation.

Two years after the end of World War I, a revised Articles of War was reissued in 1920, and this became the US military’s first service-wide condemnation of sodomy. Article 93 declared, “Any person subject to military law who commits ... sodomy ... shall be punished as a court-martial may direct” (March 1920, 24). The 1920 articles mirrored the army manuals, from the definition of sodomy to the punishments: dishonorable discharges, forfeiture of pay, and/or jail time. The military relied on the 1920 Articles of War for most of World War II (1939–1945), but there were a couple of variants in policy and implementation.

In 1942 the army laid out one of the most important policies, which would be used for decades to remove homosexuals from the military: Section VIII, “Inaptness or Undesirable Habits or Traits of Character” of Army Regulations No. 615-360 (Marshall 1942). According to this policy, homosexuality was both a moral failing and a potential mental disorder.
Medical officers were instructed to examine the alleged homosexual to determine if he could be made fit for service through psychiatric counseling and other procedures, assuming that no actual homosexual actions had occurred; if the soldier was found to have engaged in homosexual activity, he would be automatically dishonorably discharged per earlier War Department regulations. If the medical officers determined that the soldier could not be made fit for duty by psychiatric intervention, he would be discharged from service. Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall (1880–1959) reinforced that sodomy was a “heinous crime,” and that, at the very least, soldiers should be discharged for sodomy or “any crime involving sex perversion” (Marshall 1943, 2). As in World War I, by policy, a homosexual soldier faced dishonorable discharge and possible jail time.

Engaged in an active war, the military determined it did not have the time or manpower for hearings and medical interventions for alleged homosexuals, so another plan was hatched: what if homosexuals could be identified before they even entered the service? This would save the time and trouble of discharging them later. Thus, in 1942, active screening measures were put in place in induction station interviews. Psychiatrists believed they could spot homosexuals by “their effeminate looks or behavior,” by applying a tongue dispenser to the back of a recruit's throat (it was thought that gay men did not have a gag reflex), and by testing for higher levels of estrogen. The last technique proved “too uncertain and too expensive to try on every inductee” (“Homosexuals in Uniform” 1947). Psychologists also recited certain words from the gay vernacular and watched the recruit's reaction: “What is a 'size queen'? Define 'glory hole.' What is a 'Prince Albert'? What is a 'bird'? What are 'cookies'?” (Robinson 2011, 1326). Most detected homosexuals were sent to a general hospital for psychiatric treatment if a military board determined that they were “reclaimable.” Unsurprisingly, most homosexuals did not respond to the military’s prescribed treatment, and so were released from military service (“Homosexuals in Uniform” 1947).

World War II’s enormous manpower requirements also pushed down authority to lower levels of command to deem a soldier unfit due to homosexuality or homosexual actions. The need for bodies to fight the war on various fronts led to uneven compliance with the order against sodomy because the US military could not afford to court martial every servicemember considered unfit for duty. Accordingly, the army instituted other policies to stamp out the scourge of homosexual activity, among other unwanted behaviors, by issuing in 1942 a new regulation, AR 615-360, which recognized that “during emergency, it is essential that manpower be conserved” (Marshall 1942, 19). The regulation pushed discharge discretion and punishment down to the commander level, with “any doubtful case [being] forwarded to ‘The Adjutant General for the action of the Secretary of War’” (19). Given the monumental task of simply manning World War II, to say nothing of acquisition requirements, logistics, and the like, it is not likely that many cases, if any, reached the adjutant general or the secretary of war.
In order to speed discharges without having to push cases up the chain of command, a practice that began in World War I became quite common in World War II: issuing blue discharges, or “blue tickets” (named for the color of paper on which they were printed). Commanders could issue blue tickets to rid the service of suspected homosexuals or anyone else unfit for service. Although blue tickets were supposed to be neither honorable nor dishonorable but merely an administrative discharge, blue-ticketed military members were discriminated against after returning to civilian life. Having a blue ticket meant that a servicemember was in some way unfit to be in the military, had been discharged without the ability to rejoin, and was often stigmatized in his civilian life that followed. Not all blue-ticket discharges were issued for homosexual behavior, but the navy blue-ticketed about 4,000 sailors for homosexuality, and the army around 5,000 soldiers (Bérubé 1990, 232). The Veterans Administration did not provide benefits to blue-ticketed individuals.

The use of blue tickets ended on 1 July 1947. For the most part, however, the basic tenets followed later were set during the two world wars: homosexuality was both a character flaw and a potential psychiatric disorder. Implicitly, homosexual servicemembers characterized as unfit for service did not have the proper character and morals to be warriors and simultaneously had a psychiatric problem that made them that way. When the United States faced the Soviets in the Cold War, gays in the military faced a different kind of fire: fewer service-wide policies designed to ensure discharge, but those discharges that did occur were usually based on a particular service’s rules/commanders and were issued under a dishonorable categorization.

The Cold War

Soon after the passage of the 1947 National Security Act, which created today's military and Department of Defense (DoD), the Department decided that the entire military needed a common policy regarding homosexuals. It therefore issued a memorandum on 11 October 1949 stating that said homosexuals could not and would not be “rehabilitated” and that “homosexual personnel, irrespective of sex, should not be permitted to serve in any branch of the Armed Services in any capacity, and prompt separation of known homosexuals from the Armed Forces is mandatory” (Rand 1993, 6).

Two years later, the military issued its 1951 Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ), which continued the ban on gay servicemembers and superseded other policies on the issue. Per UCMJ Article 125, sodomy was defined as “engaging in unnatural carnal copulation, either with another person of the same or opposite sex, or with an animal. Any penetration, however slight, is sufficient to complete the offense and emission is not necessary” (Manual for Courts-Martial United States 1951, 367). “It is unnatural carnal copulation,” continued Article 125, “for a person to take into his or her mouth or anus the sexual organ of another person or of an animal.” It is important to note that Article 125 did not distinguish between homosexual and heterosexual activities, although most heterosexuals prosecuted under
Article 125 were charged with "sodomy in the context of rape or child sexual abuse; charges of consensual, adult, heterosexual sodomy generally only appear in two instances: as plea bargains in cases where the original charge was rape, and when they supplement[ed] charges of adultery" (Human Rights Watch 2003, 7). A person found guilty per Article 125 might have had to forfeit all pay, face a maximum prison sentence of five years, and receive a dishonorable discharge. No branch of service can produce exact numbers for homosexuals discharged under Article 125.

The UCMJ added two more articles that were also important arguments against homosexuals serving openly. Article 133 prohibited “conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentlemen” and Article 134 prohibited behavior that could undermine good order and discipline or “bring discredit upon the armed forces” (Manual for Courts-Martial United States 1951, 449). Whereas the immorality of sodomy or oral sex could be easily inferred by lumping homosexual behavior together with murder, assault, larceny, and the like, using Article 133 and 134 against homosexuals made it explicit, and characterized homosexuality as something that could undermine unit cohesion. These military readiness and unit cohesion arguments appeared again and again, especially the 1980s.

Geopolitical events such as the Cold War and the election of a new US president made more urgent the need for a more permanent national security structure in the executive branch. In 1953 Dwight D. Eisenhower (1890–1969) had just become the president of the United States. Soviet leader Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) died that same year, leading to uncertainty or even turmoil in many places in the world. To ensure that federal national-security workers were trustworthy, President Eisenhower issued Executive Order (EO) 10450, “Security Requirements for Government Employment.” Among many other actions, the EO banned from service people who had “any criminal, infamous, dishonest, immoral, or notoriously disgraceful conduct, habitual use of intoxicants to excess, drug addiction, [or] sexual perversion” (Eisenhower 1953, 936). This put homosexuals in a catch-22 situation. One of the main purposes of a security clearance is to ensure that no one with access to sensitive information is susceptible to blackmail. Under EO 10450, if an individual disclosed that he was gay, that meant automatic forfeiture of his national security job, but if he did not disclose his sexual orientation, that was a potential security vulnerability. As was often the case, the deck was stacked against homosexuals. The number of discharges for being homosexual skyrocketed tenfold after the order (to 2,000 per year), given the force's relative size (1.4 million) as compared to World War II (Rand 1993).

In 1959 the Department of Defense reinforced President Eisenhower’s policy with Directive 1332.14, “Administrative Discharges,” which canceled previous services' policies to create a uniform DoD policy; it was reissued with various changes over the next several decades (McElroy 1959). The directive identified “homosexual tendencies” as one reason for discharge and “unsuitability” for service (McElroy 1959, 5, 6). A servicemember discharged honorably or under a general discharge “for reasons of unsuitability shall be
afford[ed] with the opportunity to make a statement in his own behalf” (8). For the first time, the 1965 Directive 1332.14 gave those ousted by the military with a less-than-honorable discharge a chance to defend themselves with the help of a lawyer (Rand 1993; McNamara 1965). (Before 1965, most just were given the discharge and left.) Just having the right to defend oneself “marked a turning point in the history of homosexuals in the services” (Rand 1993, 7). As with previous policy implementations, these procedures were unevenly followed between and within military branches.

In 1982 President Ronald Reagan's secretary of defense, Caspar Weinberger (1917–2006), reissued Directive 1332.14 and mandated that homosexuals be discharged dishonorably or “Under Other than Honorable Conditions.” One part of the directive ties together arguments that were long in the making—not only was homosexuality heinous, it also hurt morale and undermined readiness:

_Homosexuality is incompatible with military service. The presence in the military environment of persons who engage in homosexual conduct or who, by their statements, demonstrate a propensity to engage in homosexual conduct, seriously impairs the accomplishment of the military mission. The presence of such members adversely affects the ability of the Military Services to maintain discipline, good order, and morale; to foster mutual trust and confidence among servicemembers; to ensure the integrity of the system of rank and command; to facilitate assignment and worldwide deployment of servicemembers who frequently must live and work under close conditions affording minimal privacy; to recruit and retain members of the Military Services; to maintain the public acceptability of military service; and to prevent breaches of security._

_(WEINBERGER 1982, 9–10)_

Although Article 125 of the 1951 UCMJ was the primary tool used to oust homosexuals, Articles 133 (actions unbecoming an officer and gentleman) and 134 (activities that could bring discredit to the services) helped with the purging. The 1982 directive went a step further by connecting the dots between the UCMJ's Articles 125, 133, and 134.

The Reagan (1981–1989) and George H. W. Bush (1989–1993) administrations held to the view that homosexuals could not be soldiers, sailors, airmen, or Marines. The debate over whether homosexuals undermined readiness and unit cohesion continued into the Barack Obama administration (2009–2017), but not before one more big policy shift, which was meant to help homosexual servicemembers but arguably left them worse off than before.
Don't Ask, Don't Tell (DADT)

Even before Arkansas governor Bill Clinton (1946–), a Democrat, became president of the United States in 1993, the only two internal DoD studies (in 1957 and 1988) conducted on homosexuals serving openly both concluded that there was no risk to the military (GAO 1992). Furthermore, the General Accounting Office (GAO) found that between 1980 and 1990, the DoD discharged 16,919 service personnel; if the military had tried to replace those discharged just in the year 1990, it would have cost approximately $27 million. The GAO report, citing Gallup survey data, also noted that public opinion regarding gays serving in the military had changed, from only 51 percent supporting their service in 1977 to 69 percent in 1991.

During the 1992 presidential campaign, Bill Clinton promised to lift the ban on homosexuals serving openly in the military (as did all of the Democratic candidates). After the election, one of President Clinton’s first major initiatives was to fulfill this campaign promise, but a variety of forces worked against repealing the ban. First, Clinton’s reputation as a “draft dodger” during the Vietnam War did not help when he tried to garner military allies. Second, the entire Joint Chiefs of Staff opposed lifting the ban, citing military readiness and morale, among other issues. Third, probably to Clinton’s surprise, he did not have the support of many influential Democrats, including Sam Nunn of Georgia (1938–) who headed the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Yet, Clinton did receive support from an unlikely source: conservative former Republican senator and retired air force major general Barry Goldwater (1909–1998). Goldwater’s most memorable line, “You don’t need to be ‘straight’ to fight and die for your country. You just need to shoot straight,” appeared in an op-ed he penned in 1993 for the Washington Post, titled “The Gay Ban: Just Plain Un-American.” What most do not remember about that piece was his warning, “What would undermine our readiness would be a compromise policy like ‘Don’t ask, don’t tell.’ That compromise doesn’t deal with the issue—it tries to hide it” (Goldwater 1993).

Rather than heed Goldwater’s advice, in 1993 Congress passed the National Defense Authorization Act for the following fiscal year. Section 654 of Title 10 mandated that the military uphold the 1982 total ban policy and offered fifteen arguments against homosexual military service, from troop morale to military readiness and everything in between (H.R. 2401 1994). Having lost the legislative battle, Clinton issued Defense Directive 1304.26 on 21 December 1993. It was this directive combined with Section 654 of Title 10 that became known as “don’t ask, don’t tell, don’t pursue.”

Clinton created a compromise he thought would satisfy everyone. Don’t ask, don’t tell (DADT) would have prevented the military from directly questioning “recruits about their sexual orientation (‘Don’t Ask’), would have required gay and lesbian personnel to keep
their sexual orientation private (‘Don’t Tell’), and would have, at least in concept, prevented investigations from being started on an arbitrary basis (‘Don’t Pursue’)” (DoD 2010, 22). Unfortunately, personal stories and the numbers show the hollowness of Clinton’s DADT hopes (see Huffman and Schultz 2011). DoD separated from service more than 32,000 active duty gay servicemembers from 1980 through 2010, with 13,000 of these discharges occurring after DADT (DoD 2010). Toward the end of DADT, women and minorities were being discharged at rates disproportionate to their numbers (Williams Institute 2010). As one can see in Figure 1, discharges under DADT increased until the terrorist attacks on US soil on 11 September 2001, at which point the military seemed to heed Goldwater’s advice that shooting straight was more important than being straight. DADT’s uneven enforcement notwithstanding, the law remained military policy until its repeal during the Obama administration.

![Figure 1](https://example.com/figure1.png)

**Figure 1.** Number of Annual Separations for Homosexual Conduct per 100,000 Active Duty Service Members in the US Military Services by Year

### The End of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

Much like President Bill Clinton before him, Barack Obama (1961–) promised as a presidential candidate to reverse the ban on gays serving in the military. Once elected, during his first State of the Union address on 27 January 2010, President Obama reiterated his pledge. Unlike President Clinton, however, Obama faced a different landscape in at least three areas: military, public, and legislator opinion.

For the first time in US military history, some top military leaders publicly supported gays serving openly. In a 2 February 2010 Senate Armed Service Committee hearing, Chairman
of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Mike Mullen said,

> It is my personal belief that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly would be the right thing to do. No matter how I look at this issue, I cannot escape being troubled by the fact that we have in place a policy which forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens. For me personally, it comes down to integrity—theirs as individuals and ours as an institution. I also believe that the great young men and women of our military can and would accommodate such a change. I never underestimate their ability to adapt.

("HEARING OF THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE" 2010, 47)

Never before had the highest-ranking military official supported gays serving openly. That said, the military branch leaders did not all agree with Admiral Mullen. Marine Corps Commandant James Amos (1946–), the loudest critic, was joined by Army Chief of Staff George Casey Jr. (1948–) and Air Force Chief of Staff Norton Schwartz (1951–) in articulating that it was not the time to repeal given that the country was involved in two wars (Afghanistan and Iraq). In contrast, Chief of Naval Operations Gary Roughead (1951–) and Coast Guard Commandant Robert Papp Jr. (1953–) testified that the law should be repealed immediately ("Military Leaders” n.d.). Even those military leaders who opposed DADT’s repeal recognized the importance of a civilian-controlled military in a democracy, however, and they vowed to support whatever Congress and the president decided.
The American public's views also had shifted. By 2010 public support for allowing gays to openly serve had risen since the 1993 polling, as Figure 2 indicates. Now, a majority of Americans were in favor of allowing homosexuals not just to serve but to do so openly.

Having legislative support also proved critical. Although some wanted Obama to simply sign an executive order to mandate DADT’s demise, repealing the law required legislative action because DADT itself was a legislative act (Schultz 2010a). Being careful to not move too hastily, in December 2010 Congress passed the Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell Repeal Act (H.R. 2965, S. 4023), which President Obama signed. Instead of immediately repealing DADT, Congress mandated that the Pentagon complete a study of any potential negative effects of repeal for military effectiveness and make recommendations for a smooth repeal process. If, within sixty days of the study's completion, the president, secretary of defense, and chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff certified to Congress that the repeal would not negatively harm military effectiveness and could be implemented, DADT would end.

The secretary of defense in charge of the study was a Republican holdover from the George W. Bush administration, Robert Gates (1943–). He appointed army General Carter Ham (1952–) and Pentagon legal counsel Jeh Johnson (1957–) to conduct what ultimately was
the largest, most comprehensive study on personnel policy ever conducted by the US military. Overwhelmingly, the study found that the majority of servicemembers and their families felt overturning DADT would have either no effect or a positive effect on the force; “around 30 percent overall (and 40–60% in the Marine Corps and in various combat arms specialties)” felt overturning the ban would have negative effects (DoD 2010; Schultz 2010b).

Regardless, the report and implementation plan were certified by the president, the secretary, and the chairman to Congress on 22 July 2011. Per the act, sixty days later, Title 10, Section 654, which had banned gays openly serving for decades, came to an end on 20 September 2011. A study conducted one year after the repeal found that the predictions of harms to military readiness or retention because of repeal did not come to pass; only two verifiable resignations could be linked to the repeal, and both were chaplains (Belkin et al. 2012). DADT was gone, yet a professional, lethal military remained.

The Next Battleground: Intersex and Transgender Servicemembers

Most military policy, law, and focus have been directed toward the LGB of the LGBTI acronym, even though transgender and intersex individuals obviously serve. The research and verifiable data on intersex individuals is scant, but intersex individuals constitute somewhere between 0.018 percent to 1.7 percent of the general population (Marom et al. 2008). Because the military sees gender as binary (one is either male or female), military policy regarding intersex individuals is almost nonexistent, although intersex individuals often are lumped in with transsexual servicemembers (or have the same policies applied to them). When one researcher called various branch recruitment centers, none of the services said it would allow “hermaphrodites” in its service; their use of the pejorative term shows how stigmatized intersex individuals are (Witten 2007, 6). Intersex servicemembers are deemed medically unfit for service (Witten 2007).

Whereas DoD regulations barred LGB individuals based on military readiness and other reasons, “the rules barring transgender military service are, for the most part, embedded in medical regulations, and are premised on assumptions about the medical fitness of transgender personnel” (Elders et al. 2014, 2). DoD military standards listed “a history of psychosexual conditions, such as transsexualism, exhibitionism, transvestism, voyeurism, or other paraphilias” as mental health disorders disqualifying these individuals from service (National Research Council 2006, 142). Yet, around 15,500 transgender active duty, National Guard, or reserve forces serve today, and there are an additional 134,300 transgender veterans (Gates and Herman 2014). Indeed, transgender individuals “are more than twice as likely as non-transgender Americans (2.2% transgender vs. 0.9% non-transgender) to serve currently in the military” (Elders et al. 2014, 2). Because they are
deemed medically and/or psychologically unfit, transgender individuals continued to serve in the shadows, even after DADT’s repeal.

However, in 2013, the fifth edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* (*DSM-5*), which provides the most current, evidence-based psychological conditions classifications, replaced

> gender identity disorder with gender dysphoria, a diagnostic term that refers to an incongruence between a person’s gender identity and the physical gender that they were assigned at birth, and to clinically significant distress that may follow from that incongruence. While gender identity disorder was pathologized as an all-encompassing mental illness, gender dysphoria is understood as a condition that is amenable to treatment.

*(ELDERS ET AL. 2014, 5)*

This reclassification is key because if gender dysphoria can be properly treated, much of DoD’s argument for banning transsexual servicemembers falls away. Moreover, one study found that the treatment for such servicemembers would be around “$5.6 million per year, or $438 per transgender servicemember per year, or 22 cents per member per month” *(Belkin 2015, 1092)*. Another DoD issued study contained comparable figures *(Schaefer et al. 2016)*. In other words, the cost of allowing transgender servicemembers to serve their country while receiving treatment is a rounding error in DoD budget terms *(DoD’s budget was around $685 billion in 2018)*.

Once DADT’s repeal occurred and was implemented with hardly a ripple in the water, possibilities opened up for making policy on transgender servicemembers, though intersex servicemembers were still left behind. In May 2014 Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel *(1946–)* announced a review of DoD rules regarding transgender servicemembers. As in the DADT process, the secretary ordered a commission to study the implications for the military if the policy were changed, and to issue implementation recommendations. The study, conducted by Rand, ultimately concluded that allowing transgender servicemembers to serve openly would not negatively impact the military, and the cost would be minimal *(Schaefer et al. 2016)*. Another report’s cochairs and authors, including a former U.S. surgeon general, ultimately concluded, “We find that there is no compelling medical rationale for banning transgender military service, and that eliminating the ban would advance a number of military interests, including enabling commanders to better care for their servicemembers” *(Pollock and Minter 2014, 3)*. On 30 June 2016 Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter *(1954–)* lifted the ban on service, allowing transgender individuals to serve
openly with immediate effect.

Like many LGBTI battles, this policy change was a short-lived victory for transgender servicemembers. One year after Secretary Carter lifted the ban, President Donald Trump’s secretary of defense, James Mattis (1950–), said that more study would be conducted to determine the effect on military readiness and whether the services were ready to implement the plan. In July 2017 President Trump (1946–) wrote a series of tweets that included the message, “After consultation with my generals and military experts, please be advised that the United States government will not accept or allow transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the US military.” Trump also tweeted that “our military must be focused on decisive and overwhelming victory and cannot be burdened with the tremendous medical costs and disruption that transgender in the military would entail.”

President Trump wrote a memo reinforcing the ban on 25 August 2017, then recanted that first memo with a second issued on 23 March 2018 in which he essentially punted the issue of transgender servicemembers to Secretary Mattis. Mattis published a DoD policy in February 2018 that allowed transgender individuals to serve if they did so “in their biological sex”; if they had undergone gender transition or were diagnosed with “gender dysphoria,” they were disqualified from service (Mattis 2018, 32, 43). As of June 2018, it is unclear how or if Mattis’s transgender policy will be implemented, or whether it will even be allowed to take effect due to numerous court challenges. What is known is that the struggle for those who wish to serve their country openly as transgender or intersex citizens remains far from over.

SEE ALSO Human Rights; Militarism and Sexualities in the Asia-Pacific Region; Military/Navy in the United Kingdom; Sodomy Laws in the United States; Vietnam War; Vietnam War, LGBTQ+ Veterans

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Military/Navy in the United Kingdom

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The history of discrimination against LGBTQ peoples in the British armed forces and the fight for inclusion.

In the United Kingdom's regular armed forces there were 196,390 people (10% female, 90% male) as of May 2017. Women and men had, until the integration of the forces in the 1990s, lived in two separate homosocial cultures. Comradeship, loneliness, and close quarters sometimes led to contingent relationships. It was joked that in submarines eighty men went down and forty couples came back up. Much as in prisons, service members who had same-sex sex did not necessarily identify as homosexual.

The actual number of LGBTQ individuals in the service is not known, as the statistics are inadequate or absent, mainly because the Ministry of Defence (MoD) sees sexual identity as a private matter. Stonewall, a London-based LGBT rights group, made the latest estimate in 2009: up to 14,000 (8%) of the British forces were lesbian or gay. This mirrors the (very disputed) national average. The Office for National Statistics in 2016 put the UK LGBT total at 2 percent. In 2016 the MoD began asking new recruits to declare their sexual identity for monitoring purposes: just 20 of the 13,780 recruits said they were gay or lesbian; 740 said they were not; 13,020 did not reveal anything (Judd 2009; Office for National Statistics 2017; Ministry of Defence 2016).

After two decades of activists' legal struggles, the British army, navy, and air force from 2000 did a radical about-face on their previous long-standing opposition. They now strongly back LGBT diversity and inclusion. Some queer wariness and residual homophobia exist but appear to be being tackled with genuine determination.

History of LGBTQ Individuals in the British Forces

Given the history of discrimination in the British armed forces, the reluctance of LGBTQ individuals to identify themselves is not surprising. Buggery was made a hanging offense in 1533. An unknown number of servicemen were court-martialed and executed. In 1829 William Maxwell, a boatswain, was the last naval person to be executed for this offense. Punishment was often for coercive sex with minors, or for officers who had relations with social inferiors, thereby upsetting hierarchical relations. Later some were charged under
the Naval Discipline Act of 1866, the Army Act of 1881, the Air Force Act of 1917, and the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, the latter of which made all homosexual acts illegal.

Historians are uncertain about the extent of homosexual identity, desire, and practice in the services. Courts-martial provide evidence that is of only limited use. On the one hand, traditionalists believe that the lack of evidence indicates that homosexuality was not very widespread, even though homosocial bonding was common and valued. On the other hand, revisionists contend that evidence is absent because men who have sex with men (MSM) was so normal that wise officers on the ground regarded it as not worth recording, let alone taking judicial action. Indeed, MSM activity usefully reduces a major labor supply problem: servicemen becoming unfit for action after heterosexual intercourse with unregulated sex-industry workers carrying sexually transmitted diseases.

**MERCHANT NAVY**

Merchant Navy (commercial) ships are crewed by civilians and are culturally more relaxed and carnivalesque than naval vessels. An out camp subculture existed on many UK passenger ships, especially in the period between 1950 and 1985. Gay men were said to be easily 75 percent of some ships’ catering departments, estimated veterans in interviews: “It was almost *de rigueur*, darling” (a head waiter quoted in Stanley 2014, 232). Shipping lines could not confirm this as they knew it only via gossip: Peninsular and Oriental (P&O), for example, penciled “SQ” (suspected queer) beside names in some personnel records. The gay mongrel language known as Polari was widely spoken in such “gay heavens.” Cross-dressing was normal; same-sex “weddings” and “divorce parties” were staged in crew bars; and crews made counterclaims that theirs was the “queerest ship afloat” (*Baker and Stanley 2003*).

Despite homosexuality at sea being illegal until 1996 in the UK merchant service, camp men (but not noncamp officers or lesbian women), particularly stewards, were welcomed by shipping operators and passengers for their excellent passenger service, wit, and glamour. They made voyages fun, especially in crew shows where cross-dressed men performed revues and versions of Broadway musicals, emulating divas such as Ethel Merman, Judy Garland, and later Dusty Springfield (*Stanley 2012*). Camp gay crew had sex with “trade” shipmates, particularly prizing butch deckhands, naval men, and dock workers. Indeed, some wives welcomed this arrangement, believing that their husbands were not truly being unfaithful if their extramarital activities were limited to other men (*Baker and Stanley 2003*).

Similarly, on ships of the Swedish America Line between the 1930s and 1970s, when its New York–bound voyages were at their height, stewards had an out-and-proud camp subculture. However, they did not put on crew shows or speak Polari (*Nilsson 2006*).
Some of the first British men to attempt to transition were seafarers, using hormone treatments obtained in foreign pharmacies (Stanley 2012). Cruise ships today still tend to have many out gay staff, especially among entertainment organizers. The British defiantly proud camp subculture is gone but is celebrated in the Hello Sailor! exhibit at Merseyside Maritime Museum (Liverpool). Oral testimony from such men is in the museum's Maritime Record Centre's Sailing Proud archive. Meanwhile, the Merchant Shipping (Homosexual Conduct) Act of 2017 tidied up obsolete laws and ensured it was completely illegal to dismiss a seafarer for homosexual conduct.

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Scholars are now revealing the extensive same-sex relationships in both World War I (1914–1918) and World War II (1939–1945). Dismissals were relatively fewer than in peacetime because personnel were so needed. Some acclaimed wartime heroes are said to have been gay or bisexual, including Herbert Kitchener (1850–1916), Louis Mountbatten (1900–1979), Bernard Montgomery (1887–1976), and Orde Wingate (1903–1944). Evidence of this is predictably flimsy, and so such claims are commonly refuted. Nancy Spain (1917–1964), a broadcaster, became the best-known lesbian woman of the women’s service of the Royal Navy in World War II, although she was not out at that time.

In the second half of the twentieth century official attitudes toward LGBT service personnel
included expressing (Christianity-related) disgust or pathologizing them as sick perverts. Exposure as a homosexual led to instant dismissal, disgrace, career loss, and sometimes nervous breakdowns and suicides. Until the early 1990s it was also treated as a criminal offense. To avoid negative repercussions, those in the closet had to live a lie, even with close comrades. This caused stress, not least because of surveillance conducted by the armed forces’ own police forces.

However, many gay or bisexual people were quietly known and respected. Straight and gay men alike crossdressed in carnivalesque homegrown entertainment such as Ship’s Operatic and Dramatic Society (known popularly by its acronym “SODS”) operas. A classic quip about the rugged and often-homophobic marines (naval soldiers) makes the point: “Why do marines have such big backpacks? So they can take their bouffant frocks and their cosmetic cases with them” (anecdote told to Jo Stanley by a marine, 2012). Not all opponents were revolted by homosexuals. Some were personally tolerant but argued “logically” that homosexuality was incompatible with service life, as queer men would be national security risks in the allegedly hypermasculine services (because they could be blackmailed), and their “difference” made them likely to dilute team morale and effectiveness.

Changes in social attitudes from the 1950s onward very slowly affected the armed forces, despite the Army and Air Force Acts of 1955 reasserting homosexuality was a criminal offense in those services, as did the Navy Discipline Act of 1957. Pivotal is the Wolfenden Committee in 1957 recommended that “homosexual behaviour between consenting adults [i.e., those over 21] in private should no longer be a criminal offence” (Home Office and Scottish Home Department 1957, para 62.) This eventually resulted in the Sexual Offences Act of 1967. It partly decriminalized homosexuality, except in the armed forces and merchant navy. Between 1959 and 1962, an average of seventy-four per year were dismissed from the navy alone (representing 0.08% of the navy’s sometimes worryingly under-staffed force at the time).

**The Fight for Change in the Services**

Marginally more permissive attitudes and the 1970s rise of gay rights solidarity after the 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City slowly led to UK LGBT service personnel taking a more resistant and united attitude toward persecution and dismissal. In addition, an alarming demographic trough forced 1980s planners to accept that nontraditional members, including women and LGBT persons, had to be included if the forces were to be fully staffed. Rank Outsiders, an LGB support and campaigning organization for the armed forces, was founded in 1991, led by army nurse Elaine Chambers and army bandmaster Robert Ely. Campaigners such as Ely gave evidence about LGB servicepeople’s position to the Select Committee on the Armed Forces in 1992. Despite some political acceptance that the ban should be lifted, persecution continued.
Section 146 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994 extended the 1967 Sexual Offences Act to the armed forces. But that did not stop the dismissals. In December 1994, however, the MoD updated its “Armed Forces Policy and Guidelines on Homosexuality.” The MoD accepted that if civilian law deemed a homosexual activity legal, then that activity “should not constitute an offence under Service law” (Ministry of Defence 1994). Even so, the dismissals did not stop, and dismissed LGBTQ service personnel began to fight back using the judicial system, despite a lack of support from the legal world and antimilitary civilian queers. The legal campaign was begun by the Armed Forces Legal Challenge Group, created by dismissed naval officer Edmund Hall in 1994, and later backed by the rights groups Stonewall and Liberty. Dismissed naval personnel John Beckett and Duncan Lustig-Prean and the Royal Air Force’s Jeanette Smith and Graeme Grady were the cases selected by the campaign, and they fought linked cases in domestic courts starting in 1995. Finally, after several setbacks, the European Court of Human Rights made a landmark decision on 27 September 1999. In Smith and Grady v. UK the dismissals were found to be a breach of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. A linked case, Lustig-Prean and Beckett v. UK, was also successful, on 25 July 2000. With the final decisions in these court cases, official persecution of LGBTQ service personnel in the United Kingdom had to end.

**All Change: Diversity and Inclusion Begin**

Despite huge controversy, the armed forces lifted the ban in 2000 and reversed their former exclusionary stance, not least because of personnel shortages. They began working with Stonewall. MoD compensation was awarded to 93 people but not the expected 500-plus. Rank Outsiders was renamed AFLaGA (the Armed Forces Lesbian and Gay Association). It faded away, partly because the armed forces began to allow online service forums to provide support for servicepeople, and partly because that resource was not available to veterans, who were some of the main activists. Early in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the forces’ own LGBT support organizations, such as Proud2Serve and Royal Navy Compass, took up that mantle.

The MoD issued a formal apology in 2007. Manchester's Imperial War Museum North in 2008 mounted the United Kingdom’s first exhibition on LGBT service personnel, titled *Military Pride*. Princes William and Harry have publicly condemned homophobic bullying in the armed forces. Fares to pride parades were, controversially, subsidized for service members, who were finally allowed to march in uniform. Rainbow flags fly from the MoD on London’s Pride Day. Diversity awards celebrate progress. Transgender service personnel were officially well supported, beginning with Caroline Paige (starting in 1999), who became a mentor and adviser on transgender people in the services, including in the US armed forces; Hannah Winterbourne (starting in 2013) and Chloe Allen (2016) followed in her footsteps.

Throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century, discharged personnel battled the
MoD for respectful levels of compensation for loss of privacy and career, as well as for a personal apology. Residual homophobic and transphobic views are expressed (largely by ex-servicemen) on the well-used Army Rumour Service (popularly known by its acronym ARRSE), the unofficial online community. In 2016, however, the Armed Forces Act of 2006 was amended so that no one could be discharged for a homosexual act. In 2017 the government posthumously pardoned 50,000 gay and bisexual men convicted of any of the now-decriminalized sexual offenses under the ten acts that had once been used to pillory them.

This major turnaround in the United Kingdom is mirrored in other European countries, which were also affected by the 1999 European Court of Human Rights decisions on the UK cases. Other European countries allowing LGBT people to serve openly include Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Greece, Ireland (Republic of), the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland.

After the services' rapid about-face in 2000, LGBT personnel were welcomed instead of criminalized. Now genuinely inclusive policies exist and are firmly enforced. Sexual identity is officially seen as an irrelevance and an entirely private matter. In 2015 James Everard, at the time a lieutenant general and the commander of UK land forces, affirmed the official position that "diverse teams, [if well led, are] far more effective than bog-standard [meaning" completely ordinary"] teams." Gays fighting in the Afghan and Iraq wars of the twenty-first century had, he said, shown "that you can be homosexual and extremely brave ... people came back saying, these guys are part of the team." He explained that "operational effectiveness is at the top of the pile" of reasons to recruit more LGBT people (Farmer 2015). All three services are usually on Stonewall's list of the top 100 of the most inclusive employers in Britain. In 2017 the navy was at number 82 (Stonewall 2017).

SEE ALSO Human Rights in Europe; Militarism and Sexualities in the Asia-Pacific Region; Military Law and Policy in the United States; Stonewall Riots, International Effects of; The Wolfenden Report

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Internationally recognized Japanese writer whose body of work includes homosexually themed novels.

Yukio Mishima (born Kimitake Hiraoka) is one of the most famous Japanese writers in the world. He never received the Nobel Prize in Literature, but he was nominated for the honor three times between 1963 and 1965. These nominations came after his novels Kamen no kokuuhaku (1949; Confessions of a Mask [1958]), Shiosai (1954; The Sound of Waves [1956]), and Kinkakuji (1956; The Temple of the Golden Pavilion [1959]) had been translated into English, but before his more controversial, nationalistic work was known widely outside Japan. Mishima’s best work is overshadowed by his disconcerting final decade, when he was obsessed with violence, political terrorism, and a homebred version of right-wing politics and emperor worship. His contentious, larger-than-life macho image—and his highly publicized self-disembowelment with members of his small, private army at his side—has distracted from a more nuanced portrait. Mishima’s work is full of homosexual (and homosocial) overtones, but these too have been assigned a lower profile by critics. Most Japanese critics have written against the notion that Mishima was gay, insisting that his work is not “homosexual.” His family, too, has gone to lengths to suppress claims that he was gay, as though being gay would compromise his legacy.

Mishima’s Literary Homosexuality

J. Keith Vincent notes that “many [key figures in the gay world of postwar Japan] spoke about the impact of Mishima’s writing … on their understanding of themselves as gay men” (2012, 176). Mishima has been something of an icon to gay men in the West too, particularly following the English release of his two novels concerned primarily with male homosexuality, Confessions of a Mask and Kinjiki (1951–1953; Forbidden Colors [1968]). Mishima is included in gay literature anthologies and histories and is perennially ranked among the top gay and lesbian writers in the world. Still, there are nearly as many versions of Mishima as there are critics. If one says he is “in the tradition of [Lord] Byron, [Oscar] Wilde, [Jean] Genet and [Joe] Orton” (Lilly 1993, 127), another considers it “difficult to think of Mishima as a gay writer in the Western sense” (Woods 1998, 67). Despite these negotiations of Mishima’s iconic status, he remains a reference point for gay writers. One of the cofounders of the Gay Men’s Health Crisis, Lawrence Mass, was so moved by Mishima, because his “story was so revealing of a recurrent role played by some homosexuals in the
history of patriotism,” that he wrote a screenplay about him (1994, 171).

Mishima’s work has been adapted to film more than thirty times. It has also been adapted to modern dance works (such as Tatsumi Hijikata’s first butō performance in 1959, which drew inspiration from Kinjiki), opera, and other stage productions, as well as television, manga, and other media, in Japan and overseas. A growing number of his plays are being professionally translated and staged in the United States and Europe too. People around the world read his fiction in many languages, including four titles that were translated with support from UNESCO. Just as Mishima is read in China and countries throughout Asia, many of his novels can be found on bookstore shelves in Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago, and other Latin American cities. He continues to be showcased at international symposia and Japan festivals, so it comes as no surprise that one can find titles currently unavailable in English translated into other languages.

Western scholars specializing in Japan have had various takes on Mishima. They have written that his inability to live with his homosexuality was part of what led to “a lifetime of over-compensation and ‘masculine protest’” (Starrs 1994, 177); that his “literary homosexuality is always struggling to emerge from the shadow of deviance” (Schalow 1996, 17); that he “seems to be dissatisfied with modern masculinity in general and sees
the austere tradition of *nanshoku* [male-male love, in the premodern Japanese sense] as ... an ideal for all men, irrespective of sexual orientation” (McLelland 2000, 30); that he had a unique way of “dealing with the disjunctions between the sexed body, gendered identity, and the ‘imaginary body’” (Mackie 2005, 127); and that his work (namely *Confessions of a Mask*) “manages to straddle two very different moments in the history of homosexuality in Japan: one in which male-male sexuality has not yet been cordoned off as a separate and distinct identity, and one in which the homosocial continuum has ruptured for good along the homo-hetero divide” (Vincent 2012, 180).

Modern readings, particularly those informed by queer theory, can be useful when approaching Mishima, but one must also bear in mind Japanese historical and cultural contexts. Mishima wrote about homosexuality at a time when nobody else was doing so in Japan, and traditional values—particularly those surrounding nanshoku and *shudō*, “a widely acknowledged set of cultural conventions that defined male-male sexual desire in positive terms, but only if the male object of pursuit fell into the category of ‘youth,’ or *wakashu*” (Pflugfelder 2012, 964)—naturally shaped his views on male-male relationships, sexual and otherwise.

**Forbidden Colors**

Lauded by many gay authors in the West, Mishima has been called an author that every gay man should read (Drake 1998). These comments tend to be in relation to his first novel, *Confessions of a Mask*, though there are also convincing arguments that this work should not be read as a “gay novel” (Vincent 2012, 191). This is not a question, however, when it comes to the more explicit presentation of homosexuality in *Forbidden Colors*. Still, or perhaps because of this, the work—inspired in part by Thomas Mann’s *Death in Venice* (1912)—has received comparatively rather little attention. The novel is about the matchlessly beautiful Yūichi, a college student who comes out to Shunsuke, a much older man and famous writer. Shunsuke uses his power over this “bronze sculpture of the Peloponnesus school” (Mishima 1968, 229) to encourage him to exact vengeance on the opposite sex. Mishima characteristically uses the novel to articulate his views on art, beauty, and human nature, but he also offers a striking depiction of same-sex love. If Mishima can be dark, cruel, misogynistic, and even misanthropic, in *Forbidden Colors*, he can also be light and subtle in his handling of homosexual love.

The Japanese original generated enthusiastic reviews when it was published, but the first reviewers of the English translation were less generous. They called it a disappointment (Seidensticker 1968) and literarily immature (Goodman 1969). Donald Keene, who knew Mishima personally but did not care for *Forbidden Colors*, claimed that, “there was no hint that the author approved of the world he described in the novel” (1984, 1192). This critic had probably not read Mishima’s 1956 essay on homosexuality, where he made his views rather unambiguous:
There is little research or scholarly theory on homosexuality, so it ends up being treated similarly to masturbation—people react with meaningless, unscientific responses to the tune of, quick, run away, you’re falling into a diabolical abyss…. If a young adult experiences homosexual desires, they should meet those feelings head-on…. Women should be proud of being women, men proud of being men. If one always has pride, there is no way for one to fall into a homosexuality that is twisted and grotesque. Pride in one’s true sexuality allows one to be restored to one’s natural self.

(MISHIMA 1989, 395–396; TRANSLATION BY M.W. SHORES)

Forbidden Colors may not be an “un- (or anti-) modern novel” (hikindai shōsetsu), but perhaps, as Tōru Matsumoto suggests,

it holds a position in Mishima’s canon similar to that of his critical essay Taiyō to tetsu [1968; Sun and Steel (1970)]; both stand out as boldly unusual in form and content and both deal centrally with sensibility and the body. The major difference between [these and all of] his work before and after The Temple of the Golden Pavilion is that his later work ... loses touch with reality.

(MATSUMOTO 2008, 105; TRANSLATION BY M.W. SHORES)

In Forbidden Colors, Mishima created a space, albeit fictional, in which homosexuality could be acknowledged and explored. Mishima may have been creating this space of possibility for a younger generation when writing the Adonian Yūichi, or he may have wished as much for himself, but this was not something he was able come to terms with during his lifetime. If Mishima was dealing with homosexual “shame” when writing Forbidden Colors, he was also dealing with a more nuanced and generous picture of homosexual love and desire. This fact cannot eclipse or replace his nationalist political ideology in later years, but it can allow for his work to be considered in different terms.

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The modern Arabic novel has generally lacked affirmative and textured representations of homoeroticism, particularly in comparison to the complex engagements with nonnormative sexualities and gender identities, including lesbianism, that permeated the medieval Arabic literary and cultural tradition. The deficiency of nuanced representations of homoeroticism in modern Arabic literature may be a result of various factors, including censorship, the influence of colonialism, the hegemony of Western sexual discourses, and sociopolitical and cultural changes in the contemporary Middle East (al-Samman 2008; Malti-Douglas 2001; Habib 2007; Amer 2012; Massad 2007). When female eroticism does appear in the modern Arabic novel, it is generally treated as a less desirable substitute for heterosexuality; furthermore, lesbian body politics and sexualities are often overshadowed by the text’s feminist agenda. With the exception of a few novels, such as Ilham Mansour’s And hiya anti (2000; I Am You [2008]) and Nihad Sirees’s Halet shaghaff (1998; States of Passion [2018]), most modern Arabic novels do not offer profound engagements with lesbian identities and sexualities or feature central lesbian characters. Hanan al-Shaykh’s novel Misk al-ghazal (1988; Women of Sand and Myrrh [1989]) is among the novels that offer a reductionist representation of female homosexuality, as it suggests that female homoeroticism is an unfortunate consequence of failing heterosexual relationships and societal repression. Furthermore, the novel gives voice to protagonists who associate female homoeroticism with sin, criminality, primitiveness, and deviance, while precluding counternarratives that deconstruct this dominant discourse.

**Synopsis**

*Misk al-ghazal* recounts the experiences of four women residing in an unnamed desert country that is portrayed as oil rich, repressive, and underdeveloped. The novel encompasses four first-person narratives, each told from the point of view of one of the female protagonists—namely, Suha, Nur, Suzanne, and Tamr—who navigate various challenges, as well as opportunities for resistance. Suha has accompanied her husband in pursuit of safety and a more lucrative business opportunity than those available in war-torn Lebanon. However, Suha feels disempowered for not being able to fully put her
education to use or even enjoy the simple pleasures in life, such as wearing the clothing of her choice, taking walks, or going to the cinema. She attempts to alleviate her boredom by busying herself with raising her son, making puppet costumes, and spending time with the other female protagonists, but she remains unfulfilled. At one point, Suha engages in a sexual relationship with a local woman named Nur. Her relationship with Nur initially offers a pleasant distraction, but it also engenders feelings of shame and confusion. Exasperated by life in the desert, Suha ultimately returns with her son to Lebanon.

Like Suha, Nur is married and has a child, and she similarly feels stifled by the strict customs. Nur fills the void in her life by immersing herself in international travel and sexual escapades with men and women. Whereas Nur and Suha find the desert intolerable, the American blond Suzanne thrives in her adopted home. The desert becomes her oasis away from the pressures of modern life in the United States. Suzanne is smitten by the exotic, chivalrous Arab men who reciprocate her admiration because of her “foreign” looks and sexual availability. Twice divorced, the fourth narrator, Tamr, fights for her education and starts her own business, thus devising solutions from within the fabric of her society. The
novel includes subplots about dysfunctional familial and romantic relationships, including the same-sex relationship between Suha and Nur, the focus of this entry.

**Lesbian Encounter between Suha and Nur**

Suha and Nur’s first sexual encounter occurs at Nur’s house. Suha had accepted Nur’s invitation because she desperately needed to leave the house after being stuck indoors because of the rain. Because Suha was not in “the mood for [Nur’s] complaining,” she attempts to distract Nur by telling her that she had seen her husband, Saleh, on television and found him very charming (al-Shaykh [1989] 2010, 50–51). Suha’s mention of Saleh agitates Nur, and she responds by saying that the man “is not worth an onion” and that she does not wish to see him again (51). Nur is so shaken by the mention of Saleh’s name that she starts to beat herself violently, which prompts Suha to grab hold of her arms in an attempt to restrain her. Responding to Suha’s touch, Nur rests her head on Suha’s shoulder and appears to calm down. Suha admits that she “couldn’t bring [herself] to pat her shoulder or hold her to comfort her” and that she felt “embarrassed” and hoped that Nur would show some selfrestraint (52). However, Nur proceeds to press her face against Suha’s neck, causing her to shiver with pleasurable sensations. Suha ultimately surrenders to Nur’s kiss, despite her conviction that “a kiss is between a man and a woman,” and she quickly finds herself lying on the bed and enjoying the “beautiful purely instinctual rhythm” of their bodies (53). Shortly thereafter, Suha seems to awaken from her trance. She experiences “a sudden nausea, then disgust, and wished [she] could disappear through the cracks in the ceiling” (53). As she pulls her skirt down, she proclaims that she would never “feel the same liking” for her legs (53). Shocked by the unexpected sexual contact, the speechless Suha bolts out of Nur’s house, eager to return to her home.

The first sexual encounter between Nur and Suha, as well as the backdrop against which it takes place, are revealing. Suha’s complaints about Nur’s never-ending drama and her apathy regarding Nur’s predicament indicate that she does not genuinely care about Nur. Bored of living in the desert country and feeling distant from her workaholic husband, Suha sees Nur as someone who could potentially offer yet another diversion from the humdrums of daily life, or even the dullness of the heterosexual lifestyle. By the same token, the encounter happens immediately after Nur expresses her resentment of her absent husband. Lesbianism is presented as a “substitute for unfulfilled heterosexual desires” because it gives frustrated heterosexual women an opportunity for rebelling against the heterosexual system by “turn[ing] towards women in the harem” (al-Ghafari 2002–2003, 89). The women’s erotic encounter is also portrayed as almost coercive and predatory in nature. The unwitting Suha resembles a victim who has fallen prey to Nur’s magical touch, rather than a desiring woman who craves a homoerotic connection with someone to whom she is attracted. As soon as Suha recovers her docile body from Nur’s grasp, she feels disgusted and even wishes her body away. Her description of her altered relationship with
her legs suggests that her body had become a liability—uncontrollable, tarnished, and depraved. Suha’s negative visceral reaction and her disavowal of her body reflect her internalized homophobia regarding the unnaturalness and sinfulness of same-sex desires. Her immediate reaction is to flee Nur’s bedroom, which has become akin to a crime scene, and to rush to her home, where she may recuperate her now questionable body, morality, and sexual identity.

**Reaffirmation of Heterosexuality as a Homophobic Reaction**

At home, when Suha’s husband inquires about her discombobulated demeanor, a pale-looking Suha concocts a story about Nur’s driver hitting another car and startling her. Suha’s spontaneous lie reaffirms her perception of her sexual encounter with Nur as a minor accident, one that momentarily unsettles her but that will ultimately pass. In bed, Suha asserts: “I am Suha. I am twenty-five-years old. My mother is Sitt Widad and my father is Dr. Adnan. I’m not bent like Sahar…. I’m normal” (al-Shaykh [1989] 2010, 55). Suha’s reference to her parents is significant, particularly because she includes their formal titles. The Arabic title *Sitt* is generally used to describe a respectable woman of a prominent social class, and the self-evident title “Dr.” highlights the addressee’s esteemed qualifications as an academic or medical professional. Suha is “able to calm herself and restore her sense of identity to avert an existential crisis through a solemn and conscious declaration of identity” (Massad 2007, 339). She must remind herself that she is the daughter of two respectable parents while denying any resemblance to Sahar, a lesbian whom she must have known in Lebanon. By juxtaposing her respectable (and heteronormative) parents with the lesbian Sahar, Suha implies that Sahar is not respectable because of her sexual orientation. Having engaged in a same-sex encounter with Nur, the “modern” and “refined” Suha dreads and denies becoming just like Sahar, the uncouth lesbian woman.

More importantly, in the original Arabic text, Suha refers to Sahar as *shadhda*, a term that may be translated as “pervert,” “deviant,” or “against the norm,” and which is often used in a derogatory manner in reference to unnatural sexualities and gender identities. Suha opts for the negative term *shadhda* over the more neutral Arabic term *suhaqiyya*, to mean “lesbian.” The term *suhaqiyya* is derived from the Arabic root *shq*, which denotes crushing, grinding, rubbing, or pulverizing, and it has been used in past and present times in Arab cultures to reference woman-to-woman sexual acts (Habib 2007; al-Samman 2008; Amer 2012). The term *shadhda*, which emphasizes a “moral deviation,” is a remnant of the colonial influence in the Middle East, because the European rule engendered the propagation of rigid values, including those relating to sexual conduct perceived as pathological (al-Samman 2008; Massad 2007). The Victorian-style rigid social and sexual norms—which were not inherent to the medieval Arabo-Islamic tradition—were
ultimately espoused by Arab elites who bought into Europe’s “civilizing” projects and attempted to distance themselves from nonnormative sexual practices deemed “primitive.” Not only does Suha deny any resemblance to the lesbian/pervert Sahar, but she also vividly recounts her heterosexual encounter with her friend Aida’s boyfriend, when the three of them were lying in bed after a long day of drinking and partying. Suha must recall this old encounter as if to persuade herself—and the reader—that the one time she had found herself literally situated between a man and a woman, she engaged in amorous behavior with the man, not the woman. Her relationship with Nur is presented as an anomaly associated with the “primordial” desert to which she had been dragged.

Contemplating her relationship with Nur, Suha proclaims that she “no longer noticed how slowly the time crawled by in the desert” (al-Shaykh [1989] 2010, 60), thus reiterating that the lesbian affair primarily serves to combat the tedium of life in the desert. As the novel progresses, Suha becomes increasingly frustrated with Nur’s selfcenteredness and with her own inability to take back control of her life. When Nur visits Suha in the latter’s home, Suha feels irritated that her private safe haven has been encroached on and robbed of its heteronormativity. Whereas in Nur’s bedroom, she had felt like a “visitor” or “onlooker,” she now feels disturbed by the familiar sight of her son’s drawings and her husband’s ironed shirts (61), which seem incongruent with her erotic relationship with Nur. No longer confined to Nur’s lavish bedroom, which reeks of incense and food, the relationship becomes too real for Suha to deny or even dismiss as an adventure.

**Condemnation of Female Homosexuality**

Suha’s agitation with both Nur and the desert reaches its peak at a women-only concert that she attends with Nur. There, the women dance freely to the loud beats of Bedouin music, played by Ghusun, whom Suha refers to as “a heroic female warrior from an African tribe” (al-Shaykh [1989] 2010, 64). When Jaleela, one of the attendees, starts dancing brazenly on stage and challenges Ghusun in a local dance that entails pulling a ring from each other’s mouths, the atmosphere becomes charged, and the dance is interrupted. When Suha asks Nur why the dance ended abruptly, Nur replies that Ghusun ended the dance with Jaleela because the latter is “awful” and “must be gay” (68). In the Arabic text, Nur uses harsher words to describe Jaleela, referring to her as *mukhifa* (terrifying) and *shadhdha* (perverted). Nur’s description of Jaleela as a dreadful deviant further enhances the novel’s negative representation of female homosexuality as pathological monstrosity. Like Suha, Nur uses the term *shadhdha* to refer to and condemn the allegedly lesbian Jaleela, which indicates that while Nur engages in homoerotic behavior, she does not consider herself a “lesbian/pervert.” When Nur invites Suha to her home, Suha vehemently refuses because she is convinced that Nur’s invitation is prompted by Nur’s arousal at the sight of the women’s sensual dance. Suha’s prior feelings of anger at Nur’s disruptive presence in her bedroom resurge at the concert, and she concludes that her relationship
with Nur has become increasingly “furtive” and “unwholesome” (69). The dancers' homoerotic contact reawakens her feeling of homophobia and repulsion. She smiles upon finding her oblivious husband waiting to pick her up, but she remains haunted by the image of Jaleela, the “lust-crazed old woman” flirting with the other girls (71). Following the concert, Suha avoids Nur. However, Nur does not retreat, even after Suha calls her “spoilt” and “thoughtless” (77) and refuses to take her phone calls. At this point in the novel, Suha seeks to end her relationship with Nur, who incessantly pursues her. Nur’s mother, Kawkab, finally intervenes and attempts to reunite the women.

Kawkab appears unexpectedly at Suha’s house and insists that Suha accompany her to Nur’s house so they may reconcile. In Nur’s room, Suha confronts Nur about unleashing Kawkab on her, which causes Nur to scream. In response to Nur's shriek, Kawkab reappears and threatens to deport Suha and her entire family. During this encounter, Suha compares Nur and her mother to “vampires,” and she refers to herself as “their prey” (78). Once again, the novel does not shy away from depicting Nur as a bloodthirsty predator, while casting Suha as an innocent victim who has been lured into a dangerous liaison. This incident frames same-sex relationships within the realm of criminality, as Suha is depicted as a hostage, held against her will by Nur and her menacing mother.

Assuming that Kawkab is oblivious to the sexual nature of her relationship with Nur, Suha discloses that her relationship with Nur is “forbidden” and “illicit,” thus invoking religious taboos in an attempt to persuade Kawkab to retreat. Suha’s statements regarding the sinful nature of female homosexuality are not self-evident, however, despite the dominant cultural norms that deem it as such. Whereas male homosexuality is mentioned in reference to Lot’s people in the Qur’an, the Qur’an does not allude to female homosexuality or address any punishments pertaining to the practice of male or female homosexuality (al-Samman 2008; Kugle 2003). Consequently, Muslim jurists have varied in their interpretations of the Qur’an’s position on homosexuality and the penalties befitting those who engage in same-sex acts, particularly in the case of women. Kawkab responds to Suha: “That’s wrong ... but adultery with a man is worse” (al-Shaykh [1989] 2010, 79). Kawkab argues that committing adultery with a man is more haram (taboo) than having an extramarital affair with a woman, perhaps because the Qur’an explicitly addresses zina, which is typically assumed to refer to unlawful sexual intercourse between a man and a woman but does not address sexual acts committed between two women. The exchange between Suha and Kawkab reveals the complex reality of female homosexuality as a lived experience, regardless of religious prescription (or the lack thereof). Kawkab is less concerned with the “sinfulness” of female homosexuality than she is with Nur’s happiness. Kawkab even attempts to bribe Suha with a gold coin, which prompts Suha to recognize that no argument, religious or otherwise, will dissuade Kawkab from her goal. Suha leaves Nur’s house after resolving never to see Nur and her mother again. She also decides to return to Lebanon.
English Translation and Its Reception

The 1989 English translation of al-Shaykh’s Arabic novel, *Women of Sand and Myrrh*, has been a subject of exploration among scholars of Arabic literature. Most notably, Michelle Hartman (2012) argues that the English translation strategies are “domesticating” because the translation choices suggest privileging issues of accessibility and marketability over ensuring that the complexities of the Arabic text are faithfully rendered.

One of the most impactful changes is the reordering of the chapters in *Women of Sand and Myrrh*. The Arabic novel presents each of the women’s narratives in its entirety. The English translation, however, splits Suha’s narrative into two parts, which open and close the novel, thus framing the entire novel and valorizing her voice over the other women’s (Hartman 2012). Moreover, the English translation situates Tamr’s story in the middle even though it occurs at the end of the Arabic text. By ending with an epilogue that features Suha’s eager departure from the desert, *Women of Sand and Myrrh* highlights the act of “fleeing” traditional society, while de-emphasizing Tamr’s story of local empowerment (Hartman 2012).

The reordering of the chapters also influences the representation of Suha and Nur’s sexual relationship. Because Nur’s story and Suha’s epilogue appear at the end of the translated novel, the English text suggests that the lesbian affair is the main reason Suha flees the desert (Hartman 2012). Furthermore, the translation of the Arabic title *Misk al-ghazal*, which literally means “the gazelle’s musk,” into *Women of Sand and Myrrh* “highlight[s] women’s oppression and the exotic location of the work,” because it represents four different women as one homogeneous entity, united by a timeless and nameless desert (Hartman 2012, 41). The English title also excludes the figure of the “gazelle,” which features significantly in Tamr’s narrative and is often associated with both masculine and feminine qualities in the Arabic literary tradition. The reordering of the chapters, along with the clichéd title, have contributed to framing *Women of Sand and Myrrh* as a mere account of an allegedly exotic, mysterious, and oppressive Arab world, as evidenced by reviews of the novel.

SEE ALSO Aná Hiya Anti (2000; Elham Mansour); *Bareed Mista3jil: True Stories* (2009); *Halat Shaghaf* (1998; Nihad Sirees); *Jannát wa-Iblis* (1992; Nawal El Saadawi); *Lesbanese* (2008; Alissar Gazal)

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Moche Pottery

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The ceramic tradition of the Moche culture of the Central Andes between 200 and 900 CE, and debates about examples depicting “homosexual” acts.

Moche (also called Mochica) is the name of a Central Andean archaeological culture that is perhaps best known for its distinctive ceramics, produced between roughly 200 and 900 CE. The Moche built elaborate ceremonial centers in the fertile river valleys that punctuate the otherwise arid and inhospitable North Coast of Peru between the Chira and Huarmey Valleys. In the intervening centuries after the Moche collapse, the North Coast was controlled by a succession of other pre-Hispanic groups, including the Chimú (c. 900–1470 CE) and, ultimately, the Inca Empire (1438–1533 CE). By the time Spanish colonizers arrived in 1532, Moche sites had stood abandoned for more than 600 years. After Peru gained independence from Spain following the decisive Battle of Ayacucho (1824), the construction of a Peruvian national identity fostered interest in the pre-Hispanic past, but the Moche culture was not actively studied until the end of the nineteenth century. Moche studies gained traction in the mid-twentieth century through the prolific work of Rafael Larco Hoyle (1901–1966), an amateur archaeologist and collector of antiquities. Larco made detailed studies of Moche ceramics, and his extensive collection forms the core of the Museo Larco in Lima, Peru, which holds the largest collection of Moche ceramics in the world. Currently, the Moche are among the most studied cultures of the ancient Central Andes.

Moche ceramics constitute one of the most compelling artistic traditions of the ancient New World. While Moche vessels for everyday use such as cooking are coarse and sparsely decorated, vessels intended for ceremonial activities are sculpted and painted with careful attention to detail, inventiveness, and technical proficiency. Although most Central Andean artistic traditions favored stylization and geometric abstraction, Moche artists portrayed a broad range of subject matter—including portraits, supernatural beings and events, animals and plants, warriors engaged in combat, war captives, and architectural structures—in a naturalistic style that has few parallels in the ancient Americas. An unfortunate consequence of the aesthetic appeal, quality, and visual legibility of Moche ceramics is that they became popular among twentieth-century collectors, which fueled the illegal looting and destruction of archaeological remains. Of the more than 100,000 Moche ceramic vessels in museums and private collections around the world, fewer than 5 percent,
estimates suggest, were encountered in controlled excavations in which their archaeological contexts can be examined. In addition to looting, market demands also promoted the production of forgeries and pastiches made from fragmentary vessels, as well as replicas manufactured as souvenirs.

**Sex Pots**

Vessels that portray couples or individuals engaged in sexual acts, often called “sex pots,” are among the most intriguing Moche ceramics (see Figure 1). The Museo Larco’s Sala Erótica (Erotic Room), one of the most popular tourist destinations in Peru, offers visitors what they perceive as a glimpse into the putative sex lives of ancient peoples who were uninhibited by modern sensibilities. Animals and deities are portrayed engaged in sex, and in some instances, fleshy humans appear to have sexual contact with skeletal beings. Most Moche examples, however, portray malefemale human pairs that are represented as three-dimensional sculpted or mold-made figures situated on top of vessel chambers. The genitalia of both sexes are typically rendered in careful anatomical detail, although frequently exaggerated in scale. Depending on how they are classified, estimates of the number of known Moche sex pots range from 500 to 800. While the quantity of Moche sex pots is high compared to that of other Central Andean traditions that produced them (including Vicús, Salinar, Gallinazo, Recuay, Nasca, Lima, Casma, Lambayeque, Wari, and Chimú), they constitute less than 1 percent of known Moche ceramics. Tourist literature, websites, and popular science publications have cast the Moche as an ancient hypersexualized Other (Wołoszyn and Piwowar 2015), even though the relative percentage of sexual imagery in Moche pottery is probably lower than, for example, that of ancient Greek pottery.
The question of what motivated Moche artists to portray figures engaged in sex acts on ceramic vessels is compelling and defies straightforward interpretation. Although the vast majority of Moche sex pots entered collections through the illicit antiquities market, almost all nonlooted examples were recovered in funerary contexts (Gebhard 1970). In these cases, the relationship of the vessel’s subject matter to the identity of the deceased is unclear; neither the age nor the sex of the tomb’s occupant(s) seems to have dictated the presence of sex pots as funerary offerings in Moche graves (Gebhard 1970; Larco Hoyle 1965). The issue of artistic motivation is further complicated by the types of sexual acts that are most often represented. Couples engage in a variety of acts and positions, but vaginal sex is notably rare. Instead, methods that do not lead to biological conception—including oral sex, manual stimulation, and anal sex, as well as images that appear to represent sex between the living and dead—are most often represented by Moche artists. Although *erotic* is an adjective frequently used to describe these vessels, the term is misleading, as it is by no means clear that their purpose was to titillate the viewer. In fact, the usual expressionless gazes of the participants show little indication of pleasure.

Scholarly interpretations of sex pots, though few, have varied and are often shaped by investigators’ attitudes toward sexuality and the nature of Moche art. The American
sexologist Alfred Kinsey (1894–1956), enticed by the prospect of documenting (and idealizing) the sexual practices of people unencumbered by Christian morality, traveled to Peru in the 1950s to work with Larco but died before a collaborative publication materialized. In 1965 Larco published his own volume in which he separated sex pots into thematic categories. He believed that some, in particular those that portray skeletons that appear to masturbate, represent individuals who are morally and physically depleted and that certain mutilated or slain nude figures portray punishment for sexual transgressions (Larco Hoyle 1965). Paul H. Gebhard (1970), working with Kinsey's extensive photographic archive and perpetuating his legacy, presented Moche sex pots as a visual catalog of the range of Moche sexual practices. Given the relative lack of representations of vaginal intercourse, others have viewed sex pots as instructional objects that demonstrate methods of contraception (Kauffmann Doig 1979; Larco Hoyle 1965). Moralizing, documentary, and didactic interpretations are problematic, however, because Moche artists seldom represented daily activities (Donnan 1976), and because these interpretations do not explain why sex pots appear alongside the deceased in graves.

Other studies have focused on possible symbolic or religious aspects of Moche sex pots. Several scholars suggest that some of the vessels may have been intended to be humorous (Benson 1972; Bergh 1993; Gebhard 1970; Kauffmann Doig 1979; Larco Hoyle 1965). Others believe that they portray ritualized or ceremonial sex acts (Benson 1972; Bourget 2006; Donnan 1976; Gero 2004). Frequently cited passages by the Augustinian friar Antonio de la Calancha (1584–1654) and the Spanish conquistador Pedro Cieza de León (c. 1520–1554) describe ritual “sodomy” undertaken by priests and acolytes in the service of pagan idols on the North Coast, but, given the dramatic chronological and cultural changes that occurred on Peru's North Coast between Moche times and the early colonial period, as well as the potential biases, agendas, and limited vantage points of Spanish chroniclers, these sources must be used cautiously.

The form and function of Moche vessels may hold important clues to their symbolism and clarify the artistic choices that determined appropriate subject matter. The stirrup-spout vessel (Figure 1), which takes its name from the two tubes that attach to the vessel chamber and conjoin to make a single spout, is a form that was particularly favored by Moche artists. The symbolic importance of the conjoining of two streams of fluid or other opposed forces, referred to by the Quechua term tinkuy, is widespread in the Andes. Liquid poured from a stirrup-spout vessel may have been understood as such a convergence (Quilter 2010). Sex may have likewise been conceptualized as a form of tinkuy, characterized by the intermingling of fluids from two opposed bodies (Quilter 2010). In sex pots of the Recuay culture, highland neighbors of the Moche, a male chamber is often the side used for pouring and the female chamber is used for filling the vessel (Gero 2004). Moche stirrup-spout vessels frequently portray a female figure nursing an infant while she is anally penetrated by a male figure (see Figure 1). While some scholars have argued that this scene portrays taboos concerning vaginal sex while breastfeeding (e.g., Kauffmann...
Doig 1979, Mary Weisman (2004) offers the compelling suggestion that it may instead show the transfer of vital bodily fluids from father to mother to infant. Similarly, Moche vessels that portray women holding the erect phalli of skeletons or skeletal figures that appear to masturbate may relate to Andean notions of ancestors as sources of power and fertility and the transference of vital essences across generations and through reproductive cycles of life and death (Turner 2015; Weisman 2004).

DRAWING BY ANDREW D. TURNER AFTER A DRAWING BY JORGE SACHÚN

Figure 2: Rollout Drawing of Low-Relief Copulation Scene on a Moche Jar. Although some have claimed that this scene depicts anal copulation between two male figures, most scholars agree that this scene portrays vaginal intercourse between a woman and a male deity or deity impersonator.

“Homosexual” and Third-Gender Representations

The question of whether “homosexuality” is represented in Moche ceramics has been complicated by scholarly and political agendas, questionable interpretations, issues of national identity, and modern forgeries. Some scholars argue that Moche artists made representations of same-sex intercourse (e.g., Arboleda 1981; Gebhard 1970; Kauffmann Doig 1979), whereas others adamantly deny that notion (e.g., Larco Hoyle 1965). All purported examples portray sex between men, and none shows sexual contact between women. Some believe that vessels considered to portray aberrant sexual behavior, such as male-male sex and bestiality, were destroyed or hidden in the interest of preserving a heteronormative Peruvian national identity (Kauffmann Doig 1979; Wołoszyn and Piwowar 2015). A fragmentary example that clearly depicts two men engaging in anal sex has, for instance, never been displayed publicly (see Arboleda 1981, Figure 5; Kauffmann Doig 1979, Figure 64; Wołoszyn and Piwowar 2015), and some question its authenticity (Gero 2004). Other examples that are displayed in smaller museums as curiosities are clearly fake, often lacking subtle nuances and appearing more as cartoonish caricatures of Moche pottery.

Manuel Arboleda published a provocative scholarly article that argued that a series of similar Moche scenes on pottery depict anal copulation between a masked male figure and another male who adopts “the role of the opposite gender” (1981, 102). While other scholars who have made detailed iconographic studies of this particular set of images (see
Figure 2) interpret them as either scenes of ritual copulation (Bourget 2006; Donnan 1976) or portrayals of a mythical narrative involving deities (Benson 2012; Turner 2015), all agree that the supine figure is biologically female based on consistent Moche iconographic conventions. Some authors (e.g., Campuzano 2006; Horswell 2003, 2005; Trexler 1995) have selectively deployed Arboleda’s argument in order to make broad claims about male-male sexual relations and third-gender identities in the pre-Hispanic Andes, while ignoring the otherwise complete consensus among specialists that the scenes portray male-female vaginal intercourse.

Other Moche vessels challenge modern projections of heteronormativity onto the past. Some Moche vessels, such as the example shown in Figure 3 from the Museo Larco, take the form of a male figure with an erect penis. Regularly spaced perforations around the mouth of the jar would make effective pouring difficult, thus forcing the user to pour or drink directly from the phallus, which serves as a spout (Larco Hoyle 1965). These vessels have generally been interpreted as humorous, but, if the drinker is assumed to be male, they may allude to male-male sexual contact. Unfortunately, it is difficult to unravel the social implications of these vessels, given the lack of a sophisticated understanding of the cultural contexts in which they were made and used. Janusz Z. Wołoszyn and Katarzyna Piwowar (2015), for example, draw attention to another such vessel that shows a male Recuay figure anally penetrated by a Moche male. Given the complex relationship between the neighboring Moche and Recuay cultures, which was at times peaceful and at others resulted in armed conflict, the Moche artist’s intentions are unclear.
Figure 3: Drawing of a Moche Jar with a Phallic Spout. Regularly spaced perforations around the mouth of this jar makes effective pouring difficult, thus forcing the user to pour or drink directly from the phallus, which serves as a spout. While generally interpreted as humorous, such vessels could carry homosexual connotations if the drinker was male.

As struggles over LGBTQ rights in the face of a heteronormative Peruvian national identity continue, the importance of archaeology as a tool to justify modern standpoints becomes apparent. What is particularly fascinating is that Moche sex pots have been used by both sides of this struggle: they have been championed by some LGBTQ activists as physical “proof” that “homo-sexuality” existed in Moche society, but at the same time, those in the opposite camp have claimed that the Moche understood representations of same-sex intercourse as morally objectionable, and still others deny the existence of such vessels altogether (Weismantel 2012; Wołoszyn and Piwowar 2015). In regard to the question of whether “homosexuality” and third-gender identities existed in Moche society, modern understandings of human sexuality and gender expression across cultures lead to an unquestionable “yes,” regardless of how one interprets Moche ceramics. No matter how one looks at them, Moche sex pots resist efforts to categorize them because Moche conceptions of gender and sexuality differed from those of today, and, contrary to the views of early investigators, Moche artists did not attempt to create an encyclopedic corpus of their cultural sexual norms in ceramic for posterity. Furthermore, it is unlikely that their conceptions were homogenous throughout the Moche region or remained unchanged during the 700-year duration of the Moche phenomenon. At present, the fascination with
sex pots seems to reveal more about modern attitudes toward sexuality than about those of the Moche. Moche sex pots may become less enigmatic with continued investigations of Moche culture and as the complexity of how sexuality and gender identity were expressed in past societies becomes better recognized.

SEE ALSO Museo Travesti del Perú

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One of the key topics in the history of sexuality is the growth, in the early eighteenth century, of a well-organized homosexual subculture in the city of London, England. This was patronized by homosexual men who used gay slang, frequented homosexual cruising areas, and engaged in camp or effeminate behavior among themselves. During this period, men who habitually enjoyed sex with other men not only were labeled “sodomites” but also were called “mollies,” a colloquial term used both by mollies (whose modern equivalents are “fairy” or “queer”) themselves and by the public. Such men frequented a network of “molly houses,” where they socialized with one another, singing and dancing together and otherwise behaving in a disorderly fashion. This is documented by a substantial body of historical data, especially the records of the Old Bailey (London’s central criminal court), but also trial records in other courts, hundreds of newspaper reports, a score of satires, and some journals and letters. Testimony given during the trials includes many circumstantial details beyond sexual activity, revealing an interesting glimpse into the social life of the sodomite.

Illustration from the 1707 Broadside Ballad “The Women-Hater’s Lamentation.” This illustration shows the aftermath of the arrests of at least forty “mollies” in London for homosexual activity in 1707. Four of the accused committed suicide, three were hanged at Tyburn, and many were placed in the pillory.
The existence of the molly houses establishes the existence of homosexual communities well before the French philosopher Michel Foucault's (1978) paradigm for modern homosexual identities, which allegedly did not arise until the medical/sexological discourse of the late nineteenth century. Contrary to the “constructionist” views of the British historian and activist Alan Bray (1982), more recent work on early modern homosexuality has emphasized the continuity of a homosexual identity (Betteridge 2002; Borris and Rousseau 2008; Hergemöller 2001; Robinson 2006; Young 2016). Even David M. Halperin (2002, 2003), a strong proponent of queer theory, has acknowledged that the hypotheses in his early work did not sufficiently recognize the continuities between premodern and modern homosexual identities and conceptions. Research by Randolph Trumbach (e.g., 1985, 1989, 2007) and Rictor Norton (1997, 2005, 2006, 2017) has documented that the homosexual is not a “modern invention”; instead, many salient features of modern homosexual subcultures, social behaviors, and self-understandings are recognizable in early eighteenth century England, suggesting strong analogies and close resemblances between gay men today and men earlier labeled sodomites and mollies.

In Georgian London (1714–1830), such men regularly picked up other men for sex, which they called “picking up trade,” in what they called the “molly markets”: cruising areas, such as “the Sodomites’ Walk” across Moorfields and Bird Cage Alley in St. James’s Park, and public latrines, especially those in Lincoln’s Inn Fields and the Savoy precinct. Some areas were used so regularly that it is clear the kind of men who went there aimed to make contact with one another, rather than simply to pick up passing errand boys. Gay sex was not casual or incidental but was deliberately sought out by men who went to specific places where they knew they could find other men with similar inclinations. In addition to picking up soldiers, mollies used a system of signals or coded gestures to indicate their desires to one another, such as waving a white handkerchief between the tails of their frock coats.

The molly houses in particular are important indicators of a collective homosexual identity. Seventeen were investigated by the police during the 1720s, and about thirty in total over the eighteenth century. They ranged from private lodgings where men met for drag parties to public alehouses and coffeehouses where fifty to sixty men would regularly gather. Some of these houses had a “chapel” or “marrying room” where the men “married” one another in elaborate mock “weddings.” They catered not to elite libertines but to working-class tradesmen and artisans who enjoyed sex with other men. The most popular molly house was a coffeehouse in Holborn owned by John Clap and his wife, Margaret Clap. Every night of the week thirty men would come to “Mother Clap’s” establishment, which operated for at least ten years before it was raided in 1726. On Sunday nights, forty or fifty homosexual
men would come to her house, sometimes from 30 or 40 miles (around 50 to 65 km) outside London, demonstrating it was known to a network of homosexual men. Two other molly houses were kept by married men and women, but the rest were kept by men best described as “queens,” such as John Towleton, who kept a molly house near Moorfields, and who gave his name as “Mary Magdalen” when he was arrested for soliciting. Robert Whale and York Horner, who kept a molly pub in Westminster, were known to their friends as Peggy and Pru; they had lived together for at least three years before their pub was raided in 1726.

The molly houses were frequented by men who possessed a collective sociocultural identity, not just a sexual identity. In these houses, men let their hair down; they would dance country jigs together while one of them played on the fiddle, and they sang bawdy songs together. They engaged in camp behavior, mimicking the voices and mannerisms of women, and sometimes engaged in “bitch” fights. They sometimes had what they called “festival nights,” when they masqueraded as women. Sometimes they performed elaborate mock births, one man pretending to give birth (to a wooden doll), with all the ceremony of a christening. Some long-term couples frequented the molly houses; some were recognized as “special sweethearts,” and some marked their relationship with a formal “wedding.”

When a man first joined a molly club, he would be christened with a “maiden name” as a glass of gin was thrown in his face in a mock baptism ritual that initiated him into the molly subculture. Molly nicknames functioned to cement relations and consolidate identities within a tightly knit community. The widespread use of maiden names is prima facie evidence of both group identity and personal identity, centered on sexual and gender identity.

Even outside the organized subculture, it is clear that many of the men prosecuted for soliciting were driven by a powerful and clearly focused homosexual orientation and that Georgian society held a binary understanding of heterosexual/homosexual orientations. Today, debates between “constructionists” and “essentialists” continue to rage, but the theory-laden histories of sexuality of the 1980s and 1990s are giving way to more nuanced understandings as more empirical data are collected. Although molly houses were superseded by out-and-out male brothels by the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the commodification of sex rather than community socializing became the driving force, the molly subculture continues to be a touchstone in arguments about homosexual community and identity.

SEE ALSO Bars and Cabarets in Europe; Cruising and Cruising Grounds; Language in Europe

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Mongolia

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The state of LGBTQI rights in this landlocked East Asian country historically and in the twenty-first century.

Mongolia has been actively participating in the globalization and democratization process, embracing newfound ideas and concepts such as democracy, human rights, and gender, sexuality, and LGBTQI rights ever since it staged a democratic movement in 1989. During the socialist regime (1924–1990) that preceded this movement, the discussion of erotic intimacy and sexuality was not widely sanctioned, thus making swift generalizations about gender and sexual minority issues difficult in retrospect (UNDP and USAID 2014). Mongolia decriminalized consensual homosexual sex between adults in 2002; in other words, homosexuality has been legal ever since (Aumakhan et al. 2014).

There was no prohibition of homosexual acts in the first Mongolian criminal code, adopted in 1926. However, after the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) criminalized homosexuality in 1933, Mongolia did the same a year later but then decriminalized it again in 1961. Scholars argue that the 1986 code implicitly semi-recriminalized homosexuality through Article 113, a provision using the vague term of “satisfying one’s sexual desire perversely/immorally,” which could be used against LGBTQI community members. Hence, the process of criminalizing and decriminalizing homosexual acts in the code and the fact that issues surrounding sexuality during the socialist era were taboo topics clearly suggest that there was a strong influence from the USSR on Mongolian political, ideological, legislative, and social matters. Nevertheless, on 1 July 2017, a revised criminal code took effect, with hate crimes, hate speeches, and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) criminalized for the first time.

Soviet influence was crucial for Mongolia, given that the latter's 1921 revolution was realized thanks to the Soviet Red Army driving out the Chinese occupation forces and that until 1946 the Mongolian People's Republic was acknowledged only by its protector, the Soviet Union (Batbayar 1998). After a long diplomatic struggle and several attempts after 1946, Mongolia finally became a member of the United Nations in 1961. As Mongols would argue, without Russia, Mongolia would not have been able to retain its independence and would have become part of China (Billé 2010). However, Mongolian LGBTQI activists have mixed feelings and opinions about the Soviet influence when it comes to SOGI issues, and
they would rather refer to the documented history of homoerotic behaviors and homosexuality in ancient China, as well as current developments, such as PFLAG China (an LGBTQI nongovernmental organization) and queer film initiatives in China.

Buddhism and Shamanism have influenced the spiritual and social life of Mongols for centuries, and both seem to tacitly accept homosexuality (UNDP and USAID 2014). As of 2017, there have been no public statements or actions against homosexuality by the country’s publicly recognized religious leaders. However, there have been implicit “denials” by religious leaders with regard to how young people should adopt or interpret Western notions of gender and human rights. The “Science and Buddhism Discussion” held in 2015 at the Mongolian University of Science and Technology featured the Hamba Lama (chief abbot) of the Gandan Monastery, who warned Mongolians to pay attention to how young people are internalizing gender issues and Western ideas without being aware of it.

The 1992 democratic constitution guarantees basic human rights and freedoms, but it does not explicitly address discrimination based on SOGI. Whereas freedoms of expression and of press permit public discourse on LGBTQI rights, there is no broad-based antidiscrimination law to protect LGBTQI Mongolians. The twelfth annual status report on human rights and freedoms by the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia (NHRCM) addresses rights violations against LGBTQI individuals. It concludes that lack of information or knowledge about and negative public perceptions of SOGI prevents LGBTQI people from enjoying their rights to a healthy and safe environment, to labor, to education, and to health, and the ability of LGBTQI individuals to participate in and benefit from social and cultural life is still not guaranteed (NHRCM 2013). Furthermore, a 2014 poverty study on the LGBTQI community revealed that the unemployment rate of survey participants was 10.4 percent—higher than the official rate of 7.8 percent among the general population—and approximately 22 percent lived below the national poverty line (Aumakhan et al. 2014). The study concludes that a legal environment ensuring equal access to education and employment must be implemented and that public perceptions and attitudes must be changed.

Mainstreaming SOGI Issues and Development of LGBTQI Rights Organizations

The 1997 Law on Non-Governmental Organizations allows freedoms of association and of peaceful assembly. In 1999 a group of men founded Tavilan (Destiny), the first queer organization serving gay men, with others following its example in the twenty-first century. Most of them continued to be active as of 2017, but a number of them had to dissolve because of funding issues or because the overall project under which they had operated ended. Given the need for Mongolia’s civil society organizations to be more diverse and inclusive by adopting rights-based approaches and intersectional analyses in their work,
women’s rights and other rights-based organizations such as the Open Society Forum, the National Center Against Violence, and MONFEMNET National Network played a crucial role in mainstreaming LGBTQI rights (Undarya 2013).

After Tavilan ceased to exist on account of a lack of funding, the Mongolian Lesbian Information and Community Center was initiated in 2004 as a project-implementing unit under the Mongolian Women’s Fund, but it also ended operations with the termination of its project. As was the case in many countries, in the early twenty-first century LGBTQI rights in Mongolia were closely linked with sexual health promotion targeting men who have sex with men (MSM). Three MSM organizations—Youth for Health Center, Together Center, and Human Rights-Youth-Health Support Centre—“merged” in 2015 as the MSM and Transgender Community Center to implement a Global Fund project to reduce HIV/AIDS prevalence. The LGBT Centre, the first explicitly pro-LGBTQI advocacy and human rights organization, was formed in 2007 but was officially registered only in 2009 owing to procedural challenges. The Sayanaa Welfare Association was founded in 2014 to work on transgender sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The most prominent organization, the LGBT Centre, championed the LGBTQI rights movement by successfully conducting advocacy at the United Nations level. Following recommendations from the Universal Periodic Review process, the Committee against Torture, and the Committee on Civil and Political Rights, the Mongolian government is obligated to protect LGBTQI rights at home. In addition, these recommendations led to public attention regarding LGBTQI rights issues nationwide, the inclusion of LGBTQI rights in the annual NHRCM report, subsequent parliamentary discussions on the subject matter for the first time, and, eventually, an amendment to the nation’s criminal code to prohibit SOGI-based discrimination, which was adopted in 2015 (but did not go into effect until two years later).

Pride at a Price

The path to “building a human, civil, and democratic society,” as proclaimed in the 1992 constitution, has not always been smooth. Key events triggered by the rapid social changes of the 1990s and increased openness to the external world have enriched the history of the Mongolian LGBTQI movement. These events include the registration process of the LGBT Centre; a 2009 amendment to the civil registration law allowing document changes for transsexuals; the rise of a “neo-Nazi” opposition; the Universal Periodic Review and NHRCM reports; the first Pride Week, held in September 2013; the 2014 report titled “Being LGBT in Asia: Mongolia Country Report”; and the 2015 criminal law reform.

The nongovernmental organization registration issue has attracted public attention to LGBTQI rights in Mongolia. The LGBT Centre began its efforts toward official registration in March 2007. This struggle continued for almost three years, during which LGBTQI activists
persistently knocked on the doors of the relevant authorities. In June 2009 the Legal Entities Registration Agency stated that the name “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Centre” has a meaning that conflicts with Mongolian customs and traditions and has the potential to set a wrong example for youth and adolescents (“LGBT Centre 2010”). To pressure the government to register the organization, the LGBT Centre involved various international stakeholders, including OutRight Action International (formerly the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission), Human Rights Watch, and the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development. This international mobilization triggered domestic policy makers to push the agenda, finally leading to the registration of the LGBT Centre in December 2009, thanks to the personal involvement of Oyungerel Tsedevdamba, the first human rights and civic participation adviser to the president of Mongolia, and the NHRCM’s commissioner, Oyunchimeg Purev.

Another barrier to equality and nondiscrimination for Mongolia’s LGBTQI community is a matter of nationalism. Ultranationalists, or the so-called neo-Nazis, believe that LGBTQI identities are Western imports. Thus, those who are perceived to be LGBTQI may become targets of more organized abuse, including by neo-Nazis and extreme nationalists (“United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights 2011”). In 2009 three transgender girls were allegedly kidnapped and brought to a graveyard, where they were sexually assaulted, tortured, and beaten. Because of the inclusion of interviews with them in the LGBT Centre’s documentary *The Lies of Liberty* (2010), they became subject to death threats, and eventually two of them fled Mongolia with the assistance of the center.

**Enabling Laws, Weak Enforcement**

Mongolia prohibits SOGI-based discrimination by law. On 3 December 2015, the State Great Khural (the parliament of Mongolia) adopted the much-awaited, revised draft of the criminal code in a legislative package along with other relevant laws. This meant that for the first time SOGI was included as one of the nondiscriminatory prohibited grounds in the code. Even though the parliament had adopted the revised code, a socially conservative ruling party, the Mongolian People’s Party, which gained power through the June 2016 elections, delayed enforcement of the new law until 1 July 2017, whereas the initial date was 1 September 2016. This indicates that despite the laudable political will on SOGI issues from certain members of the Democratic Party (the ruling party in 2015 when the reforms were enacted) and persistent advocacy efforts by rights-based nongovernmental organizations, the process of protecting and promoting LGBTQI rights in Mongolia has been stagnant as a result of systemic inconsistency fueled by changing political powers, negative public perceptions, and a lack of understanding about SOGI issues at the policy making level.

On a positive note, the 2009 civil registration law allows transgender, transsexual, and intersex individuals to change their preferred sex and name on the national identification
card based on a medical certification, and an increasing number of transsexual people have been doing so. As a result of bureaucratic administrative processes and the derogatory attitudes of public officials, this process can be time consuming and emotionally exhausting for those transgender, transsexual, and intersex individuals involved.

**LGBTQI Representation in Arts and Literature**

As a result of the increasing visibility of the LGBTQI community, the legal reform banning SOGI-based discrimination, and the need to study social and cultural connotations regarding LGBTQI issues, various media sources and journalists started to explore how arts and literature portrayed sexual minorities in Mongolia before and after the 1990s. In 2013, for example, *Undestnii Toim* (National review) magazine dedicated its whole edition to the first-ever Pride Week in Mongolia, focusing on the rights of sexual minorities. These attempts and future research involving similar projects would most likely prove that homosexuality and gender identity are not “Western imports” and are inherent and inborn to Mongolian cultural and social lives. One of the journalists keenly observed the masterpiece *Mongoliin neg udur* (One day in Mongolia) painted in the early twentieth century by Sharav Balduu (1869–1939) in which two men are depicted having sex; the journalist concluded that “this could well be an answer to those who believe that same-sex relations were imported from the West along with democracy” (*Undestnii Toim* 2013, 32, translation by Otgonbaatar Tsedendemberel).

Following the democratic movement, Mongolian intellectuals, including playwrights and poets, explored themes of homosexuality and homoeroticism. In 1997 a play titled *Íjil khuisten* (Homosexuals), originally written by the Russian playwright Nikolai Kolyada, was staged by the Mongolian producer Naidandorj Choinkhor at the National Academic Drama Theatre. The story is about two young Russian men who start out as friends and later fall in love. One of them is indecisive about his sexual orientation, which leads to the death of the other. The play briefly brought attention to the issue of homosexuality at that time. Similarly, a 2004 play by the Mongolian poet and playwright Batregzedmaa Bayartogtokh titled *Taichigch khuvguud ba saaral gudamj* (Stripping boys and Gray Street) addressed a similar topic. Although some LGBTQI community members denounced the play as being negative about SOGI issues, critics valued the playwright’s contradictory, philosophical characters.

Because homosexuality and homoerotic behavior were taboo topics during the socialist era, scholars during that period hardly studied these themes. However, the increasing attention to the topic since the 1990s triggered journalists and emerging scholars to bring into the light the historical truths on SOGI. One example is the novel *Uuriin tuya* (1952; *Ray of dawn*), by the prominent writer Byambyn Rinchen (1905–1977), which illustrates a boy with feminine qualities, lightly hinting at homoeroticism: “the young boy with flabby pink cheeks and red plum lips has effeminate qualities” (*Rinchen 1952*). Furthermore, another
famous writer, Lodoidamba Chadraabal (1917–1970), depicts bandi (boys who have sex with men) and shuumar (men who have sex with boys) in the context of monastery settings in the novel Tungalag Tamir (1967; the novel’s title refers to the Tamir River) (Undestnii Toim 2013). The term bandi shuumriin yos (same-sex sexual relations between boys and men) refers to homosexual relationships between boys and adults during the period when Buddhist monks were not allowed to get married, thus depriving them of sexual pleasures and activities.

In Mongolia today, homosexuality and sexual behaviors continue to be misconstrued in the sense that prisons, the military, and monasteries are men-only environments, which encourage boys and men to engage in same-sex sexual practices to satisfy their sexual desires and needs. In this context, Mongolians often use the term bandidah (a verb form of the noun bandi, meaning for men “to have sex with men”). The important arts and literature pieces mentioned above suggest not only that artists and writers thought about SOGI issues but also that historically there were terminologies such as bandi shuumar. Also with regard to terminology, the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender have been directly translated into the Mongolian language in transliterated form. However, the word intersex has its own Mongolian equivalents, manin and khiosgon, as defined officially in the Mongolian language dictionary, implying that Mongols have had their own ways of expressing and naming gender identity and/or sex characteristics.

SEE ALSO MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia

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FILMOGRAPHY

The history and current status of LGBTI persons in this East African country.

While homophobia is present in many African countries, Mozambique can be considered an example of inclusion and protection of sexual minorities. According to a study conducted by Afrobarometer, the country has one of the most tolerant social and political environments for LGBTI people in Africa, surpassed only by Cabo Verde and South Africa (Dulani, Sambo, and Dionne 2016). There are historical and cultural reasons to be considered in explaining this situation, although it must also be stressed that there is a long path to go for full citizenship of LGBTI people in the country.

Legal and Cultural Landscape: From Colonial to Contemporary Times

Mozambique was a Portuguese overseas territory until 1975 and was under the legal framework that governed the whole empire. Until the beginning of the nineteenth century, those convicted of sodomy by the Roman Catholic Inquisition in Portugal were sent to the African territories, in particular Angola, Cabo Verde, and São Tomé and Príncipe. During these early stages of Portuguese colonialism in Africa there are references to marriages between young men in Mozambique among the Shangaan people, in which they lived as man and wife (Mott 2005). These homosexual partnerships occurred among Shangaan workers in the South African mines. In the early twentieth century, there was a diversity of sexual behaviors in the mines, such as bukhontxana (defined as “mine marriages”), similar to other initiatory homosexual acts and spread and accepted among the workers, who created protective relationships among young men and elders. The South African authorities associated the Shangaan with the practice of “unnatural offenses,” stating that the institution of the mine marriage was extended to and adopted by other groups (Harries 1994).
The Portuguese penal code (PPC) of 16 September 1886 criminalized consensual same-sex activity, imposing punitive measures for "those who usually engage in practices of vices against nature." These measures included forced internment, forced labor, probation, and other provisions. The sodomy law in the PPC is much different from that found in the British penal code, considered the most severe in comparison with other colonial powers (Han and O'Mahoney 2014), which strictly defined "unnatural" sexual intercourse as an offense punishable by up to fourteen years in prison. Different from other contexts, the Portuguese colonial law criminalized only the behavior, and this colonial legacy must be stressed, because the PPC of 1886 was active in Mozambique until 2014.

Mozambique reformed its penal code in 2014, and the criminalization of same-sex acts was dropped. Meanwhile, the new penal code does not provide further measures for the protection of sexual minorities against hate crimes, honor crimes, and other human rights violations involving sexual minorities. However, the labor code (Law 21/2007), in its Article 180, specifies sexual orientation as a nondiscriminatory factor in access to work, as well as the right to a salary and access to the same benefits as other workers. This is the only reference to sexual minorities as a vulnerable group in Mozambican domestic legislation. The Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique guarantees same treatment under the law for all citizens, without any discrimination, although sexual orientation is not referenced directly. In spite of the constitutional principle of equality between citizens, the country’s family law prohibits marriage between individuals of the same sex. It defines marriage as a "voluntary and singular union between a man and a woman for the purpose of constituting a family" (Article 7, Law 10/2004).

Concerning international human rights law, the most relevant treaties are the international covenants of the United Nations and the African Union’s African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights (1981). Concerning the African Charter, sexual orientation does not figure as a prohibited ground of discrimination. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, however, has shown great concern for human rights violations involving LGBTI people in Africa and has taken specific steps to protect their rights. Specifically, the adoption of the Guidelines and Principles on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, in which the commission considers sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination, as well as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender and intersex people as vulnerable groups. The commission adopted, in 2014, Resolution 275, which prohibits violence and other human rights violations against persons on the basis of their real or imputed sexual orientation or gender identity, which is a landmark statement concerning the situation of LGBTI people in Africa, although it is not binding on the continent’s nations.

Mozambique is very diverse in terms of both culture and religion. There are a plurality of churches and other religious movements, with the Roman Catholic Church, Christian Pentecostal churches, and Islam predominating. These institutions instill a conservative
agenda in Mozambican society that upholds the immorality of homosexuality. Religious leaders specially oppose political changes that benefit sexual minorities, such as access to civil marriage or child adoption by homosexuals, but there is no violent hostility against LGBTI people or reported cases of violence by leaders of churches (Nota 2013). This may be explained by the legal colonial heritage, less punitive compared with the British legal heritage, as well as a more permissive social environment, in which political and religious leaders tolerate sexual difference if it remains in the private sphere or less visible in public space. The actions of local associations (such as LAMBDA Mozambique) in creating awareness for sexual diversity and difference cannot be ignored as a variable that helps explain this tolerance.

Civil Society and Homosexuality

In Mozambique, the debate concerning homosexuality is not new but has intensified in the twenty-first century, when a more public debate on sexualities became associated with the need for an open discussion on HIV/AIDS (Gune and Manuel 2011). The negative image of homosexuality, linked to conservative and moral views, is also related to the perception that power, wealth, and poverty are key factors in such relations—in particular, the sexual satisfaction of wealthy men who take advantage of the vulnerability of poor and homeless young boys (Nota 2013). Considering the social inequalities in the country, Maria José Arthur (2004) questions the necessity of an antigay perspective based on morality and defense of family, repositioning the focus on sexual minorities toward the human rights debate.

In the African Portuguese-speaking context, Mozambique is highlighted for hosting the oldest and best-organized nongovernmental organization (NGO) devoted to LGBT rights: LAMBDA Mozambique. Created in 2006, the association describes itself on its website as “an organization of Mozambican citizens who advocate for the recognition of the human rights of LGBT people” (LAMBDA Mozambique 2018; translation by Rui Garrido). The main activities of LAMBDA are advocacy for public policies concerning LGBT protection, which also resulted in the decriminalization of homosexuality in the 2014 penal code; education and public-awareness campaigns for sexual diversity, sexual and reproductive health rights, and HIV/AIDS and human rights; research into LGBT issues and the production of materials; training of public services personnel (e.g., health-care workers, police forces) to deal with LGBT people; and legal assistance for LGBT people (LAMBDA Mozambique 2018; Taimo 2014). Although it is the only association in Mozambique working specifically with the LGBT population, LAMBDA is also involved in a vast network with local NGOs, including Women and Law in Southern Africa Research and Educational Trust, HOPEM (Men for Change) Network, Ordem dos Advogados de Moçambique (Mozambican Bar Association), Fundação para o Desenvolvimento da Comunidade (Foundation for Community Development), and the US-based FHI 360.
Based in Maputo, LAMBDA Mozambique works in several provinces, engaging civil society and international organizations in its advocacy campaigns. The communication strategy of the association is very effective, taking into consideration that, for an LGBT African association, LAMBDA gained, and still has, a strong presence in media channels in Mozambique (Taimo 2014). It works to form and inform public opinion through the use of social networks and the production of short films related to homosexuality and the acceptance of sexual minorities. These films are available on LAMBDA’s YouTube channel and include interviews, in particular, with young students in Maputo, who show great tolerance for homosexuality and awareness of LGBT issues. This stands in contrast to the discriminatory behaviors that still persist in some social strata; a study found a very different reality at Maputo-based Universidade Pedagógica (Pedagogical University), where a group of biology students showed intolerance toward and low understanding about homosexuality (Nota 2013).

LAMBDA has sought legal recognition by the Republic of Mozambique since 2008. By refusing such recognition of the association, the Mozambican state not only has failed to guarantee the fundamental rights of these citizens, in particular their right to association, but also has placed LAMBDA in legal limbo, which hampers the NGO in its activities (Taimo 2014). The association has appealed to several legal institutions inside and outside the country without success, in particular to the Ombudsman. The later appealed to the Constitutional Council, which decided that the nonrecognition is unconstitutional, due to Article 1, Law n. 8/91, which regulates the right to association and to Articles 35, 44, and 52, n. 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of Mozambique (Aórđão n. 07/CC/2017, of 31 October 2017).

During the universal periodic review (UPR) process of the Human Rights Council of the United Nations, in 2011, some countries (in particular, France, Spain, and the Netherlands) asked for Mozambique to respect the constitutional principle of equality and register the associations working with sexual minorities (UN 2011). In the second cycle of the UPR concerning Mozambique, in 2015, the case of LAMBDA and the refusal of registration by the Mozambican state was, again, the subject of concern (UN 2015). There are no other national NGOs or associations working on LGBTI issues. Thus, the Mozambican state has yet to legally recognize an LGBTI association, a move that could lead to greater acceptance of sexual minorities among different levels of Mozambican society.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara

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MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia

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An umbrella term used for men who have sex with men, regardless of whether they identify as “gay,” and its complex usage in Asia.

The 2006 report of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) titled *HIV and Men Who Have Sex with Men in Asia and the Pacific* states that most men who have sex with men (MSM) outside of the West are not identifiable as such. They may be living a heterosexual lifestyle that includes marriage to a woman and fatherhood, yet because of social stigma, cultural taboos, and laws against homosexual activity, many Asian men choose to hide their engagement in same-sex sexual activity. Their decision to hide their behavior, coupled with a lack of knowledge about how HIV/AIDS is spread, makes them more vulnerable to contracting HIV/AIDS. Within such a context, the term *MSM* describes a behavioral phenomenon rather than a sexual identity, used primarily to highlight risky behavior. Hence, MSM would include not only self-identified gay and bisexual men but also self-identified heterosexual men who have sex with other men. MSM is an umbrella term for advocacy initiatives against the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The UNAIDS report goes on to state that there is a socioeconomic divide between various groups of MSMs. Educated upper- and middle-class men are more likely to identify with Western countries’ gay movements and ideologies as part of their sexual identity, whereas working-class men are more likely to view their homosexual behavior as purely an act, not an identity (*UNAIDS 2006*). Therefore, HIV interventions need to be framed in a way that targets both identities and acts. According to this report, the use of MSM as a term supports this dual focus. Shivananda Khan, the founder of Naz Foundation International and the Asia Pacific Coalition for Male Sexual Health, has advocated this approach. In the context of male sexual health in Asia, Khan argued in a 2001 article that the term *gay* flattened out the sexual diversity in the region. To him, this term was a Western imposition that did not speak to the varied sociocultural contexts of the region. According to Khan, when members of the South Asian diasporic gay and lesbian communities traveled to India and other parts of Asia, they brought with them their experiences of organizing around gay and lesbian rights, which South Asians living in the region then tried to emulate. Hence, these terms circulated only in elite spaces in the region.

However, feminist scholar Nivedita Menon (*2007*) argues that Khan’s assertions about
MSM are self-contradictory. First, his notions of the West and authentic notions of local culture are essentialist in the sense that he perceives them as compact units without any kind of flows and exchanges among them. Second, if “gay” as an identity marker is solely used in the West, then why is it that not all homosexual men in the West use this term to identify themselves? Yet MSM is also an English term that originated in Western health discourses and that would require translations into several cultural and linguistic contexts, as nobody would automatically identify as MSM. Then how is it different from “gay”? Identities are “socially, culturally, politically and historically contingent” (Menon 2007, 17); they are relational in the sense that they derive their meaning from what they are not (“black” means “not white”) and their formation is a process, not frozen in time.

Local Contexts

In this regard, the UNAIDS report cautions that HIV programs for MSM in Asia also need to be tailored to local contexts, given the cultural, political, and sexual diversity in the region. For instance, in Indonesia transgender women are commonly known as waria. They are more visible and thus somewhat recognized in Indonesian culture. There are also working-class men known as laki-laki or laki asli who often have sex with the warias without necessarily considering themselves gay or homosexual. Another term used is kucing, for male sex workers who may have both male and female clients (UNAIDS 2006). UNAIDS (2006) lists four categories of MSM in the Philippines: parlorista bakla (effeminate men who may cross-dress and use makeup and are often employed in beauty parlors), straight-acting gay men, lalake (who identify as heterosexual and have sex with men for pleasure), and male sex workers. In Hong Kong and many Chinese-speaking communities, tongzhi is a common descriptor for MSM.

In the context of HIV prevention campaigns in India, Ashok Row Kavi (1947–), India’s first openly gay activist and a founding member of the Humsafar Trust, which works for HIV/AIDS awareness in Mumbai, presented a series of subcategories under the umbrella category, MSM. Included in this scheme are subgroups classified around gender identity, such as trans women and hijras (mostly transfeminine individuals, women, and intersex people with their own religious practices who dance at weddings, beg at traffic signals and on trains, and also perform sex work), and around sexual behavior, such as kothis (feminine men who are generally penetrated), panthis (the penetrating partner of kothis, although sometimes panthis and kothis switch positions), and gay men (Kavi 2007). These are only a few examples of varied terms that circulate in Asia around sexual identity and behavior. It would be wrong to assume, however, that these terms are simply benign local variations of the umbrella category, MSM. It would also be problematic to assume that MSM subsumes all these local variations. There are many points of conflict and tension between globally and locally circulating terms such that the very categories of “global” and “local” get disrupted. The following section summarizes how these points of tension arise and how the
global and local trouble each other.

Young Men Frequent an Area Known to Be Popular with Men Seeking Sex with Men in the Cambodian Capital of Phnom Penh, 2007. One of the strategies of HIV/AIDS prevention programs in Asia has been to differentiate between sexual behavior and sexual identity. The category MSM (men who have sex with men) has been largely deployed as an umbrella term to reach out to not only gay men but also those who do not identify as gay but still have sex with other male-bodied people.

**Relation and Interaction between the Global and Local**

Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan problematize the binary of the local as the space of oppositional consciousness and resistance and the global as an “oppressive network of dominant power structures” to argue that the categories “local” and “global” are themselves heavily mediated by transnational flows of capital, technology, media, migrations, and travels that create and perpetuate not only forms of asymmetries and governmental regimes but also “conditions of possibility of new subjects” (2001, 671). For instance, in the context of his research on gender and sexual subjectivities in Indonesia, Tom Boellstorff (2005) uses the concept of “dubbing” to study how Western terms such as *gay* and *lesbian* acquire meanings that are apposite with local contexts. Dubbing is different from mimicking in the sense that there is no original that is then copied. Instead, by failing to sync with the movement of lips, dubbing gestures toward how failure is imbricated in any work of translation such that it is always incomplete and approximate, but at the same time, by not being exact, the translation itself produces newer meanings (Boellstorff 2005).
Thus, gay and lesbi (a term commonly used by queer women and even some trans men in Indonesia) subjectivities in Indonesia are neither a translation of an authentic cultural form nor a copy of a foreign form (Sinnott 2010).

Martin F. Manalansan (2003) argues on similar lines in the context of gay subjectivities in the Philippines, where the term bakla is not simply a premodern antecedent of the modern gay Filipino. Bakla (a very approximate translation of which would be “gay,” but it can also refer to feminine men and transgender women) becomes a placeholder of home, memory, and history in the queer diaspora to hold onto one’s cultural distinctiveness in the face of assimilation; there is no teleology from the bakla of premodern times to the modern emancipated gay subjectivities of global Manila (Manalansan 2003). Bobby Benedicto (2008) takes this argument further to show how the production of the global gay identity in the Philippines rests on the abjection of the bakla. Without the disavowal of the bakla, the modern Filipino gay subject cannot be produced. Thus, what one notices is a constant troubling of binaries and borders between identity markers and labels.

In Pakistan, the term khwaja sira, which dates back to the Mughal era (early sixteenth to early eighteenth centuries), regained its currency when gender-nonconforming people started using it instead of the term hijra, which they deemed pejorative. Khwaja sira now serves as an umbrella term for feminine men, intersex individuals, those who cross-dress, and those who undergo castration to take on a more feminine role. Thus, if one were to follow Kavi’s diagram, khwaja sira could be a Pakistani equivalent of the more generic MSM. In a 2016 essay on their activisms, Faris A. Khan argues that the usage of the category “transgender” for khwaja sira may be an imperialist imposition that does not fully reflect the experiences of gender-nonconforming Pakistani. Instead, Khan offers the framework of genderqueer feminism to read such lives, signaling how gender ambiguity and a state of flux gesture toward radical modes of being and becoming that question the fixity of identity categories. Yet, the term queer was generated by Western academia, and Khan himself acknowledges that even though he reads feminist praxis in khwaja sira activisms, they need not necessarily identify as feminist. This brings the discussion back to the conundrum of reading the local and the global as compact sites that Menon and many others problematize.

What needs to be reiterated here is that the flow between categories is not unidirectional. Yet, critiques of universal categories often assume that the universal colonizes or even produces the local. For example, Akshay Khanna (2009) argues that the HIV/AIDS industry configures MSM as a high-risk population. So, then its subcategories are eventually produced as epidemiological categories whose movements need to be mapped for surveillance. Khanna claims that transnational HIV awareness campaigns create identity categories such as kothi to bring more and more people under their purview. Such arguments, however, have also been refuted on the grounds that they elide how gender operates as an organizing rubric around how sexual behaviors are marked onto bodies.
While masculine men can afford some degree of sexual transgression under the guise of their normative gender, gender-variant bodies are already marked as homosexual (Dutta and Roy 2014). Given that gender performance does not allow some forms of bodies to remain discreet, there have always been forms of collectivizing around shared gender identities that predate HIV interventions or the circulation of MSM in Asia.

**Gendered Dimension of MSM**

Finally, one of the major critiques of the circulation of MSM has been that in underlining male sexual behavior, the gendered dimension of MSM is not interrogated enough. Do women have the same freedom as men in exploring their sexual selves outside marriage with other men and women (Menon 2007)? So, while the gay rights movements have been largely enabled by the proliferation of the HIV industry in Asia, queer women's movements have grown out of the women's movements. In questioning compulsory heterosexuality, marriage, and the family, queer feminists not only have brought sexuality to the center of feminist movements but have also shown how sexuality needs to be thought about beyond the frameworks of marriage and sexual violence, thus challenging the heteronormativity of feminist movements (Sukthankar 1999; Shah 2005; Dave 2012). Yet, a complete dissociation from the HIV/AIDS initiatives in Asia produces another elision. The aforementioned 2006 UNAIDS report notes several times that MSMs often have female partners. For example, it mentions a survey of 800 MSMs in China, more than half of whom admitted to having unprotected sex with women. It also mentions how *panthis* in India and Bangladesh are often married men or have female partners. If these are indeed at-risk populations, then so are the women they have sex with. Yet, the report does not mention any advocacy initiatives for women vulnerable to HIV exposure. In other words, even though the implications of MSMs and HIV for women are underlined, in the final analysis, women slip through.

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Mufākharat al-Jawārī wa-al-Ghilmān (al-Jāḥiẓ)

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Ninth-century CE work by the famous Abbasid polymath in which two characters debate the pleasures of sex with men versus sex with women.

Mufākharat al-jawārī wa-al-ghilmān (Boasting match over maids and youths) is a ninth-century CE Arabic-language literary debate between a fictional male character who enjoys sex with adolescent males and one who favors intercourse with women. It was written by Abu ʿUthman ʿAmr ibn Bahr (d. c. 868 CE), commonly known as al-Jāḥiẓ, or the man with protruding eyes. A Muslim polymath who lived in Basra and Baghdad during the early Abbasid era (750–1258), al-Jāḥiẓ wrote elegant Arabic books and epistles, some of which were dedicated to Abbasid officials. Mufākharat al-jawārī wa-al-ghilmān is one of his epistles, although it could be considered a play, given that it is written as a dialogue between two characters who trade insults, recite snatches of verse, and tell anecdotes—except that there was no medieval Sunni Muslim theater tradition apart from shadow puppets. The work is instead an example of adab, a medieval Arabic prose genre pioneered by al-Jāḥiẓ.

Al-Jāḥiẓ and Adab

Adab works are typically anthologies of quotes, stories, and stanzas of poetry. Al-Jāḥiẓ is often seen as one of the most important authors for this genre. Charles Pellat (1990, 83), a major authority on al-Jāḥiẓ, explained that he “had two main fields of activity; firstly, theology and politics, and secondly, adab.” His adab strove “to educate his readers” in an “attractive” fashion. The historian Marshall G. S. Hodgson pointed out that al-Jāḥīẓ “wrote innumerable tracts attacking or defending almost every party or group with memorable effect” (1974, 467). Various works by al-Jāḥīẓ, for example, made fun of misers, devoted extensive space to the physically disabled, and covered moral subjects such as the differences between enmity and envy as well as earnestness and jesting (al-Jāḥīẓ 1989, 33–53, 93–121). Pellat points out that Mufākharat al-jawārī wa-al-ghilmān belongs to a literary genre of debates between advocates of various opposites. If al-Jāḥīẓ wrote an essay praising government clerks and one disparaging them, this vacillation “can be explained both in terms of literary convention and of Jāḥīẓ’s idiosyncratic ability to see the good and bad in everything” (Pellat 1990, 92). Pellat wrote that al-Jāḥīẓ “urges the acquisition of good qualities and the suppression of bad ones, but without the tone of moral censure normally
considered *de rigueur* among Mu'tazilites* (1969, 24). About al-Jāḥīz's work on misers, for instance, translator Jim Colville noted, “The book's purpose is not simply to entertain; it seeks to alert the man of honour ... that his own character is flawed by a streak of avarice” (1999, xi). “Yet Jāḥiẓ is never mean-spirited towards these misers. Bemused by their antics, he pokes fun and ridicules but his laughter has no trace of malice” (xii). In discussing the respective merits of dogs and cocks, for example, al-Jāḥīz explained as follows:

*It is not the intrinsic worth of the dog and the cock, their price, their looks or the place they occupy in the hearts of common people that led us to write ... rather are we thinking about the proofs of His existence that God put into these creatures ... the mysteries He implanted in them ... thus demonstrating that He ... wishes us to think on these two creatures and take them for an object lesson and a reason for praising God.*

(1969, 141–142)

**Outline of the *Mufākharat***

From the beginning of the *Mufākharat*, al-Jāḥīz clearly states that he intends to amuse the reader. He claims that no habitual “ally of critical examination” will be “harmed by consideration of any type of subject” and advocates that both authors and readers should alternate between humorous and serious subjects. While acknowledging that prudes “are uneasy and embarrassed when the vagina, penis, and copulation are mentioned,” al-Jāḥīz labels such embarrassment an “affectation.” He argues further that Arabic sexual terms were coined for native speakers of Arabic to use— otherwise they serve no purpose (*al-Jāḥīz 1989, 140*).

The debate between the two nameless characters of the *Mufākharat* begins with the youths' patron claiming that beautiful women are often described as “just like a boy” (141). The maids' patron retorts that poets praise the lovely damsels in paradise even more frequently. The youths' patron responds that men enter paradise as beardless youths (142). The debate continues, as anecdotes and lines of verse from various sources are exchanged.

The debate includes mention of severe Islamic penalties for sex outside of marriage with male versus female partners; the prophet Muhammad's son-in-law and first cousin ʿAli ibn Abi Talib, for example, is said to have ordered a pederast thrown from the top of a minaret (143). Once some penalties for fornication have been discussed, the debate resumes with more poems, arguments, and anecdotes. The youths' patron calls women, including wives, “snares of Satan” (144), and the maids' patron claims, “We do not hear of a single
passionate lover slain by love of a boy,” although a swarm of poets died from love for a woman (145–146). Shameless youths pluck their beards when these begin to mar their appeal, whereas the worst a woman may do is dye her hair (155–156). Consideration of the eunuch as “neither man nor woman” follows the debate proper but soon concludes with the comment that eunuchs have “so many defects, it would take a long time to mention them” (156–157). The debate appears to end in a draw, with neither side able to prove the superiority of its claim. Instead, the epistle concludes with a set of raunchy jokes and some sexual advice. Of the thirty jokes, there are at least eight about men who seek sex only with males, two about young men who pluck or cut their beards to appeal to older men, two about adulterous women, and one about a woman who provides anal sex to a man with a dildo (157–165).

Al-Jāḥiẓ also wrote a shorter, related work titled *Tafdil al-batn ʿala al-zahr* (Superiority of the belly over the back), in which he did advocate a heterosexual position. The work argued for the sexual attractions of the belly over the back, literarily and figuratively, and ranged from aesthetic to legal and linguistic concerns: “The back in most of its states is ugly while the belly in most ... is handsome.... The belly at all times is hospitable and friendly” (al-Jāḥiẓ 1989, 171). “A woman is said to be slender-bellied. She is not said to be slender-backed” (169). It ends with a typical—for this author—theological endorsement of free will: “God the Exalted has afflicted with desire only one He has found straying” (173).

**Social-Sexual Dynamic of the Abbasid Era**

Although al-Jāḥiẓ felt the need for a disclaimer as to the explicit sexual nature of his work, his warning did not extend to the homosexuality implicit in the arguments by the patron advocating for the youths in it. The society in which al-Jāḥiẓ composed this work was one in which “the male-female gender binary did not exist in its modern form, [and] neither did the sexual identities based on it, such as hetero- and homosexuality,” according to David Selim Sayers, a contemporary scholar of Turkish culture. “Consequently, it was not considered abnormal per se for an individual to be sexually active with members of both sexes” (2017, 216). In this sociosexual construct, displays of “affection between friends and neighbors” tend to be more physical than in the West, and “same-sex sexual behavior is rigidly classified into active and passive roles,” according to the anthropologist William O. Beeman (2014, 157). Even today, men who play the active role may not think of their sexual activities as being homosexual, at least not until they visit the West (Beeman 2014).

This sexual dynamic in Abbasid society most often concerned relations between a master and his slaves. In the *Mufākharat al-jawārī wa-al-ghilmān*, the words *jawari* and *ghilman* literally mean “slave women” and “slave boys,” respectively. The British scholar Julia Bray has pointed out that “the reality of Abbasid casual sexual relations with slaves” was “often brutal, consumerist, and callous” (2017, 144). Al-Jāḥiẓ, as “a uniquely acute and well-placed observer of society” (Bray 2004, 137n44), was very much aware of this dynamic. Al-Jāḥiẓ
referred to both genders when describing sex objects—for example, to display his wealth a man may buy “mettlesome steeds and beautiful slaves of both sexes” (1969, 141). When discussing grammatical mistakes, he suggested that these will be excused when made by “refined young women, adolescents, handsome youths, and chubby-cheeked little girls” (105).

In addition to the imbalance of power inherent in a master-slave relationship, homosexual relationships in medieval Middle Eastern society almost always involved an age difference, according to Geert Jan van Gelder, a scholar of classical Arabic literature. “In medieval Middle Eastern society it is taken for granted that a homoerotic or homosexual relationship involves an age difference; affairs between coevals do occur but are rare, or at least rarely mentioned” (2005, 217n165). While acknowledging that “adolescent boys … [were] considered sexually attractive to normal men” (107) in medieval Middle Eastern society, van Gelder went on to stipulate that “it [was] understood, of course, that copulation humiliates and abases only the one who is penetrated, not the penetrator; the same is valid for homosexual intercourse as it appears in Abbasid invective poetry” (115). Al-Jáhiz made this same distinction: “What a difference there is in epithets between … the active and the passive sex partner, the rider and the mount, the actor and the action’s recipient, one who comes and the one on whom he comes, the lower and the upper, the visitor and the visited, the victor and the vanquished” (1989, 170).

Reception

Al-Jáhiz’s Mufākharat was popular enough to inspire a later debate between two ninth-century CE literary figures: Ibn Abi Tahir Tayfur and Ahmad ibn al-Tayyib al-Sarakhsi. The noted Arabist Franz Rosenthal’s evaluation of this debate also applies to al-Jáhiz’s: “As befits a work not meant to be an earnest debate on moot points of religion or philosophy but a literary entertainment … the stress is on how poets as the secular keepers of the Muslim social conscience, expressed themselves” (1997, 29). Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle, an authority on queer Islam, wrote the following of Mufākharat al-jawārī wa-al-ghilmān: “Many ‘Abbasid-era writers penned witty debates about whether romance or sex with a male slave (ghulam) was more pleasurable than with a female slave (jariya)—such as the famous literary debate penned by al-Jáhiz” (2010, 87). Rosenthal referred to the work as exemplifying “an age-old intellectual game” in which advocates of “two objects or concepts” compete. He observed that by “pointing out the … good and bad inherent in almost everything” such debates “furnished a much-needed outlet for a relativist view of life” that competed with more dogmatic approaches (1997, 24). Van Gelder similarly described al-Jáhiz as “a rationalist normally eager to explain things or to discuss rival explanations” (2005, 113). The British Arabist A. F. L. Beeston summed up al-Jáhiz in this manner: “He was constitutionally incapable of seeing only one side of a question” (1980, 1). Lois Anita Giffen, an authority on Islamic love, made a comparable point: “Jáhiz, the man of letters,
individualist, and Muʿtazili rationalist, displays a latitudinarian, pleasure-loving, 'live and let live' attitude" (1971, 123).

Pellat, though, also wrote that the Mufākharat is “shocking" and described it as “an anthology on natural and unnatural love ... in which Jāḥiẓ displays a marked hostility to homosexuality” (1990, 92). He characterized most of the “dialogue between the champions of girls and of pretty boys” as a text that “decency forbids us to translate.” Pellat called the jokes at the end “equally scabrous anecdotes” (1969, 271). He faulted this work, which dealt “with a delicate subject,” as “marred by obscenity” (1965, 386). Pellat wrote too that the oeuvre of al-Jāḥiẓ does not overlook “homosexuality, a vice common among the Arabs” (1969, 27).

Mufākharat al-jawārī wa-al-ghilmān by al-Jāḥiẓ is a culturally Islamic adab work in which the author expressed his bemused wonderment at variations in human sexual preference as part of his boundless fascination with all facets of God’s creation.

SEE ALSO Ghilman; Homoerotic Poetry of Abū Nuwās; Homoeroticism in the Plays of Ibn Daniyal; Literary Discourses in the Ottoman Middle East (1500–1900)

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Mukhannath

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A male person who displays feminine traits in the Islamic world during the era of the caliphates.

In classical Arabic sources, a mukhannath (plural: mukhannathin) is defined as a male person who displays feminine traits, either "naturally" or "voluntarily"; what those traits are is not spelled out very specifically, but they certainly include feminine ornaments, including decorating the hands with henna, and, at least in many cases, the adoption of some or all feminine attire, a form of crossdressing that does not intend to go so far as to "pass" as female. Mukhannathin also plucked their beards. The available evidence strongly suggests that in the time of the prophet Muhammad (c. 570–632) men who identified as mukhannathin were a recognized, and accepted, component of society and that that has continued to be the case in most Islamic societies from the seventh century down to modern times, although the nature and role of the mukhannath has varied over time and place.

Anecdotes about Muhammad reveal that in the gender-segregated society of seventh-century Arabia mukhannathin were admitted to women's quarters because of their assumed lack of sexual interest in women; the Prophet is reported to have banished a mukhannath because on one occasion he described a woman voluptuously to a man as a potential marriage partner, indicating an understanding of women's sexual charms. Other anecdotes support the supposition that mukhannathin acted as matchmakers and, more problematically, go-betweens. Perhaps surprisingly, their indifference to women sexually is not matched by any explicit indication of sexual interest in men or boys.

A number of traditions from the prophet Muhammad (known as hadith) indicate that he cursed effeminate men and mannish women, but if so, this did not prevent the mukhannathin from continuing to occupy a conspicuous position in society. Indeed, Arabic sources offer a rich picture of the mukhannathin of Mecca and, especially, Medina in the first century of Islam, focusing especially on their role as singers. One anecdote in particular describes a Woodstock-like music festival in Medina around the year 700, at which three consecutive days were devoted to highlighting the talents of male singers, mukhannath singers, and female singers, respectively. (That the mukhannath singers sang in falsetto is an obvious, but speculative, assumption.) Some of these singers are identified as mature men seeking out the receptive role in anal intercourse, whereas others are
reported to be married. Various anecdotes indicate societal conflict over whether the mukhannath lifestyle is to be looked down on or simply accepted (and their musical talents, wit, and sophistication rejoiced in), but some sort of crisis over this occurred around the year 717, when a constellation of reports indicates that there was a crackdown on the mukhannathin of Medina, which may or may not have involved mass castration (a singularly inappropriate punishment, given the charge of encouraging female licentiousness through their singing and go-between activity, not their own sexual behavior) but in any case is reflected in silence about the mukhannathin over the following fifty years (Rowson 1997).

After the Abbasid revolution of 750, which inaugurated a new dynasty of caliphs ruling the Islamic empire from the new capital of Baghdad, the mukhannathin reappear in the existing sources, no longer primarily as musicians but rather as court jesters. About one of them, ‘Abbada, in the mid-ninth century, particularly rich accounts exist, as s/he audaciously mocked the Prophet’s cousin ‘Ali, as well as basing much of her humor on her desire to be sexually penetrated by other men: in contrast to the earlier period, mukhannathin are henceforth assumed to be pursuers of the receptive role in homosexual intercourse, and in some sources that becomes virtually the definition of the term mukhannath. Other sources, however, draw a clear distinction between the two, the mukhannathin being identified by their gender role, not their sexual one, whereas passive sodomites are identified exclusively by their sexual role.

While the history of the mukhannathin in the Islamic world from the tenth to the nineteenth centuries remains to be seriously explored by scholars, there is abundant evidence for it in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish sources, indicating a continuing institutionalized role for crossdressers as musicians, matchmakers, and jesters, as well as for their being available as performers of mockery for disgraced political actors, which suggests their useful but less than respectable role in their societies. They do seem to have been targets of occasional, but rare, persecution because of their defiance of gender norms. For early modern times, post-1500, the best available evidence seems to be that concerning “dancing boys” in the Ottoman Empire (called çengi or köçek), who were mostly from religious minorities (specifically Christians) and who, after their cross-dressing and dancing career, presumably gave up what was not a lifelong lifestyle. As these dancers fell increasingly into disfavor in nineteenth-century Istanbul (their performances being banned altogether in 1857), many of them moved to Egypt, where they were known as ginks (presumably from çengi) or khawals (which in the twentieth century shifted in meaning to become a standard derogatory term for passive sodomites). The vestiges of this tradition were still observable in Cairo in the 1970s and are perhaps perceptible as well in the contemporary tolerance in Turkey of wildly popular (adult) transgender singers.

The one place in the contemporary Islamic world where the mukhannath tradition is still maintained seems to be Oman, with its society-sanctioned role for the khanith, a cross-
dressing, matchmaking male prostitute figure of high visibility. Oman as an obvious conduit of cultural influence between the Middle East and South Asia raises the obvious question, in this context, of the historical connection between the Middle Eastern mukhannath and the South Asian *hijra*. Indian and Pakistani *hijras*—transgender communities with complex roles in their societies (recently recognized officially as a third sex by the Indian government)—have been subject to intense scholarly exploration, but their presumed historical connections with the Middle Eastern (and specifically Islamic) mukhannathin remain to be investigated.

**SEE ALSO** *Homosexual Acts in Shari‘a*

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The Museo Travesti del Perú (Transvestite Museum of Peru) is not a typical museum but rather an itinerant, ephemeral counter-museum created by Peruvian trans artist, philosopher, and drag queen Giuseppe Campuzano (1969–2013). It was borne out of his personal experience as a Peruvian travesti (transvestite) as well as his desire to see his own history and to queer mainstream conceptions of national identity and national history. Given the heteronormative construct of national identity as well as the absence of histories of travestismo (transvestism), the Museo Travesti del Perú is the first to offer a comprehensive history of cross-dressing, queerness, and gender-bending in Peru. The museum chronicles forms of travestismo from the pre-Incan period (before 1438), the colonial era (1532–1824), and modern-day Peru, which essentially began with Peruvian independence in 1824. A miscegenation of genres, the Museo Travesti del Perú showcases gender-bending and sexual dissidence in popular culture and visual and performance art, while also basing its archive of travestismo in newspaper clippings, colonial ordinances, and literary and scholarly works.

The museum has taken many forms, appearing at different moments throughout the first decade of the twenty-first century and after Campuzano’s death in 2013. In each version, it offers a critical rewriting of Peruvian history that rejects chronological, linear renderings of the national past. Over the years, the exhibits have organized individual sections to juxtapose instances of travestismo from various time periods; for example, they have placed the third-gender shamans painted on the indigenous pottery of Moche and pre-Incan cultures from before 600 CE alongside the cross-dressed dancers who appear each year in Peru’s contemporary Andean festivals. The exhibits contain the image of a black homosexual from the nineteenth-century artwork of Peru’s famous costumbrista artist Pancho Fierro (1807–1879), photographs of crossdressed opera singers from the Chinese community of the 1870s, queer kitsch objects of Peru’s contemporary art scene such as a cross-dressed Barbie Ken doll, and ritual artifacts such as the indigenous ritual mask worn in Andean festivals. Merging literary, visual, and scholarly works, they also include excerpts of writings by queer literary icons such as Cuban writer Severo Sarduy (1937–1993),
verses from religious scripture, and colonial ordinances outlawing gender-bending, as well as snippets of scholarly writing about third-gender shamans and the place of ambiguity in Andean cosmology. Campuzano defiantly conceptualized his counter-museum as a looting of official archives that excavated a suppressed sexual history and that challenged mainstream narratives of national identity.

![Image of Giuseppe Campuzano as La Virgen Dolorosa](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

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**Peruvian Trans Artist Giuseppe Campuzano as La Virgen Dolorosa.** Campuzano, the founder of the Museo Travesti del Perú, used his work to offer a critical rewriting of Peruvian history from the perspective of a mixed-race, indigenous transvestite.

## Travestismo and Peruvian Identity

While the exhibits present queerness across disparate epochs, they consistently ground travestismo in the Andean cosmovision. Prior to the arrival of the Spanish in 1532, the Inca Empire and its Moche predecessors revered and celebrated third-gender subjectivity. The Incas organized society around an Andean cosmovision based in the notion of complementary dualism, which designated spaces for masculine and feminine ambiguity. Throughout the colonial era, the Spanish violently suppressed the Andean worldview, targeting the thirdgender shamans who operated as mediators of Andean ritual practice. The museum recuperates this suppressed worldview as it links the ambiguity in Andean cosmology to contemporary representations of travesti sex workers, gender benders, and drag queens. In Campuzano's rewriting of national history, indigenous and trans peoples
appear as central protagonists of the nation-state. The Museo Travesti del Perú is a counter-museum that queers mainstream conceptualizations of a national museum. In his queer archive, Campuzano uses transvestism as a metaphor for national identity, as a methodological approach, and as a historiographical practice. Affirming the relationship between travestismo and national identity, in the opening pages of a book version of the museum, Campuzano writes, “Toda peruanidad es un travestismo” (All Peruvianness is an act of transvestism) (2008, 8). In this juxtaposition he imagines national identity not as a fixed, neutral entity but as an assemblage that, like a gender bender or drag queen, is in a constant state of metamorphosis and transfiguration (Campuzano 2009a). Travestismo functions as a metaphor for a national identity that has no essence. Campuzano targets the museum as the site of sanctification and nationalist dogma to subvert the discursive and institutional symbols around which national identity coheres. Just as he crossdresses national identity, so too does the artist dress the museum in drag. He writes: “A false museum—like the term ‘false woman’ with which this Manichean language describes us. A disguised museum whose masks—crafts, photocopies, … banners, all those systems of mass production—do not conceal but rather reveal. They do not camouflage. They enact transvestism” (quoted in “El Museo Travesti: The Transvestite Museum”).

Just as the gender performance of a trans, androgynous drag queen unmasks gender as artifice—a copy with no original—so too does this museum seek to undress national identity and expose official history as mere fantasy. Campuzano reveals museology and the formation of national identity to be an act of transvestism—hermeneutical projects grounded not in fact, but in fiction. His museum is a historiographic rendering of the Peruvian nation forged through falsity and disguise. It is a historical collection made up not of originals, but of copies of objects, images, and historical documents. This is true for the museum as a material object and for the objects of its exhibit.

**Iterations and Reiterations**

The Museo Travesti del Perú is an ephemeral object that has been reinvented over time. It is a reproduction of previous iterations, an object whose ontology is under constant renovation. It first appeared in 2004 as a temporary exhibit at the site museum of the Battle of Miraflores in Lima. The site museum is one of the municipal galleries whose exposition commemorates the famous War of the Pacific—a war fought by Peru, Chile, and Bolivia during the nineteenth century. The Museo Travesti del Perú was staged in the rooms typically used to commemorate contemporary art and to celebrate the war heroes of the nation. In this iteration, the exhibit was a beauty pageant comprising objects, photographs, crafts, and other paraphernalia showcasing travesti beauty queens, androgynous shamans, and hairdressers. It placed images of these beauty queens alongside androgynous ritual figures in indigenous pottery of the Moche culture. In the pageant’s celebration of travesti heroines, it offered a queer reimagining of the fallen war hero and disrupted the
heteronormative masculinity that underwrites constructs of heroism and bravery in the national museum. This pageant was a counter-historical project that juxtaposed the nationalist rhetoric and military symbolism of the nation-state to present a travesti ready to fight for the sash of citizenship (Campuzano 2009a).

In its second iteration, the Museo Travesti del Perú presented newspaper coverage of the murders of travestis in Peru in the 1980s and 1990s for an exhibit at the Museo de Arte de San Marcos in Lima in 2004. Campuzano titled the exhibit Identikit: Un archivo travesti (Identikit: a travesti archive), and he used a set of enlarged newspaper clippings to highlight the systemic violence enacted against travestis in Peru. The exhibit denaturalized the sensationalist coverage of their murders in the press to pay homage to fallen travestis. Campuzano’s engagement with the history of violence against travestis would remain a feature of future iterations of the museum.

In reaction to the outcome of Peru’s general elections in 2006, the Museo Travesti del Perú reappeared as a street protest at a central location in the district of San Isidro in Lima. The protestors were a group of travestis, activists, artists, and sex workers. The museum, organized as a sit-in, was a direct response to the homophobia and patriarchal discourse in the rhetoric of the two front-runners in the presidential race: Ollanta Humala, whose mother called for the deaths of homosexuals, and Lourdes Flores, a staunch antiabortion candidate. Amid Peru’s transition from a dictatorship to a democracy, these protestors sought to draw attention to the murders of sex workers and persecution of travestis that had been documented in the final report of Peru’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2001–2003) about the atrocities, forced disappearances, human rights violations, and mass murders that occurred during Peru’s internal conflict from the 1980s to 2000. During the conflict, many travestis died at the hands of leftist paramilitary groups Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) and Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru (Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement), the armed forces, law enforcement, and right-wing paramilitary groups. The protestors denounced the impunity for perpetrators of hate crimes against travestis. The sit-in took place on the corner of Javier Prado and los Pinos on the borders of the districts of San Isidro and Lince. The site was a popular location for sex work that boasted a famous mural adorned with photographs and quotes celebrating the influence of women in contemporary Peruvian society. Campuzano reproduced the newspaper clippings of the previous iteration of the museum and titled the exhibit Cubrir para mostrar (To cover in order to show). The protesters wrapped themselves in newspaper clippings detailing the murders of trans people and, with their bodies, they blocked the images and quotations on the mural. This intervention served to highlight the scant regard for the lives of trans people and sex workers across the political class and in society at large. They also sought to expose and critique the shared commitment of the institutional Left, the Right, and even the feminist movement to notions of womanhood that were grounded in biological essentialism. The museum combined both embodied practice and visual art and sought to position the travesti body in relation to political rituals and figures of the state.
In its fourth iteration, the museum reappeared as the performance and visual exhibit *Cortapelo* in Arequipa in 2006. Campuzano participated in a choreographed performance of the province’s traditional dance “El Wititi” with a local dance troupe. This part-performance, part-visual exhibit entailed the cutting of the artist’s hair as a ritual offering for the Virgin and as recognition of the centrality of cross-dressing and travestismo in Andean ritual dance. In combining the cross-dressing and ritual performance in Andean tradition with Catholicism, the museum indexed processes of syncretism. It also situated travestismo within genealogies of Andean sacred practice recuperating the place of gender ambiguity in the Andean cosmovision.

After *Cortapelo*, Campuzano organized the museum as a series of smaller portable exhibits in various public parks and plazas in Lima to raise awareness about travestismo. In these iterations that took place in 2006, the Museo Travesti del Perú appeared as a mobile shop, a pink kiosk in the working-class district of Olivos, in the district of Miraflores, and in the center of Lima. Campuzano also set up the mobile kiosk behind Lima’s Palacio de Gobierno (state house). The kiosk featured the clippings and objects of earlier versions of the museum. Situating itself on the margins an official state institution, the museum indexed the relationship of travestismo to imaginations of official history and affirmed its place as a historical and artistic project operating on the margins of official institutional spaces. Dressed as a mobile shop, the Museo Travesti del Perú asked how, and from what position, is official history constructed. Appearing as a small booth of sexual history, this version of the museum played with conceptualizations of official space that are underwritten by notions of inside-outside, copy and original.

In 2008 Campuzano and art curator Sophia Durand published a book version of the museum, or what he described as *un objeto de bolsillo* (an object to be carried in one’s pockets). He designed it to stage the nonnormative body of the travesti subject; for instance, the pages of the travesti book included both glossy paper and newspaper, enabling the material object to change in various sections. In this version, the travesti museum masquerades as a catalog, exhibit, history book, and newspaper, and like the gender bender, it defied rigid systems of classification. The museum sought to unfix official history from its reliance on linear, heteronormative conceptions of time. The pocketbook version boasts an exhibit titled *Muestrario* (collection of samples), which is divided into sections and organized under one-word themes. Each section strings together a set of queer objects, images, and texts taken from different historical epochs. One section is titled *Plumaria*, the name for the colonial and pre-Hispanic art form in which certain feathers were markers of social status. It showcases images of the thirteenth-century Inca leader Manco Cápac adorned with feathers, taken from Guamán Poma’s *El primer nueva crónica y buen gobierno* (1615; The first new chronicle and good government)—a 1,200-page letter written to the Spanish king recounting the injustices of Spanish colonial rule in Peru—and places it alongside images of archangel soldiers adorned with feathers, typical of Christian
iconography in the viceroy of the seventeenth century. Following these images is Jaime Romero’s contemporary art piece Ken-el (2002), which features a queer Ken doll dressed as an archangel soldier. In this section Campuzano crafts a genealogy of transvestism through feathers, excavating a queer royalty across epochs. This section exemplifies a museum in which there is no real temporal guide throughout, so the present is the past and the past is the present; the seventeenth, fifteenth, and twenty-first centuries and the pre-Hispanic era all occur simultaneously. The teleology of official history is ripped apart and time is cross-dressed, made nonlinear, nonnormative. Here feathers are deployed as artifacts and celebrated as historical relics upon which official history is forged. This museum queers time to reject the heteronormativity of official history. In its embrace of queer artifacts, it generates new archaeological tools for rewriting history.

International Iterations of the Museum

Prior to his death in 2013, Campuzano created various iterations of his travesti museum for international audiences. In 2008 he organized the first international exhibit of the museum in Havana, Cuba, and another at Colombia’s Universidad Nacional (National University) in Bogotá in 2009. Each version of the museum was adapted according to the locale, situating travestismo in Peru in relation to acts and forms of sexual dissidence in the region. In the exhibit in Bogotá, for example, the museum showcased performances of travestismo in traditional Colombian dances, uncovering connections between travestismo in Peru and Colombia. The museum then appeared as “línea de vida” (life-line) in 2009 as part of a collective exhibit titled Lo impuro y lo contaminado II: pulsiones (neo) barrocas en las rutas de Micromuseo (Impurity and contamination II: neo-barroque impulses in the routes of the Micromuseo) exhibited at the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo (Museum of Contemporary Art) in Santiago, Chile. In these iterations, the artist sought to use these museums’ exposés of transvestism in Peru and parts of Latin America to disrupt official historiographies and to represent national histories of sexual dissidence and political insurgency. This was a museum that intended to intervene in regional imaginations of national identity and sexual history.

After Campuzano’s death, sections of the book museum were republished alongside a collection of his short stories and other writings in the 2013 edited volume Saturday night thriller y otros escritos (1998–2013) (Saturday night thriller and other writings). The Museo Travesti del Perú undoubtedly offers a scathing critique of “official” history and of the historiographic process, revealing both to be ostensibly heteronormative projects. It offers an exploration of the friction between sexual subjectivity and history. In rewriting a national history that centers the trans, the androgynous, and the drag queen, the museum makes visible the privileging of heterosexual subjectivity in the formation of official history and in the imagination of national identity. In a cowritten piece with the art curator Miguel López, Campuzano describes the museum as “a deliberately artificial device that
dramatizes the official histories and fractures the privileged site of heterosexual subjectivity which turns all difference into an object of study, while rendering invisible its own contingent and socially constructed sexual condition” (2013, 4). This museum not only presents Western history as a sexual project grounded in heteronormative discourse, but in its queering of the canonical figures and sacred and religious icons of the Peruvian nation, it also explores the contingency of heteronormativity itself. The museum queers Peruvian history, literature, cultures, and historiographic practice, and defiantly insists that all official history, all national identities, and all hegemonic systems of classification are relative, fabricated inventions.

**Impact of the Museum**

Peruvian art curators Gustavo Buntinx and Sophia Durand, and the performance artist Germaín Machuca paid homage to the Museo Travesti del Perú in micro-museo, an online catalog of various forms of transvestism in Peru and in local and international art exhibits. In the years leading up to Campuzano’s death, the Museo Travesti del Perú received critical acclaim and was exhibited in Cuba, Canada, Colombia, Spain, and the United Kingdom, and featured in academic journals such as *e-misférica* in the United States. Since the artist’s passing in 2013, the Peruvian art historian Miguel López, a friend of Campuzano, has overseen the archives and all business relating to the museum. Soon after Campuzano’s death, López curated new versions of the museum such as the exhibit *Make an effort to remember. Or, failing that, invent* in Paris in 2013 and another in Lima in 2014, titled *Cuerpo-presente: foto-video-performance*. He has since curated several new exhibits in Brussels (Belgium), Medellín (Colombia), and São Paulo (Brazil) that commemorate the museum and Campuzano’s life. Recently, the museum has proven to be influential in queer performance and visual art in the artistic scene referenced in contemporary art exhibits in Peru such as *Chuquichinchay* (2017) by local Peruvian artist Javi Nefando, whose stage name invokes the *pecado nefando* (nefarious sin) of sodomy during the colonial period. The Museo Travesti del Perú remains a singular and groundbreaking historical treatment of travestismo. It not only celebrates queerness, genderbending, and sexual insurgency in Peru but also queers historiographic practices to undermine the notion of an objective or neutral national history. Through its crossdressing of the national museum and its queering of revered, sacred emblems and figures of the nation, it reveals Peruvian history and Peruvian national identity to be deeply political projects.

**SEE ALSO**  
Moche Pottery; Museums and Memorials; Muxes; Sex Tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean; Transfeminism; Travesti and Trans Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Roper, Danielle M. Conversation with Susana Torres. 1 June 2018.
The global museum and heritage sector is characterized by extraordinary diversity. There are vast numbers of museums on every continent, with tremendous variety in scale, scope, and mission. Some have an official status granted by various professional bodies and are largely funded centrally or locally via government. Others have been founded by individuals operating on a not-for-profit basis and are reliant on private funding or commercial income. This makes it difficult to generalize, but it is beyond doubt that LGBTQ+ histories and communities have long been marginalized by the mainstream museum profession and the heritage sector. The extent to which museums and heritage sites today meaningfully represent LGBTQ histories and people varies considerably from country to country. The criminalization of homosexuality has been, and still is, a significant factor in the omission and marginalization of LGBTQ histories. There were few major exhibitions and displays that included LGBTQ perspectives in mainstream, publicly funded museums, galleries, libraries, and archives around the world before 2000. Likewise, relevant LGBTQ biographies have traditionally been omitted from the interpretation of historic houses and heritage sites, even where this was a central part of the property’s story. Largely since the late 1990s, there has been significant change and progress, although not evenly around the world. Due to restrictions of space, the emphasis here is on displays where LGBTQ themes have been the main focus of the exhibit.

**LGBTQ Museums, Libraries, and Archives**

Mainstream museums have only begun to actively collect and exhibit LGBTQ histories and experiences from around 2000 onward. Fortunately, numerous individuals took matters into their own hands, assembling private LGBTQ collections, and in some notable instances ultimately founding their own institutions to ensure these histories were captured and preserved for future generations. Largely from the 1980s onward, a number of important LGBTQ museums and archives were founded, although their collections often draw upon sustained activity over a significant period, sometimes decades. The Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives (Melbourne), the GLBT History Museum (San Francisco), the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art (New York), the Schwules Museum* (Berlin), and the Stonewall National Museum (Florida) are among the most notable examples. For reasons of
space, it is not possible to explore all of these in any depth, but the Schwules Museum* is discussed here at slightly greater length as a case study.

The Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives (ALGA) in Melbourne was established in 1978 at the Fourth National Homosexual Conference. ALGA is currently the only community-driven initiative in Australia that actively collects and preserves LGBTQ material from across the country and makes it readily accessible to students, historians, and the public. The GLBT Historical Society in San Francisco was founded in 1985 and is registered as an educational nonprofit organization. Its museum and archive are separate entities, but as an organization it collects, preserves, exhibits, and makes accessible to the public materials to support and promote knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ history, culture, and art. The Leslie-Lohman Museum of Gay and Lesbian Art in New York is a dedicated LGBTQ art museum with a mission to exhibit and preserve LGBTQ art and foster the artists who create it. The museum has over 30,000 objects in its collections, spanning more than three centuries of queer art. Its vision is to preserve LGBTQ identity, build community, and explore the relationship between queer art and social justice. It has been at its current location in New York's SoHo since 2006. The Stonewall Library and Archives in Florida was founded in 1973 by Mark N. Silber. In 2014 the Stonewall Gallery opened in a separate building located in Wilton Manors, Florida. The organization, now known as the Stonewall National Museum and Archives, promotes understanding through preserving and sharing the culture of LGBTQ people in American society. The archives contains more than 5,000 items, and the library over 26,000 books and other resources.

The origins of Berlin’s Schwules Museum* can be traced to Eldorado—the History, Everyday Life, and Culture of Homosexual Women and Men, 1850–1950, a groundbreaking special exhibition that ran over the summer of 1984. The desire to create a permanent legacy led to the founding of the Schwules Museum*, with its first special exhibition taking place during 1986. In 1988 the museum moved locations. The growth of its collections, archive, and library meant that it outgrew its site; during 2013 the museum moved into its current home in Berlin’s Tiergarten district. The strength of the museum’s holdings means that, in addition to staging regular special exhibitions itself, it has received international loan requests from institutions such as the Imperial War Museum in London and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. During 2015 the Schwules Museum* and the Deutsches Historisches Museum (German Historical Museum, also in Berlin) collaborated on the major exhibition Homosexuality_ies, which took place at both institutions simultaneously (Bosold 2015). Neither the Deutsches Historisches Museum nor the Schwules Museum* could have curated and delivered the Homosexuality_ies exhibition so successfully, reaching such a large audience, without the other’s collections, knowledge, networks, and expertise. This collaboration exemplifies the vital role that specialist LGBTQ museums, libraries, and archives have in collecting, preserving, and researching LGBTQ histories and sharing them with larger audiences as well as their own more local communities.
During 2013 the National Gay and Lesbian Sports Hall of Fame in Chicago was established to honor LGBTQ personalities and bodies “whose achievements and efforts have enhanced sports and athletics for the gay and lesbian community,” as noted on the organization’s website. It was established shortly after Jason Collins (1978–) became the first openly gay National Basketball Association (NBA) player. The Hall of Fame aims to preserve the history of LGBT individuals who have influenced professional and amateur sports and to provide support, so that young LGBT people in the United States feel welcome and safe in participating in sports and related activities.
The origins of this museum can be traced to Eldorado—the History, Everyday Life, and Culture of Homosexual Women and Men, 1850–1950, a groundbreaking special exhibition that ran over the summer of 1984. The desire to create a permanent legacy led to the founding of the Schwules Museum*, with its first special exhibition taking place during 1986.

It seems likely that the number of LGBTQ museums will increase in the years ahead. As of 2018, the Queer Britain organization was working to establish the United Kingdom’s first national LGBTQ museum. Alternative models to collecting, preserving, and interpreting LGBTQ histories are also likely to continue to emerge. The Sweden-based, online-only Unstraight Museum was founded in 2011 as “a non-profit organization working to draw attention to LGBTQI-related questions within the museum and exhibition context. The purpose is to make non-normative and unstraight stories and history visible through cultural projects” (Unstraight Museum 2015). The US-based Pop-Up Museum of Queer History also offers a different approach to established LGBTQ museums by transforming various spaces into temporary installations related to LGBTQ histories. This approach reflects a desire or need for spaces that are free of traditional institutional culture and pressures, creating greater freedom to develop community-created displays that arguably better serve the needs of LGBTQ audiences. The Museo Travesti del Perú (Transvestite Museum of Peru), created by trans artist Giuseppe Campuzano (1969–2013), also broke the mold of traditional museums as an itinerant, ephemeral countermuseum that provided a comprehensive history of cross-dressing, queerness, and gender-bending in Peru via a mash-up of genres.
Mainstream Museums

The British Museum in London has an exceptionally long history and therefore offers a particularly useful case study for exploring the changing ways major Western museums have engaged with LGBTQ histories. The British Museum was founded in 1753, and for most of its history homosexuality was illegal, so it is not surprising that it is only from around 1999 that it (and many other institutions) has begun to proactively collect, research, and exhibit LGBTQ histories. Like some other museums and libraries, it had a restricted collection, the Museum Secretum (Secret Museum), which operated at the British Museum from at least 1830 until the 1950s. The Museum Secretum contained sexually explicit material from around the world—mostly phallic in nature—and other items that challenged the sensibility of the era. Although the Museum Secretum ceased to actively operate in the 1950s—and the objects within were gradually dispersed to the relevant curatorial departments—little changed in terms of public displays. Sex and sexuality were still generally omitted, and the past was presented in a way that reinforced heteronormativity. The decriminalization of homosexuality in 1967 appears to have had little short- or medium-term impact. Meaningful discussion of sex, sexuality, and gender diversity was lacking for most of the second half of the twentieth century.

Arguably, the first significant high-profile public shift was the museum's acquisition in 1999 of a Roman silver cup that has been on permanent display ever since. The vessel, known as the Warren Cup, is decorated with two explicit scenes of male-male lovemaking, and its acquisition was an important moment and a catalyst for change. In 2006 the cup was the focus of a small exhibition that led to the museum being approached by an external organization to write an LGBTQ tour of its collection. The request came to Professor Richard B. Parkinson, who wrote an online article that highlighted objects on display that visitors to the British Museum could see. He subsequently expanded his research and in 2013 published *A Little Gay History—Desire and Diversity around the World*. The book highlighted forty objects from the museum's collection drawn from across the globe and dating from around 10,000 BCE to the twenty-first century. In essence, the central theme of Parkinson's book was that same-sex love and desire—and gender diversity—are integral to human experience, but that the way they have been expressed varies widely culturally.

The fiftieth anniversary of the partial decriminalization of homosexuality in England and Wales happened during July 2017 and was marked by many UK museums, galleries, and heritage sites. More LGBTQ-themed projects probably took place during 2017 than in any preceding year. Some of the higher profile ones were *Queer British Art, 1861–1967* (Tate Britain, London), *Gay UK: Love, Law, and Liberty* (British Library, London), *Speak Its Name!* (National Portrait Gallery, London), *Coming Out: Sexuality, Gender, and Identity* (Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool), *Never Going Underground—The Fight for LGBT+ Rights* (Peoples' History Museum, Manchester), *Prejudice and Pride* (National Trust), and *Desire, Love,
Identity: Exploring LGBTQ Histories (British Museum). Due to restrictions of space it is not possible to discuss all of these initiatives here, although some are subsequently explored in more depth.

Queer British Art, 1861–1967 (5 April–1 October 2017) at Tate Britain in London was the first major special, admission-charging exhibition dedicated to queer British art. The chronological scope of the show was set by the abolition of the death penalty in 1861 and the partial decriminalization of male homosexuality in England and Wales in 1967. The show explored how artists expressed themselves during an era when homosexuality was illegal, when modern LGBTQ terminology was largely unrecognized, but also established assumptions about how gender and sexuality were being interrogated and evolving. It featured paintings, drawings, and other items from such artists as Simeon Solomon (1840–1905), Dora Carrington (1893–1932), Gluck (1895–1978), Duncan Grant (1885–1978), and David Hockney (1937–). It was accompanied by a paper-based trail that highlighted a small number of works with LGBTQ connections in the Tate Britain’s free-admission permanent displays.

The British Museum’s primary focus for the anniversary was two free displays: David Hockney: Fourteen Poems from CP Cavafy (17 March–24 May 2017) and Desire, Love, Identity: Exploring LGBTQ Histories (11 May–15 October 2017). The former display showcased a series of etchings by Hockney, published in 1967, that were inspired by C. P. Cavafy’s (1863–1933) poems about love and desire between men. The etchings were published around the time of the passing of the UK Sexual Offences Act, which partially decriminalized homosexuality; Hockney was living as an openly gay artist throughout the 1960s, but it would probably have been impossible to publish the etchings before 1967. Desire, Love, Identity: Exploring LGBTQ Histories was inspired by Parkinson’s A Little Gay History. It consisted of a small display highlighting objects not previously exhibited and an integrated trail that highlighted fourteen key pieces on permanent display throughout the museum’s free admission galleries. It was distinct from other 2017 anniversary displays in taking a wide view and exploring LGBTQ histories around the world from ancient history to the present day, rather than focusing entirely on the modern and contemporary period. (It did include recent work by Indian artist Bhupen Khakhar [1934–2003], Japanese artist Ōtsuka Takashi [1948–], and Australian artist and activist David McDiarmid [1952–1995].)

Representation of LGBTQ perspectives in museums and galleries is uneven, and not all perspectives are present equally. White male viewpoints tend to dominate. The Museum of London Docklands exhibition Outside Edge (7 February–4 April 2008) provides one notable exception. This small exhibition examined the history of black LGBTQ communities in London from the 1970s to the present. The display was cocurated with a member of rukus! Federation, a community-based group that actively records and collects the experiences of black LGBT communities. The rukus! Black Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Cultural Archive is kept at the London Metropolitan Archives, which launched a catalog of this
resource in 2015. More recently, the work of South African Zanele Muholi (1972–), a visual activist who represents the lives of black LGBTQ people and communities, has been exhibited internationally, including at a solo show at the Brooklyn Museum in New York. Her work has also been shown at the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Wellcome Collection (both London). In 2015 Muholi’s *Faces and Phases 2006–2014* was nominated for the prestigious Deutsche Börse Photography Prize and exhibited at London’s Photography Gallery.

LGBTQ-themed exhibitions in North America and Europe have tended to be “Western” in focus, with some exceptions. From around 2013 onward, there have been a number of major international exhibitions of *shunga*, sexually explicit works on paper produced in vast quantities in Japan between 1600 and 1900. Some of these shows, such as the British Museum’s *Shunga: Sex and Pleasure in Japanese Art* (3 October 2013–5 January 2014), included works depicting male-male relationships, reflecting the prevalence of these images in Japan at the time. The Royal Ontario Museum’s exhibition, *A Third Gender: Beautiful Youths in Japanese Prints* (7 May 2016–27 November 2016), focused exclusively on male youths desired by both men and women, although in this instance sexually explicit prints were confined to the catalog. *Secret Love* was a contemporary art exhibition about LGBTQ identities in China shown at the National Museums of World Culture in Sweden (21 September 2012–31 March 2013). It has subsequently toured other venues, including the Tropenmuseum in the Netherlands (2 May 2015–8 May 2016). The exhibition featured around forty-five works by ten contemporary Chinese artists, all related to the theme of LGBTQ identities in China today. A recent exhibition of the work of the Indian artist Bhupen Khakhar at Tate Modern—*Bhupen Khakhar: You Can’t Please All* (1 June–6 November 2016)—was the first international retrospective of his work since his death in 2003. The show acknowledged, discussed, and explored Khakhar’s identity as a gay man.

Trans histories and experiences remain particularly underrepresented, although there have recently been some high-profile exceptions. *April Ashley: Portrait of a Lady* (27 September 2013–1 March 2015) at the Museum of Liverpool focused on the life of a former *Vogue* model and actress who was one of the first people in the world to undergo gender-reassignment surgery. The exhibition drew on material from Ashley’s own archive and explored the wider impact of changing social and legal conditions for all LGBTQ people from 1935 to the twenty-first century. Members of local trans and gender-diverse communities also shared their own experiences. The project was a collaboration between the Museum of Liverpool and Homotopia, an international festival of queer arts and culture.

The United Kingdom’s *Museum of Transology* is also a high-profile exhibition with a trans focus and another example of a project driven by an individual rather than a publicly funded institution. The *Museum of Transology*, curated by E-J Scott, comprises over 120 objects, each donated by an individual with a label handwritten by the donor explaining its personal significance to the donor. The exhibit seeks to redress the absence of trans
histories from museums. The *Museum of Transology* was first exhibited at the London College of Fashion (20 January–22 April 2017), and then at the Brighton Museum and Art Gallery (starting 20 July 2017). It is now the largest collection representing trans people in the United Kingdom, but as of 2018 it was still seeking a permanent home in a museum.

The exhibitions listed in the preceding paragraphs are primarily British, but many examples could be cited from elsewhere in Europe, Australia, and North America. The Harvard Art Museums’ exhibition *ACT UP New York: Activism, Art, and the AIDS Crisis, 1987–1993* (15 October–23 December 2009) at the Carpenter Center for the Visual Arts is particularly noteworthy in terms of addressing more recent events and histories. The exhibit focused on the New York chapter of the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) through works produced by the group’s various artist collectives. It featured the ACT UP Oral History Project—over 100 video interviews with surviving members of ACT UP–New York that offer unique insights into a profoundly important period in US history.

Beyond North America, Europe, and Australia, there have been some significant recent contemporary LGBTQ-themed art exhibitions in Asia. *Fault-Lines: Disparate and Desperate Intimacies* (13 February 2016–13 April 2016) at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in Singapore was curated by Wong Binghao and featured work by six artists from Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, the United States, and Australia that addressed LGBTQ experience. During the exhibition, visitors were invited to participate in a series of informal conversations with invited activists, poets, and others (events called “Pillow Talk”) designed to explore and expand the exhibition’s themes. However, the exhibit did not pass without incident, because the institute removed two sex toys from Loo Zihan’s eighty-one-piece installation *Queer Objects: An Archive for the Future* out of concern that they violated laws against the display of obscene objects. The artist replaced these objects with black vinyl stickers outlining their shapes (Lee 2016). *Spectrosynthesis—Asian LGBTQ Issues and Art Now* (9 September 2017–5 November 2017) at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Taipei was a larger survey. The groundbreaking show featured fifty-one artworks by twenty-two artists from Taiwan, China, Hong Kong, and Singapore, and was also intended to provide a focus for discussion and debate about diversity and human rights in Asia.

LGBTQ exhibitions and displays, particularly those that feature modern and contemporary art, have generated significant media controversy occasionally, and sometimes still do. The *Queermuseu: Cartografias da Diferença na Arte Brasileira* (Queer museum: cartographies of difference in Brazilian art) exhibition at Santander Cultural in Porto Alegre, Brazil, closed a month ahead of schedule on 10 September 2017. The exhibition, which featured over 200 art works by Brazilian artists, drew protests from Christian groups who accused the show of promoting blasphemy, among other charges. Protestors from the Movimento Brasil Livre (Free Brazil Movement), a libertarian movement, picketed the show and accused some works of endorsing child prostitution and pedophilia. Santander, which had approved all of the works, closed the exhibition early and apologized to anyone “who felt offended by any
work that was part of the exhibition” (Phillips 2017). Tens of thousands of supporters of the exhibition signed a petition unsuccessfully demanding that the show reopen.

**Historic Houses and Heritage**

There are countless independent historic houses and heritage sites of great significance to LGBTQ people and communities. A few notable examples include the Cavafy Museum in Alexandria, Egypt, home to the poet C. P. Cavafy; Firefly, the Jamaican home of the gay British playwright Noel Coward (1899–1973), where he was buried; Langston Hughes’s (1902–1967) house in Harlem, New York City; the Lunuganga Estate in Sri Lanka of gay architect Geoffrey Bawa (1919–2003); Plas Newydd in Llangollen, North Wales, home to Lady Eleanor Butler (1739–1829) and Sarah Ponsonby (1755–1831), known popularly as the Ladies of Llangollen; and Shibden Hall in Halifax, England, home to Anne Lister (1791–1840), whose code-written diaries document her lesbian relationships.

As with museums and galleries, historic houses and heritage sites have for the most part largely omitted LGBTQ histories until comparatively recently. Leighton House Museum in London, home of the artist Frederick Lord Leighton (1830–1896), is a case in point. The museum was criticized in the late 1990s for its failure to discuss Leighton’s sexuality. Thanks to a redisplay of the house in 2010, the interpretation now acknowledges, albeit in only a few words, that Leighton may have been homosexual. The Walt Whitman Birthplace, in Huntington, Long Island, New York, has attracted similar criticism. Whitman (1819–1892) is regarded as one of America’s greatest poets. On 31 May 1997 the opening ceremony of a new interpretive center at the birthplace was upstaged by protestors angered by the lack of a clear and direct acknowledgment of Whitman’s homosexuality (Sandell 2017).

The National Trust, founded in 1895, preserves heritage, historic houses, and open spaces in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland for the public. Throughout 2017—to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the passing of the Sexual Offences Act—the trust ran a program titled *Prejudice and Pride*, exploring LGBTQ histories at a small number of selected properties from the vast total of buildings in its care (Cook and Oram 2017). During March 2017 the trust—working in collaboration with the National Archives—imaginatively temporarily re-created the Caravan, a queer-friendly London club of 1934, and used it as a venue for events programming (Hillel and Houlbrook 2017). The re-creation took place at Freud Café-Bar, close to the Caravan’s original location. Photographs, legal reports, papers, and witness statements resulting from police raids on the Caravan, all held in the National Archives’ records, were used to re-create the club’s interior and to generate information that was pasted to the building’s windows for passers-by. National Trust volunteers led daytime tours of London’s Soho area focused on LGBTQ heritage and club culture, ending with a visit to the Caravan. On select evenings, visitors could become club “members” and enjoy a cocktail menu with drinks of the era served by the Freud Café-Bar’s bartenders.
Most of the *Prejudice and Pride* program focused on the reinterpretation of a small number of existing historic properties in the National Trust’s care in more rural locations around the country. At Felbrigg Hall, Norwich, for example, the focus was on its last owner, Robert Wyndham Ketton-Cremer. The trust argued that previous biographies of Ketton-Cremer failed to acknowledge his homosexuality; they used new research about his life to create a short film, *The Unfinished Portrait*, to address this omission. The trust also produced an LGBTQ guidebook and a series of six podcasts.

*Prejudice and Pride* was well received, but it did generate some national media controversy during 2017. With regard to Felbrigg Hall, the press reported that Ketton-Cremer’s godsons felt it was inappropriate for the trust to publicly highlight his sexuality because this was something that he had chosen to keep private. Additionally, some volunteers refused to wear the *Prejudice and Pride* badges and lanyards designed for them to wear in support of the program because they also felt the trust’s “outing” of Ketton-Cremer was inappropriate, or for other personal reasons ([Grierson 2017](#)). The project was rigorously evaluated as a whole by the academic partner, Leicester University.

English Heritage is a charity that cares for over 400 historic buildings, monuments, and sites, from prehistoric sites to twentieth-century Cold War constructions. Its sites are visited by over 10 million people each year. On 1 April 2015 English Heritage separated into two parts: a charity, English Heritage, that looks after the sites, buildings, and collections, and Historic England, a publicly funded body that champions the nation’s wider heritage, running the listing system, dealing with planning matters, and giving grants. Both English Heritage and Historic England have begun to address LGBTQ histories proactively.

Historic England is a “public body that helps people care for, enjoy, and celebrate England’s spectacular historic environment,” according to its website. In 2015 it ran *Pride of Place: England’s LGBTQ Heritage*, an initiative led by a team of historians and scholars at Leeds Beckett University’s Centre for Culture and the Arts ([Historic England 2018](#)). The project aimed to identify the locations and landscapes associated with England’s LGBTQ heritage by engaging community members and academics, and it resulted in a series of publications and other resources available online. A particularly important aspect of the project is to identify key LGBTQ heritage sites for consideration for inclusion on the National Heritage List for England, and to nominate buildings or landscapes for consideration for local heritage listing on the basis of their significance to LGBTQ histories.

English Heritage runs a scheme in London where blue ceramic plaques are fixed to the exteriors of London buildings, with brief details about a previous famous occupant. The scheme was started in 1866 and is thought to be the oldest of its kind in the world. There are over 900 plaques across the city, at least twenty of which have an LGBTQ focus, referencing, for example, Oscar Wilde, the Bloomsbury Group, Radclyffe Hall, E. M. Forster, Siegfried Sassoon, Virginia Woolf and Vita Sackville-West, Alan Turing, Sir John Gielgud,
and Kenneth Williams. Throughout 2017 and 2018, English Heritage promoted these plaques on their website along with other LGBTQ resources.

**Memorials**

The Homomonument memorial in Amsterdam commemorates all gay men and lesbians subjected to persecution because of their sexuality. It is regarded as the first monument in the world to commemorate gays and lesbians who were killed by the Nazi regime. The memorial consists of three large pink triangles made of granite, set into the ground to form a larger triangle. It opened on 5 September 1987 with the intention to “inspire and support lesbians and gays in their struggle against denial, oppression, and discrimination,” according to its website.

The origins of the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt can be traced back to 1985, and to a meeting held in San Francisco during June 1987 to create a memorial for those who had died of AIDS and to help foster greater public understanding. Public response to the quilt was remarkable, with panels from US cities affected by AIDS sent to San Francisco. As of 2018, the quilt consisted of more than 48,000 individual 3-by-6-foot memorial panels. Most of these commemorate the life of someone who has died of AIDS and have been created by friends, lovers, and family members. The quilt has been displayed in its entirety in Washington, DC, on five occasions (in 1987, 1988, 1989, 1992, and 1996). The AIDS Memorial Quilt Archive Project ensures that all of the quilt’s panels are professionally photographed, creating a permanent visual record that is available online. The idea of the AIDS Memorial Quilt has spread internationally. Quilt blocks have been displayed or collected by museums around the world. The Amsterdam Museum, for example, has two quilt blocks related to the Dutch AIDS Memorial Quilt.

Stonewall National Monument was designated on 24 June 2016 by US president Barack Obama. Located in the West Village neighborhood of Greenwich Village in Lower Manhattan, New York, it is the first US national monument dedicated to LGBTQ rights and histories. The designated area includes Christopher Park, which is opposite the Stonewall Inn, the site of the Stonewall riots of 28 June 1969 that inspired the global LGBT rights movement. In October 2017 a rainbow flag was raised on the monument, making it the first such flag to be officially maintained at a federal monument. The US National Park Service (NPS) recognizes the site of the Stonewall uprisings as a national historic landmark. There are currently nine other LGBTQ sites designated as a National Historic Landmark or listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The NPS is a body that has addressed LGBTQ histories more proactively, for example, publishing *LGBTQ America: A Theme Study of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer History* in October 2016.

SEE ALSO ACT UP; AIDS Memorial Quilt—The NAMES Project; Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara; Archives in Africa; Archives in Latin America; The Art of Identity in India; Graffiti
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Muxes

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An indigenous “third gender” in a Mexican Zapotec community.

In Juchitán, a Zapotec community on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, there is a popular myth used to explain the prevalence of indigenous men who are defined as a hybrid third gender, muxe. According to one variation of the myth,

God entrusted San Vicente [the patron saint of Juchitán] with three sacks: one with women, one with men, and one with a third mixed gender. San Vicente was supposed to distribute all three around the world. But when he got to Juchitán, the sack containing the third gender ripped open, and Juchitán received many more than its allotment as third-gender people got out.

(QUOTED IN MIRANDÉ 2017, 3)

Known as los muxes or mushes (pronounced “moo-shey”), they reside in one of the most purely indigenous communities in Mexico (Keller 2007). Many muxes of Juchitán—individuals who were born as cis men—dress in colorful traditional female Zapotec attire, assume feminine roles, and play an important part in the traditional velas, or community festivals. Described as a hybrid gender analogous to the institutionalized third gender found among some Native American groups (Lang 1998; Whitehead 1981; Williams 1986), muxes lack the traditional spiritual significance associated with the Two-Spirit persons, although they may have had such significance in the past (Chiñas 1992).

Acceptance of muxes is so widespread that some have described Juchitán as a “queer paradise” (Henríquez 2003), which challenges the dominant depiction of Mexican society as male dominant, homophobic, patriarchal, and driven by the cult of machismo. Although discrimination still exists (Campbell 1994, 230), ambiguously gendered persons appear to be not only tolerated but accepted and, in some instances, thoroughly respected and admired.
While a history of Juchitán is beyond the scope of this entry, it should be noted that gender equality and acceptance of the muxes are consistent with the history of resistance in the Isthmus in general, and Juchitán in particular, to both colonial rule and national control (Mirandé 2017; Campbell 1994, xv–xvi). The phenomenon of the muxe is thus a vestige of pre-colonial indigenous practices and identities that is nonetheless simultaneously hybrid in its constitution and cultural construction.

Most of what we know about the muxes is derived either from historical works focusing on the post-Conquest colonial rule (Campbell et al. 1993; Campbell 1994) or from contemporary ethnographic accounts. The extant literature on the muxes has been largely compiled by outsiders. American anthropologist Beverly Newbold Chiñas (1992), for example, studied the Isthmus Zapotecs and devoted a scant four pages near the end of her slim book to the muxes. A team of German anthropologists headed by Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen (1997) focused mostly on women in Zapotec society, but the penultimate chapter of their book presents an excellent overview of the muxes. Italian anthropologist Marinella Miano Borruso also carried out field research on Isthmus Zapotec society. Her excellent book Hombre, mujer y muxe’ en el Istmo de Tehuantepec (2002; Man, woman, and muxe on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec) focuses on the life history of a Zapotec woman from birth to death. An insider account is provided in a short photo journal of the well-known muxe organization Las Intrépidas, Las otras hijas de San Vicente (The other daughters of San Vicente), published in Oaxaca by Elí Valentín Bartolo Marcial in 2010. One of the most extensive studies of the muxes to date is sociologist Alfredo Mirandé’s 2017 ethnography Behind the Mask: Gender Hybridity in a Zapotec Community.

**Historical Context: Gender and Sexuality in Pre-Columbian Society**

Unfortunately, our understanding of sexuality in pre-Columbian society is based on archival research on precolonial Nahua, Maya, and Huastec sexuality rather than on sexuality among Isthmus Zapotecs. As noted by Victoria Burnett, “a mixed-gender way of life was accepted in several pre-Columbian communities across Mexico, according to anthropologists and colonial accounts” (2016), but the origins of the muxe tradition are unclear.

Contemporary scholars also disagree as to how sexuality was viewed among the Nahua, or people who spoke the Nahuatl language (Sigal 2011), both before and after the conquest of Mexico, which began with the Spanish domination of Mexico-Tenochtitlán (1519–1521) and continued throughout the many centuries of colonial and nationalist rule. Alfredo López Austin (1988) contends that the preconquest Nahua (of Central Mexico) had an extremely negative view of “homosexuality” and that the death penalty was imposed on both male and female homosexuals, whether active or passive, and on persons who wore
clothing of the opposite sex. It was also believed that homosexual relations harmed the participants. One of the ways the cause of “the disease” was tested, for example, was to throw kernels of corn on a blanket that was spread on the ground; based on the position in which the kernels fell, one could determine the nature and prognosis of the disease. “When a kernel fell onto and was held by another one, it was proof that the sick person owed his condition to homosexual practices” (López Austin 1988, 1:306).

Such assertions are, however, problematic since so much of what we know about the precolonial native peoples comes to us from postconquest, hybrid, colonial texts (written in indigenous languages but with the Roman alphabet). An additional concern is that discrete modern categories such as “heterosexual” and “homosexual” did not exist in preconquest or early colonial Nahua society (Sigal 2011). According to French social theorist Michel Foucault and other social constructionists (Sigal 2011), these categories did not exist prior to the modern period in Europe, which occurred between the late eighteenth and late nineteenth centuries. Because modern conceptions of homosexual identity did not yet exist, Nahuas instead believed that individuals tended to have certain types of sexual characteristics.

Although there is very little information on sexuality among the early Isthmus Zapotecs, homoerotic behavior among men appears to have been widespread throughout the “New World.” Sodomy was widely condemned by the Catholic Spanish conquistadores, and virtually all chroniclers of the time commented on its existence (Bennholdt-Thomsen 1997). Pete Sigal notes that, “at the time of the conquest, same-sex eroticism existed in many, perhaps all, of the indigenous societies of Latin America” (2003, 1), although it remains unclear to what extent sodomy functioned as a trope of alterity for the Europeans and affected their descriptions. In Yucatan, for example, ritualized transvestitism existed among one of the last Mayan societies to be conquered (Sigal 2003). A letter from a priest in seventeenth-century Yucatán reported that “next to one of their principal temples they had a walled-around large house of very decorous construction … into which entered all of those who wished to have their sodomitic copulations, especially those who are very young, so that they could learn there, these ministers of the Demon wearing women’s skirts” (Sigal 2003, 10). The Spaniards thus demonized what may have been sacred rites for indigenous peoples, imposing their own categories of “sodomy” and “sin” onto native peoples.

Bennholdt-Thomsen (1997) maintains that male homosexuality was socially visible in most, if not all, the communities in the Americas when the Europeans arrived in the fifteenth century. In fact, there is virtually no chronicler of the conquest who does not mention the practice of sodomy among the native population. However, “sexuality among men, which generally entailed anal sex (‘sodomy’) was the abominable sin for the Spaniards” (Bennholdt-Thomsen 1997, 295).
Muxe: Gay or Transgender?

Isthmus Zapotec society today recognizes three elements that make up the gender order: los hombres (men), las mujeres (women), and los muxe (muxes) (Miano and Gómez Suárez 2009; Miano Borruso 2002). While the terms gay, transgender, and muxe are often conflated, they are not synonymous. Transgender (or travesti) is generally not used, and muxes tend to distinguish themselves from the gays and travestis of Mexican LGBT culture. Gay men are even more emphatic in distinguishing themselves from muxes, even though both are attracted to men. As one gay man from Juchitán stated, “For me a muxe is a man who identifies as a woman and likes to dress like a woman. I am not muxe. I am gay because I have never wanted to dress like a woman or to be one. And they do women’s work. I know that I am a man” (Mirandé 2017, 88–89).

Complicating such simple formulations, however, is the fact that not all muxes dress in female attire. Those who do are vestidas (dressed up), whereas those who wear male attire but use makeup or jewelry are pintadas (made up). There is a further distinction between vestidas tradicionales (who wear traditional Zapotec dress) and vestidas modernas (who dress in “modern” feminine attire) (Mirandé 2017). Finally, some muxes dress in traditional male Zapotec attire but often wear brightly colored guayaberas (traditional tropical shirts) and gold jewelry to highlight their own conceptions of gender. However, defining oneself as muxe is a question of identity that extends beyond external things like dress or appearance. A number of Las Intrépidas noted that many of the members want to protect Zapotec traditions, dress, and language (Mirandé 2017). Biiniza, one of the Intrépida leaders, was perhaps most eloquent when she noted that, “being muxe is not something you put on and take off like a dress. It’s a way of being that includes not only dressing like a traditional Teca [Juchiteca] but also maintaining, incorporating, and respecting Zapotec language, customs, and traditions” (Mirandé 2017, 185).

Although muxes generally assume the pasivo (passive or penetrated) role in sex, they are not simply gay men conforming to the Mexican active/passive sexual binary. A major distinction is that gay men have sex with one another, whereas the sexual partners of muxes are generally hombres, or “ordinary” (i.e., straight) men. The common name for men who have sex with muxes is mayate, especially those who get paid by muxes for their sexual services.

Gay men are generally more “inter” (internacional) in that they alternately assume the passive and active sexual positions, come from a higher socioeconomic stratum, are more masculine, are less visible publicly, and tend to remain in the closet. In contrast, muxes tend to be out, visible, and committed to “maintaining, Zapotec culture, traditions, and language” (Mirandé 2017, 184). Many muxes also avoid mainstream occupations because these jobs require gendered clothing, and muxes generally seek to dress in traditional Zapotec attire. While muxes are found in all economic strata, most come from workingclass backgrounds.
and from the poorer and more indigenous sections of the city, like the seventh district of Juchitán (Mirandé 2017, 11).

Muxes also tend to come from families with muxe relatives. For example, Coni, a thirty-nine-year-old Intrépida who had a maternal great-grandfather and uncles who were muxe, noted, "In my family we are accepted because there is a long tradition of muxes entre mis antepasados" (among my ancestors) (Mirandé 2017, 119). It has been estimated that 60 percent of the families in Juchitán have one or more muxe family members (Mirandé 2017, 119). Having a muxe son in Isthmus Zapotec society was traditionally seen as a “blessing from God,” because they could provide extra help for Zapotec women. Muxes are also the children who typically support the family in adulthood, take care of elderly parents, and, in some cases, become heads of households. Like women, they have a well-deserved reputation for being hard workers, skilled artisans, and successful merchants (Bennholdt-Thomsen 1997; Mirandé 2017). Familial acceptance is not universal, however, as a number of muxes report having negative and traumatic childhood experiences, not being readily accepted by their parents, and having faced prejudice in their everyday lives. Some fathers, in particular, have been reported to be especially punitive and resistant to having a muxe son (Mirandé 2017, 105, 109).

The Importance of the Vela in Zapotec Culture

Festivals known as velas are an important tradition in Zapotec culture. The Intrépida Vela and other muxe velas are relatively recent additions to a year-round tradition of velas in Juchitán and Isthmus Zapotec society. Velas are organized by hermandades (brotherhoods) or societies dedicated to a saint, a location or sección (neighborhood), an occupation, or a family (Holzer 1997, 81). These associations, or societies, are sanctioned by the Catholic Church and work for an entire year to organize a four-day event, which includes a mass; regada de frutas (tossing of fruit); the vela, or all-night dance; and the lavada de ollas (washing the pots), an afternoon event held the day after the vela.

Muxes often assume an important economic role in the family and in the community at large. They are actively involved in the festival system as artisans who create the colorful regional feminine dresses worn at fiestas and who make decorations for the velas and floats for parades. The economic boost the velas provide are part of what has been described as a “prestige economy,” in which the highest esteem is accorded not to “the one who owns most, but the one who gives most” in the community. More specifically, “one earns one’s merits in the community through the festivals” (Bennholdt-Thomsen 2005). To sponsor a vela is the dream of every juchiteca (or woman from Juchitán), since they fall within the sphere of women. It is through sponsorship that they gain prestige, not only for themselves but also for their families (Mirandé 2017, 11).

The major vela season starts in April and culminates with the Velas Grandes in the last two
weeks of May, concluding with the two for San Vicente. Each vela offers a mass in honor of its patron saint. The Intrépida Vela is held in the third week of November. The creation of the Intrépida-sponsored vela and other muxe velas are, therefore, an extension of a much larger tradition. Muxes also participate in, and support other velas, and also serve in various capacities, sometimes assuming the *mayordomo* role.

**Las Auténticas Intrépidas Buscadoras del Peligro**

Las Auténticas Intrépidas Buscadoras del Peligro (The Authentic Intrepid Seekers of Danger) is the oldest and best-known muxe organization ([Bartolo Marcial 2010, 16](#)). Popularly known as Las Intrépidas, the group, originally known as Las Panteras Negras (Black Panthers), was formed around 1975 in Comitancillo, a small town where they were welcomed. The founders consisted of Néstor Santiago, Óscar Cazorla, and several muxes who met at a local bar. Cazorla opened Salón Cazorla in Juchitán, where the first Intrépida dance was held and which evolved into a major vela for the entire community.

**PHOTO COURTESY OF ALFREDO MIRANDE.**

*Muxes Preparing for the Regada de Frutas during the Intrépida Vela in Juchitán, Mexico, November 2014.* The Intrépida vela is a three-day festival important to Zapotec culture. The vela is hosted by the oldest muxe organization in Juchitán and includes the Regada de Frutas (Tossing of the Fruit) on the first day.
The longevity of the group is testimony to its public acceptance and its integration into the community by political and civic leaders and by the Catholic Church. Las Intrépidas come from all walks of life and include accountants, lawyers, teachers, social workers, and merchants. As of 2017, about ninety muxes were loosely associated with the organization, but the group has only about thirty-six socias (associates), defined as those who have the funds and resources to sponsor a puesto (place or designated area for muxes and their guests) at the annual vela (Mirandé 2017). Felina, one of the key Intrépida leaders, owner of a successful hair salon, and former director of sexual diversity for the Municipio of Juchitán, pointed out that Las Intrépidas have a good relationship with the Catholic Church and other political entities. She believes that “Las Intrépidas have to demonstrate to the community that they are responsible citizens and involved in civic affairs” (Mirandé 2017, 128).

Being selected as queen of the Intrépida Vela is a great honor and brings prestige to the person selected. Mayté, a socia and former Intrépida queen, explained that in order to be a member, you must finance your own puesto, which could require several thousand dollars for a dress, a band, and dancers (Mirandé 2017, 39).

A local teacher familiar with the organization noted that Las Intrépidas were more in demand and made more money than other muxes because they have a higher status and people take their business to them for weddings and quinceañeras (the important celebration of a girl’s fifteenth birthday) (Mirandé 2017). For quinceañeras, for example, Las Intrépidas do the girl’s hair and makeup and even coordinate dancing for the event (Mirandé 2017). One of the major missions of Las Intrépidas is to raise HIV/AIDS and safe-sex awareness in the community. To this end, they work closely with local youth and with the schools on relevant and pressing contemporary issues, such as sex education, domestic violence, and HIV/AIDS awareness (Bartolo Marcial 2010; Miano Borruso 2002; Mirandé 2017).

The Intrépida Vela has become an annual tourist attraction, with the crowning of a queen being the apex of the festival. It has a political base and has historically been supported by the ruling political party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, or Institutional Revolutionary Party), and the municipal government. Class differences are evident, as the mayordomo (grand marshal) is typically a person from the higher economic classes. That said, several muxes over the years have been mayordomos at other velas, which attests to their upward mobility and to their complex role in Juchitán.

Las Intrépidas have gained national and international attention as thousands of persons from various countries attend their vela. Numerous documentaries have been made about the muxes, including one by Alejandra Islas (2005) and another by Patricio Henríquez (2003). Their success has, perhaps paradoxically, resulted in the commodification and exploitation of the muxe experience by local leaders, cultural brokers among their ranks,
and corporate sponsorship of the vela by a major beer company (Mirandé 2017; Bartolo Marcial 2010).

Muxes are highly respected in Zapotec society. A muxe community does not exist because muxes are integrated into the entire community, including the ceremonial vela system. In short, the muxes transcend the gender binary as persons born with male bodies who identify as neither male nor female but as a hybrid third gender. To the people in southern Oaxaca, “the existence of a third gender is as much a part of life as the ancient Zapotec language they speak and the huge, spiny iguanas that laze in the trees” (Burnett 2016, 1).

SEE ALSO Conquest and Sodomy in Latin America; Florentine Codex and Nahua Sexuality; Sins against Nature in Colonial Latin America; Transfeminism; Travesti and Trans Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean; Two-Spirit

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Namibia

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A historical and contemporary look at LGBTQ issues in this southern African nation.

Namibia, formerly South-West Africa, was a German settler colony (1884–1915) and afterward a South African settler colony (until 1990). Its 2.5 million inhabitants— which include an overwhelming African majority and small populations of European, coloured (of mixed European and African descent), and, more recently, Chinese background—display diverse ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, as well as flourishing Christian denominations. Since the country's independence on 21 March 1990, its population has enjoyed constitutionally enshrined democratic and universal human rights formerly denied to them. Its civil society, including tiny LGBTQ organizations, grew out of anticolonial liberation movements and actively guards these rights. Legacies of colonialism, such as racism and heterosexual paternalism, extreme class relations, and widespread poverty, continue to haunt postindependence society. Its rich LGBTQ history has been and continues to be shaped by these factors and developments.

Precolonial Homo- and Bisexualities

Namibia’s precolonial African societies maintained diverse homoerotic, homosexual, and bisexual practices and relationships, attesting to their flexible approaches toward gender relations and sexuality. A critical reading of the limited, ethnically framed observations by colonial male researchers reveals African homo- and bisexualities across gender, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds and points to sanctioned or tolerated and established practices and relations. Homoerotic relations among men, for example, have been encapsulated in oupanga (singular epanga; literally meaning “friendship”) relations among Otjiherero-speaking herders of northwestern and central Namibia, these having been age-based relations between young Herero men that could entail homosexual practices. These relations could continue after epanga partners entered into heterosexual marriages and in situations when men had to move with their livestock away from family settlements and were temporarily living among themselves. As with most other Namibian societies then (and often today), such relations were sanctioned but not spoken about “especially when members of the other sex are present” (Falk 1925–1926, 207). Khoekhoegowab-speaking societies (Damara and Nama), who were also predominantly herders, managed similar
relations, and they all display histories of individual men having remained unmarried and at times living with a male companion. Such exclusive same-sex relations seem to have been rare among women, although oupanga relations between Herero women and similar extramarital female same-sex relations among Damara and Nama women were tolerated within the limits of social and cultural norms. As all these societies were shaped by polygyny (a form of polygamy involving a man marrying more than one woman), women, in contrast to men, nearly always entered into a heterosexual marriage. At the same time, flexible inheritance rights concerning both men and women provided spaces for negotiating more independent gender relations, including degrees of alternative lifestyles, for example, among Damara women.

Importantly, this limited sketch points to diverse erotic and complex bisexual experiences of and roles between African men and women of different ages before and during early colonialism. These seem to have been more restrictive among the patriarchal organized Oshiwambo-speaking societies of northern Namibia. However, some of the latter societies saw individual men maintaining lifelong roles as transgender persons engaging in cross-dressing and living normative female (economic) roles.

**Colonial Homo- and Bisexualities and Apartheid**

European colonialism as an essentially heterosexual, racializing, capitalist, and Christian project of European settler rule and African exploitation deeply affected the LGBTQ history of Namibia. On the one hand, the so-called white settler society from Germany and, after World War I (1914–1918), South Africa framed itself as a normative heterosexual society and as such criminalized “white” homosexuality in general and male homosexuality in particular. Numerous court cases attest to the existence of male settler homosexuality among white soldiers, farmers, and high-ranking professionals. Of particular relevance to the colonial state was the policing of European-African (sexual) relations in the wake of rapidly growing numbers of so-called Baster and coloured children from African-European unions and, during South Africa’s racial apartheid (1948–1991), between “Whites” and “non-Whites.” Sexual relations between European and African men were integral to state policing, and South African laws against sexual practices between men were regularly enforced.

A prominent strand of historical homosexuality in Namibia relates to the African migrant labor system that was established after the colonial genocides in central and southern Namibia (1904–1908) when the settler farming and the mining economy grew rapidly and required large contingents of male African labor. The colonial state targeted the male population of northern Namibia in particular and forced thousands of men to take up migrant labor on a contract basis for long periods of time on farms, in mines, and in towns of central and southern Namibia. Male dormitories (“compounds”) as the common form of accommodation gave rise to diverse male-centered relationships and (sexual) experiences.
As a result of long absences by men from their home communities, northern Namibian women and families managed their households and economies with women-centered support networks, no doubt giving rise to changing female roles and experiences. As with the southern African migrant labor system in general, affected men and women developed various strategies of bonding and sexual dependency. In the early twentieth century, migrant laborers from northern Namibia would often live in the compounds together with younger boys from their home villages, the latter often having been selected by the men’s female partners “to keep the men faithful to them” (Falk 1925–1926, 203). The extent to which these relations (which later were forbidden by the state) originated from historically established local practices remains unclear. In towns, individual contract laborers did at times maintain clandestine sexual relationships with African townsmen, while both African and European African male prostitution was also practiced (and criminalized) (Lorway 2015).

These varied histories show again the importance of bisexual experiences and roles as being prevalent and shaped anew by men and women of different ages alike and under changing colonial and discriminatory circumstances. Yet the strong heterosexual repression of alternative sexual practices both legally and socially drove these practices underground. Consequently, and under the simultaneously strong influence of heterosexual ideologies of the Christian mission churches, African societies themselves, converting rapidly to Christianity during the first half of the twentieth century, viewed same-sex and bisexual relations and practices with increasing hostility. The consequences of such modern homophobia for African same-sex and bisexual relations, as well as the repeated forced resettlements of African communities by the apartheid state, warrant research into the sustainability and fragility of LGB relationships under colonialism. The Namibian liberation movements, in turn, which starting in the late 1950s emerged from among migrant laborers and mobilized against the South African occupation while championing democratic and universal human rights and actively supporting women’s rights, likewise maintained a staunch heterosexual policy framework, with pronounced consequences for Namibia’s postcolonial nation building.

**Postcolonial Nation Building and the Limits of Social Justice**

Since independence in 1990, Namibia has been governed by the SWAPO Party of Namibia, a political party that emerged out of the liberation movement SWAPO (South West Africa People’s Organization). While repealing various laws relating to gender-based discrimination, the government has resisted repeated calls from advocacy groups to enshrine sexual orientation rights in the constitutional Bill of Rights and refused to repeal colonial laws criminalizing consensual homosexual practices between adult men.
Gay Pride Celebration in Swakopmund, Namibia, 2016. Madam Jholerina Timbo (right), a trans rights activist and founder of the Wings to Transcend organization in the capital of Windhoek, gives a speech at the gay pride celebration in the coastal city of Swakopmund, held on 4 June 2016.

The LGBTQ scenes in larger urban spaces such as Windhoek, Rehoboth, Swakopmund, and Oshakati have seen a publicly visible proliferation of activities and organizations since independence, with pride marches and Mr. Gay competitions being held and outspoken public debates and interventions being initiated. Instrumental in all this were and are advocacy nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) such as Sister Namibia, LGBT organizations such as the Rainbow Project and LGBT Network Namibia, and the youth education organization Ombetja Yehinga. Much of their critical work since the mid-1990s has been geared, on the one hand, toward addressing rising political homophobia, and, on the other hand, toward the necessity of establishing health and sexuality awareness programs in the wake of the severe AIDS pandemic. Various SWAPO politicians, including Sam Nujoma, who served as Namibia’s president from 1990 to 2005, repeated highly discriminatory statements against gays and lesbians between 1995 and 2005, thereby creating a climate of political homophobia and leading to the exclusion of LGBTQ members from the nation-building project. The awareness programs, in turn, took up and continue to advocate sexual minority rights while at the same time initiating a substantial research and law-reform output on same-sex, bisexual, and transgender practices and lifestyles among Namibians across class and racial divides. On the one hand, such advocacy work reflects the global frame (Lorway 2015) in which LGBTQ desires, behaviors, and relationships have been forged since independence. On the other hand, this has given rise to some severe local
backlashes, not only in terms of political homophobia but also in the form of outright harassment and repression. The degree of home-based violence toward gays and, in particular, lesbians (often in the context of rape by heterosexual men), along with the structural violence embedded in the police and in prisons, has been a major concern of local and international advocacy groups for years.

These contradictory postcolonial developments are profoundly shaping current LGBTQ relations. Despite having achieved more visibility in (urban) public spheres and being acknowledged more positively in most Namibian media, the LGBTQ community, if it can be regarded as such, continues to display and grapple with marked class and race divisions, with life stories by notable African members reflecting the entrenched contexts of violence and poverty that plague Namibian society at large. Out-Right Namibia (established in 2010) has noted “that around Namibia, people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex, or seen as such still face stigma, discrimination and violence … [which] takes place at homes, in schools, in hospitals, and other public places” (Kayunde 2017). It has to be stressed that the Namibian NGOs of and for the LGBTQ community continue to work under challenging conditions toward social justice for sexual minorities and the creation of an inclusive, antidiscriminatory, and culturally sensitive Namibian citizenship, a project that the postcolonial state and a larger civil society in Namibia regard as having been accomplished by and large.

SEE ALSO Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara; Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity; South Africa

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Nationalism and Sexuality in Europe

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The impact of nationalism on nonnormative expressions of sexuality in Europe, from the French Revolution to the twenty-first century.

As modern nationalism emerged in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century, it created a gendered vision of citizenship that persists to the present day. This nationalism sought to simultaneously exploit and contain sexual passion and gender identities, capturing both normative and dissident sexualities into a larger project of imposing hierarchical political, racial, gendered, and class identities on all members of society. After this system’s birth during the French Revolution (1789–1799), nationalists continued to theorize about and elaborate on these connections over the course of the nineteenth century, culminating in the final decades into overt struggles over political rights for women, homosexuals, and others who did not fit the nationalists’ masculine mold. In the twentieth century, these conflicts reached a peak in the overwhelming ambitions of revolutionary and authoritarian ideologies that violently sought to impose a single, approved form of sexual and gender behavior on all citizens. While both fascism and Communism fell out of power by the century’s end, the sexual and gendered dynamics of modern nationalism continued to persist across the continent, and have indeed reemerged in the twenty-first century.

French Revolution

Historians often trace the origins of modern European nationalism to the French Revolution. This revolution overthrew the old regime and sought to destroy the lingering social and economic power of its leading institutions. It was not just destructive; it simultaneously created new forms of national consciousness and participation in public life, centering on concepts of citizenship and public virtue that the eighteenth-century Enlightenment had first explored. In this new relationship between individuals and their state, nationalism obligated each person not only to obey the law, but to affirmatively participate in common national projects. This participation legitimized the state by creating a sense of ownership, investment, and common destiny among members of the national community.

Historians often cite military mobilization as one key example of this trend, such as the famous \textit{levee en masse}, which conscripted all able-bodied single men between the ages of
eighteen and twenty-five. Although less well known, this mobilization affected women as well, as seen in the National Convention’s decree of 23 August 1793:

> From this moment until that in which the enemy shall have been driven from the soil of the Republic, all Frenchmen are in permanent requisition for the service of the armies. The young men shall go to battle; the married men shall forge arms and transport provisions; the women shall make tents and clothing, and shall serve in the hospitals; the children shall turn old linen into lint; the aged shall betake themselves to the public places in order to arouse the courage of the warriors and preach the hatred of kings and the unity of the Republic.

*(QUOTED IN ANDERSON 1908, 184–185)*

As this passage shows, nationalism’s claims on individual lives applied to all members of society, no matter their age, gender, or social class. But while nationalism demanded universal responsibility, the specific tasks it required varied according to one’s place in a gender hierarchy. Men served in public roles, women in private spheres. Men forged weapons and fought foreign enemies, while women turned their handicrafts to national goals and embodied the national purity that had to be defended. All citizens had to play their identified role.

The revolution’s most prominent painter, Jacques-Louis David (1748–1825), visualized this rhetoric in several of his most famous works. On the eve of the revolution, his *Oath of the Horatii* (1784) and *The Lictors Bring to Brutus the Bodies of His Sons* (1789) mobilized Roman citizenship myths to inspire civic virtue, using a visually gendered composition to teach separate lessons to men and women. Both works depict the men of a family on the painting’s left side, either pledging to or having already sacrificed for the body politic, while the family’s women mourn their private loss on the painting’s right side. David thus developed a gendered system of republican nationalism that separated the male sphere of self-sacrifice and civic virtue from the private female realm of family and emotion. He argued definitively for the former’s superiority—for a revolutionary nationalist masculinity that must transform society despite feminine hesitation.
As the French Revolution's most prominent painter, David developed a gendered system of republican nationalism that separated the male sphere of self-sacrifice and civic virtue, versus a private female realm of family and emotion. In this painting, he depicts a Roman legend about three brothers from the Horatii family as they prepare to defend Rome during a civil war. The men embody masculine patriotism while the female family members are consumed with private feelings.

The revolution's rigid gender ideology was not inevitable. In fact, the revolution began with idealistic debates on the possibility of allowing political roles to women, emancipating slaves, ending anti-Semitism, and establishing the equality of all citizens. Early years saw women don the revolutionary cap, arm themselves, and march in the streets either alongside men or with their own political groups. One of the most important events in the revolution's early phase featured working-class women marching on Versailles and spearheading the capture of the royal family. The symbol of the revolution, Marianne, initially appeared topless and triumphant, a symbol of politically active femininity in the new revolutionary society.

These stirrings of equality soon ended, however, in the face of a reactionary drive to impose order on an increasingly chaotic situation. Not for the last time in European history, opponents of the revolution decried it as chaos and anarchy, as an overturning of traditional moral values. They interpreted the revolution's halting sympathy to gender equality as evidence of a moral decay that caused political destruction. It was not just
staunch monarchists across Europe who held this view; more politically neutral French citizens also felt this way, having simply grown tired of disruption, food shortages, conscription, and revolutionary Terror. Revolutionary leaders, therefore, took a socially reactionary turn, seeking to put women back into a passive place and thereby prove the new regime’s legitimacy and discipline. The Constitution of 1791 denied women citizenship, and their political clubs were dissolved in 1793. After Napoleon Bonaparte (1769–1821) took power in a military coup, he eventually established his Napoleonic Code, which in some ways preserved the gains of the revolution, but also formally established the principle that women were subordinate to men.

In the end, the French Revolution established two important trends in modern nationalism’s relationship to sexuality and gender, both of which repeated throughout the following centuries. First, it solidified a form of revolutionary nationalism based around concepts of male action, valor, and virility that made possible a common nation-state. Women, in turn, embodied the nation’s vulnerability and virtue—its timeless continuity that men used their abilities to defend. This pattern of defining masculine and feminine political virtues became a template across Europe, both in states that sought to imitate the revolution and in those that opposed it, and merged with growing efforts to police citizens’ sexuality for supposed reasons of state security.

The revolution’s changing stance on its own promises of gender and sexual liberalization also established a second pattern that reoccurred in future nationalist and revolutionary movements. These ideologies often hinted at embracing sweeping disruptions of gender and sexual norms during their early years as they worked to gain support and overthrow an existing system, only to abandon their promises after taking power. They then legitimized their revolution by enforcing reactionary definitions of gender and sexuality. In both these trends, gendered nationalism and social control of citizens’ sexuality became cornerstones of the European political system.

**Postrevolutionary Conservative Period**

Over the course of the next hundred years, from the establishment of the postrevolutionary conservative order in 1815 to the final destruction of that order in 1918, nineteenth-century nationalists developed an increasingly detailed vision of masculinity as the supreme political virtue and male relationships as the cornerstone of the nation-state. They created a form of normative masculinity and male behavior that scholars sometimes call “hegemonic masculinity”—a form of socially approved male behavior that granted political and social authority to those who followed it, while subordinating women and those men who fell outside it, whether because of sexual nonconformity, gender, ethnicity, or social class.

Nationalist masculinity prized values of respectability, obedience, hierarchy, authority, and
discipline. In this way, it reflected and created lines of authority in politics and class, as well as racial and gender distinctions. Nationalist men had to display both strength and restraint, self-will and self-control, obedience and authority. Various nations emphasized various sides of these dualities, with northern and western peoples (Germanic and British) generally valuing discipline and restraint, whereas southern and eastern men (Romantic and Slavic) stereotypically encouraged passion and more open sexuality. In all places, the best men sought to effectively balance these polar energies, thereby harnessing their virile capacity into nationally productive channels.

Masculine icons of the nineteenth century included above all the ancient Greeks, admired for their combination of Apollonian discipline and Dionysian passion. A revival of gymnastics, led by German nationalists, repurposed classical models of Greek male beauty, which promoted strength through discipline. Practitioners earned control of society by controlling themselves.

Men brought these values into reality through an array of politicized social clubs, veterans groups, student fraternities, sports teams, and other male-only organizations. Membership in these groups helped form appropriate masculine virtues in each generation, while also building social networks among the limited set of men allowed to access masculine authority. Male friendship was one of the century’s foremost values, especially in places such as Germany with energetic nationalist discourse. Male friendships modeled how two independent and virile men could combine their fates into an equal partnership and a common will—therefore modeling the exact dynamics of nationalism itself.

In Germany, dueling fraternities, neighborhood associations, veterans groups, and “friendship societies” taught German men to channel the homoeroticism of their male friendships into a collective love of the nation, a more productive use of this masculine energy. These groups taught them to first conquer and control their own passions, after which the groups promised them the ability to control the nation and, eventually, to subjugate other nations. In Britain, the educational system served the same purpose as the German social groups. British upperclass men spent their formative years in boarding schools marked by intense male relationships, frequent homo-erotic and even homosexual passions, and a disciplinary system in which older students exercised tyrannical power over younger ones. This artificial and homosocial society taught each rising generation of British leaders how to both accept and wield authority, as well as how to channel virile male passions into common purpose. The relationships they made and the structures of masculine authority they learned continued into their adult lives as political, economic, and imperial hegemons. After all, the imperial world was often a homosocial realm of men, a frontier that Western women could not enter until it had been tamed by masculine virtue and male cooperation.

The practice of nationalist masculinity not only relied on institutions and ideologies to
model proper behavior; it needed negative countertypes to discourage dissent. Nationalist philosophers and social scientists, thus, fearfully worried about an array of negative masculinities in the form of threatening outsiders who had to be controlled for a nation to truly rise. They did not often concern themselves with women, who to them played little formal role in a state, but they displayed great fear of men who supposedly acted like women. These types included working-class men, who were supposedly poor because of their lack of discipline, as well as racial minorities, such as Jews, Africans, Turks, and Asians, all of whom in the masculinist imagination possessed both feminine passivity and animalistic sexual depravity. Northern and western Europeans even held these views about southern and eastern European men.

But perhaps the foremost villain to nationalist masculinity was the figure of the male homosexual—the man who could have fit the authoritative type, but instead succumbed to depraved and uncontrollable passion for fellow men. German scientists had coined the term *homosexuality* in the late 1860s. By the time the concept became more commonly known in the 1890s, nationalist discourse associated homosexual men with feminine passion, a criminal underworld, a threat to natural order and, therefore, a threat to society. Homosexuals allegedly undermined masculine efforts to channel their passions to social ends, instead wasting their energies on selfish pursuits and aesthetic, unprofitable, unproductive frivolities.

While centering on men, this discourse sought to control all citizens, whether normative men and women or gender and sexual nonconformists. Gendered nationalism required all residents of a state to adhere to their assigned place: men and women, elite or working class, dominant ethnicity or persecuted minority, hegemonic man or dissident homosexual. Nationalists measured the health of the nation by whether a society enforced these categories, and they viewed with skepticism and hatred those that did not. Whereas in the eighteenth century many Enlightenment figures looked to the figure of the “androgyne” as a symbol of human unity, the nineteenth century saw the figure as a monster that threatened society.

By the end of the century, as social scientists increasingly merged biology with sociology, the existence of sexual dissidents, intersex persons, and gender nonconformists of any type posed a social problem that had to be solved. The 1886 work *Psychopathia sexualis*, by the Austro-German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902), practically founded the field. In the following decades there were further works by the Englishman Havelock Ellis (1859–1939) and an array of German-speaking sociologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists as these disciplines emerged. These scientific developments did not occur in isolation, and in contrast to scientists who sought to understand dissident sexualities and gender identities for the progressive or liberal purposes of increasing the range of individual freedom, others worked with governments or industrial elites with ambitions to shape societies by controlling populations. In an 1883 work titled *Inquiries into Human
Faculty and Its Development, the English scientist Francis Galton (1822–1911) proposed the term *eugenics* for the purposeful attempt to improve human societies through selective breeding and the encouraging of approved traits, while discouraging behaviors and eradicating traits deemed defective. Galton proposed that families be monitored for their success, intelligence, or other adaptive traits. Societies should then encourage families with such traits to marry each other (“positive eugenics”). Members of approved classes should try to reduce “dysgenic” social behaviors, such as marrying late, having fewer children, or engaging in nonprocreative sex. Meanwhile, the lesser classes, or those with family histories of alcoholism, crime, or other disruptive behaviors would be subjected to “negative eugenics” discouraging their reproduction. Galton and his followers claimed idealistic and utopian justifications for this plan, envisioning a world in which the increased ability of each generation created a stable, prosperous, and meritocratic society enjoying all the benefits of a population of geniuses. But the science behind eugenics was dubious from the start; the English naturalist Charles Darwin (1809–1882) himself disagreed with his half-cousin Galton’s views that desirable traits were inherited. And even worse, in practice eugenics and social Darwinism generally behaved as a way to entrench the existing power hierarchies of race and class.

The social Darwinism advocated by industrial elites saw sexual and gender dissidents of all types as a problem to be solved. If only the fittest states survived and thrived, each state had to eradicate vices that sapped masculine virility, caused illness, weakened wills, or prompted allegedly feminine passions in areas of life unrelated to industry and war. As the art movements of aestheticism and decadence gained steam in the century’s final decades, a discourse of degeneration also gained strength. Nationalists conjured images of the fall of Rome, a coming calamity, or the slow decay of the nation into hedonism, weakness, and illness caused by the latest generation’s failure to command masculine virility. In this way, several public scandals functioned as disciplining events, through which society warned young men of the costs of defying the vision of masculine nationalism. The most famous, the British trial of the Irish writer Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) for gross indecency in 1895, showed that even one of a nation’s most famous and celebrated cultural figures could be destroyed for his failure to be a proper man.

These trials and scandals had the secondary effect of reinforcing cultural stereotypes of homosexuality as an upper-class vice, in which aristocratic men preyed on and corrupted lower-class youths. From the 1890s onward, many great European powers experienced scandals that exposed or risked exposing members of the governing elite as homosexuals. In Britain, the Cleveland Street scandal (1889–1890) expanded the powers of police and government inspectors to pursue rumors of homosexual prostitution between telegraph boys and elite men—one of whom, rumor had it, was second in line to the British throne. In Russia, several prominent political leaders and writers, and even members of the royal family, engaged in the Russian tradition of interclass homosexuality. Centered around public bathhouses and private parties, upperclass men (*tetki* [aunties]) could arrange trysts
with working-class youths, men newly arrived from the countryside, or soldiers and sailors on leave and looking to supplement their income. The police showed little interest in monitoring homosexuality in the two capitals of Saint Petersburg and Moscow, although in non-Russian areas of the empire, especially Central Asia, the government saw it as part of a primitive society that should be stamped out through Russification policies. Homosexual scandals and open secrets were the natural product of how masculinist nationalism had constructed male friendship as the dominant force of political life. Everyone knew male relationships held great importance for government, national values, and overseas expansion. It was only natural that they feared some men might take male same-sex eroticism to its seemingly natural end point: outright homosexuality.

In Germany, the Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD; Social Democratic Party of Germany) made accusations of homosexuality a key tactic in its campaign against the government’s policies of militarism and nationalism. In 1902 the SPD’s main newspaper published details of the industrialist Friedrich Alfred Krupp’s (1854–1902) same-sex escapades in his Italian vacation home. Krupp enjoyed the friendship and protection of Kaiser Wilhelm II (1859–1941) and had proven a key figure in the nationalist expansion of the German navy in this era. His death from an apparent suicide confirmed how potent a weapon homophobic antinationalism could be in the leftist arsenal. A few years later, many more members of the military and governing elite became ensnared in a graphic scandal known as the Eulenburg affair (1907–1909), named after its central figure, Philipp, Prince of Eulenburg. Although neither side of the affair was entirely nationalist or antinationalist, it became a proxy battle that many saw as a chance to weaken the kaiser’s militant milieu. Some of the accused men retired from public life, and dozens of military officers were convicted by courts martial or killed themselves. But German militarism marched on.

In the context of growing nationalist tension, eugenic policies first took institutional form. In Britain, a 1903 commission began studying eugenic policies out of fear that racial degeneration would deny the army an effective pool of recruits. Many of the British eugenicists’ efforts came to naught, however, and the movement was in fact most pronounced in such countries as the United States and Canada, the German colonial lands, and the Scandinavian countries. In the United States, most states adopted laws allowing compulsory sterilization of certain disabled persons, ignoring the racial implications in the question of whom they deemed disabled in an era of great fear over immigration of “lesser races.” In most cases, women were more likely to fall victim to these programs, and their bodies became key sites through which countries sought to improve their industrial or military capabilities.

Turn-of-the-century France showed special concern about women’s reproduction in the context of a falling birth rate. Many of the leading industrial powers experienced a similar decline in birth rates in this era, but France perceived the supposed crisis early and intensely given its traditional status as one of the most populous and powerful nations in
western Europe. French leaders had interpreted the nation's loss in the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) as a testament to the power of population and its cousin, the mass industrial army. During a time in which French women, like their British and German counterparts, argued for their political equality and right to vote, many French leaders feared that this supposed masculinization of women would only exacerbate the population problem by distracting French women from their core task of creating male citizens. Therefore, as feminists and liberal republicans debated women's rights in traditional legal and political journals, a parallel discourse focused on birth rates, and women's labor participation exerted just as great an influence. This biomedical and pronatalist view became entrenched among nationalistic anti-republicans, who blamed French women for Germany's rising power. While France experienced a particularly acute debate over these issues, many other European nations at this time accepted the fundamental logic of associating population decline, social degeneracy, and national decline. Many of these states then pursued countervailing forces of eugenics, pronatalism, and militarism as part of a social push to be ready for the systemic war they believed imminent.

**World War Period**

Beginning in 1914, the European international system consumed itself in a thirty-year crisis of masculinist nationalism. At first, the outbreak of World War I seemed to smash what had been growing resistance to the cult of heroic nationalism. War and manliness were synonymous, and in 1914 many men celebrated its long-awaited arrival as a chance to display valor, embrace a man's natural role, cast off the shackles of feminine restrictions, flee from the confusing modern world into a primal experience of manliness, and renew the world through cleansing violence. This view of World War I, although by no means universal, became a “myth of the war experience” that grew stronger even though the mechanized reality of the war undermined its ideology of individual heroism. The German theorist of masculinity Hans Blüher (1888–1955) wrote an infamous tract praising the war's solidification of male camaraderie, homoeroticism, and even homosexuality as essential virtues of a German state. Synthesizing decades of veneration of the Greeks, he believed the war veterans formed a new Sacred Band (referring to the Sacred Band of Thebes, the ancient Greek battalion supposedly consisting of pairs of male lovers) whose erotic connections to each other were necessary to creating a cohesive state. Ancient values and modern warfare combined when the German veteran and writer Ernst Jünger (1895–1998) proclaimed that industrial combat would create a new race of man, purified in a “storm of steel” (the title of his 1920 memoir *In Stahlgewittern*, about his experiences on the Western front during World War I) and ready to lead the nation.

By 1918, however, the mechanized nature of war and its totalizing destruction had fatally undermined many of its founding ideologies. In contrast to the right-wing myth, which blamed losses in the war on society's alleged failure to adhere to masculinist values, left-
wing and revolutionary ideologies claimed that the war experience legitimized their challenge to the existing political, social, class, and gender systems that had caused this most destructive conflict. In the ensuing ideological struggle that consumed the twentieth century, gender, nationalism, and sexuality became key battlegrounds through which the new ideologies of fascism and Communism challenged democratic liberalism in a bid to remake European society.

In Russia, the ongoing privations of war had brought down its 300-year monarchy and created a short-lived democracy that soon fell to a Communist coup. The new Soviet state consciously agitated for revolution in all areas of life: in government, industry and agriculture, religion, racial attitudes, and even gender. Women had played a key role both in the revolution and in the Communist Party’s leading intellectual circles, and the party now seemed poised to advocate for their equality. It liberalized divorce laws and provided contraceptives to women. It decriminalized male sodomy during its overhauling of czarist legal codes in 1922. (True to form in a state that had acknowledged a public role only for men, female homosexuality was far less a concern and in fact had not been a legal category in the first place.) Soviet representatives traveled west to meet with the most famous German crusaders for homosexual emancipation, giving speeches at Magnus Hirschfeld’s (1868–1935) Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Science) and approvingly viewing the progressive film *Anders als die Andern* (1919; Different from the others), the first film to sympathetically portray male homosexuality. In the Soviet Union, said Health Commissar Nikolai Semashko (1874–1949), the film would not be scandalous at all and would instead well suit the new revolutionary liberation (Healey 2001). If the old national system had been based in strict hierarchies of gender, race, class, and religion, the new Soviet system promised to smash all these ideologies of control and to create a single, collective equality of all persons: international, ungendered, of all races, and knowing no social class.

It soon abandoned these promises, however. Vladimir Lenin (1870–1924), the revolution’s leader and foremost theorist, had never been comfortable with sexual freedom as a socialist value, and despite his close work with several prominent women Communists, he resisted their attempts to organize prostitutes. While socialist concern for sexual matters had at one time been “healthy” as part of the “rebellion against the virtuous hypocrisy of the respectable bourgeois,” he saw it as a distraction from the core struggle of class revolution. Lenin thought that sex should be serious and productive. Accepting existing stereotypes of homosexuality and sexual liberation generally as part of upper-class vices, he saw both homo-and heterosexual efforts at liberation as a “need to justify personal abnormality” and, therefore, “really quite bourgeois” rather than revolutionary (quoted in Healey 2001, 113). Homosexuals should instead focus on the main task of the revolution rather than advocate for their private vices. Although some of these statements are not to be fully trusted, given their publication in a later Stalinist context, they accurately convey the sense most Communists had about sexual matters in the revolutionary context: sexual
morality was a side issue that would work itself out once the main revolution removed capitalism's unfair allocation of resources and its consequent warping of natural human morality.

After Lenin’s death in 1924, Joseph Stalin (1878–1953) installed a system of brutal repression both inside the party and outside it. Internal party struggles, the social disruption of rapid industrialization and its brutal consequences, and Stalin's views favoring a Russified “socialism in one country” all combined into a renewal of masculinist nationalism. The Stalinist state viewed its people as objects to be controlled or problems to be solved. It developed a biosocial model of personal behavior, which viewed homosexuality, divorce, abortion, prostitution, drug abuse, alcoholism, and criminality as unproductive illnesses that the Soviet state had to cure in order to survive.

Meanwhile, in Germany and Italy, right-wing myths blamed those nations' losses in World War I and the problems of the postwar years on society’s failure to uphold traditional values of masculine nationalism. The new Weimar Republic in Germany had become a symbol of new possibilities in divorce, birth control, sexual freedom, gender dissent,
homosexuality, transvestitism, and cabaret drag shows. Right-wing nationalists saw this as weakness, decadence, feminization, racial degeneration, and betrayal. They proposed a solution: the violent and totalitarian ideology of fascism. Fascism sought to control all members of society according to their place in rigid national, racial, and gendered hierarchies, in which the military man of dominant ethnicity ruled society without challenge and conquered the nation’s enemies abroad. Fascism, therefore, in many ways represented the apex of masculinist nationalism as developed over the previous century, including its reliance on a medicalized and pseudoscientific biosocial discourse of control. Its similarities also included the paradoxical practice of both hating open homosexuality as evidence of weakness and feminization and prizing homoerotic male relationships as the highest political value.

Both Italian and German fascists centered their politics on male paramilitary groups, who cultivated close male relationships as the key to their political unity and paramilitary efficacy. The Italian squadristi, or Blackshirts, prized a hypersexual, macho masculinity that mirrored the exaggerated posturing of Fascist leader Benito Mussolini (1883–1945). The National Socialist (Nazi) storm troopers, or Brownshirts, drew on their own traditions of German Romantic male friendship and eroticism, which at times drifted into open homosexuality. Ernst Röhm (1887–1934), the most important leader of the storm troopers and one of Nazi leader Adolf Hitler’s (1889–1945) few close friends, was an open homosexual who had used his connections in male military circles to legitimize the Nazi movement in its early years. Several storm trooper units in Berlin and Hamburg met in known gay bars. Although the number of homosexual men in the Nazi paramilitaries was tiny compared to the millions of heterosexuals in the ranks, they saw themselves as the best representatives of this movement of masculine supremacy. This remained true even as Nazi speakers decried the Weimar Republic’s relative tolerance for sexual and gender dissent as a primary source of national woes.

Allegations of Nazi homosexuality became a key tool in that era’s antifascist discourse. Drawing on past scandals that had established an alleged connection between homosexuality and elite nationalist militarism, socialists and liberals alike weaponized this discourse against their political enemies—even while at the same time they advocated for sexual toleration as part of their own political program. The hypocrisy worried some socialists, who feared that playing to homophobia only made it more powerful. But the weapon was too tempting to sheathe. Social Democratic newspapers repeatedly exposed Röhm’s private letters and personal affairs, highlighted allegations of homosexuality among rank-and-file storm troopers, and alluded to old conspiracy tropes of homosexual cliques secretly dominating political life. Nationalists, however, seemed indifferent to charges of hypocrisy. Hitler defended Röhm by declaring that he was building a troop of revolutionaries, not a bourgeois debating society, and that he would use any men with fighting strength. In their paradoxical simultaneous embrace and rejection of sexual dissidents, both authoritarian systems reproduced the dynamic established from the
French Revolution onward: during the drive for power, they accepted all who would join the cause and promised to win their freedom. After taking power, however, they turned the outsiders into scapegoats that the regime could purge in order to demonstrate its morality.

**FEDERICO GARCÍA LORCA AND THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR**

Federico García Lorca (1898–1936) was one of the most important modern Spanish poets and playwrights. He embodied a new style in Spanish literature that incorporated cutting-edge movements such as symbolism, surrealism, futurism, and the modernist literary project to reinfuse elements from the classical European canon with new psychological meaning. Lorca grew up in privileged circumstances as the son of a landowner and sugar baron. His education took him to several universities and allowed him introductions to important cultural figures. In 1919–1920 Lorca wrote his first play, a symbolist work titled *El maleficio de la mariposa* (*The Butterfly’s Evil Spell* [1970]), which told the story of a cockroach in love with a beautiful but ultimately elusive butterfly. The audience booed, but the play previewed several elements that would endure throughout Lorca’s work and life: avant-garde staging, a fascination with transformation and death, and the concept of forbidden love.

Lorca felt this last emotion keenly in his own life. In 1923 he began an intense friendship with the Spanish artist and surrealist Salvador Dalí (1904–1989), on whom Lorca became romantically fixated. As Lorca developed into one of Spain’s foremost writers, his works displayed increasingly homoerotic overtones. He wrote odes to Dalí and the American poet Walt Whitman (1819–1892) and continually depicted characters frustrated in love, tormented by their desires, and longing for lives they cannot lead.

These themes of longing matched the political mood of a nation in turmoil. A three-way struggle between democracy, Communism, and fascism broke out into open civil war in 1936, beginning with a wave of assassinations and militia activity. In August of that year, Lorca’s brother-in-law was killed by a fascist militia just days after becoming the socialist mayor of Granada, Spain. The fascists assassinated Lorca as well. One of his killers claimed to have shot him in the buttocks as punishment for his homosexuality. Whether he was killed for his family associations, his political leftism, or his homosexuality, the roots of fascist distaste for him were clear. Here was a poet who celebrated Spanish traditions, wrote muscular and virile prose linked to political action, and valued male camaraderie and even eros—the same values on which the fascists themselves claimed a monopoly.

After Lorca’s death, Francisco Franco’s fascist regime suppressed his work, and Lorca’s own family suppressed evidence of his homosexuality for many years. His grave site has never been found, even after excavations carried out in 2009 and succeeding
The Soviets displayed this trend both in their antifascist discourse and in their own domestic social policy. Although their revolution had begun with promises of liberation from conventional sex and gender roles, they soon fixated on gender dissidence as the very cause of fascism. Antifascist homophobia became the official Soviet line soon after Hitler’s appointment in January 1933 as chancellor of Germany, when the Reichstag fire (February 1933) provided the Nazis with the opportunity to seize emergency powers. The Nazis blamed the fire on the Dutch Communist Marinus van der Lubbe (1909–1934), who they claimed had started the blaze as a signal to revolution. But the Communists had another theory: van der Lubbe was a patsy, a simpleminded homosexual puppet of Röhm. Röhm’s perverted cabal had tricked this youth into lighting the fire in order to obtain an excuse to destroy the Communist Party and take total power. Communist propagandists elaborated this theory in the factually dubious Brown Book of the Reichstag Fire and the Hitler Terror (1933), which was translated into twenty-four languages, became a worldwide best seller, and inspired a mock trial in London in which the Communists claimed to expose evidence of Nazi homosexual depravity.

Domestically, the Soviet state persecuted homosexuality more thoroughly than the czarist regime had ever done. Although it did not engage in the flamboyant homophobic violence the Nazis showed when they smashed Hirschfeld’s institute and burned its archive, the Soviet state in late 1933 began the quiet internal process of recriminalizing male homosexuality. While the precise reasons for recriminalization remain sealed in state archives, the timing and the larger context suggest a role for antifascist paranoia. The infamous Genrikh Grigoryevich Yagoda (1891–1938), then deputy leader of the secret police, declared himself eager to wipe out supposed organized cliques of fascist homosexuals as a direct threat to state security. There seems to be no evidence of actual fascist activity among homosexual groups in the two main cities, but the regime had
already shown that it did not need specific laws to persecute any dissident groups it could accuse of counterrevolutionary attitudes. Nevertheless, propagandists now declared the regime opposed to homosexuality as a counterrevolutionary degradation of the nation's fighting youth. Here too, the Stalinist state increasingly abandoned socialism's internationalism in favor of Russian nationalism, deploying old myths of Russia's elemental purity in the face of a decadent and overcivilized West. In Soviet rhetoric, Western capitalism had now created fascism as its chief enforcer, with homosexuality the ultimate sign of its moral decay. The rhetoric reached its climax in the Soviet call “Destroy the homosexuals—fascism will disappear!” (quoted in Chatterjee, Kirschenbaum, and Field 2016, 113).

The Soviet turn toward gender and sexual normativity had other sources as well. The first Five-Year Plan (1928–1932) was ending in failure and misery, with any gains in capital industries offset by massive social problems, famine, overpopulated and seething cities, and internal party struggles that encouraged patterns of scapegoating and accusation. In this context, the party turned against “social anomalies” such as homosexuals, class enemies, criminal elements, urban dissidents, and so-called primitive societies in the empire inherited from the czar. All these groups had to be wiped out by Soviet science, creating a unified state that could crush capitalism in Europe and the world.

This conservative turn in Soviet gender, sexual, and family policies has been called the “great retreat.” It did not seek to re-create the prerevolutionary gender system, but instead to create a new national image of modern, disciplined citizens all contributing to national productivity. For men, this meant avoiding accusations of counterrevolutionary homosexuality and becoming the patriarch of a working family. These patriarchs had to display sexual purity and family values and resist “free love” as a bourgeois immorality.

Women's public roles faded from the regime's early promises, when images of working women—aviators, tractor drivers, mechanics, and collective farm workers—were celebrated in socialist realist art. Starting in 1936, the regime instead celebrated the wives of government, military, and industrial leaders who served in social and emotional support roles to the dominant men, rather than contributing directly themselves. The state banned abortion, made divorce harder to obtain, curtailed birth control, and created penalties and incentives to compel women to simultaneously be mothers and workers. “Masculine women” who had lived as men and in some cases even married other women became subjects of biosocial research to encourage motherhood, which the Soviet state thought presented a natural cure for lesbianism and women's gender nonconformity. Pregnancy would correct any deviant sexuality. In general, Stalinist social and governing conventions held that a Communist state had no need to publicly discuss sexual relationships or identities; socialism had created “healthy conditions” under which a natural and universal heterosexuality could proceed. Those few deviants who continued to display sickness and perversion could be sent to the gulag, or later to the psychiatric clinic, and be cured, or at
least kept away from the rest of society.

On the supposed opposite end of the ideological spectrum, the Nazi state engaged in quite similar practices. Röhm’s hopes for a living space within National Socialism came to a fatal end in June 1934, when internal power struggles within the Nazi Party led to a violent purge. The Night of the Long Knives decapitated the storm trooper leadership and ended its leading role in the state, also giving the Nazis the opportunity to murder dozens of other political opponents. In a dramatic speech, Hitler revealed the supposed reason for his purge: he had acted to secure the party and the nation from a clique of homosexual conspirators who sought to corrupt the German people and overthrow the party. Hitler, thus, justified his assassinations as protective measures to secure national sexual purity and create a strong society, mobilizing nationalist respectability politics to gain support for a disreputable regime. He repeated this approach in the following years. Military, industrial, and religious leaders who resisted the Nazis’ total control over their fields were accused of homosexuality or sexual impropriety and removed from key positions.

The Nazis’ brutal reign over Germany and much of Europe also attempted to impose population control—a biosocial program of increasing their own birth rates and eradicating other ethnicities. This meant, at heart, a system of controlling reproduction and, therefore, controlling gender and sexual behavior. They sought to outright murder people of other nationalities, especially Jews, Slavs, Sinti, and Roma, all of whom they interpreted as displaying degenerate patterns of masculine identities that supposedly competed with a naturally pure Aryan family life. Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945), leader of the Schutzstaffel (SS; a major Nazi paramilitary organization) and one of the key figures behind the Röhm purge, became the state’s chief homophobe while simultaneously promoting heterosexual promiscuity among men and women of approved bloodlines. He opened a series of brothels for SS men and soldiers and instituted systems to reward mothers who produced Aryan babies. Within Germany, the Nazis posed as moral crusaders determined to wipe out homosexuality, gender dissident behavior, cultural degeneracy, and hereditary illnesses, whether physical handicaps or supposedly inherited criminality. Nazi laws broadened the definition of male homosexuality so far that even nonsexual acts could be prosecuted if the state determined a sexual intent. They arrested around 100,000 German men, of whom perhaps 10,000 to 15,000 died in concentration camps. Lesbians found themselves more able to hide, although some were sent to camps as “asocials.”

The similarities with the Soviets’ modernist attempts to engineer a race of superior productivity are clear. In both cases, inherently or increasingly nationalistic revolutionary movements used promises of sexual liberation as part of a rhetoric of gaining power, and then scapegoated sexual minorities in an attempt to legitimize their extralegal regime by appealing to their people’s supposedly natural morality. At the same time, they embarked on bioengineering projects of unprecedented scale, combining murderous genocide of dissidents with eugenic social and biological engineering to create their own versions of a
superior race that would defeat their ideological enemies and conquer the world.

**Postwar Period into the Twenty-First Century**

The fascist plan came to naught by 1945, defeated in the war it had begun, but the Soviet system remained. Its threat to liberal democracy in the ensuing Cold War drove liberal democracies to harden their own stances on gender and sexual freedom. A conservative and nationalistic turn began in the 1950s, marked by purges of homosexual men from government and a retrenchment of regressive gender roles for men and women alike. Women who had worked in factories during the war were now exiled back to kitchens so that they would not compete with men who claimed naturalistic rights to productive work and social leadership. States purged homosexuals from the ranks of government service, either in such targeted actions as the Lavender Scare (the persecution and mass firings of homosexual people from the US government in the 1950s), or through criminal law such as that which led to the death of the pioneering World War II code-breaker Alan Turing (1912–1954). In the German lands, the Nazi strengthening of antigay laws remained on the books, and homosexuals imprisoned in concentration camps—alone among the victim groups—could not seek reparations because the state considered their sentences criminal, not political. Meanwhile, a discourse of anti-totalitarian gender conformity arose in popular culture, interpreting Nazi political depravity as a consequence of its alleged sexual impropriety. Films such as *Notorious* (1946) and *The Boys from Brazil* (1978), as well as sensationalistic pulp movies such as *The Damned* (1969) and *Ilsa: She Wolf of the SS* (1975), emphasized Nazi depravity in contrast with a healthy democratic sexuality and gender order. Democratic rhetoric against “totalitarianism” attempted to mobilize these antifascist sentiments against Communism as well, and religious leaders especially claimed that Communism sought to destroy a healthy family life. In this way, even the liberal democracies reinforced hierarchical nationalist masculinity.

In the century's final decades, the social revolutions begun in the late 1960s established an opposition between nationalism and gender or sexual freedom. Crusaders for women's emancipation, gay rights, sexual freedom, and tolerance for gender nonconformity saw their struggle as an antinationalist, universal drive for freedom. They accused democracies of not living up to their promises, resisted Communist systems as oppressive police states, and integrated fascist persecution of gender nonconformists into powerful symbols advancing their agendas. Activists resurrected the pink triangle icon, transforming it from a Nazi badge for homosexual men in concentration camps into a symbol of gay rights.

After the Soviet state disintegrated in 1989, social activists greeted the rise of a new “gay nineties,” in which the totalitarian oppressors of gender dissent had fallen, leaving only the still-powerful conservative parties in democratic states as the enemies of progress. With the Cold War over and “the end of history” nigh, they hoped that decreased nationalism and militarism would help democratic societies embrace gay men and lesbians, women seeking
equality, transgender and intersex individuals, and all others who resisted assimilation into a single, hegemonic gender order of militant nationalism. Gay activists began making strides through a new era of respectability politics, emphasizing that gay men and lesbians sought to join normative society, not undermine it. Indeed, the most successful and popular gay and lesbian demands in this era worked in agreement with the democratic gender order. Gay men and lesbians sought to join the military, get married, and have children. It seemed for a time that two centuries of violent nationalism and the oppressive gender order that enforced it would be consigned to history.

In the twenty-first century, however, masculinist nationalism, and even outright fascism, have come roaring back in the context of the wars on terrorism, the global economic crisis that followed the 2008 stock market crash, and growing long-term inequality. Russian nationalists and their allies in the United States have been among the most prominent weaponizers of sexual and gender politics, reviving the slur of homosexual Nazism in order to undermine democratic politics throughout the world. In some ways, European states now offer more progressive spaces than ever before for gender nonconformity, sexual freedom, and women’s equality. At the same time, however, antidemocratic and nationalist forces have revived all their oldest and most powerful social weapons. Understood in the long history of modern nationalism, these topics seem sure to continue to play a central role in debates over national identity and politics.

SEE ALSO Aestheticism and Decadence, Nineteenth-Century; Anti-Gender Movement in Europe; Classical Studies; Communism and Queers in Europe; Friendship Societies in Europe; Pink Triangle; Sacred Band of Thebes; Scandals in Europe; Wilde Trials, International Significance of

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Since the late 1980s within South Asia, India has provided a global model for LGBT advocacy and social activism toward the legalization of homosexuality and third-gender identity. In particular, the Naz Foundation International, a nongovernmental advocacy organization, has been key in generating public movement toward the recognition of LGBT identities and behavior, as well as in providing HIV/AIDS health-care outreach. Its efforts to mobilize for the repeal of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code—a colonial era (1861) sodomy law that criminalized homosexuality in India until it was ruled invalid by India's Supreme Court in September 2018—have helped advance LGBT rights discourse in India. This law criminalized a range of sexual acts considered to be “against the order of nature,” meaning nonprocreative acts, such as anal intercourse, oral sex, bestiality, and pederasty. However, the Indian police used Section 377 to harass and persecute gender nonnormative individuals, such as hijras (third gender) and sex workers, in the context of their public visibility. As a result, the distinction between nonnormative sexual acts—the object of legal criminalization—and sexual identities, including LGBT persons and MSM (men who have sex with men) who do not necessarily identify as homosexual, were blurred in activist and popular discourses that framed the law as primarily criminalizing homosexual identities.

The Naz Foundation International has provided counseling support, HIV health care, and other services to a wide cross section of vulnerable groups of diverse gender and sexual identities from all socioeconomic strata. The creation of this organization occurred in the context of India’s response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, following the first reported case in the country in 1986. The legal criminalization of same-sex sexual activity, coupled with the strong cultural pressure to marry and have children, drove those who engaged in nonnormative sexual practices underground. Due to a lack of knowledge around risky sexual behavior and the fear of stigma regarding same-sex sexual conduct, HIV rates rose, particularly among MSM, a public health category comprising married men in mobile occupations from lower socioeconomic strata. The legal criminalization of their sexual practices, considered unsafe by public health workers, prevented them from coming forward to seek treatment for HIV/AIDS under government programs.
HUMSAFAR TRUST: INDIA’S OLDEST LGBT ORGANIZATION

The need to bridge the gap between men who have sex with men (MSM) in India and HIV/AIDS programs led to the establishment of the Humsafar Trust in 1994, making it the oldest LGBT organization in India. Prominent Indian journalist Ashok Row Kavi established the organization in Mumbai with a view to reaching out to MSM in the city. He was inspired to do so after his return from Montreal, Canada, where he got a firsthand view into the struggle of Western HIV/AIDS activists to bring attention to the epidemic’s impact on gay communities. Seeing how hard it was for even such well-organized Western groups as ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) to increase government funding for HIV/AIDS programs targeting Western gay communities, Row Kavi noted in an interview with TREAT (Therapeutics Research, Education, and AIDS Training) Asia that he wondered at the time, “What would happen in Asia where there were no gay communities but only large networks of men having sex with other men?” (TREAT Asia Report, n.d.).

Inspired by the social and economic disparities of resources in Asia, Row Kavi, along with a few others, decided to set up a support system for gay men who primarily identified themselves as homosexual, among a range of other local and regional identities, such as kothi (an effeminate man with a receptive role), panthi (insertive male partner), and hijra (third gender identity), who are vulnerable to HIV. With an official policy of electing unmarried gay men as board directors—because it was felt that married gay men could divide the group politically—the Humsafar Trust began its operations in Mumbai. The policy was an important one, given the need at the time to foster open discourse about gay identity in the Indian context, where homosexual men, regardless of whether they identify as gay or not, often face social pressures to marry. Over time, the Humsafar Trust became the only gay organization to be given space by the city government of Mumbai, where it caters to people living in poorer sections, some with alternative gender and behavioral identities, such as MSM.

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The World Bank noted in a 2012 report on HIV/AIDS in India that "stigma and denial
undermine efforts to increase the coverage of effective interventions among key populations such as men having sex with men. Harassment by police and ostracism by family and community drives the epidemic underground and decreases the reach and effectiveness of prevention efforts” (World Bank 2012). However, given the broader cultural climate of stigmatization around alternative gender and sexual identities, the efforts of activists within the Indian LGBT movement to legalize homosexuality go beyond the HIV/AIDS crisis among MSM to demand full recognition for those who identify as gay and lesbian.

Origins

The Naz Foundation International began in London with the formation in 1991 of the Naz Project by activists Shivananda Khan and Poulomi Desai. The Naz Project was named for a friend of Khan’s, Nazir, who was the first South Asian HIV-positive gay man Khan had met. The group provided services related to sexual health and HIV prevention to the city’s black, Asian, and minority ethnic communities. The Naz Foundation (India) Trust (Naz India) was established in 1994 in Delhi by Khan and activist Anjali Gopalan, who became the executive director of the organization, to provide HIV-related services to stigmatized communities in India.

Khan was inspired to establish Naz Foundation International, South Asia’s first MSM-focused organization, after conducting a study on HIV in Bangladesh in 1996. There, he learned about the complex social landscape of male-to-male sexuality, which was radically different from the Western notion of a gay identity and sexual orientation. In Bangladesh, people’s sexual behavior is based on gender performance; insertive behavior implies male, not homosexual, identity, with traditional expectations around heterosexual marriage, not just in Bangladesh but also in India, Pakistan, Nepal, and Bhutan. Khan realized the need for an approach to MSM work that looked at genders and sexualities as plural formations.

In 2013 Shivananda Khan died. However, his legacy continues through Naz India’s sexual health outreach activities and counseling services for LGBT ethnic minority groups.

Naz in a Global Context

The Naz Foundation’s operations in South Asia have had a significant impact in terms of outreach to HIV-vulnerable populations and advocacy for greater public health funding. Naz has received funding from a number of international donor agencies that support the foundation’s outreach, advocacy, and education efforts. The Gere Foundation, along with its public charity, Healing the Divide, worked with Naz to establish the AIDS Care Home, the first residential facility in India dedicated to serving women and children with AIDS.

The Naz Foundation in Delhi has supported the health and livelihoods of the MSM and
transgender communities through its Milan Project, the first intervention effort in India to target these groups. The Milan Project has transformed the lives of underprivileged transgender individuals, who often run away from home due to persecution and stigma. Because of a lack of viable employment opportunities, they often end up in sex work. By employing them as health outreach workers who undertake safe-sex advocacy, Naz has offered them alternative employment that frees them from sex work, which is a criminalized and socially stigmatized way of earning money in India (Agarwala 2012).

In another example of Naz’s support of transgender individuals, the foundation partnered with Delhi’s Ramjas College to launch TransCreations, a line of jewelry designed exclusively by transgender people who were trained in jewelry design by students from Ramjas College. The jewelry is sold at leading retail outlets in India (Agarwala 2012). Such initiatives highlight Naz’s holistic approach to health, which goes beyond physical and psychological aspects to create sustainable structures of support for marginalized, gender nonconforming individuals.
**Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code**

Naz has played a pivotal role in addressing HIV/AIDS through a rights-based approach. Part of this approach included a legal challenge to India's colonial-era sodomy law, Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. In 2001 Naz filed the first public interest litigation in the Delhi High Court to challenge the constitutional validity of the law. The organization was represented by Anand Grover of the Lawyers Collective, a Delhi-based legal organization that focuses on human rights issues. The challenge was dismissed by the court as merely academic, without any real cause for action, in 2004. With support from Voices against 377—a coalition of gender and child rights groups—as well as from the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Naz's petition was reinstated in the Delhi High Court through a special petition in the Supreme Court. The concern that Section 377 was impeding HIV-related health outreach was seen as grounds for entertaining the petition as a public interest matter.

The story of Naz's contribution to fostering the acceptance of homosexuality and recognition of LGBT rights has not been merely a legal one or necessarily confined to metropolitan centers. Naz's public health advocacy has also played a critical role in smaller cities, where conservative sexual norms prevailed and any public representation of sexuality remained fraught with the risk of being interpreted as obscenity and moral corruption. Such a dynamic was evident when Naz's public health work was intercepted in the north Indian city of Lucknow. In 2001, acting on the complaint of a man who was allegedly sodomized, the Lucknow police raided a park frequented by MSM and where, at the time of the raid, nongovernmental organization (NGO) representatives were undertaking a safe-sex practices demonstration. Those arrested included an activist from Bharosa Trust, an NGO promoting safe sex and conducting HIV outreach to MSM. The offices of both Bharosa and Naz Foundation International were subsequently raided, with police seizing safe-sex advocacy materials (Narrain 2004). The police framed the raids as the busting of a “gay club” and an “international sex racket.” Arrested employees were charged with indulging in and propagating “unnatural sex” under the broad purview of Section 377. Charges were also filed under Section 292 (sale of obscene books), Section 120b (criminal conspiracy), and Section 109 (abetment to unnatural sexual activity) of the Indian Penal Code. The array of educational materials seized included condoms, lubricants, videocassettes, photographs, and a dildo used to demonstrate proper condom use. This collection of items was reported in the media in pornographic terms, despite NGO documents and papers evidencing their use for education and advocacy (Kole 2007). As a result, Naz's Lucknow offices were sealed and its director, Arif Jafar, and another employee were detained without bail.

On 2 July 2009, the Delhi High Court handed down a landmark judgment in *Naz Foundation v. Government of NCT of Delhi and Others* to amend Section 377 by excluding consensual
same-sex behavior in private from the purview of the law. This amendment (a reading
down of the legal code) effectively decriminalized homosexuality in India. However, the
ruling remained provisional until the Indian Supreme Court approved it. The battle against
Section 377 was led by prominent LGBT rights groups based out of Bangalore, New Delhi,
and Mumbai that had worked arduously over almost two decades to legalize homosexuality
in India. For instance, in addition to a number of urban support groups and counseling
centers, queer pride marches had been organized in major metropolitan cities in India,
including Kolkata, Mumbai, Bangalore, and Delhi, quickly proliferating to less cosmopolitan
cities, such as Ahmedabad, Hyderabad, Chennai, and Bhubaneshwar. The 2009 ruling was
celebrated among LGBT groups and allies across metropolitan India as a watershed
moment of national uncloteting (Liang 2009). But backlash from civil society, as well as
religious and conservative groups, led to another legal challenge in the Indian Supreme
Court.

Backlash to the Naz Ruling and Recognition of LGBT
Rights

An astrologer, a prominent yoga guru, and child rights groups, among others, filed a
petition in the Supreme Court of India challenging the High Court judgment with the claim
that homosexuality was against Indian culture and that Section 377 prevented HIV/AIDS by
criminalizing same-sex behavior. In December 2013 the Indian Supreme Court, based on
these petitions, overruled the 2009 Naz judgment with the rationale that the law pertained
not to any specific identity, but to “unnatural” sexual behavior—that is, nonprocreative
behavior. Between 2009 and 2013, numerous English-language television news channels
aired debates among the supporters and opponents of the law who discussed
homosexuality, colonial morality, and Indian culture in relation to the legal reform of
Section 377. This period was significant owing to the heightened visibility of LGBT rights
on the one hand, and backlash and controversy in various social and cultural contexts on
the other. However, the rights discourse remained confined to mostly urban and a few
semiurban centers in India.

The Supreme Court judgment was welcomed by conservative groups who had warned of
consequences like the moral breakdown of society and a potential rise in rates of HIV/AIDS
if homosexuality were legalized. One of the petitioners, Baba Ramdev, a popular spiritual
guru, also claimed that yoga could cure homosexuality, a statement that was decried by
various LGBT activists and public health workers (Deccan Naz Foundation International
Chronicle 2013). In 2016 an online media group, the Quint, conducted a sting operation on
Ramdev’s Ayurvedic clinics in Delhi, which were selling for $18 energy tonics to cure the
“mental disorder” of homosexuality (Agarwal and Dam 2017). The 2013 judgment that
reinstated Section 377 led to a series of protests by Indian and Western activists globally.
This event, called the Global Day of Rage, took place on 15 December 2013 across such
major metropolitan centers as Delhi, Kolkata, Chennai, London, Toronto, Los Angeles, and Sydney, as well as smaller cities like Lucknow; Ann Arbor, Michigan; and Philadelphia. In early 2018, in response to a series of review petitions, a five-judge panel in the Indian Supreme Court began examining the recriminalization judgment. On 6 September 2018, the Supreme Court ruled that same-sex sexual activity could no longer be prosecuted under Section 377, effectively decriminalizing homosexuality.

**Naz's Viability**

The return to power in 2014 of the Hindu right-wing National Democratic Alliance (NDA), led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has dramatically altered South Asia’s cultural and political landscape. During its tenure, the militant-minded NDA has been escalating conflicts with its neighbors, Pakistan and China, causing geopolitical instability. In India, the NDA’s nationalist, anti-intellectual approach to governance has created an environment hostile to social movements, free speech, dissent, and minority rights. For instance, in 2016 the NDA government revoked the licenses of twenty-five foreign-funded NGOs based on allegations of “antinational” and terrorist activities. Some of these NGOs were engaged in advocacy around issues of caste discrimination, the environment, and human rights—issues that the NDA sees as adversely affecting India’s international reputation.

The NDA government’s effort to curb dissent by shutting down NGOs promoting social, environmental, and political causes, combined with the NDA’s longstanding anti-LGBT position and its opposition to the legal reform of Section 377, makes it imperative for an organization like Naz Foundation to continue its work in the areas of public health and sexuality rights. The foundation’s partner organization, Lawyers Collective, was targeted in the NDA’s NGO sweep, given the organization’s work in pursuing justice for the victims of riots in Gujarat, a state once ruled by Modi. In 2017 the NDA also blocked the funding of the Public Health Foundation of India, a public-private partnership supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The government alleged that the Gates Foundation had an agenda to promote the interests of Western pharmaceutical companies in India through the partnership’s immunization program (Najar 2017).

Given these political developments, the role of the Naz Foundation becomes even more crucial. Deeply entrenched and widely prevalent social, religious, and cultural attitudes that regard homosexuality as anathema to Indian society, along with the NDA’s anti-LGBT rights agenda, make it imperative that the Naz Foundation continue to provide support to such vulnerable groups as MSM, sex workers, and transgender people. The foundation’s grassroots role goes beyond legal empowerment. Its viability may be at stake in the face of ascendant Hindu right-wing politics, but given the Naz Foundation’s international visibility, the strength of India’s social movements, and India’s rapidly changing political landscape, Naz will remain a leading force in securing justice for gender and sexual minorities in India.
SEE ALSO HIV/AIDS in South and Southeast Asia; MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia; Section 377 in South Asia

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Neoliberalism in Africa

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The impact of neoliberal policies on the African LGBTQI rights movement.

Neoliberalism, a set of economic policies that have become widespread since the 1980s, has elicited controversial reactions around the globe. Some see neoliberalism as the logical evolution of liberalism, whereas others contend that it is a distortion of classical liberal ideas for the sole purpose of corporate enrichment. These classical liberal ideas stemming from the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century European Enlightenment transformed the way the modern world structures itself economically and politically. In its classical form, promoted by thinkers such as John Locke (1632–1704) and Adam Smith (1723–1790), liberalism advocated the abolition of government intervention and corporate monopolies in favor of free-market-based competition and enterprise. Economically and politically, individuals and their self-interest provided the theoretical foundations of freedom as an outcome of market-based transactional processes between specialized assets regulated by the law of supply and demand (Brown 2005). For example, a country that specializes in the production of wine finds reason to trade with another country with expertise in the production of shoes. Unhindered supply and demand in this sense rewards all parties with just prices at equilibrium. Politically speaking, self-informed individuals are seen as the vectors of freedom presented as choice, and democracy as an outcome of a deliberative process where optimal ideas and policies are arrived at through general consensus. Institutions of consent (the state, the law), in this sense, become the backbones of democracy, which is supposed to first and foremost protect individuals from the abuse of corporate power—that is, state sovereign prerogatives and special interest groups. With the ascension of Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) and Margaret Thatcher (1925–2013) to power in the 1980s in the United States and the United Kingdom, respectively, two features of classical economic and political liberalism, individual self-interest and resistance against state intervention, acquired a new momentum in global politics with devastating effect on developing countries in general and the African continent in particular.

Neoliberalism is distinct from its predecessor, classical liberalism, in three ways: First is the way it uncritically hails the market as the sole rationale and organizing principle of economic, political, and social life. Second is its aggressive determination to dismantle any other demand that is not marketized/marketizable a priori. Third is its uncritical reliance on corporate yet migrant power, as capital crosses national borders faster than people in a
globalized economy. Economic liberalization provided a foundation for globalization, and global finance has become the straitjacket for disciplining states. While individuals may find themselves on different streams of supply and demand, the individual entrepreneur who supplies “solutions” is hailed above the person who demands social justice, equal pay, clean air, gender equality, and so on. Thus, in the neoliberal market, not all demands are equal. Furthermore, where demands are formulated, the individuals and society are told that the state alone no longer provides the solution.

Neoliberal economic policies introduced since the Reagan and Thatcher eras have negatively affected Africa. In particular, the structural adjustment programs devised in the 1980s and rolled out by the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund) used conditional financial assistance to force neoliberalism into Africa. The mantra then was that developing countries could grow and reduce poverty only if they borrowed from the market while cutting government intervention in the economy. Privatization and deregulation that divest state responsibility to the private profit-making sector was sold to African countries in the name of free trade, and price mechanisms became the only diktats of progress. Consequently, in most countries food and education subsidies were eliminated, wages were cut, national currencies were devalued, long-term lucrative contracts were signed with corporate extractive industries with no significant national tax windfall (Ayangafac, Bulcha, and Bekele 2016), and land grabbing for agribusiness displaced small farmers. As the Ugandan economist Yash Tandon (2015) puts it, neoliberalism in Africa has all the features of neocolonialism functioning through development aid that corrupts state policies. Thus, Tandon argues that trade is not always a manifestation of cooperative interest, as liberals and neoliberals would have it, but is sometimes also a strategy within a kind of war that is not a one-sided story. Capitulation and resistance therefore characterize African responses to neoliberal economic policies.

Through privatization—including all sorts of public-private partnerships as the new conditionality of transnational trade agreements—the state has relinquished its power to regulate, to provide social services, and to effectively monitor its new corporate neoliberal contractors. Trade unions have been squashed almost everywhere, social services have been privatized, market deregulation has leveled the playing field between domestic and foreign entrepreneurs in public procurement, wages have gone down with the increased availability of global capital, inequality has increased between the 1 percent owners of great wealth and the 99 percent left out of neoliberal economic policies (Piketty 2014), and the revolving door of economic hit men (Perkins 2004) has fueled bankruptcy and wars in Africa. The flow of money in electoral politics has undermined political institutions (Mkandawire 2001) everywhere, and there has been a rise in conservative parties, the alt-right, and neo-Nazi parties, which find allies in Africa in the neoliberal religiosity of depoliticized “prosperity gospel” (Carney 2016). Radical Islamists have burned entire villages in northern Nigeria, and young girls there have been caught in the crossfire as if in a real war zone. Unchecked concessions to big fishing companies have decimated the coast
of Somali, resulting in traditional fishermen turning to piracy to survive. While many still talk about “ethnic wars” in Africa, the arms industry is booming there and the merchants of death remain invisible. In sum, the highest bidder takes all, including traditional spaces for democratic contestation. Even if one concedes that early structural adjustments were mainly imposed on one-party regimes, the new faces of neoliberalism are hard to detect in part because economic liberalism has shifted the focus from states to self-empowered individuals. The rise of nongovernmental organizations is a testimony to this shift in Africa—a turn in global policy that spares none, not even LGBTQI activism.

In postapartheid South Africa, neoliberal policies have induced the casualization of labor (that is, part-time employment or employment without any benefit or real wages) in the public sector and at the local government level, making privatization and outsourcing conflict laden, especially in waste-collection services in a city such as Cape Town (Miraftab 2004). In 2001 Ghanaian civil society mounted a campaign against the World Bank–backed water privatization scheme (Amenga-Etugo and Grusky 2005), highlighting the new faces of neoliberal conditionalities after the implementation of structural adjustment programs. Neoliberal reforms at Makerere University have created distortions, led to fee hikes, and undermined higher education in Uganda (Mamdani 2007), as has happened elsewhere on the continent. High external debt fueled corruption and led to a high cost of living and low quality of public services in Nigeria (Igwe, Abdullah, and Sherko 2016). Gender roles in Africa were also transformed under neoliberal economic policies. Thomas Hendricks (2015) notes that hyperphallic performances became even more important in the performance of masculinity, as male self-esteem deriving from men’s traditional role of being family breadwinners was threatened under the high levels of unemployment in Africa that the structural adjustment programs induced. In Mozambique, the devastation of structural adjustment programs led to the rise of Pentecostal churches. Unable to get efficient delivery of public health services, Mozambican women turned to Pentecostal churches to seek spiritual help for reproductive health, while men turned to traditional healers to manage the stress of unemployment (Pfeiffer, Gimbel-Sherr, and Augusto 2007). In the wake of government retrenchment in the late 1990s in Kenya, local villages on the southeastern border turned to Tanzanian witch finders to provide an explanation for what they termed “an alarming increase in uncontrollable and deadly forms of witchcraft” (Smith 2005, 141)—an example of a local community working to counter and appropriate global market forces. By and large, men in Africa are seen as the interpreters of global economic liberalization either as church leaders or as witch doctors.

**LGBTQI Activism in Neoliberal Africa**

If neoliberal ideology is primarily rooted in economic thinking, it is also a cultural trend that reorders social relations through the devolution of responsibility. Thus, as demands for rights—and more specifically LGBTQI rights—emerge globally and in Africa, it becomes
interesting to interrogate the dis/connections between identity discourse and global neoliberalism in its cultural and political applications. These dis/connections are important to understand in order to respond to antiqueer criticism in Africa. One of the criticisms of queer rights in Africa is that it fosters cultural warfare between Western and African values. Culture and values under contestation are certainly linked to sexual mores but also extend to the deployment of political recognition, which, “albeit important, is being used by queer activists in Africa to submerge an all-encompassing socio-economic struggle” (Ossome 2013, 33). That is, the politics of recognition that accompanies LGBTQI politics is inscribed in liberal and neoliberal agendas that participate in the erasure of conversations on the broad-based distribution concerns of traditional social justice movements worldwide and in Africa. “The tendency in some queer theory [and practice] to separate rather than complicate the relationship between economic politics and identity politics, and between market, state, and family, ironically can serve to reinforce the rigid identity conventions and intimacy regulations this queer theory aims to unsettle,” the legal scholar Martha T. McCluskey warns (2009, 115). Thus, it becomes politically and socioeconomically relevant to ascertain where the ideological and institutional architectures of current queer activism and scholarship in Africa fall in the spectrum of capitulation-resistance to a neoliberal order. The focus here is not on African queer resistance against the use of aid (Abbas 2012) to induce change in laws regarding LGBTQI persons in Africa. The emphasis is more generally on the silence regarding development practices that, though not targeting the LGBTQI community in particular, weaken society as a whole.
Despite its focus on transnational human rights institutions (Thoreson 2014), queer scholarship in Africa has yet to unpack the relationship between LGBTQI activism and global economic trends and class analysis. This oversight and neglect of macroeconomic factors on LGBTQI existence is not peculiar to Africa. It is one that is articulated as a critique of a certain kind of queer rights and the “equality discourse” that, while promoting gay mainstreaming and what Lisa Duggan (2003) calls “homonormativity,” simultaneously perpetuates indifference to dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions. This fundamental indifference is neoliberal in essence, as the “gay movement” favors “public recognition of a domesticated, depoliticized privacy,” Duggan argues. Furthermore, this neoliberal “homonormativity comes equipped with a rhetorical recoding of key terms in the history of gay politics: ‘equality’ becomes narrow, formal access to a few conservatizing institutions, ‘freedom’ becomes impunity for bigotry and vast inequalities in commercial life and civil society, the ‘right to privacy’ becomes domestic confinement, and democratic politics itself becomes something to be escaped” (Duggan 2003, 65–66).

To understand what this critique means for Africa, one has to unpack what heteronormative assumptions and institutions are, as well as how they are intertwined with a neoliberal ideology. The qualifier “heteronormative” here is meant to capture a hegemonic system of belief, not sexuality per se. Thus, ideas of equality and freedom, while inoffensive on the surface, become hegemonic capitulation discourses in neoliberal ideology because they encircle individuals with nothing else but themselves subject to a market rating based on consumption alone. These types of freedom and equality are atomized, selfcentered, and depoliticized because they are no longer relational but depend solely on extracted bits and pieces of the self, easily marketized. One implication of this is that solidarity rarely cuts across single issues. LGBTQI groups may demand access to better health services as an entitlement, but they will not interrogate the international trade policies that make such services unavailable, onerous, or no longer provided by the state but only through its proxies/contractors in the first place. LGBTQI groups may demand political rights while remaining unaware of, or silent about, policies that privatize education, access to clean water, and other key social services in the neoliberal state.

In neoliberal thinking, the ethics of responsibility never rises beyond the self. Groups that compete for funding try to devalue each other as much as possible in the eyes of funders whose modes of acquisition of wealth are never questioned. In the neoliberal model, LGBTQI persons see themselves as self-organizing and autonomous from society if the conversation is not revolving around sexual orientation, rights, and identity. In the words of the geographer Gavin Brown (2012), these “specific (neoliberal) techniques of the self”
mean that “people consume products and experiences that confirm their identity as ‘gay.’
This investment in [identity] consumption means that people no longer relate to each other
as active participants in the creation of society, but as the owners (or not) of things that are
divorced from the processes by which they came into being.” Thus, radical sexual politics,
not gay neoliberalism, renders possible linkages that embed LGBTQI concerns in broader
social communities while resisting a hegemonic approach to identity. One should therefore
be wary of the liberatory conflict in neoliberal ideology and the disciplining nature of its
tenets, including conflict manifested in one’s understanding of identity politics. Imagining
creative ways of belonging and decolonizing sexualities in Africa is important in
interrogating hegemonic modes of appropriation and presentation of the self that partake
in a neoliberal order as a possible cause of divorce, beyond homophobia, between queers
and society.

The political theorist Wendy Brown (2005) notes that not enough attention has been paid
to the “political rationality” of neoliberal policies beyond the market. What interests Brown
is neoliberalism as a form of governmentality (how one thinks about the broader meanings
of government and administration beyond the state) and practice of empire that
foregrounds social relations and actions in market rationality even if the market itself
remains a distinctive institution. Thus, politically speaking, neoliberalism assaults citizens
with market values that mediate and transform social analysis. Human action, from
Brown’s perspective, is subject to the law of profitability and production (human and
institutional) seen as resulting from “rational entrepreneurial action” following the logic of
scarcity and “moral valueneutrality” (2005, 40). For activism, one consequence of the
neoliberal model is that it produces citizens “who strategize for [themselves] among
various social, political, and economic options, not one[s] who strive with others to alter or
organize these options” (43). The fact remains, however, that there is no such thing as a
value-free regime of freedom. This recognition leads one not just to consider personal
freedom but also to engage in radical thinking about who/what else is subjugated as a
result/necessity of one’s freedom.

As Brown further elaborates, “Neoliberal subjects are controlled through their freedom—
not simply, as thinkers from the Frankfurt School through [Michel] Foucault have argued,
because freedom within an order of domination can be an instrument of that domination,
but because of neoliberalism’s moralization of the consequences of this freedom” (44). That
is, neoliberalism has ceased to self-interrogate about the meaning and values of its
rationality but instead focuses on profitability and efficiency. With regard to Africa, to
conjecture that the processes of presentation and representation of LGBTQI issues is
embedded in neoliberal thinking is not to suggest that queer persons benefit from queer
activism in the same way corporations do with economic liberalization. It is rather to
recognize the need to articulate options that are value laden and value driven in ways that
speak to the broad recognition of Africa and its struggle as the foil without which African
queerness cannot exist. It is further to incite or provoke reflection on the ways in which the
death of the state in neoliberal thinking and policies mirrors the death of society in market-based organizational approaches to identities. The term market-based refers to the kinds of interventions that barely leave the boardrooms—those that produce more reports and memos than conscious subjects who speak about community liberation as if it were personal and of individual freedom as if survival were predicated on the community’s cooperation.

Put differently, African queer subjectivities should be as concerned about the weakening of collective human and public institutions as about the values that this failing imposes on society. The maximization of wealth and rights can, indeed, become the token of democracy, but it can hardly center “on developing and enhancing the capacity of citizens to share power and hence to collaboratively govern themselves” (Brown 2005, 59). This is not a renunciation of rights but rather a recognition of the entrapment and alienation of the global neoliberal order against which Africa wrestles. Queer scholars and the queer movement are not insulated from this global dynamic and its ideology and values. A 2016 critique by activists is revealing about important stories and feelings that do not make headline news.

In an op-ed, Liesl Theron, John McAllister, and Mariam Armisen (2016) wrote at length about the challenges of LGBTQI activism in Africa. They pointed to competition and antagonism between individual activists, mismanagement, and outright corruption that prevent sustained collaboration. Also cited were structural problems, such as an organizational model and managerialism more accountable to boards of directors and sometimes detrimental to grassroots preferences. A donordriven agenda was highlighted as sometimes obstructing strategic and tactical maneuvering at the street level.

Obviously, not everything that goes on in queer activism in Africa is bleak. But, as the political scientist Hakima Abbas (2012) explains, what is hidden from the metaphoric light of grand narratives about donors’ “progressive” engagement in LGBTQI rights in Africa can be revealing about the North-South liberal managerial mind-set. Interestingly, one recognizes in the account by Theron, McAllister, and Armisen the signature of neoliberal performance based on competition (sometimes ethical and other times unethical), and the erosion of nonmonetized solidarities. In fact, some have come to unthink LGBTQI activism outside monetized transactions mediated by donor finance. Furthermore, one cannot help but note a similarity between the critique of international queer managerialism and the development managerialism that scholars and policy makers throughout the developing world have denounced as amounting to neoliberal trade war. Managerialism as an ideology is premised on the idea that “both capitalism and society should mirror the way corporations are managed” (Klikauer 2013, 5). Although it shares ideological affinities with neoliberalism, managerialism is fundamentally antidemocratic and pervades both the profit and nonprofit world. At the core of managerialism is the problem of control and the increased alienation of society and nonmanagerial functions.
Here then appears the intersection and similarities of experiences between the African state as an entity that is often viewed and treated as a policy taker rather than a policy maker within global international financial institutions, and queer activism in its relation to global philanthropy. Thus, it matters less whether the focus is on the profit or the nonprofit sector; Africa in its relation with the world, queer or not, cannot be understood outside of the political economy of neoliberal prescriptions. In the United States, archives such as Against Equality have not just connected the dots between the rise of neoliberalism, “the privatization of everyday life[,] and the formation of a state that increasingly places the burden of care upon the family as a unit as opposed to the state” (Chávez, Conrad, and Nair 2016, 216). Against Equality also critiques the nonprofit mode of organizing for queer activism as participating in the machinery of the neoliberal state and sees this model as, by and large, indifferent to the economic and class value that accrue to those who are already well-off at the expense of the rest. The take-home point for Africa here is to reflect on the trade-offs of mainstreaming LGBTQI rights without simultaneously attending to the complex structures of oppression that affect African people, cultures, and institutions.

**An Ethics of Resistance and Engagement**

Similarity in feelings of alienation between activists and the African state leads one to imagine an ethics of engagement with social justice under different terms. Here again, the voices of activists lead the reflection. Admittedly, corporate organizing may breed “a ‘perfect storm’ of pressures that stifle the potential to create or maintain genuine, strong relationships between activism and the lived realities of the grassroots” (Theron, McAllister, and Armisen 2016).

Beyond the individual and institutional irrationalities of neoliberalism, Abbas outlines the urgency and possible contours of a new kind of queer movement in Africa when she writes that conversations need to start not

> from the point of view of “gay rights” but from a framework of queer liberation ... [and seek] not to separate LGBTI issues from the broad spectrum of issues that affect all Africans including Queer Africans. This implies that what affects Africans negatively is indeed bad for Queer Africans but also, and critically, that the reverse holds strong.

(2012)

Radical politics of inclusion of queer persons in Africa therefore necessitates a critical reassessment of frames of presentation and recognition to deal with their hegemonic
aspects. Radical politics of liberation entails coming to terms with the realization that “in negotiating their citizenship claims [LGBTQI individuals also] adopt economic mechanisms which appear paradoxically to eschew active participation within broader political and social rights paradigms that most legitimately represent their claims as citizens” (Ossome 2013, 36). Radical liberation will be nonhegemonic or will not be at all.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara; Homonationalism in Africa; Neoliberalism in Latin America

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Neoliberalism in Latin America

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The impact of neoliberal policies on Latin America's LGBTI communities.

While Latin America and the Caribbean have, throughout the course of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, become global laboratories for neoliberal policies (often stemming from state and corporate policies emanating from the Global North), this entry centers on how the focus on the economy has affected LGBTI communities with varying degrees of violence, particularly because neoliberalism depolarizes societies by producing a decline in interest groups while leaving social policies in the hands of international institutions, banks, and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In this way, the LGBTI policy reforms that took place in the region have had a range of impacts on individuals, favoring those who participate in the activities dictated by mainstream ways of life driven by consumption, such as marriage. This entry starts by introducing the politics and history behind neoliberalism and then focuses on how this ideology translates to the life of LGBTI communities in the region.

Political and Historical Background

Economic neoliberalism is an ideology that emphasizes the importance of free-market competition with minimal government interference; when applied to governance, it results in policies that seeks to constrain intervention by the government to redistribute wealth or influence the economic market. Critics of neoliberalism argue that it produces a form of government that targets the welfare reforms advanced by social democracies: a participatory state acting as a redistributor of wealth is, for this ideology, a threat. This has very much been the case throughout Latin America, where in places such as Chile, Peru, and Colombia it has translated into a decrease in the funding available for public health, education, and social security; it has also weakened regulations on labor, financial trading, and commodity production. According to the 1975 report Crisis of Democracy, produced by the Trilateral Commission (formed in 1973 by world and business leaders to address the challenges of globalization), one of the central justifications for neoliberalism is that "too much democracy" works against that very democracy as states become unstable and ungovernable, as theorists such as Milton Friedman, Gary S. Becker, and George Gilder argue. In other words, "too much democracy" means reversing safety regulations and antipoverty programs (Crozier, Huntington, and Watanuki 1975). For this reason,
neoliberalism proposes that the state pull back from its role as social intermediary and delegate its authority to the market, emphasizing the benefits of a laissez-faire economy in a return to liberal ideals.

Yet, what results is not an explicit return to the classic ideas promoted by thinkers such as the influential Scottish economist Adam Smith (1723–1790), famous for creating the first comprehensive system of political economy in his 1776 book *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. While the free market of nineteenth-century liberalism had its gaze fixed on the unrestricted exchange that would occur in the absence of government intervention, the principal organizer of neoliberalism is competition between individuals (and, increasingly, corporations) as a driving force itself. The market ceases to be the natural and spontaneous space that Smith argues for and instead becomes something deliberately created to shape appetites and rivalries between individuals. Competition, in this sense, emerges as a guiding principle of the relationships among the members of a community (*Foucault 2008*). Here, individuals responsible for their own destiny shoulder the risks that the state was previously responsible for reducing when it protected its members from the vicissitudes inherent in the unequal system that capital promotes. The politics behind neoliberal ideology, as Maurizio Lazzarato explains, “promote insecurity, inequality, and individualization as part of ensuring the conditions for power to exercise a hold over conduct” (*2009, 110*).

As the market becomes the arbiter of human life, not all individuals are assigned the same worth. A lifestyle that the market deems “meritorious” provides tools to achieve “success” in society. On the contrary, those who do not participate in these *mainstream* forms of living are subordinated, blamed, and even criminalized by that very same market (*Lazzarato 2009*). In other words, neoliberalism brings to light the question of who is worthy of protection: that is, who is able to enter into forms of protected citizenship and who is deprived of this protection.

This anti-interventionist cocktail based on a vision of “too much democracy” has been particularly devastating for the many Latin American countries that have applied these policies with differing degrees of fanaticism and violence. According to David Harvey, neoliberalism had as its first laboratory Chile during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet (r. 1973–1989), which came about from the ousting of democratically elected Salvador Allende in 1973 with the support of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency). The torture, execution, and “disappearance” (i.e., extrajudicial killing) of individuals had as its parallel the application of economic policies that promoted the indiscriminate opening of the country’s markets to international trade, the reduction of public spending, and the financial liberalization and sale of state companies (*Harvey 2005*). In Argentina, the implementation of neoliberal policies also occurred against the backdrop of state terror with the military junta that governed from 1976 to 1983. The 1976 coup d’état annulled social movements and dismantled the presence of trade unions, which fulfilled the dual objective of
depoliticizing civil society and destroying domestic industry, while increasing unemployment and the precarization of work (e.g., the increase of short-term contractual work and repeal of employee termination regulations). It also eradicated LGBTI movements such as the Frente de Liberación Homosexual (Homosexual Liberation Front), which had been established in 1971 and was composed mainly of union members from different sectors. Many of its participants were kidnapped and later disappeared by the Junta (Jáuregui 1987).

From the 1980s on, neoliberalism would be strengthened as a dual process in which the recession of the state as guarantor of social security coexisted with the advancing democratization of countries in the region. On the one hand, political and economic violence wreaks havoc on the most vulnerable sectors of the population, including an increase in systemic unemployment in indigenous and Afro-Latino populations that were forced to emigrate to cities across the region, land appropriation by large landowners, and an expansion of state surveillance of LGBTI people of color, particularly sex workers. In Peru, for example, the neoliberal policies of Alberto Fujimori’s government (1990–2000) were combined with the state’s fight against insurgent groups, serving as an opportunity to criminalize the peasant population and, consequently, to justify state terror and social cleansing. The displacement of rural communities to the city informalized employment by forcing migrants into street work (from street selling to sex work) and exposing them to police control. The similarities here with the case of Colombia are astonishing. The government of Álvaro Uribe (r. 2002–2010) generated an unprecedented transfer of state resources to the fight against the leftist rebel group Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC; Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) with disastrous consequences for farmers. During Uribe’s administration, informal repression of the rural working class increased considerably and involved the countless summary executions of farmers falsely identified as insurgents, known as the “false positives” scandal, which came to light in 2008. The violence in the countryside not only forced the emigration of hundreds of thousands of people of color but also dismantled resistance against industries fueled by neoliberal ideology, including oil, forestry, and precious metals such as gold.

While neoliberalism continues to dismantle social protections for marginalized peoples throughout Latin America and the Caribbean (as it does elsewhere around the world, especially in the Global South), at the same time, countries in the region have sought to increase citizen participation and to protect individual rights and guarantees: examples include the constitutional reforms in Brazil (1988), Chile (1989), Colombia (1991), Peru (1993), Argentina (1994), Venezuela (1999), Ecuador (2008), and Bolivia (2009), which in most cases made the justice system more accessible and less complex so as to facilitate its use. These reforms have extended acknowledgment of the rights of persons with nonnormative identities, including ethnic minorities and those with dissident sexualities. As Leticia Sabsay argues when discussing queer politics in neoliberal times, “It has been precisely through the politics of difference and the multiplication of (sexual, cultural,
ethnic, religious) identities that the liberal constitution of the citizen-subject has expanded” (2014, 101).

The coexistence of neoliberalism and democracy in Latin America has created a contradictory reality in which the former strives for economic liberty and the self-sufficiency of the individual, while the latter works for political equality and the common good. This is why the recognition of sexual rights has not unfolded in the same way for all people, as can be seen, for example, with the unequal treatment of the members of LGBTI communities. Sabsay speaks of these new paradigms of acceptance as central to the construction of a public space that imagines a

new sexual respectability, namely one that is reinscribing sexual attachments within the horizon of hetero and homonormative values associated with coupledom and marriage as the model that continues to be hegemonic in the configuration of national discourses. Although the politics of sexual diversity is leading to a more inclusive frame, it is re-inscribing the boundaries of citizenship across moral frontiers. (SABSAy 2013, 177)

**Marriage**

Marriage, for instance, may easily become a way of reframing a set of hierarchies used by the oppressed to oppress one another. Lisa Duggan (2003) calls this reframing “homonormative,” and it appears, under neoliberalism, as part of an agenda that on the one hand fosters heterosexual mimicking and on the other minimizes LGBTI demands tied to transgender discrimination, police brutality, and fair access to jobs. In a way, expanding the boundaries of citizenship translates into economic reforms that tend to increase the number of consumers by enforcing policies permeated by dominant heteronormative assumptions and institutions, as is discussed in more detail below.

In Latin America, it could be said that marriage as a patriarchal institution par excellence has played an important role when sexual minorities in the neoliberal era start being recognized by the law. In effect, the legalization of same-sex marriage in countries such as Argentina (2010), Brazil (2013), Uruguay (2013), and Colombia (2016) is the result of a long process that began with the equity debates of the 1980s and that recognizes the rights of LGBTI communities in relation to the distinct social and economic benefits provided by the state that previously were enjoyed only by those in heteropatriarchal marriages. Having said this, it is also valid to affirm that marriage is an institution that not only facilitates access to social benefits, such as the pension system, but also grants access to
imaginaries of consumption that rely on the promotion of heteropatriarchal models of the family and marriage. In this way, neoliberalism is a flagship institution of “new household economics” (Cooper 2014, 44), as Gary Becker calls the new social contract that has as its objective protection from risks previously mitigated by the political institutions of welfare states now using the logic of the market itself. In a way, according to the Canadian economist Jean-Luc Migué (1933–), the household replicates a “unit of production in the same way as the classical firm” (Cooper 2014, 41). Up to a certain point, then, the emphasis on marriage forms one of the counterforces that restores disintegrating social relations that are behind the individualist ideology of neoliberalism that in various countries of the region has transcended the heteronormative domain.

Nevertheless, it is also fair to suggest that same-sex marriage has reduced the scope of LGBTI demands. Some call attention to this process, viewing it as a way in which neoliberalism—and its obsessive focus on institutional and legal recognition around issues such as marriage and adoption—depoliticizes certain communities, particularly the LGBTI community and especially members of the trans community (Richardson 2005). It is worth remembering that neoliberalism channels social struggles through the individual by disarticulating collective practices that would crystallize patterns of solidarity among members of groups that come together through shared needs. For instance, in the 1990s, while the city of Buenos Aires decriminalized transvestism by changing its code of statutes, transgender sex workers became the focus of a national debate because “the new code said nothing regarding the practice of prostitution” (Modarelli 2010, 304). As a result, fueled by the mainstream media, panic broke out over transgender women, who were depicted as “monsters to be sacrificed, [as] the goal was to preserve a violent, corrupt order in opposition to a few attempts at political liberalism” (305). And it turned out that “only a few human rights organizations and gay and lesbian organizations came to support the transgendered” (305).

Transgender People

It is important to remember that neoliberalism in countries such as Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Peru has informalized the economy and labor relations, which has a particular impact on LGBTI communities, particularly on transgender people, for whom the formal labor market generally becomes less accessible (Fernández 2010). If one considers that unemployment, for neoliberalism, is not a failure of the market but rather the fault of the worker for being “unqualified,” or for not conforming to the kind of work that the market needs, sexual labor becomes one of the few possible jobs for transgender women. As unions are weakened amid the increasing flexibility of labor regulations, there is no real positive action in place to protect transgender people, and more so when they do not conform to traditional gender roles mandated by the workplace. Today, Maurizio Lazzarato suggests, “to be employable, one must conduct oneself and have a lifestyle which is in
harmony with the market. Risk now relates to a combination of the unpredictable events and events that are calculable because they depend on individual's characteristics and conduct” (2009, 126), which are mainly based on cis- and heterosexual ideals.

Thus, it does not seem paradoxical that the decriminalization of transvestism in Latin America arising from democratizing processes has had as a counterpart more acute control over transgender sexual workers because today they pass through an ambiguous zone over which the police may exercise a wider legal range of action (Modarelli 2010). This increased policing of trans individuals, largely in urban spaces, coincides with an increase in migration (for various reasons) from countryside to city. The fact that transgender people are more likely to be forced to abandon their homes, especially because of household homophobia, must be considered alongside other types of violence that create this exodus, such as rural terrorism, the appropriation of farmed land, and environmental crises—all problems that bring trans individuals to urban spaces, many with no possible source of income other than that offered by work on the street exposed to police control (Prada Prada et al. 2012). So it is that trans women are exposed to the surveillance and control of public space and its logics of violence, including assault, extortion, rape, and even murder (Green 2010; Fernández 2010; Santamaría Fundación 2013). Here it can be seen that displacement as a political tool reinforces certain aspects of a patriarchy that reorders bodies through violence in terms of gender, race, and class, and normalizes that configuration, trapping individuals in a low-paying trade. For instance, in cities such as Cali, Colombia, which has been the forced destination for an increasing number of displaced transgender women, as of 2012, around 80 percent of them worked in the sex market at some point in their lives (Colombia Diversa 2012).

**Limited Progress but Some Clear Achievements**

Thus, the progress achieved in some countries in the region in the neoliberal era is limited, as Sabsay critiques, to a “universalization of individualized free will, rationality, and moral autonomy as the conditions of possibility of sexual politics within the field of sexual citizenship,” a position that “restrict[s] our ideas of political subjectivity to a specific cultural tradition, namely that of liberalism” (2014, 106). The universal subject, far from truly being so, has come to be associated with a certain European view of the citizen, an abstract condition that is recognized as such, as stated previously, in judicial institutions. From there one can observe that the acknowledgment of rights that protect queer individuals in daily life depends on actions of guardianship or protection, as in Colombia, Peru, or Argentina, and that the burden of putting them into practice usually falls to NGOs. In fact, this process of democratization influenced by neoliberalism has delegated the implementation and management of public policies to NGOs in order to transfer the responsibilities of the state to the private sector, filtering demands according to the logics of the market in the customer service relationship (Dagnino, Olvera, and Panfichi 2006).
For example, in Colombia, setting aside their important role in counseling transgender women who have been assaulted mostly by the military and the police, NGOs have narrowed LGBTI demands through the scope of *acción de tutela*, which is a kind of lawsuit instituted by the constitutional reform of 1991 as a way to make judicial proceedings easier to file. This is why, to a certain extent, common needs such as fair labor conditions or access to public health care are addressed only if claimed by the individual—precluding those individuals from coming together to make demands as a group. In this sense, by channeling social struggles through NGOs, the state has depoliticized them by dismantling to some degree collective practices such as social protests (*Lopes de Souza 2013*).

Still, there have been clear advancements, even for queer communities that do not align with nonmainstream lifestyles and for whom same-sex marriage does not provide increased benefits. For example, as of 2018, there have been laws implemented that make gender change on IDs more flexible, as in Argentina (*2012*), Ecuador (*2016*), Bolivia (*2016*), and Chile (*2018*), something that has facilitated access to benefits and social protections that until recently were unthinkable. The majority of advancements such as these have taken place as part of what is called the “pink tide,” a changeover in several Latin American governments from neoliberal administrations to socialism from the late 1990s to the beginning of 2010, thus destabilizing the free-market project. The end of this wave, however, also reveals how fragile advancements remain, as can be seen with the rise of center-right governments in countries such as Argentina, where President Mauricio Macri has promoted the Law of Religious Freedom, which grants the freedom to discriminate against the LGBTI community in innumerable ways under the guise of religious belief, or Brazil, where the administration of President Michel Temer has eliminated all federal resources that financed LGBTI organizations.

**SEE ALSO** *Neoliberalism in Africa; Sex Tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean*

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New Media in Asia

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The impact of digital technologies on LGBT populations in Asia.

In the mid-1990s the popular adoption of digital technologies by the general public gradually became evident in non-English-speaking regions, especially non–South Asian countries. The internet was first introduced to mainland China in 1994, to Singapore in 1994, and to Malaysia in 1995 (Berry, Martin, and Yue 2003). By 2002 Japanese was the third-most-used language on the internet after Chinese and English (McLelland 2003). In 2010 approximately onehalf of Vietnam’s urban population had used the internet (Justumus et al. 2013). Furthermore, by 2016, the number of internet users in the Philippines had reached 44 million, which represented more than 40 percent of the country’s population. Meanwhile, India witnessed its internet and cellular mobile phone booms early in the twenty-first century (Shahani 2008). The popular use of digital tools in making short videos and circulating these media materials (either online or in the VCD or DVD formats) for sociopolitical and/or entertainment purposes has also been widespread in Asian media markets since 2000.

These emerging cyber communities and digital practices demonstrate the surge in the use of new media in Asia since the late 1990s. During about the same period, the significant increase in the public visibility, activity, and knowledge of LGBT cultures accompanied the rise of late capitalism in some parts of Asia, including Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and Thailand (Berry and Martin 2003; Jackson 2011). Furthermore, rising along with the entangled technological, economic, and communicative transformations and progress were information flows within and about LGBT groups online and offline that transgressed geographical and linguistic boundaries. For example, the first South Asian cyber LGBT community—the Khush email list— was founded as early as 1992 (Shahani 2008). Thai LGBT cultures and markets have further expanded in the internet and digital age via “Thai-language queer web sites, chat rooms, web boards, and e-mail lists, along with the use of SMS texting and mobile phones” (Jackson 2011, 28). Digital technologies have also contributed to the knowledge production, identity formation, and political and cultural movements of Asian LGBT people. Take, for example, the Beijing-based queer film director Zi’en Cui’s influential theory of digital video activism, which understands Chinese digital filmmaking and screening as appropriated forms of arts and activism that can help form a historical archiving and presentation of LGBT cultures and construct nonmainstream
identities and spaces in performative ways (Bao 2015). In this vein, digital videos facilitate the building of Chinese-specific queer theory. These local, inter-Asian, and global digital communication and cultural flows eventually led not only to amplified, diversified articulations of nonnormative gender and sexual identities in Asia but also to Asian LGBT-identified people’s transcultural queer memories, imaginations, and mobilization (Martin 2009).

Nevertheless, the concurrent advent of a queer Asia in the age of new media does not substantiate the problematic theory of “global gays” (Altman 1997), which homogenizes the development of modern public discourses on Asian LGBT cultures as a direct product of the facilitated gender and sexual information flows from nonAsian, particularly Western, cultures in the globalist age. For example, as Peter A. Jackson (2009) revealed, the highly commercialized information published in nationally distributed Thai print media (such as the images in popular magazines) in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s has heavily shaped modern Thai lesbian, gay, and transgender cultures and identities. Therefore, against the backdrop of the still largely heteronormative mainstream societies in Asia today (whether for legal, historical, or religious reasons), the convergence of new media and LGBT cultures has brought about neither a simple borrowing of Western models in gender and sexual identifications nor a pure highlighting of local gender and sexual traditions and legacies (Boellstorff 2003). Instead, the queer Asia blossoming in this digital age features a promising, intricate proliferation of unique queer identification, representation, and subjugation in digitized mass communication and sociocultural productions. During this process, queer practices, positions, and logics function together as a powerful disruptive force in the digitized normative society of contemporary Asia.

The conjunctive force of queer and new	media has been operating as an indispensable constitutive element of Asian LGBT sociocultural manifestations and identifications. The negotiative alliance between the two designates a ubiquitous, though often uncomfortable and sometimes fleeting, intersection and transgression that works along, within, and against local, transcultural, and global mainstream public discourses. The collaborative manifestation of queer and new media in Asian history can be seen in two general, intertwined ways: the queering of communication in which mainstream media content and platforms have been queerly intervened with and appropriated for LGBT groups' communication and entertainment, on the one hand, and the digitized mediation of queer cultures and products in which LGBT-targeted or LGBT-themed cultural productions, which used to largely be contained underground, have been widely produced, distributed, and circulated through new media venues, on the other.

**The Asian Queering of New Media Communication**

In the past several decades, the arrival of wired, computerbased, and internet-mediated communication has enabled the multiplication of dating sites, location-based mobile apps,
online journals and magazines, email lists, and online forums in multiple Asian languages, as well as their popularization among local and diasporic Asian communities worldwide. Notable examples include the numerous Chinese-language cyber communicative platforms that have been proliferating, enabling ethnic Chinese people all over the world to connect since the first years of the twenty-first century (Martin 2009), and the online spaces that have been taken up by South Asian, especially Indian, diasporic groups since the late 1990s (Dasgupta 2017). These digital communicative platforms, gadgets, and formats have also significantly shaped Asian LGBT people’s social, sexual, and political lives in unexpected ways.

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**Chinese Gay Dating App Blued.** Gay Asian men have appropriated Western-originated dating apps, such as Jack’d and Grindr, while also embracing local versions, such as Blued.

Since the use of the internet in Taiwan was popularized in the 1990s, various means of online communication, publication, and circulation—such as the Chinese BBS (bulletin board system) and the online feminist and lesbian activist journal *G-zine*—have not only enhanced mass media communications surrounding lesbian, gay, feminist, and homosexual topics but also carved out a “transnational public sphere” online and developed waves of radical lesbian and feminist movements (Sang 2003). Later, in 2005, *Les+*, the only online lesbian magazine published in Mandarin in mainland China, was being issued and circulated online. This Beijing-based lesbian magazine eventually made possible and visible the vibrant local lesbian scene of the later years of the first decade of the twenty-first century. Meanwhile, during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, with “more than 43 million [internet] users” in India, online communication has enabled various spaces of “queer sextopia” for young gay and lesbian Indians (Shah 2016, 277). Malaysian lesbians have also been empowered to voice in cyberspace their political responses to the local official culture, which still deems sodomy to be an Islamic crime (Khoo 2003). In Singapore, where sodomy is also considered illegal in official and mainstream cultural discourses, the pager (beeper)—a technology that may not be considered “new” in the West—helped connect local lower-class lesbians in the 1990s (Yue 2003). In Hong Kong—a region with one of the highest rates of networked mobile phone use across the world (Tang 2016)—the local phone app Butterfly, which was designed for Hong Kong lesbian groups’
mobile social networking and dating, was launched in 2013. Since then, it has been extremely popular among Mandarin, Cantonese, and English users in sinophone communities, which have created online queer intimacies by conquering time and space restrictions (Tang 2016). Moreover, gay Asian men have actively appropriated the Western-originated dating apps Jack’d and Grindr. Local versions of such gay social networking apps—for instance, Blued, which originated in China—have been popularized among sinophone gay men around the world.

Furthermore, inter-Asian queer information flows and media communication have experienced a surprising upsurge in the digital age. Predominantly through music videos, movies circulated online, performances, images, and cross-national fan sites, androgynous male idols and hyperfeminine girl bands from Korea have inspired gay and lesbian Thais and Indonesians to perform transgressive and hybrid gender identities and looks (Käng 2014; Jung 2011). Some of this nonnormatively gendered and sexualized information in inter-Asian entertainment media and pop culture has even influenced the cultural and capital flows within local media and celebrity industries. The most sensational and intriguing example is the mobile phone text-message (SMS) voting activity that the Chinese audience of the Idol-style Chinese reality singing competition show Super Girl (2004–2006, 2009, 2011, 2016; Hunan Satellite Television) engaged in to support the transgender female (and potentially lesbian) singer Yuchun Li. The voting of Li’s fans not only generated enormous economic success for the show in 2005 but also helped to raise the profile of images and performances of nonnormative female genders (with lesbian connotations) in mainstream Chinese media. It was believed that the show, as a form of democratic entertainment, stimulated the largest grassroots voting movement within a pseudopublic sphere in modern Chinese history and carved out a feminist and queer space within Chinese society. This entertainment-focused, participatory practice ultimately points to the possibility of democratic social and political participation, autonomy, and articulation by the grassroots public under the authoritarian control and information blackout of the contemporary Chinese Communist Party/state, although monetary investment in SMS voting made it possible.

Later, other Asian-based reality television shows that manufacture queer idols and performances have adopted formats and voting styles similar to those of Super Girl. One notable example comprises the 2014 special segments of the Philippine daytime variety show It’s Showtime (2009–; ABS-CBN), titled “I Am PoGay” and “That’s My Tomboy.” These segments of the show allowed participants with nontraditionally gendered personas, some of whom were publicly out LGBT people, to perform and compete onstage for audience support. This explicit promotion of queer images, performances, and desires through collaboration and cooptation among the shows’ producers, performers, and audiences, facilitated by digital means of communication and participation, has discursively, yet tremendously, contributed to the acceptance and visibility of LGBT cultures in certain areas of Asia.
The Asian Mediation of Queer Cultural Productions

The employment of digital technologies in the cultural production, circulation, and consumption for, by, and about LGBT-identified groups has also been a common practice in this new media in Asia. Pirated versions of Taiwanese and Japanese homoerotic comics and literature; lesbian and gay television shows from the United Kingdom and the United States; and LGBT movies from Thailand, the United States, and Europe are often imported (e.g., to Taiwan, China, Indonesia, Vietnam, and Korea), and online Asian fans and audiences translate them, circulate them, and queerly rewrite them. These digitized grassroots practices, though often legally questionable, forcefully challenge both local media regulations on cultural and political content and the heteronormative structure of mainstream societies. For example, the Indonesian queer dubbing culture, which added local soundtracks to foreign media texts, not only enabled culturally specific LGBT subject positions but also worked as a pejorative force that countered local bans on and discrimination against LGBT cultures in the 1990s (Boellstorff 2003). Some of the pirated queer images from and media about developed global gay cities in the West that have been made available online to Asian audiences have even encouraged transnational queer imaginaries, escapism, and tourism among Asian media consumers (Zhao 2017).

This Asian mediation of LGBT-themed media and cultures also manifests itself in the media content that Asian LGBT organizations produce and circulate for social and political purposes. For instance, Vietnamese and Indian LGBT groups have used online platforms and social media for sexual health preventions (Dasgupta 2012; Justumus et al. 2013). Chinese Lala Alliance, a sinophone grassroots organization for lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, and intersex people founded in 2008, has actively employed online platforms and digital media to develop transnational networks, run queer fund-raising and internship projects, and publish online articles and reports on topics pertaining to the legislative and sociocultural struggles that LGBT groups face while dodging local government crackdowns and censorship. The use of digital video technologies has been common in grassroots Asian LGBT communities’ indie filmmaking, queer parades and protests, and other forms of sociopolitical activism. For example, nongovernmental queer film organizations in China have actively organized and supported film festivals, documentary training camps, screenings, competitions, and workshops for LGBT film practitioners and audiences since 2012 (Bao 2015).

In addition, since late in the first decade of the twentyfirst century, globally accessible video-streaming websites, such as YouTube, have been queerly deployed as handy channels for distributing indie LGBT films made in Asian regions where homosexuality-themed media has been banned from mainstream distribution venues, such as China and Singapore. A large number of Thai, Chinese, and Taiwanese LGBT-themed indie and commercial movies and television programs, such as the well-known Thai lesbian movie Yes or No
(2010; directed by Saratsawadee Wongsomphet), have been subtitled in diverse Asian languages and circulated on YouTube and other English-language videosharing websites. Moreover, various kinds of apps and downloading software, such as VPNs (virtual private networks) and eMule, have emerged to break the political information blackout and geoblocking on LGBT and feminist media content in a few Asian countries.

Meanwhile, LGBT-themed cultural products have been adapted and distributed across diverse media venues. For instance, online gay literature produced by grassroots, sometimes anonymous, writers and published in Chinese cyberspace are often adapted into films and online TV shows and thus available for sinophone and global audiences. Notable cases include the originally internetbased gay novel Beijing Story, which was made into the 2001 internationally renowned film Lan Yu by the Hong Kong director Stanley Kwan, and the online Chinese TV drama Addicted (2016; iQiyi platform), which was well received in sinophone communities, having been adapted from the popular gay novel Are You Addicted? (2013; by Chai Jidan), which was, in turn, first published on the famous Chinese fiction website Liancheng Read.

These digital tools and platforms have made online LGBT media productions more accessible across various media platforms and to a large number of LGBT-identified or queer-friendly audiences around the world. The digitized queer images and the queering of digital technologies in Asia have ultimately built up visualcultural sites for LGBT groups’ subject making, transnational political mobilization, and desire articulation.

**Paradoxes of the New Media in a Queer Asia**

The promising and intriguing digital queer phenomena in Asian sociopolitical arenas have allowed LGBT people to actively imagine and participate in a larger, globalized community and empowered LGBT parades and movements for equal rights and against discrimination, and they have even made the global mobility and public appearance of same-sex intimacy possible. Yet, problems and concerns regarding these queer uses of new media have also been prevalent in Asia.

A worrying digital divide affecting young, educated, urban people involves the exclusion of classed minorities within LGBT groups. This phenomenon has been prevalent transnationally. It can also be found within a single country (even developed nations such as Japan) or within communities with members of a wide socioeconomic demographic distribution (e.g., South Asian gay men groups) (Dasgupta 2017; Goggin and McLelland 2009; Shah 2016). Take, for example, a single sinophone LGBT group whose members are in diverse locales around the world. The use of different Chinese characters by the mainland Chinese and the Taiwanese, as well as the translinguistic differences in understanding “gay” and “queer,” may cause miscommunication and disharmony online (He 2009; Martin 2009).
Moreover, during the second decade of the twenty-first century, a globally networked pink economy has been emerging alongside the intertwined desiring voices of neoliberalism and cosmopolitanism in many Asian countries with local economic prosperity, such as Singapore, India, Korea, Japan, and China (Shah 2016). Misogynistic, homophobic, Occidentalist (stereotypical representations and/or imaginations about the West), and racist expressions, as well as online bullying and silencing, especially toward bisexual and transgender people and classed and ethnic minorities, have not been uncommon, even within digitized queer activist groups and spaces. For instance, a number of online social networking, communicative, and video-streaming sites, such as Facebook, have been viewed as free and convenient queer venues for the self-promotion of some gender nonnormative public figures, including the neutrosexual (zhongxing) girl band MissTER in Taiwan in 2011, the Singaporean SMZ Tomboy Crew in 2012, and the Chinese “boy band” FFC-Acrush, which consists of cross-dressing girls, in 2016. These online sites facilitate the distribution, circulation, and appreciation of queer performances, images, and interpretations. Yet, on the one hand, homonormativity, ageism, and lookism have been prevalent in these queer spaces, and, on the other hand, persistent debates surrounding the difference between onstage queer images/performances and real-life lesbianism/transgenderism, which have eventually catalyzed the self-distancing and self-silencing of real-world LGBT voices, have also dominated these sites.

Although the emergence of new media has enabled transcultural imaginaries and representations of LGBT communities both online and offline, these queer spaces and imaginations sometimes reflect the more severe invisibility and self-regulation of LGBT people in nonvirtual public spaces. For example, although the increasing popularity of mobile phone apps can be identified in Hong Kong, the diminishing of lesbian and gay public social spaces, such as lesbian bars and gay saunas, has been particularly evident in the same region in the twenty-first century (Kong 2011; Tang 2011). Additionally, although online queer sociocultural spaces have proliferated across Asia since the late 1990s, cyber spaces for queer cultural productions often serve either as “digital closets” or same-sex fantasy heterotopias: rather than directly confronting normative cultures, they sometimes help to sustain the offline heteronormative system of the real world by confining queerness to the unrealistic virtual world (Dasgupta 2017; Shah 2016).

These multifarious, disturbing aspects and problems of online and digital cultures in a seemingly burgeoning queer Asia serve to caution future scholarship against making simplistic and optimistic assumptions about the role of new media in the growth of Asian LGBT populations. For one thing, the contribution of digital technologies to the development and expansion of contemporary Asian LGBT groups, particularly in ways of knowledge formation and communication facilitation, has been tremendous. For another, the convergent force of queer and new media has inevitably been shaped by multiple sociopolitical factors, co-opted by capitalist and normative cultures and complicated by struggles within and about LGBT identities and politics. In this sense, the generative
alliance between queer and new media cultures does not necessarily herald a democratic, queer-friendly society in the near future. It certainly does, however, open up spaces for continuing negotiations and contestations between LGBT groups and mainstream sociocultural forces within a still largely heteronormative Asia.

SEE ALSO The Art of Queering Asian Mythology; Digital Cultures in Latin America; Eurovision Song Contest; Internet in Africa; Internet Queer Sites in the Middle East; Zhongxing Phenomenon

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The Nicaraguan Revolution

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LGBTI activism in Nicaragua from the 1960s to 1990, during the civil war and the Sandinista government that followed.

In July 1979 the military forces of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional (FSLN; Sandinista National Liberation Front) overthrew Nicaragua's Somoza dictatorship, which had been backed for decades by the United States. The Sandinistas instituted socialist reforms and confronted US-sponsored war before losing power in 1990 elections. The terms Nicaraguan Revolution and Sandinista Revolution refer both to the efforts to oust the Somoza regime in the 1960s and 1970s and to the programs of the Sandinista government from 1979 through 1990.

The Nicaraguan Revolution is significant to LGBTQ history for two key reasons. Most principally, gay and lesbian activism first developed extensively in Nicaragua in the 1980s, and it was both fostered and constrained by the revolution. In addition, gay and lesbian radicals played important roles in the Nicaraguan solidarity movement. Both phenomena revealed the ways that interconnections between socialist, feminist, and gay and lesbian politics energized the transnational gay and lesbian left.

Forming the FSLN and Ousting Somoza

The FSLN took its name from Augusto Sandino (c. 1893–1934), who in 1933 led a peasant militia in liberating Nicaragua from a decades-long occupation by the US Marines. Soon after Sandino's victory, the rightwing Nicaraguan general Anastasio Somoza García (1896–1956) ordered Sandino assassinated and took the presidency by coup. Under Somoza, the majority of Nicaraguans lived in deep poverty, and dissidents suffered violence from Nicaragua's National Guard. Somoza's rule became a family dynasty: in 1967 the general's second son, Anastasio Somoza Debayle (1925–1980), assumed power following a campaign that included assassinations of protesters by the National Guard.

Radicals founded the FSLN in 1961 and made it the central means of opposing the dictatorship. The FSLN was Marxist-Leninist and nationalist in orientation, and many of its leaders worked from exile in Cuba, Mexico, and the United States. In December 1972 a massive earthquake hit Managua, the Nicaraguan capital, killing roughly 20,000. Yet
Somoza sold international aid for profit rather than directing it to people in need. In response, popular support for the Sandinista cause grew. At the same time, the FSLN split into distinct "tendencies," with the "third tendency" favoring coalition with other leftists and with moderates. This tendency won leadership and power.

By 1977 prominent Nicaraguan leaders were demanding that Somoza resign, and the FSLN that year launched intensive military attacks. In 1978 the country entered all-out war: Somoza’s forces escalated reprisals, the FSLN seized the National Palace, and Managuans carried out a general strike. Somoza resigned on 17 July 1979, fleeing to Paraguay, where he was later assassinated. The FSLN entered Managua and fully seized control on 19 July 1979. Approximately 50,000 people had died in the war that led up to this point.

**In Power and under Attack, 1979–1990**

The Somoza regime had concentrated personal wealth while keeping the majority of the Nicaraguan population landless and illiterate. In response, the Sandinista government nationalized and redistributed land, established workers’ and women’s rights, and created education and public health programs. Starting in 1980, thousands of young Nicaraguans joined the Ejército Popular de Alfabetización (People’s Literacy Army), also known as the “literacy brigades.” Vaccination programs operated on a similar model, leading the World Health Organization to designate Nicaragua as a model of primary health care. The literacy and vaccination brigades brought urban Nicaraguans into rural areas and shifted the operation of the revolution from armed resistance to everyday life.

The Sandinista government and Nicaraguan people quickly faced attacks by *contras* (counterrevolutionaries) who were backed by Somoza loyalists and the United States. Contra opposition began immediately after July 1979 but expanded after US president Ronald Reagan (1911–2004) assumed office in January 1981. US support operated both aboveground and secretly. CIA operatives trained contras and passed them resources, and by 1983 the United States was mining Nicaraguan harbors and guiding air bombings of Managua. The US Congress moved to limit intervention in 1982 and 1984 but granted approvals in 1986. The Reagan administration also funded the contras secretly through arms sales to Iran and by collaborating with cocaine traffickers; the first of these networks was exposed in the 1987 hearings into the Iran-Contra scandal, and the latter by the journalist Gary Webb (1955–2004) and by a Senate subcommittee. Throughout the 1980s the United States also imposed economic sanctions that led to rapid inflation and shortages of food.

The Sandinistas responded to the contras through military conflict and by consolidating political power. From 1982 through 1988, they instituted a “state of emergency” that restricted civil liberties, including by allowing the government to detain contras without trial and restricting organizing outside the FSLN. Though this generated international
criticism, activists in the Central American solidarity movement largely overlooked the revolution’s human rights abuses, including those that subjugated indigenous and black Nicaraguans on the Atlantic coast. Solidarity activism grew when the Sandinistas asked global supporters to assist with the coffee harvest in 1983 and when the government held an internationally monitored national election in 1984. Daniel Ortega (1945–), already leader of the national junta, won the presidential election that year.

The violence of the contra war, the stresses of economic sanctions, and internal political debate led to the FSLN losing national elections in 1990. Violeta Chamorro (1929–), an ally of the United States and the widow of a journalist killed by Somoza’s forces in 1978, won the presidency. Nicaragua entered the 1990s with 30,000 dead from the contra war.

Gender and Sexuality in the Revolution and in the Solidarity Movement

Women played strong roles in the Nicaraguan Revolution; nearly a third of Sandinista military forces were women, and a number of women served as military leaders. Their prominence produced some progressive Sandinista policies in regard to women, and a significant number of lesbians came out during the era of the Sandinista Revolution.
some other anti-imperialist struggles. In the 1970s nearly a third of Sandinista military forces were women, and a number of women held military leadership. For example, Dora María Téllez (1955–) served as second in command in the seizure of the National Palace and later captured the city of León. In the 1980s women composed about a quarter of the army, and some women held government leadership; Tellez became the minister of health. The Sandinistas overturned a law that granted men property rights over women and children, and they instituted laws for equal wages and paid maternity leave. They also helped to shift gender and sexual politics by recognizing common-law marriages, ending legal distinctions for children born outside marriage, and banning sexist advertising. Sandinista women formed the Asociación de Mujeres Nicaragüenses Luisa Amanda Espinoza (AMNLAE; Luisa Amanda Espinoza Association of Nicaraguan Women), although as a formal party organization this group was more beholden to the government than independent.

In contrast with revolutionary Cuba, the Sandinista government did not develop clear policies regulating lesbians or gay men. Gay and lesbian people experienced persecution, but it was uneven rather than systematic. In the early years of the revolution, the Sandinista government closed some gay bars and heterosexual brothels; as in Bautista-era Cuba, same-sex culture had been associated with prostitution under Somoza. A significant number of lesbian women came out in the settings of newfound independence fostered by the FSLN militia and brigades. At the same time, the Sandinista army ejected some gay and lesbian people. Opponents of the FSLN described the Sandinistas as unmaking family norms and sought to discredit women leaders through rumors that they were lesbian.

A strong international movement grew in solidarity with Nicaragua, and many solidarity activists praised the revolution’s apparent feminist gains. Nicaraguan solidarity became important in gay and lesbian politics around the world. In the United States, gay and lesbian leftists saw themselves and Central Americans as holding a common enemy in the Reagan administration. In San Francisco, Central American immigrants settled next door to gay and lesbian communities, and this made solidarity an important venue for Latinx and anti-racist gay and lesbian organizing. (Latinx is a gender-neutral term to refer to Latino and Latina people.) Solidarity activists were divided, however, over how to understand sexual politics in Nicaragua. Some assumed that homosexuality was foreign to Nicaragua and therefore remained silent about gay and lesbian politics. Others sought to foster transnational gay and lesbian activism.

The Nicaraguan Gay and Lesbian Movement

Lesbian and gay organizing in Nicaragua developed in the midst of the Nicaraguan Revolution and met a complex response, including both repression by Sandinista State Security and support from the Sandinista Ministry of Health. The first known lesbian and gay organization in Nicaragua was known simply as el grupo de homosexuales y lesbianas
(the gay and lesbian group; also referred to in English-language sources as “the Nicaraguan gay movement”). It began with a group of friends from two Managua neighborhoods, Máximo Jerez and Centroamérica. Key leaders included Joel Zúñiga Traña, Lupita Sequeira, and Martha Sacasa. These individuals were actively involved as Sandinistas and sought to advance lesbian and gay recognition within the revolution. In addition, they tied gay and lesbian politics to a socialist agenda of national and personal liberation. The group began to meet purposefully in early 1985 and formalized themselves as an organization by fall 1986. Although they violated the state of emergency by organizing outside the FSLN, they aligned themselves with the revolution and required all members to be involved in a Sandinista council, militia, or government agency. Initial activities revolved around consciousness-raising, including exchanges with international solidarity activists. Meetings were typically held at a house in which both Nicaraguans and US-born solidarity activists lived.

Soon after forming their group, the leaders of the Nicaraguan gay movement came under surveillance by Sandinista State Security. By February 1987, they had been questioned and verbally intimidated by State Security officials, who expressed concern over possible infiltration by the revolution’s opponents. On 13 March 1987 the group’s members received a collective subpoena and were told to suspend their activism. This day is recalled in Nicaraguan LGBTI history as the *quiebre,* meaning “breakup.” (*LGBTI* is the preferred term in Nicaragua today, with activists also referring to *diversidad sexual,* or sexual diversity.)

Although the group disbanded after the *quiebre,* Nicaraguan gay and lesbian activists did not report Sandinista harassment to supporters outside their own country. Instead, they purposefully kept the *quiebre* quiet in order to not undermine gay and lesbian participation in the solidarity movement. They also found a different path to activism through the creation of an HIV/AIDS outreach program.

**AIDS Activism in the Revolution**

AIDS work in Nicaragua held origins in three sources: the Nicaraguan gay movement; the Ministerio de Salud (MINSA; Ministry of Health), which was headed at the time by Dora María Téllez; and the nongovernmental organization Centro de Información y Servicios de Asesoría en Salud (CISAS; Center for Health Information and Counseling). The epidemiologist Leonel Argüello led MINSA's AIDS work and sought out information on the epidemic starting in 1985. The following year, CISAS invited several solidarity activists from San Francisco to make a presentation on HIV/AIDS at an international health colloquium in Managua. Soon after, Argüello created a national AIDS commission and a national plan for testing and prevention.

HIV/AIDS activism became a way not only to address sexual health but also to resolve the status of gay and lesbian people within the Nicaraguan Revolution. Both State Security and
gay and lesbian activists had kept the *quiebre* silent. Because of this, Argüello remained unaware of the *quiebre* until fall 1987, when he asked activists who had been part of the Nicaraguan gay movement if they would lead AIDS outreach. The activists met with Tellez to inform her of the *quiebre* and to secure letters of approval in case the police questioned them. After this, they established a nongovernmental organization that was supported by MINSA and called the Colectivo de Educación Popular contra el SIDA (CEP-SIDA; Popular Education Collective against AIDS).

CEP-SIDA built on networks initiated by the Nicaraguan gay movement, but as an officially approved organization, it was able to be more public than the earlier group. It conducted HIV/AIDS outreach to both straight and LGBTI audiences at cruising grounds, in universities and high schools, and among social groups of gay men. Solidarity activists from outside Nicaragua provided assistance, including written and video materials, condoms, and small amounts of financial aid; the San Francisco–based Nicaragua AIDS Education Project and Latino AIDS Project provided notable help. But CEP-SIDA was hampered by the financial and political challenges that beset Nicaragua in the late 1980s. The project folded soon after the Sandinistas’ 1990 defeat.

**Lasting Impacts**

Women’s, feminist, and LGBTI organizing continued in Nicaragua after 1990, and new activist groups emerged from networks earlier forged by the Nicaraguan gay movement and CEP-SIDA. Such organizing maintained leftist politics across the 1990s and into the twenty-first century, even as the FSLN stood in retreat. After the FSLN regained power in 2006, however, it clashed with women’s and LGBTI groups. A key reason for this conflict was that, in 1998, Daniel Ortega’s stepdaughter, Zoilamérica Narváez, had accused him of sexual abuse, and Ortega aligned himself and other FSLN leaders with social conservatives in order to ensure immunity from prosecution. In the eyes of Ortega’s critics, such alliances undermined the vision of the Nicaraguan Revolution, including its possibilities for gender and sexual freedom. Today, many LGBTI and feminist groups in Nicaragua lay claim to the legacies of the Nicaraguan Revolution, even as they reject the leadership of Ortega and his wife, current vice president Rosario Murillo (1951–).

**SEE ALSO** Central American Solidarity Movement; The Cuban Revolution and Homosexuality; HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Mexican Revolution and Sexuality

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Nigeria has a population of more than 190 million. It is roughly divided into an Islamic-dominated north and a Christian-dominated south. It has more than 200 ethnic groups, but the most prominent ones are the Yoruba, Hausa-Fulani, and Igbo. The Nigerian LGBT community cuts across all these ethnic groups. Based on the reports of the journal *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* which indicate that the portion of adults reporting a history of any same-sex sexual interaction ranged from 6.9 percent to 8.8 percent, Jide Macaulay, the first “out” gay pastor from Nigeria, estimates that the Nigerian LGBT population is up to 13 million (interview with Macaulay, June 2017).

Interactions among the many ethnic and religious groups often lead to conflicts in Nigeria. These conflicts spill over to include attacks on the LGBT community through so-called jungle justice, especially when religious fanatics fuel the hate directed toward the LGBT community. Jungle justice is a type of illegal policing—an extreme, biased vigilante justice in which the perpetuators take the law into their hands and crush a perceived threat. This occurs especially with LGBT members who dare to be “out” or are suspected to be homosexuals. In February 2016 a young man, Akinnifes Olumide, was viciously attacked and almost bludgeoned on the suspicion of being gay. He later died from the injuries he sustained. The killers were neither tried nor arrested (*Simon Ateba News 2016*).
This is one of the reasons why many in the Nigerian LGBT community live underground—for fear of persecution through beatings, fines, or imprisonment, or even of outright murder. For instance, Adam Nossiter (2014a) reported that some religious officials in the northeastern Nigerian state of Bauchi said that “they want to root out, imprison and punish gays.” The people that expose homosexuals to these officials do so as a way to cleanse their community of homosexuality. According to one of the officials, Mohammed Tata, the act of homosexuality is “detestable ... this thing is an abomination” (Nossiter 2014a). His opinion on the rights of the Nigerian LGBT community echoes that of a majority of Nigerians, including Chris Okotie, a popular pastor who has advocated for legal and religious prohibitions against same-sex practices (Elakhe 2015). Although the members of Nigeria's LGBTQ community face intense hostility that includes psychological/mental abuse and physical abuse and attacks, they keep pushing for their rights and their visibility, mostly through writing, film, and activism. Their resilience is evident in their works, and this gives hope for a better future.

**Legal and Religious Prohibitions against Same-Sex Practices**
Nigeria is a federation of thirty-six states. Each state has its own criminal codes, all of which proscribe homosexual behavior, as do the federal penal codes. Four of the twelve northern states of the Nigerian federation adopted various forms of shariʿa, or Islamic law. In these states the crime of sodomy can be punished by stoning. Apart from shariʿa courts, Nigeria's legal system registers homosexuality as a crime punishable by a jail term of fourteen years. The criminalization of homosexuality derails any attempt to form policies that support the Nigerian LGBT community. Also, any form of injustice toward the LGBT community in Nigeria is perceived as legal even though Nigeria is a signatory to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (adopted in 1981), which insists that all peoples are equal. The charter also emphasizes an international legal obligation to fundamental freedoms. In some cases, homosexuals are fined or even given a death penalty in regions where shariʿa is applied as a penal code. Yet the 1999 Nigerian constitution guarantees a right to privacy, specifically in Sections 18 and 37.

Religion is of great importance to Nigerians. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), Nigeria is nearly equally divided between Christians and Muslims. Many Nigerians continue to practice local, indigenous religions alongside their professed adherence to Islam or Christianity. Generally speaking, the forms of Islam and of Christianity that are practiced in Nigeria today tend to be fundamentalist and most intolerant of homosexuality, although there are exceptions, such as the Reverend Jide Macaulay’s House of Rainbow church. Because the Nigerian Anglican Church does not want to accept homosexuals as ordained ministers, it broke away from the Canterbury and other Anglican churches. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Nigeria encouraged the enactment of legislation to criminalize homosexuality and supported the 2014 Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act. This coalition between religious institutions and state power is the major reason why gay rights are inhibited in Nigeria. This issue is well documented in Asonzeh Ukah’s 2016 essay “Sexual Bodies, Sacred Vessels: Pentecostal Discourses on Homosexuality in Nigeria.” Many homosexuals in Nigeria are subjected to the humiliation of church deliverance sessions organized in most cases by their family members. During some of these deliverances they are beaten. These atrocities are constantly perpetuated against homosexual Nigerians in the name of delivering them from the demons of homosexuality. The hostile treatment of homosexuals is not justifiable considering that Nigeria historically had and still has a variety of nongender fixed roles and practices.

Before Nigeria was colonized by the British, there were nongender binary relationships and practices, and these still exist. In the state of Kano in northern Nigeria, for example, there are a group of men called ‘yan daudu who have sex with men (Gaudio 2009). Some of these men are effeminate and do not follow strict gender norms and attitudes; they wear women’s clothing and even use female pronouns when addressing themselves. They keep male lovers and take on traditionally feminine tasks, such as cooking and selling food. Often, they enjoy lavish gifts from both their lovers and their male admirers. They live openly and are very visible in their communities (Pierce 2007).
But with the introduction of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria, homophobia has been widespread. One of the well-known cases of ʿyan daudus being punished happened in 2008. Abubakar Hamza, who was also known by his female name, “Fatima Kawaji,” was not only jailed for cross-dressing; he was also fined. There have been instances where gay men have been accused of conducting same-sex weddings and charged in court (Lui 2017). Another incident occurred at the University of Benin, where “three female university students who were alleged to have been caught engaging in lesbianism in their room were forced to perform sexual acts on themselves against their wish while they were being recorded by some men who locked them in their room” (Ilesanmi 2013, 109). Furthermore, some “outed” gay men are known to have been victims of the aforementioned jungle justice. When they are lynched, the act is widely perceived as honorable because the perpetrators are seen as honor killers. They are hailed as the agents of God who are determined to rid their society of the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah. Out of these highly homophobic dynamics, the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act was born.

**The Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act**

On 30 December 2013 the National Assembly of the Federal Republic of Nigeria passed an anti–gay marriage bill, known as the Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act. It was signed into law on 7 January 2014 by Goodluck Jonathan, Nigeria’s president at the time. This was done secretly and was not revealed right away. The signing became known to the public six days later. The international press tagged it the “Jail the Gays Bill.” The provisions of the law made it obvious that it was a crackdown on homosexuals and same-sex unions. The law, given that it applies to the whole country, marked a turning point for the members of Nigeria’s LGBT community: its vigorous enforcement forced hundreds to flee Nigeria and seek asylum (Patricca and Azuah 2016).

Although the Nigerian Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act is called an anti–same-sex marriage law, it outlaws all types of homosexual organizations and activities. The act’s language on the prohibition of homosexual activities in particular is brief and vague: “The public show of same sex amorous relationship directly or indirectly is prohibited” (Section 4, Article 2). The lack of a definition for what constitutes a “public show of same sex amorous relationship” alarms Nigerian activists, who fear that the ambiguity indicates the intention of the government to promote a witch hunt against homosexuals rather than its stated objective of protecting traditional “natural” marriage between a man and a woman. The law is essentially an assault on the civil and human rights of all Nigerians. This law goes against all the provisions of the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, of which Nigeria is a signatory. It also contradicts Section 37 of the Constitution of Nigeria, which states: “The privacy of citizens … is hereby guaranteed and protected.” The privacy of Nigerians cannot be protected, however, if anyone can be accused of directly or indirectly making a public show of same-sex amorous relationships.
The unfortunate reality for Nigerians generally, not just homosexuals, is that anyone can be accused of being homosexual, especially when there is no rationale for determining what signifies a "public show of same sex amorous relationship." In this context when a man gives a lingering hug to his brother or a woman walks with her arms around the shoulders of her sister, they could end up in jail (Patricca and Azuah 2016). Furthermore, the members of the Nigerian LGBT community, especially gay men, are constantly under attack based on the popularity of fundamentalism within both major religions of Christians and Muslims. According to the report Nowhere to Turn: Blackmail and Extortion of LGBT People in Sub-Saharan Africa, published by the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission,

Lesbian and bisexual women must also deal with customary and religious laws that dictate and limit their behavior. In those northern states that have adopted shari‘a, both male and female homosexuality have been outlawed, with death as the maximum penalty for male homosexuality and whipping or imprisonment as the maximum penalty for female homosexuality. The strong legal, religious, and social prohibitions of homosexuality empower families, neighbors, and communities to police gender norms among homosexual men and women—and allow practices like extortion and blackmail to flourish.

Generally, extortion and blackmail is especially common in the male homosexual community. This is because homosexual men in Nigeria more publicly transgress gender norms, especially the belief that men should be dominant over submissive women. By rejecting the privilege enjoyed by heterosexual men, homosexual men represent a visible threat to patriarchal values and the sexual ideologies they support.

(THORESON AND COOK 2011, 46–47)

Because of the dire situations Nigerian homosexuals face, most of them resort to marrying the opposite sex just to escape being caught as homosexual.

When the anti–same-sex marriage law was enacted, it triggered a spate of recorded and unrecorded attacks against LGBT people around Nigeria. About a month after Jonathan signed the bill into law, some men in the Gishiri neighborhood of the capital city, Abuja, who were suspected of being homosexuals were attacked, beaten, and ejected from their homes by a mob of about fifty young men, who shouted “We are working for Jonathan!” during the attack, according to witnesses (Nossiter 2014b). Not only were no members of the mob arrested, but the mob dragged four of the victims to a police station, where the
police further beat and insulted them. Some men and women rumored to be homosexual disappeared without a trace. Hence, there were cases in which gay men were declared dead without an investigation into how or why they were killed. Such cases of assaults, attacks, and disappearances are often met with cold silence because family members of the victim would be stigmatized if they attempted to investigate.

**Education System**

The violence against homosexuals does not just affect their economic and social lives; it spills into educational institutions as well. Nigeria's inherited British form of education is the most accessible form of education in the country, existing alongside other, indigenous educational structures. In addition to Islamic schools, the non-British forms of education include skills-based training in rural areas covering such vocations as cattle herding, blacksmithing, fishing, trading, pottery making, and farming. Much of Nigeria's education system is faith based, with curricula that either shun LGBT topics altogether or demonize them. Religious leaders such as Seyoum Antonios, an Ethiopian who is funded by radical US Christian evangelists, organized religious revivals at Nigerian universities in 2013 with a focus on gay bashing. That same year, a well-respected Christian leader, Pastor Enoch Adeboye, visited campuses to condemn homosexuality. As Kehinde Okanlawon, a sexual and health rights activist, noted in his 2017 essay “Homophobic Bullying in Nigerian Schools,” these developments are further encouraged by American evangelists who fund so-called crusades to promote antigay sentiments. Consequently, religious creeds are entrenched in Nigerian schools, and the enrolled students are constrained to adopt hostile and discriminatory beliefs about LGBT persons. In a number of cases LGBT persons have been assaulted in their schools. These attacks have rarely been given any attention in the media. As Okanlawon (2017) further observes, there is an absence of research on homophobic intimidation in Nigerian schools, especially in Nigerian universities, where policy changes and interventions are urgently needed to make schools secure for LGBT persons, who have the equal right to be protected as citizens of Nigeria. For the many LGBT persons who are not physically attacked or killed outright, they still must face other harsh realities, including unemployment and economic hardship.

**Employment and Economics**

Nigeria’s economy is dependent on exports of petroleum. Because of corruption, mismanagement, and falling crude oil prices, Nigeria has experienced staggering unemployment rates. Over 70 percent of the population is categorized as poor. According to a 2012 report by the African Development Bank and three other international agencies, the unemployment rate among young people in Nigeria aged fifteen to twenty-four was 38 percent in 2011. LGBT people in Nigeria are disproportionately affected by Nigeria’s poor economy because of bias against them. Those who are found to be homosexuals are
instantly fired. In some cases, homosexuals have been reported to the police for legal prosecution. As a result, they resort to concealing their sexual orientation and claim heterosexuality just to maintain their employment status. Furthermore, they are alienated from government programs, and no social activities are created with the Nigerian LGBT individual in mind.

Social/Government Programs

Disregarding the needs of the LGBT community, the Nigerian government has neither any social nor health programs for that community. This finding was documented in the Bisi Alimi Foundation’s 2017 report titled “Not Dancing to Their Music.” Nevertheless, the National Agency for the Control of AIDS recognizes the term and categorization MSM (men who have sex with men). Hence, that agency does support the need for health interventions in the LGBT community even while the national legal provisions of the same-sex marriage act refuse to recognize the legitimacy of that community. Additionally, some pro-LGBT nongovernmental organizations work discreetly to assist with advocacy, as well as with health and social events; among these organizations are Queer Alliance Nigeria, the Initiative for Equal Rights, the International Centre for Sexual Reproductive Rights, and the Women’s Health and Equal Rights Initiative. As an example of the activities of these groups, Queer Alliance Nigeria has been involved in, among other things, fighting for LGBT rights, providing health assistance/awareness, and offering safe spaces for LGBT individuals who have been rendered homeless because of their sexual orientation (Queer African Youth Network 2017).

LGBTQ Activism in Nigeria

Although there are many legal and cultural impediments to the acceptance of Nigeria’s LGBTQ community, there are reasons to hope that change can occur. While the 2007 Pew Global Attitudes Project revealed that 97 percent of Nigerians do not accept homosexuality (Pew Research Center 2007), a Bisi Alimi Foundation survey, published in 2017, found that that number had fallen to 87 percent by 2015. In spite of the challenges the members of the Nigerian LGBT community face, they continue to fight for their rights and find creative ways to counter the hate and stereotypes about them.

One way they fight back, for example, is through writing. A Nigerian online magazine, Nigerians Talk, released its first-ever gay edition as a response to the anti–same-sex marriage act. The gay-themed edition was unveiled in February, a few weeks after the Nigerian president signed the act into law. The editor and publisher of the e-zine said this about the antigay law: “If the anti-gay legislation around the continent does achieve something, I hope it is a chance to now talk more openly about those among us that—being different only in sexual orientation—live and love just like us, and do us no harm” (Tubosun 2014). Among the gay-themed narratives that were included in the edition were
Jude Dibia’s “Witness,” Elnathan John’s “Barna and I,” Ayodele Morocco-Clarke’s “What Matters Is the Way We Are,” and Unoma Azuah’s “Whip.” Following in the same tradition of LGBT literary visibility as a tool for fighting homophobia in Nigeria, Azuah edited a 2016 book titled *Blessed Body: The Secret Lives of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Nigerians* that counters the stereotypical narratives surrounding LGBT lives in Nigeria and in the diaspora. There are also more recent releases, such as the online LGBT-themed magazine *14: We Are Flowers*, which was launched in early 2017, and Nnanna Ikpo’s novel *Fimí Síîê Forever: Heaven Gave It to Me*, released in April 2017.

In the arena of human rights activism, pro-LGBT nongovernmental organizations such as Queer Alliance Nigeria and the Initiative for Equal Rights have recorded successes in intervening on behalf of and defending some members of the Nigerian LGBT community who were either attacked physically or kidnapped by providing counseling, as well as legal and financial assistance. The Initiative for Equal Rights is also involved in visual activism, particularly with their production of films, such as *Veil of Silence* (2014) and *Hell or High Water* (2016). In the religious arena, pioneer gay Nigerian Christian pastors such as Jide Macaulay continue to make their mark in the Christian ministry of gay rights advocacy. Macaulay started the House of Rainbow church in Nigeria in 2006, and many Nigerian LGBT individuals embraced the church because it recognized and catered to them as beloved of God. Although he was eventually forced to flee Nigeria, the church Macaulay founded continues to flourish in Nigeria and in several African countries, including Botswana, Burundi, Ghana, Lesotho, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia. Branches of the church have also opened in two European countries: Sweden and the United Kingdom. These various activist endeavors have given the Nigerian LGBT community hope for a future society that would not only recognize it but also give it space to grow and celebrate the strength and beauty of its diversity.

**SEE ALSO** Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Christianity in Africa: Anglican; Christianity in Africa: LGBT Friendly; Christianity in Africa: Pentecostal and Charismatic; Christianity in Africa: Roman Catholicism; Cinema, African (Anglophone); Islam in Africa South of the Sahara; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Islam

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Prominent South African anti-apartheid, gay rights, and AIDS activist.

Simon Tseko Nkoli fought for justice and democracy in South Africa from across many movements during his lifetime. As a founding member of the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW), the Township AIDS Project, the Positive African Men’s Project, and the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality, Nkoli not only served to bridge the anti-apartheid movement and the gay rights movement within South Africa and internationally, but through his leadership and courageous organizing he shaped an agenda for an intersectional gay and lesbian Global South–centered human rights that still reverberates today.

Born in Soweto, Nkoli was raised by his grandparents on a white-owned farm in Orange Free State until age eleven, when he joined his parents who were living as illegal squatters in Bophelong Township. Growing up in the segregated rural areas and later in a working-class township community exposed Nkoli early on to racist violence and systemic impoverishment. Formative experiences of discrimination and marginalization led him to participate as a student in the anti-apartheid movement. Along with thousands of South African youth, he was detained for several months for his involvement in the student demonstrations of 1976. Between 1976 and 1980, Nkoli was detained for months at a time for “suspected terrorism,” and in 1981 he was held for seven months as a potential state witness in the trial of other activists. Under the apartheid regime, activists were often detained under the guise of serving as “potential state witnesses,” which allowed the state to terrorize activists and undermine trust within communities and organizations.

Although his pursuit of higher education was interrupted by the consistent repression he faced, and despite being assaulted and tortured in prison, Nkoli remained committed to anti-apartheid activism and civil disobedience. He cofounded the United Democratic Front–affiliated Vaal Civic Association, and by 1981 Nkoli served as Transvaal regional general secretary for the Congress of South African Students (COSAS). Although he was largely respected in the movement, his position within COSAS was threatened when several members of the local executive committee demanded his expulsion from the organization because of his homosexuality. Nkoli had come out as gay to his family years earlier and had openly discussed his sexual identity with friends. By a slim but vocal margin, COSAS
members voted to keep Nkoli in his position as secretary. Seeking support and camaraderie, Nkoli joined the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA) in 1983. Faced with the overwhelming whiteness of GASA, Nkoli formed the Saturday Group to recruit black members and encourage multiracial socializing and coalition building within the organization.

Nkoli’s work as coordinator of GASA’s Saturday Group was short lived. In September 1984 his leadership in organizing a rent boycott campaign in the Vaal townships led to his arrest. Known as the Vaal uprising, a series of marches across the area’s townships attracted a brutal response from the police, who killed more than forty protesters over the course of five days and arrested hundreds. As violence erupted, three local officials were killed, including a deputy mayor. In response to the upheaval, the apartheid state charged Nkoli and twentyone other activists with murder and treason in what became popularly known as the Delmas Treason Trial.

Nkoli was detained from 1984 to 1988. In prison, when Nkoli came out as gay to his codefendants, some responded with shock and calls to drop Nkoli from the collective defense strategy. Additionally, the leadership of the largely apolitical GASA refused to offer public support for Nkoli, citing that he was arrested for activities unrelated to gay rights. Socially isolated and incarcerated, Nkoli fell into a deep depression and was hospitalized in the prison psychiatric ward for three months. It was while in prison that Nkoli was diagnosed as HIV positive. In support of their client, Delmas lawyers reached out to an international set of gay and lesbian rights organizations and anti-apartheid task forces for letters in support of Nkoli’s immediate release. As letters of solidarity with Nkoli poured in from Europe, Canada, and the United States, his codefendants were persuaded that Nkoli’s sexual identity would not be used to discredit the defense, and Nkoli rejoined the general prison populace in better spirits.

Nkoli and ten other defendants were acquitted of all charges in 1988. Settling in Johannesburg, he made a call for activists to join him in creating an anti-racist gay and lesbian rights organization; the result was the founding of GLOW. Now a kind of activist celebrity, Nkoli visited cities such as Vienna, London, Amsterdam, Atlanta, Toronto, New York, and San Francisco to address progressive communities and mobilize support for democracy in South Africa, as well as to fund-raise for grassroots projects serving South Africa’s black and HIV-positive communities. In 1990 Nkoli cofounded the Township AIDS Project and worked for many years as an AIDS educator and counselor. With a cadre of activists from GLOW, including Bev Ditsie (1971–), Nkoli would organize the first gay and lesbian pride march on the African continent in 1990.

As South Africa began its slow transition from apartheid regime to democracy, Nkoli was one of the first to openly discuss his HIV-positive status and was an early agitator for awareness, compassion, and health care for the HIV positive as a form of social justice. He
was also at the center of a group of activists who lobbied the recently released Nelson Mandela (1918–2013) and the African National Congress for public recognition of, and full citizenship for, gays and lesbians in the new South Africa. As a result of his work as a leader within the National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality, the Constitution of South Africa (codified in 1996) protects its citizens against discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Nkoli was awarded many honors, including the Stonewall Equality Award and Lidell Jackson Award, as well as the proclamation of Simon Nkoli Day in several major cities in the United States. A lover of athletics, he delighted in his role as the official opener of the Gay Games in New York City in 1994. He wrote several autobiographical essays, commanded countless interviews, and used print media and documentary film to advocate for Africa's black LGBT populations. Nkoli was mourned globally and received a state funeral in Johannesburg upon his death from HIV-related illness in November 1998. His friendship with fellow GLOW activist Ditsie is recounted in the 2002 film Simon and I, which was codirected by Ditsie and Nicky Newman. In 2017 Stellenbosch University renamed the building that houses the campus equality and disability units Huis Simon Nkoli House.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; HIV/AIDS in Africa; South Africa

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FILMOGRAPHY
The Arabo-Islamic world entertained matters related to sexual behavior in a number of discursive ways. In Islamic jurisprudence, sexual behaviors were categorized as licit or illicit, and jurists busied themselves with specifying punishments for the illicit and protocols for the licit. During the Islamic golden age, typically understood to have been between the ninth and thirteenth centuries in Iraq and between the ninth and fifteenth centuries on the Iberian Peninsula, there emerged an alternative discursive category in which sexual desires, behaviors, and cultures were examined, pondered, and chronicled. This body of literature is difficult to define. Sometimes it was manifested in medical or natural science treatises on sexual function and dysfunction; elsewhere, it was found in collections of popular anecdotes, poems, and songs; and at other times, sexual mores became apparent in the extremely complex, orally transmitted folktales of uncertain origin, such as the stories eventually Arabized and collected in written form in *A Thousand and One Nights* and other similarly dynastic sagas such as *Sirat al-Amira That al-Himma* (The story of Princess That al-Himma).

Scholars can ascertain from scanty sources that there were dozens of erotological manuscripts in existence in the Arabo-Islamic empire of the golden age, although only a handful have survived (Franke 2012). Among this handful is *Nuzhat al-albāb fīmā lā yujad fī kitāb* (The Delight of Hearts; or, What You Will Not Find in Any Book [1988]). *Nuzhat’s* author, Aḥmad ibn Yūsuf al-Tifāshī, was born in the Tunisian town of Tifāsh in 1184 CE and died circa 1253 CE. In the book, he indicates that he collected the material found therein during his travels throughout the Arab world, which spanned centers of culture and power including Cairo, where he acted as a judge, Damascus, where he studied under the famed Tāj al-Dīn al-Kindī, and Baghdad. He also traveled to Armenia and Morocco and throughout his own country of birth, Tunisia, at the beginning of his career (Habib 2007).

Tifāshī’s book is an extraordinary compilation in its far-reaching scope, its collection of material, and its substantiation of acquired narratives, sometimes through the implementation of a chain of transmission not dissimilar from those used in hadith (the
sayings of the prophet Muhammad) collections. These features set his work apart from mujūn literature (a form that depicts otherwise unacceptable behaviors and expressions in a lighthearted yet brazen way). In Tifāshī’s earlier book, Azhār al-afkār fī jawāhir al-aḥjār (c. 1211; Best thoughts on the best of stones), he comprehensively classified gemstones; in the twelve chapters of Nuzhat al-albāb, he similarly classifies various types of known sexual behaviors. These chapters include some rather surprising categories. Chapter 1, for example, catalogs the erotic act of safʿ, slapping or hitting, without directly linking it to sexual activity, but raising the specter of the sadomasochistic relationship dynamic. A number of chapters are dedicated to describing prostitution (both male and female) and zina (nonmarital sex). Chapter 6 is about sodomizers of young men and boys, al-lāta, who are defined as plying younger men with money, alcohol, and other rewards. Chapter 7 mostly relates stories about Abū Nuwās, the famous Abbasid poet of ninth-century Baghdad, and his exploits with young men as well as ghulām (male slaves). Chapter 8 shares more stories about al-lāta, again mostly in reference to Abū Nuwās. Chapter 9 refers to the practice of dab, which is the opportunistic rape of a sleeping man by another man. Chapter 10 is about anal sex with women, which was often understood to be a minor form of liwāt, or male sodomy (al-liwāt al-asghar); it is traditionally forbidden in Sunni Islam. In Chapter 11, the reader is treated to an extremely rare compilation of stories, poems, and observations related to sexual relations between women (suhaq). The final chapter on al-khunāth and the mukhannathin is another equally rare compilation about effeminate and gender-ambiguous persons commonly seen as men. The order of these chapters reflects a “descending hierarchy with the more important subjects coming first” (Malti-Douglas 2001, 126).

To date, there is no reliable and comprehensive translation of Tifāshī’s extraordinary feat of erotology. The chapters concerned with male homoeroticism were translated into French and published under the title Les Délices des coeurs (Khawam 1981), and an English translation of the French version was published by Gay Sunshine Press as The Delight of Hearts (Tifāshī 1988). Samar Habib translated into English the chapter concerned with female homoeroticism (Habib 2009).

Female Homosexuality

Tifāshī’s chapter of same-sex sexual activity between women is by far the medieval Arabo-Islamic world’s most illuminating literary artifact on the subject. There is no other surviving text quite like it, in that it appears to be free from moral rebuke. (This tone changes, albeit slightly, when Tifāshī deals with male homoeroticism.) Indeed, there is a hint of admiration in Tifāshī’s observations on the musaḥiqāt (grinders), with the not insignificant exception of his opening sentence, which refers to the phenomenon of suhaq as an ailment (daʾ). Suhaq, Tifāshī explains, is a term that refers to the grinding of saffron, and the women who practice it are described in lurid detail as grinding their genitals.
against each other or, at the very least, grinding their clitorises to climax. There is no description of penetrative sex of any kind among Tifāshī’s grinders, as though penetrative sex without penises was unheard of.

The first part of the entry on grinding is concerned with collating scholarly opinions on the causes and origins of the behavior. One of the possible causes that Tifāshī discusses is that a woman’s vaginal dimensions may be ill-suited to her male lover’s genitalia: “Just as the male’s member varies in length and shortness, so it is with the woman’s womb [vagina]. So if the dimensions of the woman’s womb were suited to that of the penis, then she would like him, and if it was not suited to her then she would hate him … and prefer grinding” (Habib 2009, 89). Or, Tifāshī reports, the cause of discomfort may be a condition the woman acquired as an infant from her wet nurse’s excessive consumption of watercress, celery, and clover, which results in a chronic itchiness that leads women to grinding in an effort to alleviate their symptoms. Or, it may be that a woman is habituated to grinding with other women from childhood, particularly in situations of concubinage where she had little choice in the matter, Tifāshī reasons. This is his only mention of the use of slave girls by their female owners for such purposes, and it contrasts sharply with the numerous anecdotes about ghulām in chapters about male homoeroticism. Tifāshī also, and surprisingly, indicates that “some wise men” saw grinding as “a natural appetite” resulting from an “inverted boil,” which is capable of producing a kind of vaginal water that has a cooling effect and that relieves a grinder’s “itchiness”; this seems to be a description of the process of producing female ejaculation. Following this contemplation of the origins of grinding, the author launches into relating his own observations and the stories told to him by others. The remainder of the chapter is divided into two subsections that collate poems and anecdotes that alternately praise grinding and censure it.

**Al-Khunāth and Mukhannathin**

There are eight subsections in what is one of the most substantial chapters on al-khunāth and the mukhannathin in premodern Arabic literature. During Tifāshī’s time (and still today), individuals identified socially as male, effeminate, and seeking to be sodomized by men were referred to as al-ma’bun, synonymous with mukhannath. A mukhannath is always depicted as penetrated by a man (rajul), who is not given a homosexual indicator here, although in jurisprudence he is considered a lūtī (sodomite), and is placed on equal footing with al-ma’bun/mukhannath with respect to punishment under the law. Culturally, however, a man may penetrate a ma’bun without losing his place in the hierarchy of normalcy; he may be resorting to this act because he has no access to women, for example. If, however, a man is habitually seeking out men to sodomize, without recourse to women, he may be identified as a lūtī (plural: lūtiyīn or lāta). Tifāshī dedicates two chapters to the lāta (plural form of lūtī), discussed below.

The term mukhannath was used as early as the seventh century in the Arabian Peninsula.
By contrast, *al-khunāth*, a term designating intersex persons, does not appear as a separate category of inquiry in Arabic literature and jurisprudential compilations until *Musanaf Abd al Razk* in the earliest years of the ninth century. Tifāshī discusses male effeminacy, female masculinity, and biological intersexuality in the subsection on the khunāth, suggesting that these sexual- and gender-atypical phenomena exist along the same continuum of masculinity and femininity as aberrations. Tifāshī catalogs individuals known to have been born with both sets of genitalia; a deceased man who, upon autopsy, was found to possess a womb; a woman who, after bearing children, developed a penis; masculine women who menstruated infrequently or not at all; and women with mustaches, and even one Kurdish woman with an extensive beard (*Tifāshī 1992*). Tifāshī also relates a biological theory proposed by the scholar Abu Bakr al-Rāzī that fetuses acquire their characteristics (masculine or feminine) based on the quality of the egg and sperm (*manīī*) of their progenitors. When the sperm (*manīī al-rajul*) dominates, Razī reasons, the fetus is born male, and a masculine one at that. When the ovum is more dominant (*manīī al-marʾa*) the fetus is female, and also feminine. Sometimes, however, the sperm or the ovum may be compromised in some way, producing children who are neither masculine nor feminine. This results in the birth of females that are not very feminine, he says (*Tifāshī 1992*).

There are no stories about al-khunāth or poems written about or by them; they are mentioned in passing, much like the masculine women that Tifāshī calls *muthakarāt*. By contrast, there are many stories and anecdotes about mukhannathin that give us vivid pictures of social relations. These stories reveal consensual pleasure, hypersexuality, and humor, but some also carry the weight of incidents that are not commensurate with pleasure, such as a gang rape, which is narrated to facilitate a punch line spoken by a mukhannath (*Tifāshī 1992, 288*); the acquisition and coercion of a male slave (285–286); sex with a young ghulām whose body is not ready for the act (284); and stories of lashings, banishings, and insults that appear to be intended to make the reader laugh.

Of the anecdotes about mukhannathin, there are some that may seem remarkable to us in our contemporary contemplation of premodern sexualities. For example, there is a brief anecdote about a mukhannath who seeks to be penetrated only by another mukhannath. This exceptional reference to mukhannathin exchanging active positions indicates that reciprocal sex was known to men of the time, even if it was largely ignored because it did not fit neatly into the maʾbun/lūtī dichotomy. When the mukhannath was asked why he sought to be penetrated by another like him, he replied that only they know exactly where the seat of pleasure is, while other men penetrate haphazardly (*Tifāshī 1992*).

**Al-Lāta**

There are two chapters, 6 and 8, that discuss al-lāta (the singular form of the term, *lūtī*, is derived from the Qur’anic story of the prophet Lūt, corresponding to the figure of Lot from the Hebrew scriptures). From the outset, these men are depicted as manipulating boys and
young men into having sex with them. The opening description in chapter 6 leaves the unmistakable impression that to be such a man requires status and access to wealth. “The first rule of al-lāta,” writes Tifāshī,

is to have a nice, unoccupied house whose key is in his hands. It must also have a bathing facility and birdcages withaudible, singing birds in them. And there must be a chess board. And there must be portfolios filled with poems and stories about amorous love and illustrated books depicting myths, and stories about great leaders and noblemen. There must be an endless supply of alcoholic brews, for these are his greatest assistants. And he must be in possession of dirhams [money], ready to be used.  

(TIFĀSHĪ 1992, 141; TRANSLATION BY SAMAR HABIB)

The remainder of chapter 6 relates a story originally told by al-Jāḥiẓ in which an elderly man who was once the leader of a gang of thieves takes an adolescent male lover in prison. When the pair are taken to be whipped together before their release, the ghulām makes no sound throughout his 100 lashes, impressing those present. Meanwhile, the pain is evident on the elderly man’s face at every lash that falls on his lover. When the jailers are done with punishing the ghulām they decide not to whip the elderly man because it is unlikely he could endure even five lashes—they had misunderstood his reaction as fear of being whipped. The elderly man protests and declares that he can take as many as 500 lashes. So they do punish him with 500 lashes, per his request, and to their surprise, he withstands their assaults to the very end, without so much as cowering. This prompts a man sitting with the governor to say, “Is this the man you blamed the ghulām for allowing him to sodomize him? If he wanted to sodomize me, I wouldn’t stop him” (Tifāshī 1992, 143; translation by Samar Habib). What is remarkable about this story is not this punch line but the rare description of a male same-sex relationship that implies emotional attachment and even love. In medieval erotological literature there are almost never depictions of male same-sex sexual acts as anything other than sex with no emotional involvement (which is not the case for homoeroticism between women).

Chapter 8 collates some of Abū Nuwās’s most famous poems in which he extols the pleasures of sex with men over and beyond sex with women. This is perhaps Tifāshī’s least innovative chapter, in that he reiterates sources that remained in circulation due to Abū Nuwās’s popularity and the survival of his poetry and anecdotes about him in books from the Abbasid era. In one anecdote, a companion of Abū Nuwās named al-Jumāz hears him say, “I desire [ashtahi] something found neither on earth nor in paradise.” Al-Jumāz, shocked by the sacrilegious idea that paradise might not contain something desired by one
of its inhabitants, asks him to clarify, and Abū Nuwās replies, “I desire a ghulām who is permitted religiously [ghulāmun halal].” Abū Nuwās is often depicted not only as bisexual but also as an irreverent atheist, which makes his pronouncement rather remarkable. Predictably, al-Jumāz responds, “You will never be saved” (Tīfāshī 1992, 173; translation by Samar Habib).

SEE ALSO Homoerotic Poetry of Abū Nuwās; Homoeroticism in the Plays of Ibn Daniyal; Homosexual Acts in Shari‘a; Mufākharat al-Jawārī wa-al-Ghilmān (al-Jāḥiẓ); Mukhannath

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"An Act to consolidate and amend the Statute Law of England and Ireland relating to Offences against the Person" (24 & 25 Vict., c. 100) is of particular interest to LGBTQ+ history because of its provisions against "unnatural offences" (Sections 61–63). The legislative history of these crimes can be traced back to the Protestant Reformation and Henry VIII’s (r. 1509–1547) break with the Roman Catholic Church. In 1533, in order to introduce a secular rule for a matter formerly dealt with by the church, the English parliament legislated “An Acte for the punysshement of the vice of Buggerie” (25 Hen. 8, c. 6), which judged “the detestable & abominable vice of buggeri committed with mankind or beest” a felony punishable by death. Buggery of a man, a woman, or an animal was equally felonious. The brief Counter-Reformation of Mary I (r. 1553–1558) abolished the new statute and revived the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical courts, but Henry VIII’s law was reintroduced and made permanent in 1562 under Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603) as “An Act for the punishement of the Vyce of Sodomye” (5 Eliz. 1, c. 17).

Variations on the buggery or sodomy law then remained on the statute books for the next four centuries. Executions for sodomy came to an end in continental Europe by the end of the eighteenth century, and the French revolutionaries and the 1810 Napoleonic penal code dropped sodomy as a crime. But there was no such relaxation in Britain; in fact, the height of the executions for sodomy came in the first third of the nineteenth century, when more than fifty men were hanged (Weeks 2018). The “abominable,” “nameless,” “unspeakable,” “infamous” nature of the crime/vice/offense, which became a staple of discourse (or silence) about sodomy, ensured that discussion in legal texts and in Parliament would be minimal and couched in veiled terms. The only English legal theorist who wrote in favor of decriminalization was Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) in a 1785 essay titled Paederasty, but he did not dare publish it. (It was not, in fact, published until 1978.)

Peel's Acts

Thus, when the Buggery Act was repealed and replaced in 1828 by Section 15 of the Offences Against the Person Act (9 Geo. 4, c. 31), there was no diminution of the hostility to
sodomy. Section 15’s language was remarkably similar to that in the Henrician statute: “And be it enacted, That every Person convicted of the abominable Crime of Buggery, committed either with Mankind or with any Animal, shall suffer Death as a Felon.”

Moreover, Section 18 of the act attempted to increase the conviction rate by stipulating that, in cases of buggery (as well as of rape and of sex with girls under the age of ten), only penetration and not ejaculation needed to be proved.

The 1828 legislation was one of eight omnibus statutes instigated by the Tory home secretary Robert Peel (1788–1850) to consolidate the criminal law. Peel’s Acts, as they were known, replaced 278 individual statutes. Peel’s purpose was to restore the credibility of the criminal justice system, long under attack from radicals and reformers because of its lack of certainty and order. The laws had piled up into a chaotic mess of overlapping accretions. In addition, there were more than 200 capital crimes on the books, which meant that—to avoid an orgy of bloodletting that would have undermined the public rituals of terror and demency by which the “bloody code” operated—95 percent of the condemned had to be pardoned by the late 1820s, and whether a felon lived or died seemed arbitrary. Therefore, Peel’s intention was to synthesize and simplify the criminal laws, increase the likelihood of conviction in the interests of social order, and restore the deterrence of the death penalty by weeding out obsolete and overly vindictive capital offenses.

Whig Reforms

It was the Whig administrations of the 1830s, and especially the home secretary John Russell (1792–1878), who whittled away at the death penalty still further in a successful bid to reduce the toll of executions. In 1833 the Whigs initiated the Royal Commission on the Criminal Law, and in its Second Report in 1836, it recommended the abolition of a number of capital offenses. But sodomy was still too toxic a subject. The report stated, in reflexively coded language, “A nameless offence of great enormity we, at present, exclude from consideration” (Second Report from His Majesty’s Commissioners on Criminal Law, 9 June 1836, 2). But the trend away from executions for all but the most violent of crimes was clear. Two Londoners, James Pratt and John Smith, were, in 1835, the last men to be hanged for sodomy. Russell thought opinion had shifted sufficiently for him to attempt, in 1841, to abolish the death penalty for rape, sex with underage girls, and unnatural offenses. He succeeded with the first two but, while the Commons voted in favor, he was stymied on the third in the House of Lords. The Earl of Winchilsea “implored their Lordships not to withdraw the penalty of death from a crime so utterly abhorrent to the feelings of human nature,” and their lordships concurred (Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates, Lords, 3rd ser., vol. 58 [1841], col. 1568).

The 1833 commission was the first of six commissions that produced multiple reports over the next three decades with the aim of codifying or consolidating the criminal law—or, if that were too ambitious, just the statute law alone: “to simplify it, to amend it, to bring it
within the smallest possible compass” (Lord Stanley, *Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates*, Commons, 3rd ser., vol. 140 [1856], col. 739). The first fruits of this labor, after numerous false starts in Parliament, were the seven Criminal Law Consolidation Statutes (chapters 94–100) of 1861: the Accessories and Abettors, Criminal Statutes Repeal, Larceny, Malicious Damage, Forgery, Coinage Offences, and Offences Against the Person Acts.

The Criminal Law Consolidation Statutes were, essentially, new editions of “Peel’s Acts,” updated to include subsequent legislation, with minor amendments to iron out anomalies and enhance clarity. But there were two key differences. The first was that they assimilated Irish laws, providing uniformity in all parts of the United Kingdom except Scotland. The second was that most of the remaining death sentences were abolished; only murder, high treason, piracy, and arson in a royal dockyard now merited hanging.

The Offences Against the Person Act consolidated all English and Irish statute law pertaining to interpersonal violence—stretching from murder to assault to rape to abortion—into a single act. Section 61 restated Section 15 of the 1828 act (and Section 18 of the comparable Offences Against the Person [Ireland] Act [1829], 10 Geo. 4, c. 34) but with a reduced punishment: “Whosoever shall be convicted of the abominable Crime of Buggery, committed either with Mankind or with any Animal, shall be liable, at the Discretion of the Court, to be kept in Penal Servitude for Life or for any Term not less than Ten Years.” Section 62 had no direct equivalent in the 1828 act. It stated, “Whosoever shall attempt to commit the said abominable Crime, or shall be guilty of an Assault with intent to commit the same, or of any indecent Assault upon any Male Person, shall be guilty of a Misdemeanor”; the penalty was three to ten years’ penal servitude or up to two years’ imprisonment, with or without hard labor. Previously, “attempted sodomy” (which meant any sexual activity between men short of penetration) was covered either by common law, by the “assault, with intent to commit a felony” clause (Section 25) of the 1828 act, or by Section 9 of the Larceny Act (1827), which defined sodomy, attempted sodomy, and solicitation to sodomy as “infamous Crimes.” Section 63 (like Section 18 of the 1828 act and Section 21 of the 1829 Irish act) stipulated that ejaculation was not essential to secure a conviction: “it shall not be necessary to prove the actual Emission of Seed in order to constitute a carnal Knowledge, but the carnal Knowledge shall be deemed complete upon Proof of Penetration only.”

**Buggery Laws in the British Empire**

In a bid to Christianize colonial subjects by ridding them of their “perversions”—and to protect the colonizers themselves from the temptations of “Oriental vices”—the British exported their buggery laws to the empire. In colonial America, the southern colonies (in contrast to a distinctive Puritan code in the north) had either applied the 1533 act or, in the case of the lawmakers of South Carolina, written its terms verbatim into their own laws. Some of the later exports, including to Canada, the Caribbean, and New Zealand, were also
practically copies of the wording in the 1533, 1562, 1828, or 1861 acts. Others were variations on a familiar theme. The most influential was Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code (1860), which was largely the work of the first Indian Law Commission, chaired by Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859). It criminalized “Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal,” and it specified that “carnal intercourse” meant penetrative sex. The Indian Penal Code then became the template for the spread of antisodomy legislation to colonies such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Brunei (through the Straits Settlement Law [1871]) and to various African colonies at the turn of the century. Only Sudan, uniquely in the British Empire, allowed consent in certain circumstances as a defense.

The second most influential medium for the spread of the buggery laws was Section 208 of the Queensland Penal Code (1901), which was the work of a chief justice of Queensland, Samuel Walker Griffith (1845–1920). This was couched more broadly, targeting not only any person who had carnal knowledge of a person or an animal, but also any person who “permits a male person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature.” This made it quite clear that the passive partner was just as guilty as the active one, that women were not exempt, and that the law was not limited to penetrative intercourse. The Queensland code was widely adopted across parts of Australia, the Pacific, and Africa. The Criminal Code Orders in Council adopted in Cyprus in 1928 and in Mandate Palestine in 1936 were also based on the Queensland code, but stipulated different penalties for male rape and consensual male sex.

Repeal and Retention

Back in Britain, by the end of the nineteenth century the Westminster parliament had added to the provisions of the 1861 act two additional offenses to ensnare men committing homosexual acts. The first was Section 11 (the Labouchère Amendment) of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885. This criminalized “gross indecency,” but in many ways it simply supplemented the prosecution of nonpenetrative offenses hitherto covered by “attempted sodomy.” The second was Section 1 of the Vagrancy Act of 1898, which zeroed in on a male who “persistently solicits or importunes for immoral purposes.” Apart from sentencing adjustments, these three statutes remained fully in force until they were superseded by the Sexual Offences Act of 1956, which consolidated and amended much of the country’s sex-crime legislation while restating the anti-homosexual laws in simpler language.

But it was also in the 1950s that the first serious attempt was made to decriminalize homosexual acts. The Conservative government of Winston Churchill (1874–1965), alarmed at the rise in cases known to the police of buggery, gross indecency, and indecent assault—from 622 in 1931 to 6,644 in 1955—established the Wolfenden Committee to investigate the state of the law (Home Office and Scottish Home Department 1957,
The Wolfenden Report of 1957 recommended that consensual sex in private between two men over the age of twenty-one no longer be a criminal offense. It then took a decade of political maneuvering before this change was embodied in the Sexual Offences Act of 1967, which applied to England and Wales.

Elsewhere in the British Isles, it took longer for decriminalization: Scotland (operating under partially different laws) in 1980; Northern Ireland in 1982 (after a European Court of Human Rights verdict in *Dudgeon v. United Kingdom* [1981], which ruled that the government had failed to protect Jeff Dudgeon’s right to a private life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights); and the Republic of Ireland in 1993 (after a similar court ruling in *Norris v. Ireland* [1988]). The anomaly of leaving the law against heterosexual buggery intact (the 1967 act focused on men only) was corrected in 1994. The final public and political repudiation of the buggery laws came in 2017, when the UK parliament granted posthumous pardons to all those convicted of buggery and gross indecency with consenting adults over age sixteen in private since 1533. (Those who are living still need to apply under the “disregard rule” to the Home Office to ask for their past convictions to be expunged from criminal records.)

The story across the former empire was more mixed. Most of the colonies had achieved their independence before the Sexual Offences Act of 1967, so it was up to the new nations to make their own choices. Some, such as Canada (1969), New Zealand (1986), Australia (state by state, 1975–1997), and Hong Kong (1991), decriminalized homosexual acts through the legislative process. Others needed more prompting from their own higher courts: for example, South Africa in 1998, Fiji in 2005, and India in 2018. Cyprus was forced to act in 1998 because of another European Court of Human Rights ruling (*Modinos v. Cyprus* [1993]). Turkish Cypriot deputies voted to decriminalize in 2014, removing Northern Cyprus’s status as the only remaining territory in Europe to maintain a ban on homosexual sex. Yet others—in the Caribbean, Africa, and parts of Asia—steadfastly upheld the laws as, in an ironic reversal, vital to the protection of their “cultural values” against “Western corruption.” And Sudan introduced a new shari’a-inspired penal code in 1991 that removed the defense of consent in buggery cases.

**Operation Spanner**

If the buggery laws still live on in some of the former colonies, different clauses of the 1861 act have unexpectedly played a role in more recent LGBTQ+ debates in Britain. During a raid in 1987, the Greater Manchester Police came across some videotapes of men having sadomasochistic sex. The subsequent investigation, dubbed “Operation Spanner,” overseen by the London Metropolitan Police, produced evidence of the involvement of nearly fifty men in various locations across the country over the course of a decade. The tapes graphically depicted a variety of practices, including the nailing of scrotums and foreskins to boards, the dripping of hot wax into urethras, the sandpapering of testicles, the slitting of
genitalia with scalpels, branding with hot metal, the insertion of wires, fishhooks, and safety pins into penises, and scourging with stinging nettles and cat-o’-nine-tails.

Sixteen of the men were tried at the Old Bailey, London, in 1990. Charging them under the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 was not an option—even though group gay sex contravened its provisions and one of the men was under twenty-one when he first became involved—because the act stipulated that trials should begin within a year of the offense. Four of the men were therefore convicted for keeping or aiding and abetting the keeping of a disorderly house; and, thanks to an absence of other viable options, all sixteen were charged with violations of Sections 20 and/or 47 of the 1861 act. Section 47 proscribed “any assault occasioning actual bodily harm,” while Section 20 specified a greater degree of damage: “unlawfully and maliciously wound[ing] or inflict[ing] any grievous bodily harm.” The only precedent for the deployment of these clauses against sexual practices was Rex v. Donovan (1934), the case of a man tried for the consensual caning of a seventeen-year-old female; he was found guilty but cleared on appeal. In the Spanner case, all sixteen men were found guilty. Sentences ranged from fines to prison terms of four years and six months.

The Limits to Consent

The authorities in the Spanner case readily conceded that the activities were consensual and in private, that they involved no payment, and that the videotapes were for group consumption only and not for wider circulation (the simple possession of pornography not being a prosecutable offense). The question of consent was the lynchpin of the men’s defense. As one of the defendants, Anthony Brown, put it, “My sexuality is my own private business.... The people I beat fully consented, enjoyed the beatings, and were all over 21” (quoted in Kershaw 1992, 36). None of them was permanently injured, infected, or required hospital treatment. They played by clear rules with the use of code words to terminate the pain if necessary. But the presiding judge, James Rant, was not persuaded. Consent, he thought, was not an adequate defense for anything greater than trivial harm; “the courts must draw the line between what is acceptable in a civilised society and what is not.” An editorial in the Times of London considered this “a proposition both dubious and dangerous. He is not appointed to decide such a question. Indeed, the very mark of a civilised society is that, as far as possible, it allows its citizens the liberty and the privacy to do as they like” (1992, 17).

Several of the men took the case to the Court of Appeal, which upheld the verdict but reduced the sentences (because the defendants had not been aware that their activities were illegal), and then to the House of Lords, where three Law Lords approved the verdict and two dissented. Lord Templeman, dismissing the appeal, believed that “society is entitled and bound to protect itself against a cult of violence. Pleasure derived from the infliction of pain is an evil thing. Cruelty is uncivilised” (Regina v. Brown 1993, 10). Lord
Mustill disagreed, suggesting that the 1861 act had been deployed, inappropriately, only because no other statute could be found. Typical conduct snared by the relevant clauses "involves brutality, aggression and violence, of a kind far removed from the appellants' behaviour which, however worthy of censure, involved no animosity, no aggression, no personal rancour on the part of the person inflicting the hurt towards the recipient and no protest by the recipient" (Regina v. Brown 1993, 33).

Three of the men, backed by the campaign group Liberty, appealed to the European Court of Human Rights on the grounds that the United Kingdom had breached its obligations to respect private life under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights. But, pointing to the qualifying phrase in Article 8 stating that a democratic society does have the right to interfere in private life “for the protection of health and morals,” the court unanimously held in its 1997 ruling that the men’s rights had not been violated. Nor did it find evidence of any bias against homosexuals in the decisions by the British authorities, in spite of the men’s suspicions that they had been dealt with more punitively because of their sexual orientation.

A recommendation by the Law Commission of England and Wales that—short of serious disabling injury—consent should be a legitimate defense, plus ongoing campaigns by BDSM (bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism) practitioners (notably the Spanner Trust, set up in the wake of the case), and general support for reform in liberal circles, have not yet prevailed on Parliament and the courts. There have been no comparable cases against homosexual sadomasochists since, but, in theory, Sections 20 and 47 of the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861 still define the limits of sexual activity for consenting adults in private in Britain today.

SEE ALSO Antisodomy and Buggery Trials; BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism); Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara; Human Rights; Imperialism and Colonialism; Section 377 and Section 377A; Section 377 in South Asia; Sodomy Laws in the United States; The Wolfenden Report

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The Order of Chaeronea

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Secret society of homosexuals founded by George Cecil Ives in Great Britain in the early 1890s.

The Order of Chaeronea was the first named campaign group in Britain for homosexual rights. Its inspiration came from the Battle of Chaeronea in 338 BCE. There, allegedly, the Sacred Band of Thebes, made up of 150 pairs of male lovers, refused to flee or surrender and was annihilated by the stronger forces of Philip II of Macedon. The motivation for the band came from a remark of Phaedrus in Symposium, by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato:

And if there were only some way of contriving that a state or an army should be made up of lovers and their loves, they would be the very best governors of their own city, abstaining from all dishonor, and emulating one another in honor; and when fighting at each other's side, although a mere handful, they would overcome all men.

(1993, 7)

The genealogy of the Order of Chaeronea can be traced from the American poet Walt Whitman (1819–1892) through the English socialist Edward Carpenter (1844–1929) to the English criminologist and sexologist George Cecil Ives (1867–1950). It was from reading Whitman and visiting him in Camden, New Jersey, in 1877 that Carpenter was inspired by the democratic, class-transgressing ideal of male comradeship. As the historian Sheila Rowbotham (2008) relates, in 1886 Carpenter outlined his idea to Charles Robert Ashbee (1863–1942; later a leading light in the Arts and Crafts movement in Britain) for a band or freemasonry of comrades—an idea germinating since that first visit to Whitman and gaining greater urgency with the passage through the Westminster parliament of the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885, one section of which was the notorious Labouchère Amendment, which criminalized all forms of homosexual behavior. This band of comrades was to be based on a small circle of Cambridge University friends, including artistic and
intellectual young men such as Ashbee and the philosopher and political scientist Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1862–1932). In the same year, Carpenter began a passionate relationship with a young, working-class man, George Hukin, and—on reading Plutarch’s account of the Sacred Band of Thebes—he found a suitable image for himself and Hukin as socialist warrior-lovers within this clandestine brotherhood (Rowbotham 2008). As he put it in a 19 December 1887 letter to Charles Oates (Edward Carpenter Collection),

> We are going to form by degrees a body of friends, who will be tied together by the strongest general bond, and also by personal attachments.... The knowledge that there are many others in the same position as oneself will remove that sense of loneliness which one feels so keenly at times—especially when plumped in the society of the Philistines—and which is really almost unbearable.

**Founder**

There is no indication that this homoerotic freemasonry was ever anything more than an informal mutual-support group. But, in the early 1890s, Ives, another young Cambridge man with poetic and literary tendencies, made contact with Carpenter and his Thebans. And it is Ives who is credited with founding the Order of Chaeronea, in late 1893 or early 1894. It is from this point that the faint traces of the order can be mapped through Ives’s remarkable 3-million-word, 122-volume diary, plus his correspondence and other papers, all now housed at the Harry Ransom Center at the University of Texas at Austin.

Born in 1867, the illegitimate son of minor gentry, Ives spent much of his gilded youth migrating between the family’s country estate in Hampshire in the south of England, town house in London, and villa in Nice on the French Riviera. From an early age he was aware of his sexual abnormality (abnormal only by modern standards, he insisted, not by those of Greece and Rome). Maybe as early as age sixteen or seventeen, and certainly by the time he became a student at Cambridge University’s Magdalene College, he had determined what his future must be. Because he was wealthy enough to live independently, freed from the need to earn a living but not so rich as to be tempted to fritter away his life he would be an “instrument of Destiny,” dedicating himself to aiding in the liberation of fellow homosexuals and of mistreated prisoners. Over the course of his long life—he died at the age of eighty-two in 1950—he accomplished this through writing and organizing. He began his diary in 1886 as a nineteen-year-old (intending it to be “a mine for the making of history” [Ives Papers, diary, 20 December 1886]); he helped found the British Society for the Study of Sex Psychology (later the British Sexological Society) in 1914; and he produced a body of published work, including three books of Uranian (or pederastic) verse and a
succession of volumes or tracts advocating sexual and penal reform. His best book, *A History of Penal Methods* (1914), which was widely and favorably reviewed in spite of its brave advocacy of homosexual rights, cemented his reputation as a noted criminologist. It enabled him in 1915 to suggest, with some justification, that, aside from Carpenter and the sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), no one else had done as much in Britain to advance “the Cause,” “the Faith,” or “the Ideal,” as he variously called the struggle for the rights of homosexuals.

**Formation**

It is the diary that sets the historian’s pulse racing today— Ives as a chronicler rather than a midwife of a revolution in queer understanding—but his footnote in queer history is, ironically, mostly thanks to the one aspect of his campaign for the Cause about which the least is known: the Order of Chaeronea. By the time of its founding he had forsaken the country for London. In the early 1890s he was drawing on a range of references—classical, Whitmanesque, and Carpenterian, above all—in constructing his vision of the Hellenic, Higher Philosophical Ideal (his terms). His recurrent visionary daydream was of youths, freely sleeping in each other’s arms in the calm, exalted joy of love; and the true glory of Hellenism was reserved for male youths between the ages of fifteen and nineteen at the height of their physical perfection. This is what he himself had missed in his own youth, he confessed, except in reverie. He did, however, frequently spend whole afternoons at the bathing sheds on the green (common land) on the banks of the River Cam during his college years, swimming, sunbathing, and playing improvised cricket or football with the local lads of the town. “It was quite Hellenic,” he said. “We all ran about quite naked and the fair forms amongst the trees and along the grass-banked river would set me dreaming in a sort of Greek ecstasy” (Ives Papers, diary, 30 May 1892). Still, it was too late for him to find comrade-love, he lamented in September 1893, at the advanced age of twenty-six, “but I shall see it in others, if not now, in the life to come. To think of them free!, as they will be; to think of Our Ideal being widespread over the land Kinetic mighty ecstatic glorious” (diary, 21 September 1893).

But to set youths free required organization: hence his idea for the Order of Chaeronea. “There are many of us,” he wrote in 1892. “A great army: of many tongues and kindreds but as yet scattered and unorganized; but this must not be; our common cause shall be a bond between us all, overcoming all small differences and jealousies, and uniting us as one body, one mind one effort in our cause” (diary, 3 April 1892). As he put it in early 1893, “A little band would shake the world, but a little band brave, earnest, and unstained, and ‘we’ should scatter far greater hosts than fought at Chaeronea, some might fall, all might be swept away, but the Cause would prevail whether we lived or died” (diary, 5 March 1893).

**Organization**
So how was the Order of Chaeronea organized? “A Commentary upon the Rule and Purpose of the Order” survives in the Ives Papers (box 5, folder 11). This document indicates that the order was quasi-Masonic, quasi-religious. It was secretive, to avoid suspicion, detection, or prosecution. It was nonhierarchical: the members were a band of brothers. There were no membership lists, and the initiation process involved two members initiating a third, who was then supposed to create further links in a chain with no automatic knowledge of the other links, so that if any part of the chain collapsed or was crushed, the whole organization would not disintegrate. The members were styled “priests” of the order and donned monkish robes, wore symbolic rings, dated their letters to fellow members from 338 BCE (so that 1900, for example, became 2238), addressed each other in the letters with phrases such as “From brother to brother greeting” or “From One to Another Greeting,” and sealed those letters with the seal of the order. This seal was an elaborate concoction, consisting of an outer wreath of calamus (taken from Whitman’s *Leaves of Grass*: the calamus flower has strands that cling together, representing the adhesive love of male friendship); an inner wreath of myrtle (a symbol of love and immortality); the date 338; a chain with open links at both ends; the letters ZLD, standing for “zeal,” “learning,” and “discipline”; and the word or acronym AMRRHAO—the motto of the order, which remains obscure, described as “a sign-word which tells a truth. Once upon a time it was carven on an old wall.”

The rules of the order rejected any orthodox religion or divine revelation. Its most important creeds were, first, “We demand justice for all manner of people who are wronged and oppressed by individuals or multitudes or their laws” and, second, “We believe in the glory of passion. We believe in the inspiration of emotion. We believe in the holiness of love.” All initiates had to promise the following: “That you will never vex or persecute lovers. That all heart-love, legal and illegal, wise and unwise, happy and disastrous, shall yet be consecrate for that love’s holy presence dwelt there.” Once the promise had been made, the “priest” performing the ceremony intoned, “Then Comrade / We receive you / Go and join link to link / Over the World / To you I transmit this charge, bequeathed also to me.” The service concluded with suitable passages of exhortation taken from Thomas Carlyle, Carpenter, Whitman, Oscar Wilde, George Eliot, Ecclesiastes, James Russell Lowell, and the Sufi mystic poets Rumi and Jami.

**Membership**

The Order of Chaeronea’s membership was primarily, it seems, homosexual literary and artistic men, especially in and around London. Some of the names can be identified in Ives’s correspondence: the writers Laurence Housman, Montague Summers, Louis Wilkinson, Samuel Elsworth Cottam, Charles Kains-Jackson, John Gambril Nicholson, and H. G. Hart; the artist and collector Cecil French; and, in Berlin, Adolf Brand, the producer of the homosexual periodical *Der Eigene*. Ives’s friends Carpenter and Wilde conspicuously did
not get involved.

There is no indication that the order included women. Although he noted that some members of the order disliked a close association with women, Housman indicated in 1928 that the lesbian novelist Radclyffe Hall would be a very suitable candidate, if Ives decided to invite women to join (British Sexological Society Collection, box 23.4, Housman to Ives, 30 November 1928). Hall and her lover, Una Troubridge, did express an interest, but they were not impressed when they finally met Ives in 1933, and apparently the matter went no further (Radclyffe Hall Papers, Troubridge’s daybook, 5 December 1933).

Impact

Did the order accomplish anything? Housman’s letters to Ives are the most revealing here. He continually berated Ives for his timidity and for his narrow-minded focus on the Cause rather than on social injustice in general. On many occasions Ives expressed disappointment with the number of recruits and the zeal of the disciples. Housman replied that he did not see how the order could thrive in its current format. It was composed mainly if not entirely of homosexuals who had a special ax to grind and whose motivation for joining was personal and selfish—to link up with other homosexuals—rather than being inspired by the message of social freedom. It had no appeal whatsoever for many excellent humanitarians who were doing the real, effective work in changing public opinion, who were repelled by the cult of mystery and ritual, and who did not think so secretive and self-interested a society worth joining. In other words, Housman concluded, he could see no way for the order to be rendered effective as a body, even though specific members might do good things individually (British Sexological Society Collection, box 23.3, Housman to Ives, 22 July 1924, 6 November 1927).

If such a long-term priest of the order could reach such a dispiriting conclusion, it is quite possible that the order achieved very little—that its quirky, esoteric mix of secular spirituality, mysticism, and eccentric ritual appealed to few and that the underground army of warrior-priests campaigning for the Faith was largely a figment of Ives’s overwrought imagination or daydreaming. It is surely significant that very little is now known about the order outside the materials to be found in his own archive, as is the fact that, although it survived into the late 1940s, it presumably died with him in 1950. Certainly the paradigm shift in the understanding of human sexuality between the late nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, propelled and reflected by sexologists from Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895) in Germany to Alfred Kinsey (1894–1956) in the United States, apparently owed nothing to the order. So the Order of Chaeronea remains a queer footnote in British history. But Ives meticulously chronicled that paradigm shift in his diary, and it is this that remains of abiding importance for the historian.

SEE ALSO Mattachine Society; Sacred Band of Thebes


Hall, Raddcliffe. Papers. Harry Ransom Center. University of Texas at Austin.


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“Sexual orgasm constitutes one of the most amazing aspects of human behavior,” suggests American sexologist Alfred Kinsey (Kinsey et al. [1953] 1998, 631). Orgasm is a reaction to sexual stimulation, a reaction that comprises contractions in the pelvic muscles preceded by muscular tension and an increase in blood flow to the sexual organs. Orgasm is also associated with the “pleasure center” of the brain, which includes the amygdala (which regulates emotions) and the nucleus accumbens (which plays an important role in reward, pleasure, and addiction). In individuals with penises, orgasm is usually accompanied by ejaculation of semen. In individuals with vaginas, it may be accompanied by a secretion of fluid, although debates are ongoing within the medical community about what this fluid is composed of and where exactly it is secreted from. Alongside the physiological aspects of orgasm, orgasm also carries cultural weight. For instance, culture dictates the value of orgasm and the meanings attached to its occurrence (or lack of occurrence). This entry locates orgasm within the historical study of sex and sexual dysfunction, considering male, female, transgender, and intersex orgasms. It explores the notable absence of consideration of orgasm in queer theory and looks at the importance of sexual pleasure to the field. The entry also considers the relationship between orgasm and sex aids or sex toys.
Given the centrality of orgasm to norms of sex and desire, Michel Foucault, a foundational thinker in the history of sexuality, argues that orgasm is an “ideal” rather than simply a biological function (1978, 71). For Foucault, discourses about sexuality contribute to controlling what sex is and to dictating how desire should be experienced. Within this thinking, orgasm is a site where the norms and ideals of sexuality and pleasure are enforced.

**Orgasm and Behaviorist Therapy** Within sexological thinking on orgasm, the ideal orgasm has been one achieved during heterosexual coitus. This bias and its resultant effects are particularly apparent within the homophobic, behaviorist therapy of the mid-twentieth century, which occurred in places including Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom, and the United States (see Jagose 2013 for more on behaviorist therapies and orgasm). These treatments sought to reorient male homosexual eroticism away from same-sex desire toward what was deemed normal, that is, heterosexual desire, via a process of “orgasmic reconditioning” (Marquis 1970). Since the aim was to “correct” the “abnormal” pleasures that men took in other men, treatment involved attempting to associate pain (either by electric shock or induced nausea) with erotic images of men and to associate pleasure with heterosexuality (by showing patients images of women during orgasm). Importantly, in this behaviorist therapy, the orgasm is the thing that needs changing, and an “appropriate” orgasm to heterosexual stimulation evidences the therapy's success. Similar orgasmic reconditioning was carried out on transgender individuals, to align both their gender identities and their desires (Reay 2016).

**Simultaneous Orgasm** In the early modern period in Europe, mutual or simultaneous heterosexual orgasm was referenced in medical and midwifery tracts, and it was deemed necessary for conception (Laqueur 1990). However, by the eighteenth century, mutual orgasm had lost its cultural saliency in the West, and in the nineteenth century the necessity of women’s orgasm to conception (and even the existence of women's pleasure in sex) was all but absent (Laqueur 1990). In the early twentieth century, simultaneous orgasm reemerged as culturally salient, this time as a key measure of the health of the heterosexual couple (Jagose 2013). In sexological discourse, simultaneous orgasm became both the normal accomplishment of sex and the secret of love (see Ellis 1910). In China, Zhang Jingsheng, popularly known as “Dr. Sex,” proposed that female ejaculation (which he described as three different kinds of water) and simultaneous orgasm were crucial to both conception and a healthy baby (Chiang 2010). In the United States, simultaneous orgasm appears frequently in marriage advice books from the twentieth century, where it ostensibly evidenced the pinnacle of love between a husband and wife (see Stopes 1918; Sanger 1926; Masters and Johnson 1966).

**Fake Orgasm** Faking orgasm is a practice that is widely reported worldwide, particularly by women, but it is also a practice that men partake in. Orgasm can be faked in any number of encounters, heterosexual or otherwise; however, the practice tends to be associated with
and most frequently practiced by women in heterosexual encounters. The prevalence of women faking orgasm is often linked to the failures of heterosexual coitus (and specifically vaginal penetration) to provide women with sexual fulfillment (see Jagose 2013 for more on fake orgasm). A popular cultural discussion of women faking orgasm, which condenses debates about men’s lack of knowledge about women’s pleasure and women’s agential performativity of faking it, can be found in the 1989 film When Harry Met Sally.

Orgasm and Sexual Pleasure in Queer Theory

It is perhaps the link between orgasm and normativity that has produced a lack of queer engagement with orgasm as an object of study (see Jagose 2013 for more on the orgasm in queer theory). Despite queer theory beginning by taking sex and sexuality as a distinct object of study (see Rubin 1984; Sedgwick 1990), orgasm has received relatively little attention.

Early work in the field of sexuality studies made apparent the way sex and desire are neither private nor ahistorical, and argued for the ways heterosexuality in particular is promoted by institutions such as the church, the state, hospitals, and schools (see Berlant and Warner 1998). Counter to this, the pursuit, celebration, and theorization of the pleasures and social forms enabled by nonheterosexual or “deviant” desire has remained a hallmark of queer thinking and politics. Queer theorist David Halperin remarks that there is “no orgasm without ideology,” referencing the way that sexuality is historically situated and that the notion of pleasure is deeply political (2002, 103). An important strand of queer thought has insisted on the connection between sexual practices, pleasures, and politics. This can be traced back to Foucault’s call for the invention of a new eroticism—a reorganization of the body and pleasures outside of disciplinary norms (1978). Predominantly, this work has tended to focus on gay male public cultures within a Western context, including, for example, public cruising cultures, bathhouses, and fist-fucking (see, for instance, Bersani 1987; Warner 1999).

Despite this focus on sex and alternative pleasures outside of the norms of heterosexuality and heterosexual cultures, queer theory has remained remarkably silent on the orgasm in particular. A marked exception in terms of queer theory’s treatment of the orgasm is found in Leo Bersani’s influential essay “Is the Rectum a Grave?” (1987). Bersani, in this essay, sees orgasm as useful for thinking about the sexual as involving both an inflation of the self and simultaneously a loss of consciousness of the self.

The Sexed Body and Orgasms

Within the study of orgasm, there exist ongoing debates about the relative similarities or differences between women and men’s orgasms. In the Middle Ages, influenced by the ancient Greek physician and philosopher Galen, female genitalia were imagined as an
inversion of male genitalia, with the clitoris being of the same matter as the penis; thus, orgasms were imagined similarly with both being required for conception. Yet, in the Kama Sutra, a Sanskrit text dating from the fourth century CE, orgasm is not referred to directly, but sexual pleasure and satisfaction are described as differently experienced by men and women (Vatsyayana 1963). In traditional Chinese medicine, sex involves a balancing act between depletion and absorption, and men’s orgasms, because they involve ejaculation, are seen as more dangerous to the loss of qi (life force) than women’s orgasms. Across twentieth- and twenty-first-century popular cultural texts, there is frequent debate about which sex has the “better” orgasm, making orgasmic similarity or difference central to debates about sexual difference.

A common theme in the history of thinking on the male orgasm is that it represents a loss of power or vigor. This can be found, for instance, in Taoist thinking where men are advised to prolong their orgasm and gain energy and vitality from women’s orgasms (Ruan 1991). Within Christian traditions, caution about a loss of vitality associated with orgasm is often linked to the condemnation of masturbation. This thinking can be found as well in the Victorian era, where masturbation was associated with insanity and homosexuality (Whorton 2001). The medical diagnosis of “spermatorrhea,” or “seminal weakness,” also emerged in the nineteenth century. Meant to diagnose “excessive” loss of semen, the condition produced a kind of medical and popular panic around male sexuality so that almost any seminal emission was regarded as a symptom of disease (Mason 1994). In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, penile orgasm is frequently represented as the normative aim of heterosexual sex. For instance, in heterosexual pornography, it is predominantly male orgasm and ejaculation that are represented as the aim and end goal of sexual encounters.

The history of thought around women’s orgasms revolves, in part, around understandings of the vagina and the clitoris and their relative relationship to pleasure. Women’s anatomy and its relationship to pleasure has historically produced far more debate than male anatomy and pleasure, which relates to shifting ideologies of patriarchal discourse (see Laqueur 1990; Traub 1995). Influential in these more recent debates is Sigmund Freud’s differentiation between clitoral and vaginal orgasms (see Gay 1989). Clitoral orgasms, according to Freud, were a sign of sexual immaturity, and the goal of women’s sexual socialization was the “mature” vaginal orgasm. In the West, from about the mid-twentieth century, women’s primary pleasure was relocated to clitoral orgasms (see Kinsey [1953] 1998). Debates and discussion between sexologists and readers from around the world about women’s orgasmic pleasure and vaginal penetration/clitoral stimulation can be found in the pages of the International Journal of Sexology, edited by Indian sexologist A. P. Pillay (Ahluwalia 2015). Alongside sexological studies, feminist activism from the 1960s and 1970s highlighted the primacy of the clitoris to women’s sexual pleasure (see Atkinson 1970; Koedt 1970; and Shulman 1971). Despite studies that continually show that the majority of women cannot reliably reach orgasm without clitoral stimulation (Lloyd 2005),
vaginal orgasm retains a strong cultural saliency, perhaps evidencing the stronghold of the myth of sexual reciprocity in heterosexual, vaginal penetrative coitus (Jagose 2013). What is apparent from debates about vaginal versus clitoral orgasm is that women’s pleasure has historically been difficult to untangle from patriarchal discourses and heterosexual norms.

Norms of heterosexuality, and particularly binary sex, are no less central to the relationship between orgasm and intersex and trans individuals. In the case of intersex individuals, in the twentieth century there was an increase in surgical “fixes” for bodies that did not clearly fit within a sex binary. These surgeries, pioneered in the 1950s at Johns Hopkins University in the United States, focus on making the sexed body appear clearly male or female. These surgeries privilege the visual appearance of secondary sex characteristics (and their ability to fit clearly within a two-sex binary), meaning the sexual pleasure of the adult intersex individual is secondary (see Chase 2006).

A similar issue occurs when it comes to transgender surgery. Dominant narratives of transgender subjectivity often describe transgender people as unable to take pleasure in their bodies and, indeed, medical professionals demand this narrative from transgender individuals who want to access surgery (see Spade 2006). Yet, narratives by transgender people themselves dispute this forcefully, claiming pleasures in their transgender bodies outside of medicalized norms of sexed binaries and heterosexual norms (see Cromwell 2006).

**Orgasm and Sex Aids**

Sex aids are devices that assist people in feeling sexual pleasure and achieving orgasm and include vibrators, anal plugs, dildos, and the Fleshlight. Dildos, devices that are usually designed for the penetration of the vagina, mouth, or anus and are traditionally solid and phallic in shape, have a long history, with the oldest dildo dating back more than 30,000 years. Masturbatory aids for individuals with penises include inflatable sex dolls and, more recently, products such as the Fleshlight. The Fleshlight is an artificial vagina or artificial anus sex toy, which can be bought modeled after female or male porn actors. Various sex aids associated with BDSM (bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism) became popular within gay male subcultures in the West, particularly the leather subculture, from the 1970s. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ+) sexual practices around sex toys and masturbatory aids often involve deconstructing the limits of the body and the so-called fake or imitative toys. Sex toys for many LGBTQ+ individuals might be reconceptualized as extensions of the body. This might also be the case for differently abled individuals or individuals with nonnormative bodies. For many individuals, a prosthesis that aids in expressing sexual desire might be liberatory, rather than experienced as a lack.

Vibrators have perhaps the most contentious history and the one with the strongest ties to
orgasm as it relates to the study of sex. In the height of diagnoses of hysteria in western Europe in the nineteenth century, it is well documented that medical professionals treated women by various forms of "uterine" massage. Some historians argue that this massage enabled women to achieve orgasm, and the vibrator was invented to speed up this process (see Maines 1999). However, many historians also suggest that there is little evidence to support the idea that practitioners or patients were seeking sexual gratification (see King 2011). Given the taboos around masturbation (with the widespread belief that masturbation led to mental illness), combined with doctors' fears about impropriety, this would have likely been a rare or fringe practice, if it occurred at all (see Hall, n.d.). However, the mythology of the Victorian vibrator retains a strong cultural currency with the story of women queuing up to be masturbated by their doctors repeated across many different cultural domains, notably represented in the 2011 film Hysteria.

Vibrating devices did, however, emerge in the nineteenth century as medical treatment for all kinds of ailments (Morus 2001). Vibrators became purchasable from the beginning of the twentieth century, and vibrator manufacturers began advertising to individuals (both men and women) outside of the medical profession. It is difficult to say definitively that individuals did not start using them as orgasmic aids in the privacy of their own homes.

SEE ALSO BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism); Clitoris; Cruising and Cruising Grounds; Orientalism in Gay Pornography about the Middle East; Penis; Pornography; Pornography in Asia; Sexperts and Sex Education in the West

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**FILMOGRAPHY**


Orientalism in Gay Pornography about the Middle East

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The manner in which Orientalism and pinkwashing influences gay pornography made in—and about—the Arab world.

Given the Orientalist tendency to construct the Arab world in hypersexualized terms, it is not particularly surprising to see this attitude reflected and these tropes reenacted in gay pornography, or to see that there is a very productive and flourishing genre of gay pornography that seeks to represent the Middle East and Middle Eastern themes and that sexualizes both LGBTQI Middle Eastern men and women. Gay pornography depicting Arabs (both male and female) and Middle Eastern subjects is not a new phenomenon but rather has its roots in colonialist Orientalist art and literature. Gay pornography has also been extensively used as a discursive tool in pinkwashing (the practice of championing gay rights as a way to distract attention from discrimination against other groups); however, Arab gay and straight actors and producers in pornographic movies are beginning to produce discourses that counter these Orientalist tropes and discourses of pinkwashing.

Orientalism and Homoeroticism

Joseph Allen Boone, in his article “Vacation Cruises” (1995) and subsequent book The Homoerotics of Orientalism (2014), maps the creation of the Arab male as a homoerotic, Orientalized subject in both art and literature of the colonialist era. He claims that

the geopolitical realities of the Arabic Orient become a psychic screen on which to project fantasies of illicit sexuality and unbridled excess—including, as Malek Alloula has observed, visions of “generalized perversion” and, as Edward Said puts it, “sexual experience unobtainable in Europe,” that is, “a different type of sexuality.” This appropriation of the so-called East in order to project onto it an otherness that mirrors Western psychosexual needs only confirms the phenomenon that Said calls “Orientalism” in his book of that name.

(BOONE 1995, 89)
While writers that have critiqued Orientalism through the lens of sexuality studies have focused on heteronormative sexualities, Boone argues instead that “the possibility of sexual contact with and between men underwrites and at times even explains the historical appeal of orientalism as an occidental mode of male perception, appropriation, and control” (90). Discussing the impact that travel in the Middle East and North Africa has had on gay, bisexual, and sexually ambiguous writers and other cultural figures from the Western world such as André Gide (1869–1951), Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), E. M. Forster (1879–1970), Malcolm Forbes (1919–1990), and Mick Jagger (1943–), Boone looks at three aspects of the development of the Arab world in Orientalist discourse: the construction of the Orient as “a symbol of polymorphous perversity [engendering] their obsessive fascination with, and often anguished negotiation of, the homoerotic”; “the homo-erotic undertow in representations of life on the desert”; and the “gay male enclaves established in the African Maghreb since the beginning of the twentieth century,” in which Western gay men sought places where they could escape Western opprobrium for their actions (90).

Frequently connected to each other and operating in tandem, these three aspects of homoerotic Orientalism constructed the Arab world as a place of endless homosexual opportunity and depravity for Westerners, which Westerners were able to exploit and appropriate both in order to explore their desires and to find some sort of creative and sexual “awakening” (101). This same attitude was reflected in art and photography, as documented by Boone.

**From Homoerotic Discourse to Homoeroticism**

The Orient and Middle Eastern men are not only constructed as passive sexual objects in this Orientalizing discourse. As Boone describes in his aforementioned book *The Homoerotics of Orientalism*, “The myth of the beloved boy is complemented by a corresponding fantasy figure capable of inciting equal amounts of anxiety and desire in Occidental imaginations: the unremittingly virile man of Middle East extraction” (2014, 90), stemming from a mythos of “‘pure’ unspoiled masculinity constructed out of late-nineteenth-century Anglo-European worries that its male population had become too civilized, too soft, too enervated in a world in which the sexes were more equal and everyday life no longer beset by violence and hazard” (91). Boone traces how this aesthetic, combined with a large dollop of the trope of the Arab as passive sexual object, has found its way into portrayals of homoeroticism in popular Western gay culture, including in ads for events at gay clubs and tanning salons, as well as in photography. This homoerotic Orientalism has also been combined with tropes of homonationalism (the idea of a homosexuality that is in line with nationalism and that is tolerated in a way that presents the tolerating country as civilized) in order to mock figures such as an Arab sheikh penetrating Uncle Sam, in a cartoon protesting the oil embargo of the 1970s, and the former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who was portrayed on the *New Yorker*
cover as cruising in a bathroom. It has also been deployed in representations of the infamous scandal at the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, in which eroticized bodies are depicted in the same forms of torture perpetrated there by US soldiers on Iraqi prisoners (Boone 2014).

Not merely artistic photography but also visual media with explicitly pornographic intent began to appear as early as the 1800s. Boone points out how in an 1884 compilation of "classical references to sexuality" by the German scholar Friedrich Karl Forberg, the only image (painted by an artist who went by the pseudonym Paul Avril) that does not "use Greco-Roman classical settings" is an Egyptian-themed one, which is also the only one of three that include homosexual acts, and one of two that bears a descriptive title [Hadrian and Antonius in Egypt] as opposed simply to naming the sexual position being depicted.... Strategically, the identification of the two lovers as historical figures serves to legitimize Avril's inclusion of a scene of male sodomy not only by placing it in “real” history but in a foreign land already associated in the popular imagination with same sex activity.

(401–402)

Other similar pornographic images were also produced around that time, focusing on the Arabness of the participants. In the 1920s a French pornographic film set in the Arab world and titled Mektoub (It is written) was released, featuring lesbian, heterosexual, and male homosexual encounters and presenting the Arab world as a place of harems and polymorphous perversity. This same motif of the Arab world as a place of heightened same-sex activity was reproduced again in the 1960s in a series of erotic cartoons produced by Dom Orejudos (1933–1991; also known as Etienne), in which American sailors are captured by a generic Arab sultan and turned into sex slaves, and in which Crusaders are also kidnapped, violated, and castrated by Saracens (Boone 2014).

As film developed, so did pornography depicting Arabs and the Arab world. Examples include an appearance by the porn star John Holmes (1944–1988) in the 1980s film John Holmes: The Man, which was advertised as “John Holmes and his cock [playing] a shah in ancient Persia who commands a court of male subjects to become his willing love slaves,” and the release of the films Harem (1984; also known as Sex Bazaar), Hammam (2004), and Nomades (2005) by the gay French director Jean-Daniel Cadinot (1944–2008), all of which were “filmed in the Maghreb” (Boone 2014, 406).

Modern Times
The Occidental trend of Orientalizing gay Arab male bodies has continued to the present day. One of the most notable films that enacts this trope is *Arabesque* (2005) from Raging Stallion Studios. A three-hour-long feature, it depicts actors who are mostly not of Middle Eastern ethnicity—with the exceptions of Huessein, who is a German of Turkish decent (GayPornStar 2017), and François Sagat, who was “born to Arab parents in France” (Klinck 2010)—performing the roles of Arab men having sex in stereotypical Arab marketplaces, on Persian rugs, and on sets made to look like palaces in the Arab world, in keeping with the Orientalist tropes that have been thoroughly discussed in this entry.

The marketing description of the film invokes these same tropes, describing the setting of the film in this way:

> A long time ago, in a far away place ... beneath the shimmering sun of the hot Sahara was a land of fire and flame—a romantic world of forgotten dreams that harken back to a bygone age where men ruled the desert from horseback and found sexual pleasure in their violent lusts and desires. The powerful drumbeat of the Arabian heart drove men into each other's arms, a co-mingling of sweat and passion that filled deep-rooted needs, the result of a lonely existence surrounded by sand and palm. This is the setting of Arabesque. ([“ARABESQUE” 2006](#))

Virtually all the aforementioned tropes are reenacted in this description of the film: the desert as romantic and a place to recover “forgotten dreams”; men with uncontrollable “lusts and desires,” who satisfy them violently; and the environment of the desert becoming a place conducive to homosex.

It is interesting to note that Arab trans and lesbian pornography has not reached the same level of popularity that Arab gay male porn has. While Arab trans pornography is frequently indistinguishable from other forms of trans pornography except for the ethnicity of the actors, it is notable that the veil plays a major role in Arab lesbian pornography, as it does in heterosexual pornography featuring Arabs.

**From Orientalism to Pinkwashing**

More recently, one can see the incorporation of pinkwashing and homonational discourses into gay pornography dealing with the Middle East. One of the most blatant examples of this is the production of the film *Men of Israel* (2009) by the Russian-born porn producer Michael Lucas. In this film, the actors have sex among the ruins of a destroyed Palestinian
village (Schulman 2012). The desire of Lucas (who had lived in Israel prior to moving to the United States) to engage in pinkwashing discourse is extremely clear from his blog, which mixes pinkwashing, Far Right Israeli politics, and stills of gay Israeli sex from his movies for the explicit purpose of showing the freedom in Israel for gay men in contrast with the purported situation in the rest of the Middle East (Lucas 2017). Some of the articles that he wrote that were published on various news media websites sought to portray Muslim immigrants as an inherent threat to the LGBT community in the United States (e.g., Lucas 2016). In his writings he has argued against the idea that “Republican and conservative gays and Jews care more about [Republican US Senator Ted] Cruz’s support for Israel than they do about his horrendous record on LGBT rights” (Lucas 2015), has suggested that travel in Jordan for LGBT people is “dangerous” in comparison with travel in Israel (Lucas 2012), and has denigrated LGBT activists calling for a boycott of LGBT organizations that meet in Israel as “poisonous” (Lucas 2011). His politics and how his political ideology features in his pornography are extremely clear.
In 2006, prior to the production of Men of Israel, Collin O’Neal produced World of Men: Lebanon as part of a series of films with a global perspective, with most of the sex scenes taking place in buildings that were bombed out in Lebanon’s civil war (1975–1990). One can see, when juxtaposing the two film covers, a similar positioning of the male bodies on them, so that one evokes the other, with the actors and location both being constructed as oversexualized sites of polymorphous perversity. One can also see the major role that space plays in both of these films, with the presence of the demolished Palestinian village—which Sarah Schulman, in her 2012 book Israel/Palestine and the Queer International, cites the Palestinian American filmmaker Nadia Awad describing as “desecration porn” (117)—playing almost a triumphal role in constructing Israeli men as stronger, more civilized, defeaters of the Palestinian savage. In World of Men: Lebanon, by contrast, the sex among the buildings destroyed by the civil war serves to frame Lebanon as a destroyed place, in which the normal lines of interaction have been disrupted and invite new sexual possibilities. While there is little in the way of locally produced gay pornography in the Middle East, there is a fairly well-developed amateur gay pornography sector in Israel that, instead of focusing on Orientalist tropes or the Arab-Israeli conflict, focuses on providing a recognizable “local” experience (Auerbach 2017).

Responses to Orientalism in Pornography

Evangelos Tziallas, in his 2015 article “The New ‘Porn Wars’: Representing Gay Male Sexuality in the Middle East,” argues that the production of Men of Israel by Lucas was actually a response to the trend of the production of both World of Men: Lebanon and pornographic films that sexualize Arabness, such as Arabesque. Tziallas further argues that World of Men: Lebanon represents an attempt to provide an intervention into these Orientalizing tropes, shifting the construction of Lebanese from the category of “Other” to part of a global framework within which homosexual desire is dispersed throughout, saying:

In many respects, Lebanon is a typical offering; it is neither the first nor will it be the last gay male pornographic film to sell the fantasy of leisure travel or profit off of the exoticness of foreign locales.... At the same time, the series highlights and advertises a global network of gay male sexuality, one which includes those typically perceived as hostile and in opposition to it, while simultaneously challenging the American gay porn industry’s preference for white performers and its tendency to sort races. Unlike Arabesque ... [Collin O’Neal’s World of Men:] Lebanon and [Men of] Israel were shot in the Middle East offering a comparative portrait of how same-sex desire functions in a Westernised space in the Middle East, such as Israel, and in a non-Western nation, such as Lebanon. O’Neal presents Lebanon as neither an enclosed space
nor a homophobic one, but a globally integrated nation that is sexually and culturally diverse: a gay-hub for men in the surrounding region.

(2015, 100)

According to Tziallas, it is this trend against “Othering” nonwhite bodies by deploying discourses of globalization that Lucas is working against. Through the production of Men of Israel, Lucas attempted to reconstitute the division between East and West that O’Neal’s film sought to break down. Tziallas describes it thusly:

Playing with authenticity and performance, the films attempt to blur the manufactured border between the East and the West, “white” and “not white,” and resist dominant images of Muslim and Arab men as categorically homophobic: it is precisely this blurring of identities and racial bodies that Lucas is responding to and reacting against. It is not just that Arab or “Arab” men are the latest gay pornographic craze, but the way in which the breakdown between Eastern and Western bodies, identities and cultures symbolically attempts to bridge what is popularly manufactured as a chasm between two opposing civilisations. The last thing Lucas wants is for the West, or at least gay men in the West, to see the surrounding regions as not only nonthreatening but similar, and Lucas uses his film to reassert an imaginary East/West border.

(2015, 94–95)

It is important to note that none of the actors in O’Neal’s World of Men: Lebanon is Lebanese, and only one (Sagat) is partially of Arab descent, continuing the unfortunate trend of the Global “West” speaking on behalf of and representing a local “Orient,” so it would be disingenuous to say that these newer productions dealing with the Arab world are unproblematic. While also constructed as hypersexual as the product of war, these same Lebanese male bodies are also, in gay Lebanese circles (and tacitly by the Lebanese government), constructed as yardsticks of civilization and modernity, in keeping with the idea of Lebanon more being more integrated into the system of globalization. Through the marketing of the Lebanese gay tourist industry, which has taken cues from the pornographic movie industry, Lebanon is portrayed not only as an Orientalist gay paradise but also as a progressive and yet more “authentically” Arab gay-tolerant counterpart to Israel. In addition, while Israel promotes itself as a gay-friendly country, the gay Lebanese tourist industry in turn promotes that one can go to a gay club in an Arab country in order
to counter the claim frequently made by the Israeli government that Israel is the one country in the Middle East that has gay rights.

**Arab Americans in Pornography**

While the heterosexual Lebanese-born American adult film actress Mia Khalifa rose to new levels of notoriety after appearing in a hijab in one of her videos and became the most viewed adult film actress on Pornhub in December 2014 (Kaufman 2015), it is important to note that the most visible Arab American gay adult film star, Conner Habib, has been frequently and thoughtfully contributing his own perceptions on sex work, society, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and pornography to sex-positive discourses. A former English instructor at the University of Massachusetts who then went into adult films, Habib says that he has “a hunch that [he’s] the only person who’s ever won awards for teaching, writing, and porn” (Uses This 2017). On his blog he speaks extensively on his experiences growing up as a half-Syrian, half-Irish person in rural Pennsylvania and how these experiences shaped his own subjectivity (both sexual and otherwise), such as how his lack of exposure to American sports while growing up prompted other students to mock him for being gay (Habib 2012a) and having a teacher tell him that she would “send [him] back to Syria on a camel” (Habib 2012b).

While Habib’s ethnicity has rarely been foregrounded in his films, he has spoken out frequently about both issues in the Middle East and issues related to the Middle East. For example, he signed a statement made by members of PEN America protesting the awarding of the PEN/Toni and James C. Goodale Freedom of Expression Courage Award to *Charlie Hebdo* magazine (Greenwald 2015). Afterward, he explained on his blog why he had signed the statement, saying that

> there is an insistence that these cartoons [of the prophet Muhammad by Charlie Hebdo] are not racist. And yet many experience them that way. Shall we demand they discard their fear, their anxiety? Maybe we should demand they authenticate their pain to us before we take them seriously? Shall we call them stupid pussies as the bombs rain on them and the guns are turned on them?

*(HABIB 2015B)*

He also signed a statement sponsored in 2014 by Adalah-NY demanding that the Brooklyn Book Festival “no longer accept partnerships with the Israeli government or complicit institutions” and frequently makes statements in support of the BDS movement (the campaign of boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel) on his Twitter account
Given that pornography is a form of expression that is primarily focused on sexual desire, critical analysis of it and the discourses expressed in it is useful because it allows one to look not only at how desire is constructed in a particular society but also at how these forms of desire intersect with cultural and literary tropes that are seen outside of it. Because of this, pornography that deals with both homosexuality and the Middle East is particularly interesting to critique because Orientalist tropes outside of pornography often relate to the nature of desire, and particularly queer desire, and have left their imprint on the politics and the porn of and about the region to this day.

SEE ALSO Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Pinkwashing

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**FILMOGRAPHY**

Otaku Sexualities in Japan

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Debates around the queerness of fan enthusiasm for Japanese media, particularly manga and anime.

*Otaku* is a Japanese term used to define enthusiastic fans of certain media—predominantly manga (Japanese comic books), anime (animation), and video games, but also pop idols (media celebrities), electronics, cars, trains, and so on. Derived from the Japanese honorific for *you*, the form of address used between the members of the otaku subculture, the term entered public discourse in the 1980s through the works of journalist Akio Nakamori (1960–), who used it to mock zealous manga and anime fans. Quickly becoming a stereotype associated with under-socialized, immature, and obsessive male hobbyists, the otaku gained even more notoriety in the late 1980s, when serial killer Tsutomu Miyazaki (1962–2008) was discovered to have been a fan of *rorikon* (anime and manga featuring prepubescent girl characters). In the 1990s there were attempts to reclaim and depathologize the otaku as the founder of the highly successful anime studio Gainax and self-proclaimed “Otaku king” Toshio Okada (1958–) defined the otaku as a new cadre of connoisseurs able to appreciate and distinguish between various pictorial styles of anime and manga, and to introduce these styles to the world as a vital part of Japanese culture (*Okada 1996*). In the 2010s, while the otaku are still sometimes stereotyped as obsessive and out of touch with reality, the term is no longer pejorative and is used by fans for self-identification (*Azuma 2009*). Beginning in the 1990s, the term spread outside Japan to refer generally to fans of Japanese media, achieving in the Western context a meaning close to “nerd” (*Saitō 2011*).
An Anime Fan in Tokyo, Japan, Exchanges Wedding Vows with His VR Anime Girl Crush. To the otaku, fictional characters are just as real as objects of sexual desire as “real” people—the difference being that the former are found in another type of reality. Understanding all reality as imaginary gives the otaku the right to their own imaginary sexuality even if it is masturbatory, immaterial, and object-oriented—destabilizing the natural assumptions of “proper” reproductive sexuality and making it queer.

Psychoanalytic Theory of Otaku Sexuality

Psychologist Tamaki Saitō (2011) has attempted to theorize the otaku culture from the perspective of their sexuality. He argues that what distinguishes the otaku from all other obsessive hobbyists is the sexual desire (moe) they experience toward manga, anime, and video-game characters. One such iconic character commonly found in Japanese media and popular among the otaku is a girl superhero: usually a teenager who has to save the world by using either her superpowers or weapons, including giant robots (mecha). Called “beautiful fighting girls” by Saitō, these characters are protagonists of classic anime works such as Kaze no tani no Naushika (1984; Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind), Bishōjo Senshi Sērā Mūn (1992–1997; Sailor Moon), Shin sei ki evangerion (1995–1996; Neon Genesis Evangelion), and Shōjo kakumei Utena (1997; Revolutionary Girl Utena). Beautiful fighting girls, often portrayed as powerful and fearless warriors who nevertheless exhibit typically feminine traits, have long been a site of contention among academics and the general public, as they are understood as both overtly sexualized symbols of women’s objectification and a manifestation of women and girls’ empowerment (Napier 2005; Allison 2006). Drawing on the work of French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901–1981),
Saitō defines such characters as “phallic girls,” by analogy to the “phallic mothers”—powerful female figures in Lacanian theory—arguing that they are nothing other than pure fantasies of the otaku (2011, 8). Following Lacan’s tripartite model of human subjectivity (the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real), Saitō posits that because the contemporary reality is oversaturated with media images, all perception of reality happens within the realm of the Imaginary, where we perceive images and appearances as mediated by the Symbolic (language and signs). Therefore, discriminating between so-called fiction and reality (riarity) and privileging the latter over the former makes no sense. For this reason, to the otaku, as objects of sexual desire, fictional characters are just as real as real people—the difference being that the former are found in another type of reality, one that is mediated. While the omnipresence of media images can be overwhelming and traumatizing to some, the otaku’s ability to be sexually attracted to fictional characters is actually a healthy adaptive strategy—an attitude useful to everyone, Saitō claims. Understanding all reality as imaginary gives the otaku the right to their own imaginary sexuality, even if it is masturbatory, immaterial, and object oriented—destabilizing the natural assumptions of “proper” reproductive sexuality and making it, according to J. Keith Vincent (2011), queer.

Undoubtedly meant to depathologize the otaku, Saitō’s approach has significant limitations. His analysis concerns exclusively heterosexual male otaku who, Saitō insists, are “healthy” in their “real” sexual lives; that is, they have “vanilla” relationships with “perfectly respectable members of the opposite sex as partners” (2011, 32). Ignoring female otaku and stressing the near absence of “homosexuals” (2011, 32) in the otaku subculture also reproduces, perhaps unknowingly, patriarchal and heterosexist assumptions in regard to otaku sexuality.

**Female Otaku (Fujoshi)**

The term *fujoshi* (rotten girl, and a pun on “girls and women”) is used to describe female otaku who are invested in male-male erotic narratives in manga and anime such as *boys’ love* (BL, commercial homoerotic works) and *yaoi* (form of fan fiction and art focused on “coupling” [*kappuringu*] presumably heterosexual male characters from mainstream manga and anime, similar to the Western form “slash”) (Welker 2015). Similar to the male otaku, fujoshi are stereotyped as failed (rotten) and immature women. They are “rotten” because they do not conform to conventions of appropriate feminine behavior: they are invested in fictional men rather than real ones and prefer same-sex romance to heterosexual relations. *Female otaku and fujoshi* are sometimes used interchangeably, yet some female otaku do not identify as fujoshi (Hester 2015). Finally, as is the case with male otaku, the term *fujoshi*, though it carries a hint of self-mockery, is used among the BL and yaoi fans themselves and is sometimes a source of pride (Galbraith 2015).

Scholars have pointed out that BL/yaoi narratives allow women to safely explore sexuality and gender and to play with it either via self-identification with male characters (Fujimoto...
1991) or by taking on an observer’s perspective (Otomo 2015). For instance, Yukari Fujimoto argues that BL provides women with a space to escape gender oppression and to purify love from “the tarnished male-female framework of heterosexual love” (1991, 283). Similarly, discussing the practice of reading BL/yaoi as one in which the autoerotic reader seeks her own disappearance as a subject, Rio Otomo argues that fujoshi is not an identity but rather an indication of individual taste, which is nevertheless shared by many, and this anti-identitarian, antinormative spirit likens fujoshi to “queer,” which is similarly best understood not as identity category but as a “celebration of heterogeneity, a way of living and a utopian worldview” (2015, 150).

Saitō’s theory of the sexual foundations of the otaku identity can be extended to fujoshi, albeit with significant differences (Vincent 2011). Unlike male otaku, whose moe is the desire they feel for fictional female characters of manga and anime, fujoshi’s moe is directed toward the relationship between fictional characters, not the characters themselves, and is sustained not only by reading or drawing BL/yaoi but also via moe-banashi (moe talk), a form of communication between fujoshi friends where they discuss romantic relationships between their favorite male characters as well as animate and inanimate objects (Galbraith 2015). In the words of one fujoshi herself, fujoshi differ from “normal” people and even other otaku in that they are not satisfied with things as they are in the existing narratives, and so create alternatives using their abundant imaginations (Galbraith 2015, 155). Patrick W. Galbraith argues that this interest in pure fantasy links fujoshi and the male otaku, as both are attracted to “fictional contexts” where they enjoy “layering” contexts one upon another, creating new possibilities for the relationship between fiction and reality (156). This investment in transforming fiction through layering may explain why some fujoshi are not interested in consuming BL stories with “confirmed” same-sex romances, preferring yaoi-style reimagining of mainstream heterosexual characters in same-sex couplings (2015). Galbraith’s observational study of a group of fujoshi friends stresses the communal essence of yaoi; through sharing yaoi art and fiction (dōjinshi) and online and in-person discussions of their favorite couples (moe talk), fujoshi relate to each other in affective, validating ways.

**Male BL Fans**

While the overwhelming majority of BL/yaoi fans are female, there is a small community of male fans who sometimes call themselves fudanshi (rotten men), though this term has not yet gained much purchase in Japan (Santos 2017). According to Kazumi Nagaike (2015), these male fans come in all sexualities, including heterosexual, and what they all have in common is their perception of BL/yaoi as an escape from the pressures of conventional Japanese masculinity. Reading BL fulfils their interest in androgynous ideals, self-feminization, male passiveness, and romantic narratives of “true love”— all far cries from Japanese patriarchal assumptions of assertive, domineering masculinity. Unlike shōnen
(boys’) manga, where romantic plotlines are told through the prism of competition, BL allows its male fans to explore and embrace masculine passivity—a salvation for some, as Nagaike puts it (193).

**BL and Gay Men: The Yaoi Dispute and Contemporary Gay Manga**

Despite the widespread belief that yaoi and BL characters are pure fantasies of the women who produce and consume them, and as such, have nothing to do with “real” gay men, female fans of homoerotic manga and anime have been accused of fetishizing, appropriating, and harming gay men (Lunsing 2006). Wim Lunsing recaps the famous yaoi ronsō (yaoi dispute) that started in 1992 when gay activist Masaki Satō published an essay critical of yaoi in the feminist magazine *Choisir* (Choose). Satō accused yaoi creators and consumers of homophobia and of invalidating gay lives, comparing them to “dirty old men” interested in hentai (conventional pornography based on objectification of women). Yaoi as a genre, he argued, produces distorted images of gay men that have little to do with reality, and it contributes to the growing public interest in homosexuality (the “gay boom”) without helping real gay men; furthermore, the common yaoi trope of characters perceiving homosexuality as “disgusting” is homophobic. Satō’s criticisms elicited a variety of responses from the female fans of BL and yaoi, who insisted that as a fantasy, yaoi was not about real gay men at all, and that it was liberating to its readers because it provided women with romantic narratives free of gender roles and female objectification. However, BL and yaoi do reflect and influence gay sensibilities in Japan. Lunsing notes that characters in BL/yaoi narratives who react to homosexuality with disgust or shock may be a reflection of popular homophobia in Japan. Additionally, until the mid-1990s, Japanese gay men predominantly followed the handsome and slender bishōnen (androgynous young male) beauty ideal common in BL; men who were not able to uphold this ideal faced ostracism and alienation from the community. A major shift occurred in 1995 when the first manga works of Gengorō Tagame (1964–) were published in the gay magazine *G-Man*. Tagame, who would become a leading author of gei komi (gay comics, or manga produced for gay men by gay men), drew extremely masculine characters who were muscular or chubby, broad-shouldered, and hairy. The publication of his works in *G-Man* made fashionable among Japanese gays traits associated in the West with the “bear” subculture, such as a bulky build and facial and body hair.

While the yaoi dispute continues and scholars still observe a certain degree of guilt and unease among some fujoshi with regard to “appropriating gay men” (Ishida 2015), the relationship between BL/yaoi and gei komi is neither straightforward nor easily defined. Thomas Baudinette’s study (2017) of young Japanese gay men’s consumption of gay media shows that they understand BL and gei komi as two aspects of the same meta-genre—gay manga—and treat them as equally important to their subjectivities as gay men. Lunsing
(2006) notes the commonality of pictorial styles, themes, and tropes shared by both BL/yaoi and gei komi such as bondage, sadomasochism, and rape scenarios. Interestingly, like female producers and consumers of yaoi and BL, some gei komi artists claim that in their real lives they do not have sex the way it is portrayed in their works, as the latter are purely imaginative. Tagame, who initially was very critical of BL/yaoi on grounds similar to those cited by Satō, eventually changed his position, admitting that both BL/yaoi and gei komi are fantasies and are equally valid as such (Santos 2017).

In conclusion, several decades of manga and anime popularity in Japan allowed the otaku culture to develop into a new form of individual and collective engagement with media, which has a rich potential for exploring alternative and queer sexualities both in and outside Japan.

SEE ALSO Boys Love (Yaoi) Manga; New Media in Asia

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Evidence of homoeroticism in the visual art of the Ottoman and Persian Empires.

According to conventional wisdom there is little in the way of depictions of homoeroticism in the Ottoman and Persian visual archive beyond the outpouring of miniature paintings of beautiful youths, often wine servers, that flourished in the Safavid period (1501–1736). However, what some have taken to be the invisibility of male homosexuality in regard to Middle Eastern art turns out to be far from accurate. This oversight owes first to a widespread misperception that Islam prohibits bodily and erotic imagery and hence that there will be little to find. Second, it owes to the tendency of Western scholars to look for signs of homoeroticism common to the Hellenistic and European traditions (e.g., sculpture or paintings glorifying the nude male body) but absent in Ottoman and Persian visual representation. Third, it owes to the reticence of Middle Eastern studies historians to take up sexually controversial topics until relatively recently, discouraging investigation into this visual heritage. In fact, once one learns to look at this archive with fresh eyes, decoding its particular system of signs, one discovers an overwhelming abundance of visual evidence of male homoeroticism. This wealth of evidence complements scholarship in the history of Middle Eastern sexuality since the beginning of the twenty-first century, revealing the extent to which institutionalized forms of male-male sexuality, love, and romance permeated premodern Persian, Arabic, and Ottoman cultures and aesthetics.

History and Aesthetics of Miniature Art

The tradition of adorning book manuscripts with miniature paintings flourished in Persia from the ninth century onward, reached a zenith in the Safavid dynasty, and spread eastward to the Mongol Empire and westward to the Ottoman Empire. Although Thomas W. Arnold's 1928 influential thesis about the prohibition of figural imagery in Islamic art has since been refuted by a number of scholars in the field, the widespread assumption of Islam's hostility to representations of the human figure lingers, coloring sexual historians' suppositions about the likelihood of locating substantive visual evidence of the erotic—much less the homoerotic—in such cultures. But as various scholars have clarified,
admonitions against artistic representations (for usurping God’s role as the creator of human likenesses) exist in various hadith (collections of sayings of the prophet Muhammad) but not in the Qur’an. Indeed, the idea of a “ban” on human figuration never extended beyond sculpture and decorations in mosques. But in the fine arts, from wall paintings (most of which have been destroyed over time) to illustrated manuscripts to brocaded silk garments to luxury household objects such as lacquered pen boxes, idealized human figures of both sexes are everywhere, and their beauty is designed to rivet the viewer’s gaze. At the same time, the very stylization of these ideal representatives of beauty—apparent in the depiction of seemingly nonindividuated, circular faces on fragile necks, tilted eyes, and pinched lips (traits inherited from earlier Persian contact with Chinese art traditions)—created an aesthetics of beauty whose focus on the ideal, in contrast to the realist emphasis of European portraiture, also functioned to protect the artist from accusations of imitating God’s creation through mimesis.

Persian and later Ottoman miniature art is nothing if not aesthetically self-reflexive, and this self-reflexivity often becomes a key to deciphering the genre’s homo-erotic subtexts. Take, for example, a single-page image from a Safavid album in Istanbul’s Topkapi Palace Museum depicting a handsome youth, perhaps a prince, contemplating a single folio on which is painted the image of another young man. Such an image is not just a self-conscious meditation on art (in which the viewer’s contemplation of this artwork is mirrored in the act of artistic contemplation represented in the depiction). That this depiction of the act of looking is also meant to symbolize the inception of sexual desire—in this case male-male desire—is underlined in the way it “quotes” Nizami’s Khamsa, a revered and continually illustrated heterosexual romance epic from the twelfth century in which the heroine, Shirin, falls in love with Khusraw when she sees his portrait. The three different specimens of verse affixed to the same album page, moreover, share the theme of erotic desire. Text, illustration, and context thus all reinforce the representation of a romantic yearning that is in this case homoerotic.

As an image created independently of a larger text, this folio represents a later development in the tradition of miniaturist art. But miniature paintings conceived to serve as illustrations to the history, verse narrative, medical treatise, or poetic anthology they accompanied in earlier texts are also suffused with homoerotic subject matter. These range from illustrations to often repeated stories (such as the prince who is waylaid by an infatuated lover on the way to a polo match) to the Ottoman poet and courtier Fazil Enderuni’s Huban-name (1792–1793; Book of beauties), a sequence of lyric portraits singing the erotic charms of desirable boys around the globe—each of which is accompanied by a miniature painting illustrating the winsome youth at hand.

Because these images most often originated as the property of the elite, the question arises whether the homoeroticism pervading them reflects sexual mores beyond those of their elite viewers. These circumstances of ownership and circulation, in turn, have fostered
assumptions that, because aristocratic circles have always allowed room for “rarefied sexual tastes”—tastes as exceptional as these rare book-objects—such representations do not reflect the social values or habits of the larger culture. Yet, as numerous scholars have definitively shown (Ze’evi 2006; Andrews and Kalpakli 2005; El-Rouayheb 2005; Rowson 1997; Massad 2007), male-male sexuality pervaded Islamic culture on multiple levels, including literary traditions whose oral performance reached wide audiences from the tenth to nineteenth centuries. Likewise, one should not dismiss the possibility of such imagery also reaching wider audiences, both local and foreign, than is often assumed. First, the Persian artists who originated the miniaturist motifs that dominated manuscript production for some 400 years traversed vast areas (sometimes freely, sometimes as booty), often bringing their personal caches of manuscripts with them as they set up schools to teach their skills in new locales; manuscripts were often given by rulers to diplomats and important figures from other countries as gifts and received by courts as tribute offerings. Whereas Istanbul remained the hub of art production throughout the Ottoman Empire, the ever-shifting political fortunes of the ruling dynasties of Persia meant that the Persian Empire’s centers of artistic production periodically shifted from one city to another as new dynasties relocated their capitals, thus dispersing local traditions of miniature painting widely across the face of Asia Minor and even Europe.

Although the most talented artisans and calligraphers worked in royal studios, many artists served their apprenticeships in bazaar workshops and, by the fifteenth century, were employed in ateliers whose customers included upper- and middle-class patrons, ranging from governors to merchants. Commercial enterprises also increasingly produced illustrated manuscripts expressly for sale to foreign visitors. As the presence of Europeans in these regions exploded beginning in the mid-sixteenth century, their travel narratives provide ample evidence of the hordes of book manuscripts available for viewing and sale, along with a number of individual paintings separated from their original manuscripts and dispersed in urban bazaars, including, in the words of one such traveler, William Ouseley, images “offensive to the modest eye” (1823, 1:69).

The dissemination of such images, including homo-erotic ones, across large geographic areas was also facilitated by three important artistic developments. First is the rise of the poetic miscellany in the 1400s, which consisted of poetry by various authors and combined various themes and styles and both full and abridged texts. In such volumes, illustrations inevitably tended toward the love themes (often homoerotic) of much of the poetry and existed in a much looser relation to the text than those created for the narrative romances or historical chronicles. The second crucial development was the rise of the self-standing single-page painting as an aesthetic object existing in its own right. This tradition included innumerable portraits of languid, epicene youths in a style perfected by Riza-i ʿAbbasi (c. 1565–1635) and his most famous student, Muʿin Musavvir (1617–1708). The third development of significance was the increased popularity in the sixteenth century of the album genre, in which illustrations and lines of poetry cut from older texts were affixed to
new pages in aesthetically interesting arrangements, allowing the arranger to focus on favored themes and subject matters through juxtaposition and placement. Thus, the independently minded collector might decide to bring multiple representations of beautiful youths by different artists together on a single page, creating a “conversation” between the figures.

This technique is evident not only in Middle Eastern albums but also in those of European collectors who brought their singly purchased folios back to France, England, or Germany to bind into albums. Charles Hercules Read (1857–1929), the keeper of British antiquities at the British Museum from 1896 to 1921, amassed fifty-seven such folios in an album that now resides in the Morgan Library and Museum. While textual evidence suggests that several of the Persian illustrations came from the same early seventeenth-century muraqqā’ (album), Read inserted into their midst a number of leaves from other sources as well. The result is a handpicked collection overwhelmingly consisting of images of beautiful male youths, raising the question of whether this thematic played a role in their original assembly, their purchase by Read, and the additions that Read made to the collection.
Figures 1: Portrait of Shah ʿAbbas I with One of His Pages (1627). Attributed to Muhammad Qasim, this famous representation of the shah includes several homoerotic symbols, including a wine bottle between the youth’s thighs.

Examples of the Various Categories of Homoerotic Illustrations

To illustrate the homoerotic frisson that infuses the archive of Ottoman and Persian miniature painting, the following paragraphs discuss an array of images arranged in thematic categories. Read’s album provides an excellent launching point to discuss the first grouping: single portraits of youths depicted as objects of desire. In one image dating to Herat (present-day Afghanistan) between 1600 and 1610, a seated youth epitomizes the beau ideal (perfect model) of Safavid art in his combination of indolence, lissomeness, and a coyness that borders on yawning indifference. The youth’s detached gaze acts as one of the motors of desire for the viewer, whom the portrait projects as the wishful male suitor who would rather wrest the youth’s attention to himself. This desire is flamed by the epicene youth’s obvious enjoyment in striking a provocative pose as he offers himself up to the viewer’s gaze: from his elaborately wrapped turban, to the ermine borders of the cloak that he hugs loosely to his chest with his unseen left arm, to the artfully casual strands of hair that lie on his neck, and from his arched eyebrows to the open-legged posture on the raised platform on which he ever so casually lounges against his ornately brocaded pillow, he renders himself an object of desire and display.

Another common depiction of homoeroticized desire in the miniature tradition features male couples. Figure 1, attributed to Muhammad Qasim in 1627, is the most famous of many representations of the Persian shah ʿAbbas I (1571–1629) in the company of a handsome youth, as well as the one whose homoerotic signifiers are most artistically encoded. Note how the shah clasps the extended wrist of the smiling boy with his own hand, bringing flesh into contact with flesh, as the two stare intently into each other’s eyes. The boy appears ready to chuck the shah under the chin (an iconic gesture of amorous affection in miniature art—here reversed, because the youthful beloved is usually the recipient of the gesture), while the shah’s right arm, draped over the youth’s shoulders, pulls him closer into a near embrace. Meanwhile, the boy’s left hand strokes the tilted neck of the equally iconic wine flask, which rises between the youth’s thighs (one of which is exposed) as if an erect phallus and extends into the vicinity of the shah’s lap, thereby visually creating a symbolic link between their erogenous zones. The miniature is accompanied by the following verse: “May life grant all that you desire from three lips, those of your lover, the river [of life—flowing at the bottom left corner of the frame], and the cup.”

Expression of amorous affection between youths of the same age is also part of the visual tradition. Often the youths’ intertwining of limbs makes it difficult to tell where one body
ends and the next begins, evoking the arabesque design ubiquitous in Middle Eastern aesthetics. This simultaneously sensuous and formal appeal is apparent in a late sixteenth-century album miniature. As the two wine-drinking youths engage in a flowing embrace, the anonymous artist captures the sensation of bodies caught in motion: the S-like curve of the horizontally extended arms of the youth in front, who holds his turban in one hand and the wine flask in the other, forms links in a chain created by the overlapping limbs of his companion. The latter youth drapes one arm over the bare-headed boy's shoulder and down his back, his hand directing the viewer's eye to the leg that he has simultaneously twined around the boy's waist. One can almost feel the pressure of this leg pulling the bare-headed boy in to his companion's inner thighs; all the while the turbaned youth's other hand tantalizingly extends the wine cup to his companion's mouth.

There also exist numerous miniatures depicting groups of men in which the entire mise-en-scène is suffused with male-male desire, thereby making homoeroticism the image's dominant trope. One exquisitely rendered example is a very small Ottoman miniature in a volume of poetry, Kâsim-i Envâr, probably copied in Isfahan in 1456–1457 but with its illustrations added by Ottoman artists later in the sixteenth century. Eight figures (plus a nearly offstage musician) form a visual circle that gives the painting its formal symmetry. At bottom right, a köçek (male, often effeminate, dancer) entertains this all-male group of refined aristocrats in a sumptuous palace setting. The participants in this pleasure party form a range of types of couplings (and age pairings) that attests to the sheer variety of acceptable homoerotic desires in this world, a variety familiar to viewers of the image.

At the top center of the group, a man with a slight moustache who is holding a wine bottle—his position indicating that he is probably the host of this indoor sohbet (highly aestheticized, aristocratic, all-male pleasure party)—is extending his free hand to meet that of the youth he is engaging in conversation, while a lad positioned on the far left looks on. Meanwhile, at the right border, two young men hold hands. But, most notably, in the lower left corner two seated and embracing youths, also of the same age, are depicted in the passionate act of kissing—a degree of intimate lovemaking very rarely illustrated in the miniature tradition.

Festivities have moved outside, and have already passed their climax, in the illustration of an all-male garden party included in the album of the Ottoman sultan Ahmed I (1590–1617) from the Topkapi Palace Museum collection. The narrative encoded in the illustration registers the surprised looks on the faces of the attendants, to the left, who have just appeared with refreshments, as they take in the scene of drunkenness and debauchery that greets them. Just below the central fish pond, one youth is attempting to revive his older companion, who, as the broken bottle and fallen turban indicate, appears to have passed out from too much wine. In an equally humorous touch, the sage sitting by the fish pond is so caught up in a moment of creative inspiration that he remains as oblivious to the amorous antics taking place around him as the cat who is intently watching the fish circle.
the pond. Meanwhile, the gazes of three of the attendants on the left direct the viewer to the postcoital “pillow talk” occurring between the two youths reclining on the ground on the right half of the folio. That the two have just engaged in sex is not only indicated by the fact that they have removed their outer garments and turbans, as the neatly stacked clothing of each indicates. It is also signaled by the way in which their transparent undergarments teasingly reveal their still-tumescent penises. That of the youth who faces the viewer lies draped across his left thigh, while the genitals of the youth whose back is to the viewer are tucked between his legs, visible along with his buttocks. The overall depiction is both whimsical and erotic, its outdoor setting in a lovely landscape lending a bucolic carefreeness to an afternoon of excessive indulgences in the double pleasures of wine and lovemaking.

Another all-male venue providing artists with the occasion to depict scenes suffused with sensuality is that of the hamam (public bath). While there is a rich poetic tradition evoking, in often explicit terms, the homoerotic pleasures of the bath and its delectable bath boys, visual representations are often more subtle. An illustration of a group of men cavorting in a hamam’s bathing pool in a sixteenth-century album of miniatures housed in the Topkapi Palace Museum depicts a degree of male intimacy that appears relatively innocent on the surface but that, on closer view, includes a degree of tender sensuality superseding general locker-room homosociality. The artist strategically allowed the wrap of the masseur on the bottom left to fall open, exposing his penis, and rendered the blue towels of the two men preparing to dive into the pool on the upper right translucent, so that they reveal fully outlined genitals beneath. There is more going on, at least in the miniaturist’s imagination, than first meets the eye.

Various explicit images of male intercourse can also be found in the archive, ranging from miniatures to everyday painted objects. Often these conform to the pattern of age-differentiated sodomy most common in Ottoman and Persian culture, in which the adult male is the active partner and the adolescent youth the passive recipient. But some visual images also attest to a greater flexibility than this truism allows. A case in point is an eighteenth-century illustration in Nevʻizade ʻAtayi’s Khamsa (see Figure 2). On the one hand, the central action inscribes the familiar script: a mustachioed turbaned man mounting a boyishly plump youth reclining on a pillow on a raised dais that underscores the scene’s “to-be-looked-at” quality. On the other hand, this staging makes all the more pronounced the alternative relations and erotic practices occurring among the witnesses to this spectacle—indeed, the slightly ajar door to the rear of the platform hints at the porous dimensions of this phantasmic tableau, its openness to new possibilities. Thus, in the front of the raised platform, a single man enjoys the pleasures of autoeroticism, taking in the coupling occurring to his rear with eyes aslant. Meanwhile, the two men to the right add another intriguing element to the scenario. On one level they might be interpreted as waiting their turn to enjoy the youth. Yet on second glance they seem more interested in getting off watching each other as they exchange intense glances. A more mobile exercise of
homoeroticism—here involving adult peers—inhabits the fringes of the pederastic model that occupies center stage; such a reversal of expectations also occurs in multiple miniatures in which the youth is shown as the active partner, sodomizing his senior partner.

This erotic plasticity is encapsulated in a tiny miniature that forms a fitting conclusion to this survey, a scene occurring within a brothel that provides a reminder that well into the early twentieth century Middle Eastern formations of sexuality and desire were not constructed on an either/or polarity pitting heteroand homosexuality as binary opposites, as was increasingly the case in Christianized Europe. While this sixteenth-century miniature, illustrating a story in the Külliyat of Saʿdi, measures only a few inches, it depicts a world teeming with activity, including six couples (and four other onlookers, clients, or attendants). Not only do men engage in sex with both female and male partners in a shared architectural space and on the same visual plane, the artist has taken care to represent as
many variations of acts and age pairings as possible. Of the five couples involved in sexual activities, two are male-male and three are male-female. In addition, a man woos the seated woman on the carpet to the right, while a man entering the door at the bottom left seems to be pursuing a boy whose body is cut off by the bottom margin. In terms of both visual and architectural hierarchies, the pride of space is the decorated alcove at the top center, generally occupied by the highest-ranking person in the miniature, which accords the action occurring in it—a man penetrating a youth—elevated prominence. In contrast to this model of age-differentiated sodomy, a second male pairing—located at the bottom right corner— involves two youths of the same age. Given their parity and that certain brothels served not only as sites where one might pay for sex (with either a male or female) but also as “safe spaces” rented by males, it is not unreasonable to surmise that the latter couple are not in fact client and prostitute but lover-companions. A hint of this erotic porosity also infuses the scene’s depiction of heterosexual congress. While two involve face-to-face intercourse between an older man and younger woman, the third depicts a youth on his knees, erection exposed, as he manually pleasures his female companion. In sum, this remarkable image celebrates a plethora of erotic activity whose fluidity is encouraged by the privacy that the brothel’s enclosed world provides its patrons. Within this erotic zone, adulterous intercourse (between male clients and female prostitutes) and sodomy (between males) are equally permitted and occupy the same playing field, occurring in “full sight” of each other.

From bawdy scenes such as this to single portraits of youthful dandies, from couples of similar and differing ages to illustrations of all-male venues, from palaces and hamams to pleasure gardens, the Ottoman and Persian visual archive is suffused with a sensuality that is both implicitly and explicitly homoerotic. That so much evidence has remained, in the face of later censorship (in some manuscripts the point of insertion in scenes of sodomy has been rubbed out), raises the question of how much has been destroyed, as well as how much remains to be discovered. But what the extant archive offers up—once the viewer learns to resee with fresh eyes, and from a queer angle of vision—is a startlingly evocative trove of images whose homoerotic content is already present and awaiting analysis.

SEE ALSO Amer, Ghada (1963–); Khookha McQueer (1987–); Literary Discourses in the Ottoman Middle East (1500–1900); Sufi Treatment of Same-Sex Relations in Poetry and Prose

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When late eighteenth-century European navigators first landed at Tahiti, in what is today French Polynesia, they were bewildered by what they thought was a society untouched by “civilization,” in which people lived in innocent harmony with nature. What perhaps enchanted them the most was what they understood as the islanders’ seemingly unabashed approach to sexuality. They were somewhat aware of the fact that the sexual freedom they thought they were witnessing was entangled with dynamics of material exchange that Tahitians were anxious to establish with the seemingly powerful newcomers, and thus was the product of a cross-cultural encounter riddled with politics and potential misrecognition (Wilson 2002). The exacting narratives that they published upon their return would cause sensations in London and Paris salons, fueling romantic fantasies about humanity before the fall from Paradise and debates about national and racial difference (Cheek 2003).

There were, however, limits to the travelers’ enchantment. When they witnessed “unnatural” same-sex practices and gender-bending that some Tahitians engaged in, the enlightened spirit of scientific discovery and romantic wonderment gave way to moral indignation (Besnier 1994). These they also recorded in lurid detail in their journals, where they were suffused with European discourses of “civilization” and “primitivity” and helped confirm that islanders were, after all, savages.

Pacific Transgender in the Late Eighteenth Century

What the navigators described involved male-bodied individuals who were socially considered women, called to this day māhū in Tahitian (as well as Hawaiian) and by a variety of other names in other societies of the region (e.g., fakaleitī in Tonga, fa’afafine in Samoa, ʻakavaʻine in the Cook Islands, qauri in Fiji), many of which are neologisms and often unstable. It can expediently be referred to in English as “transgender” despite the risk of erroneously conflating the category with others with which it shares some but not all characteristics. Eighteenth-century Europeans wrote that māhū socialized primarily with women, performed women’s work, and were subject to the same gender-based taboos as women. They were part of chiefs’ retinues and, according to these descriptions, were not
the object locally of any particular moral reprobation or social marginalization. Unlike transgender categories in other parts of the world, however, they did not perform any particular religious function. This was a category defined in terms of gender rather than sexuality, but since māhū were not socially considered to be men, they did not take on male sexual roles. Instead, they engaged in receptive sexual acts with normatively gendered men, who appear to have been mostly or exclusively members of the elite classes.

While eighteenth-century Europeans, who believed that both effeminacy and same-sex desire were the consequences of spending too much time with women, must have made some sense of māhū’s gendering and sexuality, they were unanimous, in contrast to Tahitians, in their moral evaluation of these “depraved” individuals and their “abominable” and “detestable” practices. This reaction makes sense in the context of the fact that these encounters were taking place at a time when a gender revolution was taking place in England that would squarely establish a heteronormative order, violently repressing sodomy and male effeminacy as signs of moral and civic deficiency (Trumbach 1998). Yet the encounters also may have had a strong, if unacknowledged, homoerotic undertone (Wallace 2003). As the navigators were followed in Tahiti by missionaries of the evangelical London Missionary Society, any trace of Enlightenment curiosity gave way to the categorical and virulent condemnation of all Tahitian sexual practices.

One puzzling fact is that in contrast to the copious European documentation of gender-crossing māhū in Tahiti, accounts of comparable social categories in other island groups are at best equivocal. In Hawai‘i, naval officers who accompanied British explorer Captain James Cook (1728–1779) noted that male elites surrounded themselves with “the most beautiful males they can procure about 17 years old,” referred to as ‘āikane (a term that later came to mean “bond friend”); the chiefs “are extremely fond of them, and … they bestow all the affections upon them that were intended for the other sex” (Ledyard 1783, 132). But these were quite different (and to eighteenth-century observers, undoubtedly more puzzling) than māhū because gender and sexual desire did not align as the Europeans expected at the time.

Explorers’ journals bear witness to the fact that early encounters were replete with reciprocated misapprehensions about gender and sexuality. Several passages about Tahiti recount situations in which a Western sailor courted a beautiful young woman, only to discover to his dismay that she was a māhū; this was a source of great hilarity to all bystanders. In both Hawai‘i and Aotearoa New Zealand, European sailors were occasionally the object of Polynesian men’s sexual interests. Some writers express doubts about island men’s masculinity, but surely these doubts must have been reciprocated, despite the silence of archives on the topic, particularly in island societies that practiced circumcision as a rite of manhood, where an uncircumcised man, which included European travelers, was (and still is) considered deficient.
Outside of Tahiti, early records provide either no comment or comments about the absence of transgender individuals. For example, William Mariner, a young midshipman who spent 1805 to 1809 in Tonga, 1,700 miles from Tahiti, after the ship on which he was sailing was attacked and scuttled, dictated upon his return to Britain an account of Tongan society, in which he declared, “As to certain preposterous habits, which so disgrace the moral character of nations west of them, and which have been said to infect the natives of some of the South Seas islands, we must do the Tonga people the justice to say, that they have not the most remote idea of any thing of the kind” (Martin 1817, vol. 2, 178; “west” is undoubtedly an error, since Tahiti is east of Tonga). As for the possibility of women taking on a male role in Pacific Island societies, early-contact witnesses are uniformly silent.

Islanders' own perspectives on the history of the transgender, whether in encounters with European travelers or in other contexts, are unfortunately difficult to excavate, as oral history in the region is silent on this social category; historical memory focuses on the identities and deeds of people of importance, which transgender persons certainly were not. Some indigenous activists in the region claim historical knowledge of the transgender in settler colonial societies of the region where struggles over indigenous rights are most visible, namely Aotearoa New Zealand and Hawai‘i. However, these claims invariably focus on mythological figures that transgress gender categories or attest to close same-sex friendships, such as that between the warriors Tūtānekai and Tiki in Māori mythology, as narrated in writing by mid-nineteenth-century chief Te Rangikāheke in the 1850s (Walker 2014). The exact nature of these dynamics is very difficult to interpret specifically (and they tend to lend themselves to romanticization), but they do play an important role in contemporary struggles for the recognition of nonheteronormative practices in contemporary indigenous and sexuality politics.

Pacific Transgender in the Long Nineteenth Century

By the early twentieth century, according to Western accounts, men who take on and are attributed feminized personas were ubiquitous throughout Polynesia, the triangular region of the Pacific with Hawai‘i, Aotearoa New Zealand, and Rapanui (Easter Island) at its apexes. Today they and gender-crossing women are part of all societies of the region, including the contiguous regions that Westerners have referred to since the nineteenth century as Micronesia, in the North Pacific, and Melanesia, in the Western Pacific.

Documentary records that followed Enlightenment-era accounts fall largely silent for the duration of the long nineteenth century, other than in the confusing and sensationalistic accounts by a few colonial agents (e.g., Jacobus X 1893). How these identities may have spread to regions where they were evidently unknown at first contact with Europeans remains an unanswered question. A tantalizing hypothesis argues that early cross-cultural encounters were theatrical events as much as they were political and economic events, in which the encountering parties performed for one another (Balme 2007). The central role
played by gender-crossing men and the prominence of slapstick gender equivocations in these encounters is no coincidence, given the category’s predilection for performance, which survives to this day. Could gender crossing in island societies where it was apparently not known in precontact days have been triggered by the precolonial encounter?

In the course of the nineteenth century all Pacific Islands were incorporated, to various degrees, into the colonial empires of the United Kingdom, France, Spain, and Germany, as well as, in the last decade of the century and first decade of the twentieth, the United States and Australia. At the center of imperial projects were zealous efforts to turn islanders into civilized and Christian colonial subjects. Colonial and missionary agents outlawed precontact religious rituals, cannibalism, infanticide, and human sacrifice, as well as, to various degrees in different island groups, tattooing, dancing, long-distance canoe voyaging, and the manufacture of tapa cloth. They and the local elites who benefited from their presence reconfigured social structures and cultural practices so that Christianity and the colonial order would eventually constitute “tradition.” Newly introduced diseases, liquor consumption, slaving-ship raids, land dispossession, religious and other wars, and other calamities finished the restructuring job where imperialism and missionization left off.

While they undeniably transformed Pacific Island societies, imperial projects were inevitably counterbalanced by action “from below,” ranging from quiet tactics of resistance to open rebellion. As the “new Pacific historiography” that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s, inspired by subaltern and postcolonial critiques, has documented (Denoon 1997), Pacific Islanders were not simply victims of colonialism, but took events into their own hands, although often with aims that differed from one another. One illustration is precisely the fact that, despite the new moralities imposed on Pacific Islanders during this period, gender identities and sexual practices that did not conform to the new normativities evidently expanded and flourished, although the details of this flourishing remain unknown.

Transgender and Modernity
Fakaleitī at a Hair Salon in Tonga, 2008. Tongan fakaleitīs (male-bodied individuals who are socially considered women in Tongan society) are expert hairdressers and their salons are social hubs where they socialize with one another and with their women friends and clients.

In the early twentieth century Western observers began commenting again on the transgender people, this time not only in Tahiti but also elsewhere in the region. This renewed interest owed much to the emergence of the discipline of anthropology, which sought to document social and cultural practices, allegedly suspending moral judgment. For example, American anthropologist Edward Winslow Gifford (1887–1959), who conducted fieldwork in Tonga in 1920 and 1921 and published one of the first modern ethnographies of a Pacific Island society, writes that “little could be learned about berdaches (fakafefine, which [missionary dictionary compiler] Baker defines as ‘a monster’). Only a single informant … vouchsafed information concerning them. He said that anciently ‘there were many,’ but in 1920 he knew of but one” (1929, 203; Gifford was familiar with berdaches from his previous fieldwork among Native Americans). In Coming of Age in Samoa, American anthropologist Margaret Mead (1901–1978) relates encountering one “deviant,” a twenty-year-old boy who made “continual sexual advances to other boys,” whom girls regarded as “an amusing freak” but whom men looked upon with “mingled annoyance and contempt” (1928, 148). The possibility that non–gender-bending boys might have been equally interested in the young fa'afafine is not part of the description.
But these remarks were invariably incidental. Sustained analysis did not take place until the 1960s, when American psychological anthropologist Robert Levy (1924–2003) conducted psychoanalytically inflected research in Tahiti. In 1971 he published a brief article in which he proposed that *māhū* performed a particular “function” in Tahitian villages, namely to demonstrate to heteronormative youth what a man should *not* be, in a context in which, according to Levy, the relative lack of cultural markers of gender rendered masculinity fragile. While subsequent researchers demonstrated that this analysis and the assumptions on which it is predicated are flawed (*Besnier 1994*), it deserves credit for having opened a debate in the ensuing decades.

One important characteristic of male-bodied transgender Pacific Islanders is the role that they frequently adopt as cultural brokers, performers, and innovators, in character with the role they played in early contacts between islanders and Westerners. They distinguish themselves for their cultural creativity and orientation to an external world and the future (*Mageo 1992; Besnier and Alexeyeff 2014*). For example, in urban centers of the region such as Nuku'alofa, Papeete, Suva, and Apia, they organize beauty pageants and similar performances, which are eagerly attended by admiring, although sometimes mocking, audiences (*Besnier 2002*).
In contexts where colonialism remains in place this orientation to modernity and the future takes on a more complex configuration. This is the case, for example, in French Polynesia, a large territory of islands scattered across the eastern Pacific, one of the last polities of the region still administered by a European power. From 1966 to 1996 France conducted nuclear tests in the territory, despite growing local opposition and evidence of the long-lasting deleterious effects of these tests. During the same period a tourist industry also developed, bringing significant numbers of visitors to the main centers, particularly Tahiti and Bora Bora.

These dynamics have had an important effect on transgender inhabitants. Tahitians consider māhū to be attentive to their self-presentation, good at working in the care industries, and proficient language learners, competencies that make them well-suited for labor in the tourist industry. Since the 1960s many have migrated from the outer islands to the main centers. This has given rise to a bifurcation between “traditional” māhū, who adapted the care work they were known for in rural contexts to care for tourists, and a new identity, the raerae, who gravitate toward the sex industry that emerged to cater to tourists and military personnel. Mainstream Tahitians appreciate the former for their ability to secure wage employment, and thus contribute to kinship economics, and for conveying a positive impression of Tahiti to the outside world. They are also appreciated for the role of guardian of “traditional” culture that some adopt, by becoming dance teachers, for example, thus contributing to the anticolonial cultural revitalization movement. Mainstream Tahitians are much more critical of the raerae, whom they view as culturally “inauthentic,” too blatant in their sexuality, and uninterested in their kinship obligations, as well as objectionable for their association with the undesirable French military presence (Kuwahara 2014).

One finds similar tensions in other areas of the region between the “traditional” and “modern” manifestations of male-bodied transgender, whereby those who take on “traditional” identities garner the moral approbation of mainstream society and those who adopt “modern” identities, particularly by showcasing same-sex desire over gender crossing, are the object of disapproval (Besnier and Alexeyeff 2014). However, one must also insist that both “tradition” and “modernity,” and the social categories they produce, are historical and social constructs. In Tahiti, for example, the revitalization of traditional culture, in which māhū play a visible role, is a political reaction to the colonial presence, and the modern identity that raerae adopt is the product of geopolitical dynamics of much greater scale than local cultural politics, including the presence of military and the history of nuclear testing.

Throughout the region, male-bodied transgender persons are far more visible than female-bodied transgender individuals, who tend to avoid the limelight, are the object of considerably more moral reprobation than their male-bodied counterparts, and have a much more obscure history. If they were present in eighteenth-century Tahiti, they
completely escaped the notice of Western travelers, and today they have been the object of very little research. Yet “mannah” women, who perform work traditionally associated with men, seek sexual relations with nontransgender women, and fail to conform to the heteronormative expectations of women, are widely attested throughout the region, where it is common to refer to them as *tomboys* (a borrowing that has been incorporated into local languages, as it also has been in Southeast Asia).

As anthropologist Serge Tcherkézoff (2014) argues in reference to Samoa, the lives of *fa’afafine* and *tomboys* present considerable asymmetry: while *fa’afafine* find their place in society despite hostility from some quarters (particularly from fathers and brothers, who are concerned that they might compromise the family’s dignity), *tomboys* find it very difficult to do so. They are often categorically rejected for bringing shame to the family, and in contrast to *fa’afafine*, whose company women in particular delight in, few seek their friendship, leading many to leave the communities in which they were born. In the Pacific, heteronormativity applies its hegemony considerably more stringently on female-bodied than on male-bodied transgender persons.

**Gendered Geographies and Global Flows**

So far, this discussion has been primarily concerned with transgender identities in Polynesia. While Polynesia is the region where these identities are most visible, transgender categories are found in other parts of the Pacific such as Micronesia and the urban centers of Melanesia, although their emergence there appears to be a recent phenomenon and their position in society is considerably more precarious. In Highland Papua New Guinea transgender identities must be distinguished from now abandoned “ritualized same-sex practices,” initiation rituals that involved semen transactions between older and younger men.

From the second half of the twentieth century many societies in the Pacific Islands became transnationally mobile, and this mobility added considerably to the gendered and sexual geography of the region. From the 1960s, for example, Samoans and Tongans have been moving overseas to seek wage work, first to New Zealand, which initially welcomed them as they filled needs in the lower rungs of the labor market, and then to Australia and the United States. Today there are more people of Tongan and Samoan descent outside of Tonga and Samoa, respectively, than in the islands, and the two societies today constitute diasporas, populations dispersed over a large area from an original center, but with enduring relations between the center and the expatriate communities and among the latter. Other mobilities are more restricted in scope (e.g., Cook Islanders to New Zealand, Wallis and Futuna Islanders to New Caledonia, Micronesians to Guam and Hawai‘i) and more recent (e.g., Fijians and ni-Vanuatu to New Zealand and beyond), and yet others have brought people from elsewhere to the region (e.g., in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, South Asians to Fiji and East Asians to Hawai‘i, originally as sugar plantation
laborers in both cases). Despite the fact that the increasing criminalization of border
crossing by the underprivileged worldwide creates new obstacles for Pacific Island labor
migrants, they continue to be mobile as island economies stagnate while wage work
becomes essential to survival.

Transgender islanders have participated in these mobilities with enthusiasm. This
enthusiasm is grounded in their affinity with innovation and change, and may once again
echo their age-old role as cultural brokers. But it also has a pragmatic foundation, in that
moving to an urban, anonymous environment enables them to pursue what they see as a
freedom from the moral and social strictures of small-scale societies. At the same time, the
reality they encounter in postindustrial countries is often at odds with their designs: there,
they are often stereotyped as racialized, unskilled, and unwanted immigrants of suspect
gendering, and have to make do with employment at the bottom of the labor market,
including sex work.

In Western countries Pacific Island transgender people encounter new forms of gender and
sexuality. For example, they are often invited to form alliances with existing groups
espousing LGBTQ politics and identities (ranging from political activism to circuit parties),
while in the islands they generally had viewed Western-style gays, lesbians, and
transgender persons with suspicion and incomprehension, as “foreign ways of being” with
which they did not identify. New experiences lead some to rethink the relationship
between their own gendering and sexuality. In other cases, sex reassignment and other
body-altering interventions, which were not available in island countries as of 2017,
become a possibility that some consider.

The legalization of same-sex marriage in Pacific Rim countries (New Zealand since 2013,
the United States since 2015, Australia since 2017) has had the unexpected effect of making
legal migration easier for transgender Pacific Islanders than for their heteronormative
compatriots, as they are more likely to have remained unmarried at home. However, the
legalization in 2013 of same-sex marriage in France, which also applies to Pacific Island
territories administered by France, including New Caledonia, Wallis and Futuna, and
French Polynesia, has been met with a moral backlash. Despite efforts to promote French
Polynesia as a same-sex wedding destination to revitalize a declining tourism industry, the
legalization of same-sex marriage there has been framed as yet another colonial imposition
from metropolitan France. Elsewhere in the region, marriage equality is legal in the US
state of Hawai‘i and in Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands, both US territories.
Marriage equality was legalized in 2015 on Pitcairn Island, a British dependency peopled
by fewer than fifty descendants of Bounty mutineers, none of whom overtly identifies as
transgender or gay. Elsewhere, there is considerable opposition to the idea, including
among the transgender population.
In the region of the Pacific generally referred to as Melanesia, comprising Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, New Caledonia, and Vanuatu, transgender identities are a relatively recent phenomenon largely confined to urban spaces. However, one phenomenon involving same-sex practices was first documented by anthropologists in the 1980s (a time when ethnographic fieldwork increased dramatically in the region), namely what Gilbert Herdt called “ritualized homosexuality” or “rituals of semen ingestion,” practiced by groups inhabiting the Great Papuan Plateau as well as a few other groups in Melanesia. These rituals, which ceased to be practiced in any society of the region in the late 1980s, generally consisted in oral, anal, and masturbatory sexual relations involving a prepubescent or pubescent boy as the ingestor and a young unmarried adult man, who was usually in a specific kinship configuration to the boy, in the context of initiation rituals. Among some groups such as the Gebusi, these practices were also supplemented by sexual relations among younger men outside of initiation rituals.

The practice operated in the context of the belief that, while girls were nurtured by their mother’s milk, boys had to ingest semen in order to successfully attain adulthood, and women could sap boys’ and men’s masculinity. The dramatic gender segregation and avoidance that these beliefs engendered are common in societies in the New Guinea Highlands, including many that did not practice ritualized same-sex practices. These societies are also particularly concerned with exchange in general and the exchange of body substances in particular, of which semen ingestion is only one particular form. Ritualized homosexuality was: (1) obligatory, in that boys could not grow into men without engaging in it; (2) sustained, in that the boy and his older relative maintained their sexual relationship until the boy was deemed mature and in turn, took on the role of semen giver; and (3) temporary, in that all grown men were expected to eventually marry heterosexually and produce children after an adolescence of receptive homosexual practices and a young adulthood of active homosexual practices. It thus cannot be understood as a matter of sexual identity.

It generally took place in the context of rituals of initiation during which the young initiates were instructed in religious secrets, were kept physically separate from the rest of the group, and were subjected to practices designed to induce pain and fear, such as nose bleeding induced by shoving bamboo into the nostrils. While erotic pleasure on the part of both parties was an uncontroroversial aspect, semen transactions took place in an atmosphere of terror and hazing. This has prompted some commentators to view them as imbued with domination and submission, although these did not take the form of a feminization of the receptive younger party in the transaction—quite the contrary, as the latter was seen as benefitting by becoming more masculine.

With a few exceptions, ritualized homosexuality had largely disappeared by the time
anthropologists began conducting systematic fieldwork in Papua New Guinea in the 1980s, and many anthropologists have based their ethnographies on informants' memories of these practices. Today, groups that formerly practiced it have forgotten the practice and sometimes virulently denied that it ever existed. The extensive Christian missionary effort to which the region has been subjected since the 1980s has played a role in this cultural amnesia, but so has the fact that the inhabitants of the region are considerably more interested in the future than in the past.

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Global flows have brought other ideas to island countries, including new religiosities. In the social order established in the nineteenth century, Methodist, Anglican, Congregationalist, and Catholic churches are part and parcel of “tradition.” These established churches have generally not been concerned about transgender persons, many of whom are devoted church members and presentable citizens, as long as they do not showcase too much their sexual activities. In the last decades of the twentieth century, in contrast, new forms of Christianity such as Mormonism, Pentecostalism, and charismatic versions of established churches have gained considerable ground in island societies and have brought new politicized moralities that conflate transgender identities with gay and lesbian identities in the West, of which they are vocally disapproving.

SEE ALSO Asia Pacific Transgender Network; Australia and New Zealand; Diasporas, Queer; Migrant Queer Communities, US; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity; Samoan Fa'afafine; Two-Spirit
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The use of the term queer in Pakistan, including related activist groups and the indigenous designation khwaja sira.

The word *queer* generally lacks the kind of salience enjoyed by the terms *gay, lesbian, bisexual,* and *transgender,* as well as the umbrella initialism LGBT, among both gender and sexually normative and nonnormative Pakistanis. As such, *queer* has not yet emerged as an inclusive, overarching framework, as a category against the fixity of categories (Johnson 2010; Sullivan 2003), for the purpose of either social identification or political activism in the country. This is not to say that the term should or will in time achieve salience in the Pakistani context. Such an assumption would support a flawed linear evolutionary and imperialist logic that presupposes that regions of the Global South are “backward” and in need of modernizing in step with Euro-American notions of progress. That said, it is worth mentioning a few queer platforms that have emerged over the last decade that have had some modicum of impact, especially with regard to identification, community formation, and information dissemination. It should be noted, however, that in the absence of a substantial historiography of what can be deemed “queer Pakistan,” the information presented here has been pieced together by the author largely from his own research and personal experience of having worked with Pakistani gender and sexual minorities since the late 1990s. Like any historical recounting, it should be treated as fragmented, incomplete, and still in the making.

**Queer Organizations**

The emergence of the first two organizations, referred to here as P and M (pseudonyms have been used throughout this entry for both people and organizations in order to protect their identities), can be traced to 2009 and 2010. The Lahore-based P’s stated mission is to “support, inform, and empower the Pakistani LGBT/queer community to advocate for its own rights and autonomy, strive to eradicate homophobia and trans-phobia from Pakistani society, and create community and fellow-feeling.” P not only has an online presence in the form of a website and a Facebook page, it also exists offline as a government-registered organization and a physical community space. According to its executive board, P was registered as a broad-based social welfare organization meant to serve a range of marginalized groups rather than just gender and sexual minorities (e.g., religious...
minorities and people with disabilities). It was this broad focus that enabled the group to safely and successfully pass the approval process and become a recognized nongovernmental organization (NGO). In 2011 P’s office location, a small apartment that doubled as the residence of one of the organization’s executive committee members, was set up to serve as a queer safe house for those needing to escape familial and communal persecution. Some of P’s activities have included, but are not limited to: hosting awareness-raising events with key stakeholders (e.g., meeting with medical and mental health professionals to learn about their treatment of queer people and then organizing sensitizing presentations based on their input); conducting research on gender minorities (e.g., an international donor-funded “project on violence experienced by lesbian and bisexual cisgender women and transgender women in Pakistan”); and issuing statements on relevant historical and current events to express solidarity with other oppressed groups that are marginalized for reasons other than gender and sexual difference. P strives to be inclusive and to reach a wider audience by publishing most of its original written content in both Urdu and English.

Unlike P, M’s existence has been largely limited to social media, although the platform has occasionally organized group and individual meetups, thereby providing opportunities for its members to connect offline. Over the years the group’s online status has changed from an open to a secret group. This shift, brought about amid security concerns, involved a sizable membership purge in which the group’s participant pool shrank to fewer than 500 members in late 2017. For the sake of safety and privacy, M’s administrator runs the group under an alias but has personally met numerous group members, including the author. M has largely served as a platform for bringing together people of Pakistani origin as well as those interested in advocating for “queer equality in Pakistan” into a safe space where they can exchange pertinent information and engage in dialogue. The group has occasionally experienced moments of intense online activity followed by months of dormancy.

In the 2010s, a few more self-proclaimed queer spaces emerged on popular social media platforms. R and N, both of which are open to anyone wishing to join, are among the most recent online forums to organize under the banner of “queer.” R came into existence in 2013 to serve as a “Pakistani LGBTQIA advocacy and resistance group,” and N, formed in 2017, purports to be a “safe space” for the expression of “pride through art, culture, and dialogue.” Replacing the now defunct C, B was created in early 2016 to serve as a hidden online “hang out” space for Pakistani queers to “celebrate [their] … existence, make bonds, define and redefine what it means to be gay, bi, queer and trans!” The group is much more active than P and M because its broad focus on sociality, rather than just on issues of queer oppression and social justice, yields discussions on a diverse range of topics, including bawdy humor, popular culture, history, and current events. It also hosts postings for job openings in either LGBTQ-focused or LGBTQ-friendly organizations; personal experiences related to intimacy, sex, discrimination, violence, and familial problems; and group member selfies and photographs of events and small get-togethers. As of late 2017, B was primarily
made up of gay and bisexual men, along with a handful of trans and intersex women, while trans men, lesbians, and other queer women have been consciously left out of the group.

To date, the five aforementioned forums have a combined social media following of close to 3,000 people but with significant overlap in membership and participation. These five should be viewed not as an exhaustive list of queer groups, but as a partial one meant to offer a sense of the type of activities that have transpired under the banner of “queer” in Pakistan between 2009 and 2017. The majority of queer groups in Pakistan maintain a clandestine existence due to the legal, religious, and cultural restrictions and stigmas associated with gender and sexual difference. In such an environment of secrecy, it would be highly improbable for the author to have access to and knowledge of all queer spaces, especially those that are kept hidden and/or cater exclusively to queer women. (The author, being a cisgender man, did not have access to or sufficient information about women-only queer groups.)

The Politics of Naming and Identification

Although there are several other prominent and not-so-prominent online Pakistani clusters with a similar focus, none of them functions under the queer framework, but instead works within the narrower, but more familiar LGBT classificatory scheme. One such group, A, a key player working to “inform, lobby/advocate on issues that affect the lives of Pakistanis/South Asians who identify as LGBTI,” deliberately eschews the term queer because its executive director considers it to be offensive and ineffective—not entirely unlike earlier generations of North American gays and lesbians.

A majority of the author’s own research participants identify as either khwaja sira and/or transgender alongside a host of other identity terms, including hijra, zennana, khusra, murat, and trans. (Although the conflation of transgender with khwaja sira has increased in recent years, not all transgender people identify as khwaja sira, and vice versa, because the former is viewed by many as a modern label with insufficient cultural overlap with indigenous subject positions.) Most informants were either unfamiliar with the word queer or unclear about its meaning. This appeared to be the case both with lower-class, non-English-speaking activists who identified as khwaja sira and lower-middle-class, transgender-identifying informants who spoke a mixture of Urdu and English and were key constituents of gender and sexual minority rights organizations. For many, then, lack of proficiency in the English language limited access to information and became a major barrier in efforts to forge ties with local and global queer networks.

The terminology used for and by gender and sexual minorities has also been influenced by the domain of public health, especially HIV/AIDS intervention work. As in other regions of South Asia and the Global South, NGOs and community-based organizations (CBOs) working to curb the spread of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in Pakistan were
among the first to organize collectives of gender- and sexually nonconforming people. These groups use a range of industry-specific terms to describe their nonnormative beneficiaries. For instance, the initialisms MSM (men who have sex with men) and TG (transgender), introduced by these organizations, are now routinely invoked as identity labels by NGO/CBO staff and their activist affiliates. Although the global LGBT discourse has figured prominently in the context of these sexual health initiatives, queer as an organizing category that challenges categorization has been less useful because it defies the very logic of stable and discrete groupings on which STI interventions rely for identifying and monitoring target populations.

Still others organize under broader, more encompassing, and potentially less threatening labels, such as gender and sexual minorities and indigenous classifications like khwaja sira. Although the number of groups working under the banner of “queer” in Pakistan has gradually risen, whether or not the term will gain prominence in social and activist domains remains to be seen. To date, however, queer has not gained the same currency as the terms gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender.

That said, the significance of an LGBT discourse in the Pakistani context cannot be overstated. Specifically, the adoption of identificatory language that traces direct linkages with a global LGBT movement has proven to be ostensibly dangerous in that it has been perceived by local opposition forces as a foreign cultural imposition and an affront to the Pakistani nation. The following incident demonstrates that by using khwaja sira, a historically and culturally rooted term, in identifying themselves to the state and the national public, gender-nonconforming activists have managed to impede allegations of antinationalism. In the summer of 2011, the US embassy in Islamabad hosted a pride event and subsequently issued a press release expressing its support for LGBT rights in Pakistan. The announcement of the pride celebration sparked anti-US and antigay rallies in several Pakistani cities where religious political parties, such as the Jamaat-e-Islami, took to the streets, condemning the event as a form of “cultural terrorism” and “an assault on Pakistan’s Islamic culture” by the United States (Express Tribune 2011).

Subsequently, another religious organization, Muslim Youth Forum (MYF), launched a campaign against homosexuality by displaying antigay signage in Lahore. A banner hung at a busy city intersection stated, “There is no place for Gay and Lesbian in Islam.” Another poster, referencing the US embassy pride event, called for the immediate dismissal of the representatives of “gays and lesbians in foreign affairs agencies” and the “gay, lesbian and straight education network” from Pakistan (Kashif 2012).

The strategic significance and utility of the term khwaja sira as a safety measure for staving off allegations of dissent are evident in the different ways the US embassy’s actions affected various gender and sexual minority groups in the country. On the one hand, fearing that this incident would spark violence and jeopardize the safety of queer people, the core
members of P and M organized a covert Skype meetup to deliberate over how to respond to the controversy. After careful consideration, the activists decided in favor of lying low instead of engaging in the heated mass-mediated debates surrounding the events. Although the collaborative potential of transnational connections is undeniable (Speed 2008), the case in point clearly demonstrates that they can have detrimental impacts as well. In this instance, local queer activists viewed the embassy’s action as an imperialist move that jeopardized their already meager efforts to organize.

On the other hand, khwaja siras were either unaware of, or unfazed by this entire controversy, and even the protesting groups did not seem to view khwaja siras as a part of LGBT. This is not entirely surprising because at the time, khwaja sira did not always translate as “transgender” in mainstream discourse. (It must be noted, however, that in the years since this incident, the terms transgender and trans have progressively become more salient identity categories.) Furthermore, unlike LGBT, khwaja sira was not perceived as a foreign import but as an indigenous category with deep roots in Islamic South Asian history. The language used to identify minority groups has consequences for how they are perceived, and in appropriating khwaja sira, community activists established distance between gender-nonconforming people and such politically charged English terms as gay and lesbian, which in the popular imaginary were associated with Euro-American sexual subjectivities and rights activism. Unlike khwaja sirs, the gender and sexual minorities who identified with globalized LGBT categories risked their well-being and were condemned for colluding with imperialist forces believed to be working against Pakistani and Islamic interests. Hence, even though gay and lesbian are more prominent categories than queer, they have proven to be problematic and dangerous in Pakistan.

Legal Developments

If queerness is understood as an overarching and inclusive umbrella category, then within this broad domain of difference the nonnormative populations that have made significant progress in Pakistan, particularly in terms of activism and legal reform, are khwaja sirs and transgender citizens. Though rarely invoked, Section 377 of the Pakistan Penal Code, an injunction inherited from the British colonizers, criminalizes sodomy as an unnatural offense. With this colonial law intact, the Pakistani Supreme Court made a series of historic rulings from 2009 to 2012 in which third-sex/-gender citizens were granted a range of legal privileges and protections. Among the rulings was the recognition of khwaja sirs as a distinct sex/gender, the provision of security, inheritance and voting rights, the right to take public office, educational and job opportunities, and access to government-sponsored welfare programs for khwaja sirs.

The proceedings commenced after Islamic jurist and human rights lawyer Aslam Khaki filed a Supreme Court (SC) petition in 2009 seeking protection of the fundamental rights of khwaja sirs. Khaki’s actions were in response to a police raid and the subsequent arrest of
khwaja siras at a celebration in Rawalpindi that was followed by a public protest staged by
khwaja siras (Redding 2015). Though unexpected, the SC’s actions coincided with similar
developments in other South Asian countries, including India, Bangladesh, and Nepal (Khan
2014). Moreover, the advancement of khwaja sira rights can be attributed to the historic
significance of Mughalera khwaja siras (1526–1857), who played such important roles in
the imperial courts as guarding the royal seraglio (Manucci 1906) and serving as army
generals and regal advisers (Lal 1994). As a historically rooted term, khwaja sira has
retained legitimacy and respect in contemporary Pakistan, while most other queer
descriptors are stigmatizing and harmful.

It was roughly in 2016 and 2017 that transgender emerged as a synonym for khwaja sira.
This change occurred at the intersection of additional legal developments and the rise of a
younger cohort of middle-class activists who have either a functional or a strong command
over the English language. After being unanimously approved by the Pakistani Senate, the
Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, was passed by the National Assembly in
May 2018 and subsequently signed into law by the country’s president.

SEE ALSO Queer Names and Identity Politics in the Arab World; Section 377 and Section 377A;
Section 377 in South Asia

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Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo, Brazil

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One of the world’s largest pride parades and its role in Brazilian LGBT politics.

The Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo (São Paulo LGBT Pride Parade) has taken place annually since 1997, most often in June. The 1969 Stonewall riots in Manhattan, as well as the LGBT marches and parades that have occurred in its wake in various parts of the world, have served as its main points of reference. A crucial local precursor in São Paulo, however, was a march that took place in June 1980, organized by a coalition of sex workers, queers, Afro-Brazilians, and feminists to protest a violent police campaign (see de la Dehesa 2010). Protest marches also took place in 1995 in Rio de Janeiro and Curitiba, as the closing event of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association World Conference and the 8th Encontro Brasileiro de Gays e Lésbicas (Brazilian Meeting of Gays and Lesbians), respectively. Since 1999 the Parada has been organized by the Associação da Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo (APOGLBT; Association of the São Paulo LGBT Pride Parade). The latter part of the parade’s name has been changed several times, initially from “GLT” (1997–1998) and “GLBT” (1999) to “Gay” (2000–2003) and then back to “GLBT” (2004–2007) and to “LGBT” in 2008. Invariably, the Parada has traversed São Paulo's city center, from Paulista Avenue via Consolação Street, located in Brazil’s financial center, to Roosevelt Square. Parade trucks play largely electronic music and feature artists, politicians, activists, and other public figures. Unlike pride parades in the United States, no barriers separate spectators from participants, and there is no clear separation between the different groups and organizations marching, which has led some to compare Brazilian pride parades to Carnival.
The Parade as a Space of Activism

Politically, the Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo has emerged as part of the Brazilian LGBT movement’s politics of citizenship, which seeks to achieve social rights for LGBT people and to counter homophobia and transphobia (Hutta 2013). The APOGLBT not only has considered the Parada crucial in making LGBT people and their demands publicly visible, it has also used it as a space of education and activism, distributing pamphlets, communicating political demands, and organizing an accompanying series of cultural and political events throughout the year.

The slogans the organizers chose for each parade have largely mirrored the Brazilian LGBT movement’s shifting advocacy priorities. Early on, the focus was on diversity and visibility. The poster announcing the first parade in 1997 thus proclaimed, “We are many, we are in all places and in all professions.” In 2004 and 2005 the slogans focused on families and civil partnership, reading, respectively, “We have family and pride” and “Civil partnership now! Equal rights, no more, no less.” From 2006 to 2014 slogans centered on homophobia (e.g., in 2006: “Homophobia is a crime! Sexual rights are human rights”), which in 2007 was...
further connected to racism and machismo: “For a world without racism, machismo and homophobia.” While the visibility of lesbians formed a thematic focus as early as 2002, trans issues appeared more consistently only during the following decade after trans activists publicly denounced the APOGLBT in 2012 for marginalizing them (even though trans activists had been involved in the organization earlier than that). The 2014 slogan thus explicitly addressed the issue of “homolesbotransphobia,” and in 2016 the official slogan was “Gender identity law now! All together against transphobia.” Given the unprecedented rise of evangelical churches and groups in Brazil since the 1980s—and an increase in anti-LGBT mobilization among evangelicals since the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century (de la Dehesa 2010)—the topic of religion was also incorporated into the Parada’s slogans starting in 2008. The 2017 slogan, for example, proclaimed: “Independently of our beliefs, no religion is law! All together for a laical state.”

Growth and Its Social Context

Since the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo has been considered the world’s largest pride parade. After around 2,000 people attended the initial parade in 1997, participant numbers started to grow in the first years of the twenty-first century, totaling several hundred thousand. Between 2005 and 2016, the organizers reported between 2 million and 4.5 million participants each year, peaking in the years between 2011 and 2013. Police and other sources, however, did report lower figures for several years. The Parada’s emergence and growth have been facilitated by São Paulo’s commercial gay and dynamic cultural scenes (Facchini and França 2013).

In this social context, a new focus on public visibility in the LGBT politics of citizenship rapidly gained traction starting in the late 1990s. Apart from voicing political demands, parade participants thus enjoyed being able to publicly socialize, show same-sex affection, and perform or express gender in ways that challenge hegemonic norms, which was hitherto largely restricted to specific private, subcultural, or cruising spaces. Thereby, the São Paulo parade—in conjunction with the LGBT parade in Rio de Janeiro, both of which received wide media coverage—played a vital role in projecting LGBT cultures and demands into the national (and international) public arena. At the same time, however, the Carnivalesque character of the parade and the participation of commercial actors have provoked critiques regarding the event’s depoliticization, which the organizers sought to counter in 2016 by unifying the parade trucks and their slogans.

The event’s massive growth since early in the first decade of the twenty-first century was also facilitated by an increase in funding, especially from the Ministry of Tourism, state-owned banks and oil companies such as Caixa and Petrobras, and, more recently, Netflix. Prominent politicians, including São Paulo’s former mayor and state governor, have praised the economic returns the Parada generates through hotel occupancy and visitors’ consumption, estimated at 180 million reais each year. The Parada’s growth also correlated
with a proliferation of pride parades nationally and internationally. In 2011, 387 LGBT parades were counted across Brazil. It is important to note, however, that the increasing visibility of LGBT people and issues has not necessarily translated into social acceptance. For instance, the massive participant increase of the Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo has been paralleled by the dramatic growth of São Paulo’s evangelical March for Jesus, for which the police reported 5 million participants in 2010 and 2011. While the LGBT parades in Brazilian cities have certainly paved the way for political achievements such as the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2013, they have thus also provoked a conservative backlash.

Such a backlash has also assumed violent forms, including in the context of Brazilian LGBT parades. Most dramatically, on the evening of the 2009 Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo, neo-Nazis threw a homemade bomb at participants, leaving over twenty injured. That same evening, aggressors—not identified at the time of writing—beat thirty-five-year-old Marcelo Campos Barros to death. Together with the persistently widespread violence against LGBT people across the country and the homophobic and transphobic campaigns by conservatives and evangelicals, these incidents signal that LGBT politics—and especially the pride parades, with their intense production of queer visibility—continue to be at the focus of some of the most ardent social and political contestations in Brazil.

SEE ALSO Carnival and Sexuality in Brazil; Pride Parades and Marches

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Parenting Rights in North America

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The history and current status of LGBTQ rights pertaining to adoption, surrogacy, fostering, and custody in Canada and the United States.

From the early 1990s into the early twenty-first century, the number of lesbians and gay men having children was on the rise, and during this period they made significant gains in securing formal parental rights. Progress was uneven, occurring at first in only a few US states and Canadian provinces, but this was years before such rights were recognized in other parts of the world. In North America, victories were being registered even with socially conservative campaigns placing the supposed risks to children at the center of their opposition to LGBT rights. In the United States, despite the persistence of such campaigning, a steady accumulation of favorable legal decisions was confirmed and enlarged by the US Supreme Court’s 2015 marriage equality ruling in Obergefell v. Hodges. In Canada, a shift in law and public policy came very rapidly over the course of the 1990s, several years before marriage rights were extended to same-sex couples. In both countries, lesbians and gay men as individuals or in couples still face hurdles in adoption, especially those who are nonwhite or economically disadvantaged. Surrogacy remains challenging, especially for gay male couples. The barriers facing trans parents remain formidable, and much less “tested” through courts and social agencies than the impediments facing lesbians and gay men.

Context

In the United States and Canada, family law is largely within the jurisdiction of regional governments, occasionally producing a patchwork of approaches to sexual diversity. Courts play a crucial role, and much of what is legally recognized has come through the decisions of judges ruling on the basis of common-law principles, often in the absence of statutory guidance at the state or provincial level except for that which prioritizes the “best interests of the child.” State and provincial courts are guided or constrained by judicial interpretation of the US Constitution and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, although they can still find ways to discriminate in judgments involving sexual minority claimants, particularly in the United States.

More than a quarter of US states still lack explicit prohibitions on discrimination against
sexual minorities. Rights protections for trans people have lagged, and there are still around twenty states with no explicit protections based on gender identity and expression. The Supreme Court has never extended to LGBT people the same interpretive force of the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the US Constitution as it has to racial minorities and women. Even with that court having ruled in favor of lesbian and gay claimants, such as with the 2015 case on marriage, it is not yet clear how much leeway will be provided for discrimination based on religious belief, or specifically for administrative and judicial decisions that discriminate against LGBT parental claims.

In Canada, parental claims were significantly bolstered by favorable interpretations of the Charter of Rights during the 1990s, effectively including sexual orientation within the ambit of the already very broad prohibition on discrimination. The Supreme Court of Canada’s 1999 ruling in *M. v. H.* barred discrimination in provincial family law in a case specifically arising from the recognition of cohabitational same-sex relationships. By that time, Canadian law and public policy had already extended recognition to de facto heterosexual couples, narrowing the gap with formal marriage at least as much as any jurisdiction in the world. Attaining similar recognition for same-sex relationships, then, entailed most of what would be secured by marriage in the United States. By the mid-1990s Canadian courts were also specifically ruling that discriminating on the basis of sexual orientation in adoption was unconstitutional. In 2003 appeal courts in several provinces ruled against the exclusion of gay and lesbian couples from marriage, and 2005 federal legislation simply echoed what courts had already decided by changing the formal definition of marriage (a matter lying exclusively in federal jurisdiction). The overall effect of these advances was that parental rights were secured, in law at least, for lesbian and gay couples, whether married or not. Trans rights were encoded in federal human rights law in 2017, by which time almost all provinces and territories had effected protections against discrimination involving trans people through either changes to human rights statutes or interpretations delivered by provincial human rights tribunals.

The strength of resistance to parenting advocacy owes much to the power of religious conservatism in each country, and on this front the United States is highly distinctive among Western democracies. Weekly attendance at religious services is double that in Canada, as is the proportion of the population declaring that religion is important in their lives. Estimates of the number of evangelical Protestants, who are usually at the heart of protests against LGBT rights, average around 30 percent, about three times their proportion of the Canadian population.

**Early Advocacy**

Local groups advocating rights for lesbian mothers and gay fathers were part of the gay liberation movement from the 1970s on. They faced a formidable challenge in confronting social prejudice and institutional practice that saw sexual difference and parenting as
incompatible and as threatening the health and safety of vulnerable children. Lesbian and gay activism during this period provided support for mothers and fathers to defend access to their own children. The stakes were typically the retention of custody of children born of now-dissolved opposite-sex relationships. Until the early 1980s, there were few favorable court rulings in either country, and virtually none that came without onerous restrictions aimed at protecting children from visible signs of homosexuality.

In both countries there was a very slow shift toward more positive outcomes in the 1980s, aided by a judicial focus on the best interests of the child, although expectations of “discretion” were still the norm. In Canada, expanding legal recognition of cohabiting heterosexual relationships was facilitating the willingness of courts to acknowledge rights and responsibilities flowing from de facto parenting, although this idea was also gaining traction in some US jurisdictions. In 1984 the US Supreme Court ruled in a race-related case (*Palmore v. Sidoti*) that decisions could not be rationalized by societal prejudice. However, the continuing criminalization of same-sex activity in many states (until the 2003 Supreme Court ruling in *Lawrence v. Texas*) was a very powerful impediment, reinforcing other factors to produce dramatic differences in outcomes across state lines.

In 1977 the state of Florida enacted an explicit ban on adoption and fostering by lesbian and gay individuals, although in other parts of the United States and in Canada statute law remained largely silent on this question. In fact, there were openings created for lesbians and gay men to become foster parents during this period, eased by the low public visibility of the fostering system and by shortages of prospective parents. Fostering agency workers were prepared to approve adoptions where the foster care had been successful, though often with particularly challenging cases and using a higher standard in screening parental applicants.

**Incremental Gains, 1985–1995**

Parenting claims expanded in the second half of the 1980s. The HIV/AIDS epidemic added to the arsenal of antigay campaigners, but it also heightened LGBT visibility in the political arena and mainstream media. The epidemic contributed, as well, to a politicization of demands for recognizing same-sex relationships and parental rights, in part because of a heightened sense of vulnerability about family ties not being officially recognized. More same-sex couples were now choosing to have children through informal arrangements or through assisted-reproduction clinics. In both countries, most clinics were still refusing to provide such service, but there were a few in the United States willing to do so. There are no solid data from the period in either country, but the US census in 2000 indicated that one-third of lesbian couples and 22 percent of male couples had children at home.

The most common parental claims arose from couples seeking “second-parent” adoptions to obtain formal status for a nonbiological partner, usually for children whose conception
had been planned from the outset. In the United States, important courtroom victories were won in New York (1992), Vermont (1993), and Massachusetts (1993) and then at mid-decade in New Jersey, Illinois, the District of Columbia, and New York. Vermont became the first state to enact statutory approval of second-parent adoptions in 1995. By that time, courts in several other states seemed more willing to apply the notion of de facto parentage to claimants seeking rights, at times in cases involving same-sex parents separating and in conflict.

In Canada, the early 1990s also saw important court rulings that discrimination against same-sex relationships was unconstitutional. This did not necessarily carry over to parenting, although that same period also saw important breaks from heterosexual presumptions in Ontario and British Columbia family law.

**Accelerated Change in Canada, 1995–2015**

During the second half of the 1990s the contrasts between the Canadian and US trajectories were sharpened. In 1995 the British Columbia legislature broke new ground by in effect opening up adoption to same-sex couples, as well as to de facto heterosexual couples. This meant easing not only second-parent adoption but also joint adoption of a child not biologically related to either adult—until this point unrecognized across North America. That same year, an Ontario court effected basically the same change in a case brought by four lesbian couples. The 1999 *M. v. H.* ruling by the Supreme Court prohibiting discriminatory differentiation between same-sex and opposite-sex cohabitational couples then provoked sweeping legislative change at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels over the next five years, although it would take longer for issues such as joint birth certificates to be free of discriminatory legacies.

Even if for this reason marriage mattered less than it did in the United States, the legal recognition of same-sex marriage in the 2003–2005 period further reduced the room for discriminatory decisions on adoption. Early in the decade, before that happened, Quebec had developed a civil union regime for both same-sex and opposite-sex couples, in part because that province’s distinctive civil code did not extend the same recognition to de facto couples as had become the norm elsewhere in Canada (without the need for civil union). At that time, Quebec also eased registration for both parents in same-sex couples on birth certificates, although by then it was clear that the courts would require such a change elsewhere.

**Contested Incrementalism in the United States, 1995–2015**

The story in the United States is different, in large measure because of persistent opposition to same-sex marriage, leading to the passage of the federal Defense of Marriage Act in 1996 and constitutional prohibitions on the recognition of same-sex marriage in over
half the states by the end of 2006. This, along with political and legal mobilization specifically targeting lesbian, gay, and trans parenting, would prevent the kind of “takeoff” in measures recognizing same-sex relationships that had occurred in Canada.

Nevertheless, courtroom and legislative gains in one parenting area or another continued their steady spread across states. Between 1999 and 2007, precisely the time when antigay marriage referenda were being passed, the number of states recognizing second-parent adoption had risen to nine, and claimants had secured appellate court support in at least parts of an additional fifteen states. By the middle of the second decade of the twenty-first century, marital or civil union legislation had been secured in close to 40 percent of US states, and in several more states second-parent adoptions were being approved for same-sex couples. The acceptance of joint adoptions was becoming more widespread, and courts were also leaning toward viewing parental rights formalized in one state as transportable to other states.

In several states, conservative judges and political opponents succeeded in reinforcing existing barriers to LGBT parental claims or created new ones. Although Florida’s explicit ban on gay and lesbian individual adoption was overturned in 2010, several states solidified barriers, especially to joint adoptions, and additional states were considering legislatively expanding the right to discriminate on religious grounds. This was essentially creating two camps: a steadily growing roster of states that were moving toward comprehensive recognition of LGBT parenting rights and a group of states in which conservatives were doing all they could to prevent such recognition.

Cross-Country Access to Marriage in the United States

The 2015 Supreme Court ruling in Obergefell v. Hodges was an extremely significant gain for lesbian and gay marriage rights across the United States, and in the process eliminated most of the formal barriers to lesbian and gay parentage. In fact, the majority opinion explicitly cited parenting in support of its view, providing ammunition for future parenting claimants contesting state-level barriers. Attempts to limit joint adoption to opposite-sex couples were already falling before court challenges, and now would almost certainly suffer that fate.

Opportunities for discriminatory policies and practices, however, were not eliminated. In a country where LGBT rights in general—and those involving children in particular—are still so politically contested, prejudice retains powerful entry points. Adoption agencies still exercise discretion that may disadvantage people considered less than ideal for parenting. Legislative opponents in several states have either enacted or proposed “religious freedom” laws that allow service providers to discriminate, and it is not yet clear how much leeway the US Supreme Court will provide for these religious exemptions, even after its support for a religious exemption in Masterpiece Cakeshop v. Colorado Civil Rights
Commission (2018). Custody cases that pit now-separated same-sex partners against one another provide judges considerable leeway in the interpretation of the best interests of the child.

Room for prejudice also exists in Canada, but the significant reduction in political mobilization targeting LGBT family issues, and the relatively un politicized processes of judicial appointment, appear to have reduced the room for that. There is still uncertainty about how trans parenting cases will be adjudicated, although gender identity issues have been less intensely politicized in Canada than in the United States.

**Assisted Reproduction**

In the United States, the fragmented nature of health-care provision, as well as the extent to which it is driven by free market considerations, created openings in the early 1980s for assisted-reproduction clinics willing to serve lesbian and gay clients—though, of course, for a price. During that same decade a continent-wide market in frozen sperm expanded rapidly. Canadian women often availed themselves of such services, because access to locally provided assisted reproduction was difficult and not covered by government health insurance. By the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, there were LGBT-
friendly services in Toronto and Vancouver, although many more were available in urban centers across the United States.

The challenges facing gay male couples were much more daunting, in part because they depended on a surrogate, which entails considerable costs. Since 2007, Canadian federal law has outlawed payments of fees (though not expenses) to individuals who are involved in assisted reproduction. This may be a challenge in securing sperm donations but is especially daunting for those depending on surrogacy. In the United States, surrogacy law varies enormously. About ten states would be viewed as generally quite supportive of surrogacy, with at least five prepared to register both same-sex parents on birth certificates. At the other end of the spectrum, there are complete bans on surrogacy in a small cluster of states (including New York, Indiana, and Michigan) and significant hurdles in a few other states.

The presumption of parentage is virtually universal in the treatment of children born through assisted reproduction to married couples, and almost as automatic for cohabitational opposite-sex couples, even more so in Canada than the United States. In the case of an anonymous sperm donor, there is effectively no other claimant to parental rights, so the issue is unlikely to be contested. In the United States, however, even post-Obergefell, officials in some states will still resist placing the names of two women on a birth certificate, forcing them to go through formal adoption proceedings.

With surrogacy, US states, and to some extent Canadian provinces and territories, vary in the legal room they provide for surrogates to claim parental rights or to change their minds after earlier agreeing to not do so. Across most of the continent, it is not yet clear that same-sex parents using surrogacy would be at a particular disadvantage compared to heterosexual couples, although in parts of the United States they most certainly would. Antigay state legislators still seem intent on creating barriers for gay couples using surrogates and for other sexual minority couples seeking official recognition of parental rights and responsibilities.

Lesbian and gay reliance on assisted reproduction has often led to a desire to acknowledge the legal standing of more than two parents. In 2007 an Ontario court ruled in favor of a lesbian couple who wished to extend parenting rights to the gay man who assisted them. Nine years later that province’s legislature explicitly allowed for the registration of up to four parents on a birth certificate, and there seems to be no categorical impediment to such recognition elsewhere in Canada. In the United States, the first major decision in that direction was by the California legislature in 2013, and within a few years there were at least twelve states where courts or legislatures had opened up room for the same.
Lesbian Couple Raquel Grand (left) and Deanna Djos with Their Daughters at Their Home in Toronto, 2016. Grand and Djos were part of a 2016 court case petitioning for the right to both be registered as parents on their daughters' birth certificates. Laws in place at the time forced lesbian couples who conceived with a known donor to pay for a legal adoption.

Foreign Adoptions

The policies of foreign countries toward international adoptions have a profound effect on sexual minorities, because such couples are much more likely than heterosexual couples to be limited to that option. Increased attention to unethical adoption practices, embodied in the 1993 Hague Adoption Convention on intercountry adoption, led to an overall reduction in such adoptions in the decades to follow. But the spread of same-sex marriage also led to a tightening of restrictions specifically on lesbian and gay applicants by most of the countries to which sexual minority couples and individuals turned for options. In 2013, for instance, Russia imposed restrictions on applicants in all those countries that recognized such marriage, something that many other countries had already effected. This is in a context where domestic adoptions are difficult for all individuals and couples to arrange except for children who have been difficult to place.

Conclusion

The spread of official recognition of LGBT parental status became noticeable in the 1990s, with important precedents established in several US states and Canadian provinces. This followed a significant increase in the number of lesbians and gays with children, more and
more of them planned in the context of a same-sex relationship. In other words, the law, and eventually public policy, was catching up to new kinds of family formation. Sometimes even conservative family court judges were agreeing to coparent adoptions in cases where both parents were in complete accord and no one was objecting. This would sometimes occur even in jurisdictions where little progress had been made in securing official recognition for sexual minority rights.

Although there were a few US states in which pioneering steps had been taken in supporting lesbian and gay parenting claims, Canadian law and public policy leapt ahead of the United States and other countries. In the meantime, however, away from the limelight of the battle over same-sex marriage, there was a steady growth in the number of US states where parental rights were being recognized. The year 2015 marked a significant step forward, but much groundwork had already been laid. A declining minority of states has resisted that change, and, in some cases, attempts were even made to sharpen the restrictions on parental rights for sexual minority claimants.

In both countries, sexual minority parents still faced serious barriers, more formidable for gay men than lesbians and still more so for trans people and for those whose socioeconomic status or whose relationships do not accord with what appears to be safely normal. For many, too, the barriers to international adoption or the costs associated with assisted reproduction are simply too high. That said, the determination of LGBT individuals and couples to have children and assert their right to be recognized as parents has had a profound impact on US and Canadian law and public policy.

SEE ALSO Adoption and Surrogacy in Europe; Adoption, Fostering, and Surrogacy (International); Defense of Marriage Act (1996); Family Law in Asia; Lesbian Mothering and Adoption in Latin America

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The misrepresentation of women, homosexuals, and Middle Eastern culture in the first Western movie adaptation of A Thousand and One Nights, produced in 1974.

A Thousand and One Nights (known in the West as The Arabian Nights, henceforth referred to as The Nights) has long fired the imagination of Easterners and Westerners alike. Since its documentation in written form in the tenth century, the text has been translated into almost every language known to humankind. The stories of The Nights came from various cultures—Indian, Persian, and Arabic. Through a repeated process of dissemination and assimilation, they have come to exhibit “the cultural and artistic history of Islam” and the countries from which they originated (Haddawy 1990, xv). There are two known manuscripts of The Nights: the fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript deemed to be the more authentic and the eighteenth- to nineteenth-century Egyptian manuscript containing copious additions to the original frame story of Shahrazad and Shahrayar.

In 1974 Italian director Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975) was the first Westerner to adapt The Nights into film, as part of his Trilogy of Life series. Pasolini was a prominent, though controversial, writer and film director whose daring works reflected his commitment to neorealism and subproletariat Communism as well as his aversion to Catholicism and consumerism. Il fiore delle mille e una notte (1972; A Thousand and One Nights [1974]) represents Pasolini’s fascination with the Arab oral literary tradition that produced The Nights. Although generally recorded in written form, the text’s stories still carry the simplicity and charm of an oral literary tradition that has remained unaffected by the distortions and the restrictions of the written word. Furthermore, Pasolini was interested in the multiplicity of narrative voices, the various “narrative divisions,” and the “narrative that calls attention to itself” (N. Green 1990, 187). Thus there are no rules governing the organization of his various plots, with the possible exception of the laws of fate. It was his desire to create a film that corresponded to his theory of art for art’s sake that motivated Pasolini to portray sexual explicitness and an all-powerful Eros in a prelapsarian world—a world free from original sin and full of adventure, dreams, mythology, and fantasy—namely, the “Oriental” world of The Nights.
Il fiore delle mille e una notte was the culmination of Pasolini’s Trilogy of Life series that includes Il Decameron (1971; The Decameron [1971]) and I racconti di Canterbury (1972; The Canterbury Tales [1972]). The director had experimented with sexual explicitness in the first two films of the trilogy, and in Il fiore delle mille e una notte he was uninhibited, freed from the restrictions of Catholic theology and the feudal class structure that he was bound to face with his adaptations of The Decameron and The Canterbury Tales. In Il fiore delle mille e una notte he helped himself to a dreamland of sexual fantasy and bawdy pleasures, where “animality” and “savagery” replace Christian “spirituality” and “pseudo-civilization” (N. Green 1990, 187).

Yet, Pasolini’s representation of the Other in Il fiore delle mille e Una Notte, as represented by women, homosexuals, and Eastern culture in general, is marred by his own assumptions and expectations of what an Eastern culture should be. Consequently, the Other becomes a mirror that reflects Pasolini’s own fantasies, and in the process the text loses its specificity and the nuances of its Eastern identity. Indeed, the relationship between the self and the Other has always posed a dilemma for Pasolini; to him, the self is always in a state of fragmentation, which is why it seeks to identify with the Other, which it views as whole. As William Watson points out, “Pasolini’s desire for the other ... corresponds to his own lack of being, his awareness of his incomplete, divided and fragmentary self” (Watson 1989, 7). However, Pasolini’s adoption of Arthur Rimbaud’s motto “Je suis un autre” (I is an other) has its own drawbacks, as the difference between appreciating and appropriating the Other becomes hard to define. Moreover, in this Lacanian mirror the Other forms a “salutary” image of the self but never a true one—hence in reality, the image is a misrecognition of the self.

Women as the Ultimate Other

The most evident manifestations of the Other in Il fiore delle mille e una notte are women and same-sex individuals. Early in his childhood, Pasolini came to associate female reproductive ability with animality and bestiality after hearing his mother’s frank answer to his question, “How are children born?” Later, he admitted that his childhood vision of his mother was “a half-memory, invisible” (Watson 1989, 3). This biographical information, combined with the observation of one of his associates that Pasolini viewed “young girls primarily as rivals for the young boys he pursued,” sheds important light on Pasolini’s view of women in general (Watson 1989, 17).

The first distortion of the female image in Il fiore delle mille e una notte is Pasolini’s disavowal of Shahrazad as the main narrator of the stories. In fact, the frame story of Shahrayar and Shahrazad is pivotal to understanding the rest of the tales. In the fourteenth-century Syrian manuscript’s text, after discovering his wife’s adultery and betrayal, King Shahrayar vows to avenge his wounded male pride on all females by deflowering a virgin every night, then beheading her the next morning. Shahrazad, the vizier’s daughter,
volunteers to save her fellow women by marrying the king and telling him a story every night until she cures him of his lust and desire to kill. Some of Shahrazad’s stories involve virtuous and powerful women—Shahrazad’s side of the tale; other stories feature treacherous and lewd women—Shahrayar’s side of the picture. By ignoring the frame story and the illumination it sheds on the text, Pasolini omits a crucial element of the original narrative.

In Pasolini’s *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* it seems that things happen as if they are governed by an omnipotent destiny that makes the characters look superficial, passive, and inapt. This is mainly because we do not see the characters in their socially and culturally specific contexts—that is, in Shahrayar’s and Shahrazad’s frame story as well as in the Arabic culture itself. For example, in the original text the story of ‘Aziz and ‘Azizah is a portrayal of true female solidarity. ‘Aziz and ‘Azizah are cousins who have been promised in marriage to each other since childhood. ‘Azizah is completely enamored of ‘Aziz, but ‘Aziz does not share her feelings. ‘Aziz is interested only in pursuing amorous escapades with other love interests, including Boudour (Dalilah in the original), while insensitively enlisting the help of ‘Azizah to ensure his success. ‘Azizah is always ready to help him attain his desires because she selflessly places his happiness over hers. Ultimately, her sorrow gets the best of her and she dies of her unrequited love.

In the written text, ‘Azizah never considers Dalilah her rival. On the contrary, the two women begin to correspond, through ‘Aziz himself, on the subject of ‘Azizah’s helpless love affair, though Dalilah does not know that ‘Aziz is ‘Azizah’s love interest. Dalilah and ‘Azizah have many qualities in common: intelligence, fidelity, and a genuine appreciation for true love. These qualities set them apart from ‘Aziz, who is portrayed as naive, ungrateful, and selfish. ‘Azizah and Dalilah share, albeit unconsciously, a bond of sisterhood, which puts them in one camp and ‘Aziz in another. When Dalilah learns the nature of ‘Azizah’s love for ‘Aziz and realizes that he is the cause of her death, she exclaims, “By Allah, were she thy cousin, thou hadst borne her the same love as she bore thee! It is thou who hast slain her, and may the Almighty kill thee as thou killedst her! By Allah, hadst thou told me thou hadst a cousin, I would not have admitted thee to my favours!” (*Smithers 1894, 2:214*). Moreover, she insists on paying a visit to ‘Azizah's tomb, where she inscribes on the headstone verses that dignify ‘Azizah’s true love and martyrdom. She addresses her, “O thou slain of love, ... May Allah help thee. And grant thee home in Heaven and Paradise-height to see!” (*Smithers 1894, 2:217*). For both Dalilah and ‘Azizah, dying for one’s true love is a deed that equals martyrdom, and “the slain of love” deserves heavenly bliss in Paradise. Later, Dalilah refuses to take ‘Aziz back when she learns he has just become a married man. For Dalilah, betraying another woman by stealing her husband or fiancé is inexcusable: “Then said she, ‘Thou art of no use to me, now thou art married and hast a child; nor art thou any longer fit for my company; I care only for bachelors, and not for married men: these profit us nothing’” (*Smithers 1894, 2:230*).
This female solidarity and sisterhood is felt even by 'Aziz's mother, and later by his own wife. Both of them weep for 'Azizah's unfortunate death and pray for God to take vengeance on 'Aziz for his ruthless treatment of her. This is surprising coming from 'Aziz's own mother, who is expected to be protective of her son, yet her sense of justice and above all, female solidarity, drives her to wish him bad luck. 'Aziz describes his mother's reaction to 'Azizah's death thus: “So I entered the house and when my mother saw me she said, ‘Her death lieth heavy on thy neck and may Allah not acquit thee of her blood!’” (Smithers 1894, 2:214). Another example of female solidarity occurs earlier in the tale when 'Azizah seeks advice from Dalilah, whom she believes is more experienced than herself in the matters of the heart; to 'Azizah, Dalilah is not a rival but rather an older sister or tutor in love. Her decision to help 'Aziz decipher Dalilah's mysterious non-verbal signs is motivated by her true love for 'Aziz as well as her sense of belonging to the female sex, and to resurrecting the symbiotic language of the mother as opposed to the symbolic language of the father. In helping 'Aziz to decipher Dalilah's hand signs, 'Azizah tries to remind 'Aziz of his “pre-Oedipal” stage, before he experienced psychological separation from his mother and from the feminine aspects of his character, and before his introduction to the patriarchal language of the father (Chodorow 1978). These examples of female bonding and sociability are juxtaposed with models of male sociability (in the frame story of Shahrayar and Shahzaman and many other tales) and give female characters a reactive power that parallels the male power in The Nights.

In Pasolini’s film, however, this solidarity is played down to the point of virtual elimination. We do not know, for example, that 'Aziz is castrated because of his poor treatment of 'Azizah, not because of Dalilah's/Boudour's power as a femme fatale. It is noteworthy that in the film Pasolini refers to Dalilah as “Boudour the Madwoman (Budur la Pazza),” whereas in the original Arabic text she is called "Dalilah the Wily"; the shift in epithets from intelligent to psychotic signifies her newly diminished role. Throughout the story, 'Aziz proves to be interested only in gobbling food and making love without making a real effort to develop a serious relationship with his cousin or with Dalilah. So it is appropriate that, in the end, his punishment at the hands of Dalilah and her female attendants entails a physicality that echoes his earlier behavior. In other words, Dalilah castrates him to deprive him of the only thing that matters to him—his sexual potency, by which he values his masculinity. The literary text explains clearly that the nature of the punishment reflects the nature of the sin itself. In the film, however, the shocking castration of 'Aziz is portrayed as an act of extreme violence initiated by Dalilah's jealousy and vindictiveness. Additionally, in the written text, 'Aziz is treated as a sexual object at the disposal of two women, his wife and Dalilah; he is placed in the position of the passive female object rather than the active male subject so that he experiences how it feels to be treated as a sexual plaything. Earlier, in the original Arabic text, his wife declared that she needs him only to perform a “cock's duty.” When he asks her what that duty is, she answers: “His duty is to eat and drink and company with the hen.” Similarly, in the written text, after she castrates
him, Dalilah sends him off with these words: “Go forth this instant to whom thou wilt, for I needed naught of thee save that which thou no longer hast; and now I have no part in thee, nor have I any further want of thee or care for thee” (Smithers 1894, 2:231). As a result of this forced role reversal, ‘Aziz realizes the immorality of his loose and irresponsible behavior and quickly comes to regret ‘Azizah’s death.

This nexus of food, sex, and violence is a recurring theme in the text version of the story of ‘Aziz and ‘Azizah as well as the story of ‘Ali Shar/Nur ed-Din and Zumurrud. The men’s lust is signified by their gluttonous desire for food rather than love for the women whom they court or wed. And for the sin of overindulging in carnal desires (a failing usually attributed to men), sinners are punished by women, who represent the other side of the human equation (responsiveness, good manners, and an ability to experience a true love both spiritually and physically). In the written story of ‘Aziz and ‘Azizah, the cause of ‘Aziz’s castration and subsequent misery is, at least in part, his inability to control himself when the table is set before him. This blending of food, sex, and subsequent violence alludes to “the nexus of sex and death” proposed in the earlier frame story of Shahrayar and Shahzaman, the king’s brother (Malti-Douglas 1991, 19). In the original text, the purpose of punishing men who are extremely gluttonous or lustful is to give them a taste of their own bitter medicine by being placed in the position of the consumed female instead of the consuming male. Thus, the physical punishments of ‘Aziz and the three evil men in the story of Ali Shar/Nur ed-Din and Zumurrud stress this carnal side of their characters—their visceral overindulgence in sex and food.

The story of Zumurrud and Nur ed-Din provides yet another opportunity for Pasolini’s misrepresentation of Eastern women. In the original, Nur ed-Din, a naive adolescent boy, luckily comes to the attention of Zumurrud, an experienced and strong-willed girl. They live happily together until Zumurrud is kidnapped by some thieves who rape and torture her. Despite her ordeal, she manages to escape, disguised as a man, and to be installed as the king in a city whose chieftains have mistaken her for their long-awaited promised king. Meanwhile, Nur ed-Din is looking frantically for his lost beloved and is repeatedly taken advantage of by manipulative, “lewd” women. As the new king, one of Zumurrud’s first royal orders is to hold a banquet for travelers every day on the outskirts of the city, in the hope of eventually reuniting with Nur ed-Din. Her plan pays off and she finally finds her lover, but she does not disclose her true identity before she tricks him into a masquerade game through which she shows him who is truly in charge.
Zumurrud (center, in yellow robe) Masquerading as King of the Walled City in a Scene from Pasolini’s Il Fiore delle Mille e una Notte. Zumurrud, an experienced and strong-willed girl, is mistaken for the promised king of the walled city after the chieftains see her disguised as a man.

During her banquets, Zumurrud takes her revenge on the men who raped her: the old Christian man, his young brother, and the thief who kidnapped her. All of them are guilty of desiring her body and exerting male power over her. Their carnality manifests during the banquet in their gluttony with regard to a certain sweetened rice dish. All three of them insist on eating some of it despite the people’s warning that whoever eats from this dish will face a certain death at the hands of the king, Zumurrud. Needless to say, Zumurrud makes sure that they are decapitated and that their bodies are stuffed with hay and publicly displayed. The nature of their punishment, here again, coincides with the nature of their sins: excessive lust and gluttony. The sweetened rice dish is a trap that uncovers their transgressive, aggressive libidos. Once again, in the original text of The Nights, the woman, Zumurrud, acts as an instrument of divine justice sent to take women’s revenge on men. In Pasolini’s film, however, the motif of the sweetened rice dish and its connection with the death of the three men is never explained to the audience. Thus the whole scene turns into a meaningless farce that denotes nothing except, perhaps, the superficiality, irrationality, and savagery of Eastern culture.

In the literary text of The Nights the exemplary tale of male infidelity makes sense because it is juxtaposed with the story of the treachery of King Shahrayar’s wife. In Pasolini’s interpretation, however, the film provides only examples of female lewdness (Nur ed-Din and the three women), violence (Zumurrud and the three men), and castrating elements
Furthermore, Pasolini’s women are portrayed as lascivious, lazy, and inferior to men. Indeed, being both women and Easterners makes them doubly inferior to Pasolini and to his implied audience (Kabbani 1986). Technically speaking, the female body attracts little attention from the camera; it exists only in relation to the male body so as to accentuate the aesthetics of the penis. When the female body is shown, it is generally in frontal shots that stress the lack of a penis. For example, in the scene that shows Nur ed-Din with the three women in the pool, three sets of female genitalia are matched with one male sexual organ; the underlying message is that one penis can overcome three female vaginas, both aesthetically and symbolically. This is emphasized when the women ask, referring to his penis, “What is it called?” and Nur ed-Din responds, “It is the donkey that crops the scented grass, and eats the pomegranate, and spends the night at the inn.” The “scented grass,” “pomegranate,” and the “inn,” of course, are metaphors for the female genitalia that will be overcome and destroyed by the careless consuming act of the donkey (the penis).

Furthermore, in the film, the old woman who helps Nur ed-Din locate Zumurrud after she is kidnapped makes sexual advances toward him. While fondling his genital area, she says to him, “I helped you, you must be sweet with me.” In the literary text, however, the old woman helps him because she feels sorry for him, and she has no intention of sleeping with him. Finally, the culmination of Pasolini’s debasement of women in Il fiore delle mille e una notte occurs in the celebration of fellatio in scenes that depict acts performed by Dalilah and Dunya on ‘Aziz and Taj al-Muluk, respectively. As mentioned earlier, Pasolini’s representations of his female characters in the film marginalizes them both as women and as Easterners, casting them as lascivious and treacherous. The fact that the Eastern women are subjects of Eastern men makes little difference, since Pasolini subjects the whole Eastern culture, women and men alike, to his own phallic, usurping gaze.

**Homosexual Others**

Pasolini’s portrayal of homosexuality in this film is another example of this problematic representation. At the beginning and also the end of the film, Pasolini presents us with what seems to be the ideology and method he follows in creating his cinematic rendition: “The truth lies not in one, but in many dreams.” If this on-screen motto is accurate, one would expect to see different sides of the truth and multiple representations of female and male homosexuality, or even of heterosexuality. On the contrary, what we see is the same male/female, active/passive dichotomy repeated time and again in heterosexual/homosexual scenes. For example, at one point in the movie we see ‘Aziz preparing to shoot Dalilah’s vagina with what appears to be a golden penis-shaped arrow. The camera moves from a close-up of the penis-shaped arrow to a close-up on Dalilah’s face overcome by horror, and then dissolves into a shot of ‘Aziz’s face full of satisfaction and victory as he shoots the arrow toward her vagina. Another heterosexual lovemaking sequence starts with a close-up on Taj al-Muluk’s lower parts and his seemingly erect
penis, followed by a shot of Dunya performing fellatio, and finally a shot of Dunya sleeping at her lover’s thighs with her face situated in a worshipful posture opposite his penis.

Pasolini’s objectification of Easterners is not restricted to women; it extends to men who engage in same-sex relationships as well. Young “Third World boys,” as Pasolini called his homoerotic characters in this film, are presented not much differently than their countrywomen. They are objectified for Pasolini’s eager eyes and by the camera’s inquisitive and usurping gaze. Commenting on the erotic in *Il fiore delle mille e una notte*, Pasolini remarked:

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*May I say, a bit tautologically, that for me eroticism is the beauty of the boys of the Third World. It is this type of sexual relation—violent, exalting and happy—that still survives in the Third World and that I have depicted almost completely in *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* although I have purified it, that is, stripped it of mechanics and movements [by] arranging it frontally, almost arresting it.*

*(QUOTED IN N. GREEN 1990, 194)*

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It is exactly this “arresting” and rearranging, and the “stripping” of the male homosexual characters of their movements and their unique identities (the dangers of their Otherness) that make the naked male a sexual object, subject to the camera’s rape. Pasolini has “purified” this Other from excessive Otherness, from extra unwanted eroticism, or to use bell hooks’s term, from extra “spices,” only to make this Other more liable to consumption by the dominance of the Western gaze. On the dynamics of “eating the Other,” hooks reflects that “White racism, imperialism, and sexist domination prevail by courageous consumption. It is by eating the Other that one asserts power and privilege” (*hooks 1992, 36*).

In Pasolini’s *Il fiore delle mille e una notte*, homosexuality loses its fluidity and multiplicity of sex roles as well as the experiences of intimacy and affection. The real dynamics of a Middle Eastern homosexual relationship—one that involves the cultural context of homosociability and spiritual sublimity—are not represented here. On the contrary, homosexuality represents a commodity in the sex market, subject to the rules of supply and demand and ready to be sold to anyone with an economic advantage. Earlier in the film, when a poet becomes interested in three youths, he offers them food and drinks in exchange for voyeuristic and sexual pleasures. His proposal includes the following verses: “To two youths I said: ‘I love you’ / ‘Have you money?’ they said. / I responded ‘Yes, and I spend it generously.’ / The youths exclaimed: ‘Done.’” In the same vein, the verses that the disguised Zumurrud recites to Nur ed-Din while pretending to seduce him in the final scene
of their tale describe a young lad who accepts the homosexual advances of a rich man who offers a large sum of money. The line uttered in the film, which is not present in the original text of *The Nights*, affirms the transactional aspect of homosexual acts: “I showed him a dinar.” Only then does the boy say, “If it is fate I cannot escape it.”

Once again, homosexuality falls into the power dialectic of the active/passive binary that characterizes male/female relationships. It becomes another form of sexual transaction subject to the same economy of purchase, and to the ills of prostitution and violence. Consequently, we have Pasolini, the Western male, objectifying the “exotic,” poor, almost feminine Eastern boys by the power of the phallic camera and his financial and technical power as a director. In the previous episode involving the poet, the three youths are seen later in the tent. Here, the point-of-view shot stresses their fetishistic positions, as their heads are eliminated while their genitalia is “arrested frontally” and displayed for the voyeuristic pleasure of the director and audience. Defining the mechanics of the fetish object, Linda Williams remarks: “Fetishism was understood as a delusion whereby the fetish makers worshiped their own constructions not simply as conventional human-produced *symbols* of supernatural power, but as the literal embodiment of that power” (*Williams 1989, 104*). Williams also points out that the lack that one feels in relation to the Other is actually “a lack of ability to imagine a relation to the other in anything but the phallic terms of the self” (114). Elaborating on the psychic process that the male audience undergoes in relation to images of men in the cinema, Steve Neale explains that the male viewer (and in Pasolini’s case, one might add, the director) experiences the following stages: “narcissistic identification, voyeuristic looking, and fetishistic looking” (*Neale 1983, 15*). By Neale’s standards of male identification with male characters on-screen, Pasolini’s objectification of the “Third World boys” may have been part of his own fetishized identification with the Other—that is to say, a self-fetishization or even self-exoticization, especially because Pasolini’s open homosexuality motivated him to seek and identify with the Other in this film. After all, he often felt exiled at home, and this identification with the Other is part of his revolt against fascist Italy, religion, and oppressive norms of expression. However, as a Western Other, Pasolini has authoritative power over all the various little Eastern Others, to put it in Jean-François Lyotard’s terms of the *grand/petit récit*. This makes the identification between Pasolini and the rest of the marginalized Others almost impossible, because their relationship is governed by the dominating power of the camera lens, of seeing and not being seen, of “cultural appropriation” rather than “cultural appreciation” (*hooks 1992, 39*). In his reflection on Pasolini’s approach in *Il fiore delle mille e una notte*, Vincent Canby confirms this observation:

> Most of the tales have to do with power, with the power of beautiful women to bewitch their lovers and the power of the rich to control the poor. Pasolini clearly doesn’t approve of this—the Marxist in him will out. Yet the manner of
Later in his life, Pasolini expressed this same aggressive male power in his homosexual relationships: by seeking “to transform body into things, as he bought sexual favors from boys,” he “play[ed] the male” role himself (Watson 1989, 15–16).

Some critics consider *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* to be representative of a crucial moment in history in which homosexuality is freed from sin and irony as well as Otherness. But Pasolini’s depiction of homosexuality as Other is flawed at best. This is evident from both his commodification of the Middle Eastern male actors in the film and his complete obliviousness to registers of female homosexuality in the literary text. For example, in the story of Zumurrud and Nur ed-Din, the cross-dressing Zumurrud, in her new role as king, has to marry Hayat al-Nufus (the former king’s young daughter). In the original text of *The Nights*, this carries the possibility of a lesbian encounter, whereas in the film the disclosure of Zumurrud’s true identity is turned into a silly laughing matter. The Arabic text stresses female solidarity, connectedness, and the sisterly love that the two women feel for each other: “And when Hayat al-Nufus had ended her verses, she said, ‘O my sister, verily the breasts of the noble and brave are of secrets the grave; and I will not discover thine.’ Then they toyed and embraced and kissed and slept till near the Muezzin’s call to dawn-prayer” (*The Nights* 1884, 3:73). Female homosociability and potential homosexuality is not based on material gain. This stands in sharp contrast to Pasolini’s depiction of male homosexuality, which is subject to rules of the sex market. Despite Pasolini’s desire to escape patriarchy’s paradigm of a monolithic heterosexuality, he falls prey to some of its prime fallacies. In particular, he remains surprisingly faithful to patriarchy’s notion of devaluing women for their perceived lack vis-à-vis a phallocentric value system. Hence, the homosexuality of the “lacking” female body is not even worthy of depiction in Pasolini’s film, because it does not produce the same scopophilic, phallic pleasure.

Still, Pasolini should be credited for his commitment to the original text in his depiction of the last encounter between Zumurrud and Nur ed-Din. Here, the audience experiences the pleasure of witnessing a departure from the traditional “active male” and “passive female” roles. The essentialist dichotomy of fixed gender roles is questioned and even mocked in this masquerade scene where Zumurrud performs her active oppressive male role and even excels at it. The message in both the written and in the cinematic versions of *The Nights* is that femininity and masculinity are but socially constructed concepts—simply masks used to perform biologically determined roles. Once donned, the masks produce in
their wearers the culturally constructed norms, behavior, and manifestations of one gender or the other. For example, Zumurrud admits that she “wants to play a trick on ‘Ali Shar [Nur ed-Din in the written text] just for fun” (*The Nights* 1884, 3:73). In fact, the fun she refers to is the ability to transgress all social and sexual boundaries that separate the two sexes, to have a fluidity and a multiplicity of representation between female and male identities. Zumurrud proves to us and to ‘Ali Shar himself that when enacting the role of a male, she can be quite as violent, as insensitive, and as cruel as a man can be. By the same token, Nur ed-Din can be forced into being an unwilling, passive sexual partner in an unwanted homosexual relationship when the balance of power is no longer in his favor. In fact, ‘Ali Shar finds himself completely helpless when Zumurrud threatens to kill him if he does not acquiesce to her demands. She warns, “Durst thou disobey me? it shall be an ill-omened night for thee! Nay, but it behoveth thee to do my bidding and I will make thee my minion and appoint thee one of my Emirs” (*Smithers* 1884, 3:343). Later, she orders him to “take off [his] underwear and lie down facing downward” (*Smithers* 1884, 3:343). This places him in the position of the passive participant, a role traditionally reserved for female characters. However, to our dismay, Pasolini undermines the dynamics of the role reversal and shifts our attention from a critique of male/female power dialectic to a mere homoerotic, voyeuristic scene as the camera moves from the masquerading Zumurrud to the naked buttocks of Nur ed-Din. We watch Zumurrud gazing and objectifying Nur ed-Din, while the camera is also objectifying him by focusing on his buttocks as they occupy the center of the screen.

*Il fiore delle mille e una notte* was lauded for unmasking homosexuality, for exposing it in front of the camera without any scruples. However, the very fact that Pasolini chose to unmask homosexuality in a removed, “Oriental” setting rather than a European one prompts us to doubt the sincerity of his representation. Just four months before his death in 1975, Pasolini explicitly disavowed his Trilogy of Life series in the article “Abiura della Trilogia della vita,” writing that he regretted ever making it. He was disappointed at the realization that because the Trilogy of Life became a box-office hit, his success was co-opted by capitalism. He declared later that “he would never again be able to show the youthful human bodies in the same positive way he did in the trilogy. The sacredness of sexuality had become transformed into a consumer product” (quoted in *Michalczyk 1986, 101*). He also disavowed permissiveness, the subproletariat, and the Third World. In “Abiura dalla Trilogy della Vita,” Pasolini explains his new position:

>The young men and boys of the Roman sub-proletariat—the ones I portrayed later in the old and resistant Naples and later still in the poor countries of the third world [sic]—if they are now human garbage, it means that they already were such then: they were thus imbeciles compelled to be adorable, squalid criminals compelled to be likeable scoundrels, inept cowards compelled to
This should not surprise us, coming from such a controversial and contradictory artist as Pasolini. Still, it is rather ironic that once the screaming eroticism, the sexuality, and the appropriated bodies of the “Third World boys” that Pasolini worked hard to portray in his *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* had appealed to the public, threatening to speak for itself and to assume its own agency, he decided to disown the film. Could it be that a little bit of excessive Otherness had escaped his monitoring calculating lens, becoming too dangerous, too racy, too Other? hooks provides an answer to this question in her observation that “to seek an encounter with the Other does not require that one relinquish forever one’s mainstream positionality” ([hooks 1992, 23](http://example.com)). Pasolini enters the sphere of the Other seeking adventure and self-exaltation. He wants to be elevated by the “exotic,” the “primitive” and the “prelapsarian” Other. It is obvious, to use hooks’s terminology, that he leaves the Other symbolically and literally richer than he had been before, “but we have no idea how the Other leaves him” ([hooks 1992, 39](http://example.com)).

Pasolini’s domination over the Other in the film goes far beyond depiction of his characters, extending to control over the music and even the mise en scène. For example, at one point in the film, a Western musical tune with a loud organ track prevails over scenery of sea and desert as a jinni (genie) flies over the landscape with Shahzaman; this device helps the director to keep the scene from sounding too “Eastern,” and to regain control over the narrative. Furthermore, Pasolini’s use of the colors gold and red reflects his fascination with the luxuriant and exotic East. Once again, his fetishism of an Eastern life full of tranquility and bawdy pleasures drives him away from accurate depiction. At this point, we are reminded of Pasolini’s motto, “The truth is not in one dream but in many dreams,” which begins and ends *Il fiore delle mille e una notte*. It is apparent that Pasolini’s truth regarding Middle Eastern culture is distorted in the same way the dream of Dunya is distorted by the impositions and alterations of Taj al-Muluk. Taj al-Muluk, a determined suitor for the celibate Dunya, hires two Sufis to draw on the wall several pictures to illustrate Dunya’s dream of two male and female doves. However, his drawings suggest a different ending to the dream in order to convince Dunya to give up celibacy and to accept him in marriage. Likewise, Pasolini created his many dreams of the Middle East, replete with his own version of the truth, which he deems to be absolute and universal. In *Il fiore delle mille e una notte* the Other, as represented by women, homosexuals, and Middle Eastern culture as a whole, is patronized, objectified, and misrepresented. It is as if Pasolini could not reconcile his simultaneous fascination with the Other and his desire to seize, capture, and control every aspect of it. Pasolini’s eager eyes and the devouring gaze of his camera appropriate Middle Eastern Others and strip them of their unique identities,
placing them under his arresting lens. Indeed, Pasolini’s post-structuralist promise of representing multiple truths dissolves into a traditional totalitarian objectification of all other minorities. Pasolini’s Il fiore delle mille e una notte, perhaps unintentionally, highlights the irony of Karl Marx’s famous motto, “They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.”

SEE ALSO Orientalism in Gay Pornography about the Middle East; Queer Themes in Italian Neorealist Cinema; A Thousand and One Nights

BIBLIOGRAPHY


The cultural weight of the penis in defining masculinity, its role in sexual pleasure, the ways it can be modified, and its relation to intersex and trans bodies.

“The genital area accounts for only 1 percent of the surface area of the body. But—1 percent or not—genitals carry an enormous amount of cultural weight,” argue David Valentine and Riki Anne Wilchins (1997, 215). Genitals carry the weight of sexual and gender identity and sometimes even of ethnic and cultural belonging. This entry explores the cultural weight of the penis in transnational contexts: its shifting relationship to cismen (those men who were assigned “male” at birth) and masculinity; its position in sexual encounters; its alterations and reconfigurations; and its relation to intersex and trans bodies. The entry also considers the role that cultural, medical, religious, and political views play in the meaning-making of the penis.

The Penis and Masculinity

The dominant, Western view of the penis is one deeply tied to biomedicine. The hegemony of this worldview, now shared by people around the world, was accomplished by direct colonization and cultural imperialism—the imposition of Judeo-Christian ideology, Western science, and psychiatry—eroding or replacing local and traditional views (see Chiang 2012 for an example). The concept of biological sex (itself a cultural construction) is composed of three distinct indicators: genitals, chromosomes, and hormones. Thus, “being male” is, from a medical view, simply the state of having a penis (and corresponding testes), XY chromosomes, and a prevalence of testosterone. In lived experience, though, the penis (along with other socially significant markers such as facial and body hair or a deep voice) is a defining component of “maleness” because rarely do people, or those around them, have direct experience of their hormones or chromosomes. In fact, most do not spend significant time considering their “sex” per se, in comparison with their gender—the social meanings, identities, rules, and roles written onto the sexed bodies of humans.

Although the medical view of the penis is relatively modern—the anatomy correctly identified by the Belgian physician Andreas Vesalius in the sixteenth century, spermatozoa recognized two centuries later, and the connection to hormones and chromosomes added
in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—the penis’s connection to social expectations of masculinity is perhaps as old as human history. More than its role in the assignment of “male sex,” the penis holds its greatest weight in relation to masculinity, the gender most commonly connected to the male sex category. In fact, ideas about masculinity have shaped the human conception of biological sex; even Vesalius believed that the vagina was merely an inverted penis—in other words, that women were simply failed men. For Vesalius, men’s supremacy was a given, something that must be evident in nature (Friedman 2001).

Men often place great significance on the penis to their self-definition. Throughout human history, the penis has been both revered and feared for its connection to masculinity, although its specific meanings and social manifestations have shifted. In ancient Egypt, the penis was understood as the giver of life and featured prominently in creation stories (Friedman 2001). In ancient Greece, a small, flaccid penis was valued as symbolic of masculine beauty and appeared conspicuously in some of the period’s famous artworks. Other ancient civilizations valorized the large, erect penis. It is prevalent in ancient Roman art, as in Pompeii, and in ancient Hindu worship of the lingam, a phallic symbol for the god Shiva (although some scholars argue that the lingam was not always intended as phallic, especially when it appears as the “lingam-yoni, an erect penis conjoined at the base to a vulva ... the undivided self of the male and female, which was believed to be the embodiment of the divine” [Dasgupta 2014, 107]). In the modern Western world, the large penis is hegemonic and is presented frequently in pornographic and media representations (Lehman 2007).

**Penis as Phallus** The phallus is a symbolic representation of the penis, distinct from its fleshy reality; the phallus is large and erect, symbolic of potency and power. But the actual penis often fails as phallus, because it is more frequently flaccid than erect and often small, delicate, and easily injured. The phallus often symbolizes the socioeconomic, military, and political power of a society, dating back to the great ancient monuments such as the phallic hermae of ancient Athens and the Forum of Augustus in ancient Rome (Friedman 2001), through more modern examples of skyscrapers and other monuments (e.g., the Washington Monument in Washington, DC) (see also Williams 2014). In certain contexts, such as hard-core pornography, penis and phallus are treated as one—with only large, erect, or semi-erect penises shown (Lehman 2007).
Phallus Statue outside of a Japanese Fertility Shrine. The large, erect penis, or phallus, has been a symbol of potency and power in many cultures since ancient times.

The penis-as-phallus is not relegated to the realm of pornography. The emphasis on size, which is inextricably tied to notions of masculine power, can be seen in the availability of many products and techniques to increase penis size: vacuum pumps, surgical enlargements, hanging weights, and milking, or jelq, a technique of stretching the penis from an early age (Paley 1999). An interesting example is foreskin restoration, a variety of techniques (and products) available to help unhappily circumcised men regrow their foreskin. For the men who undertake them, these techniques may address issues around sexual sensation, bodily autonomy, or penis size, with an emphasis on a long, or redundant, foreskin (Kennedy 2015).

Penis size is highly racialized. Although a large penis is hegemonic, the stereotype of excessively large, even animalistic, penises among black men has been used to justify visions of black men as dangerous, oversexed, subhuman, and aggressive (Friedman 2001). Colonial fascination with African sex organs later became an American obsession about black men defiling white women, leading to the lynching of thousands of black men. In LGBT history, this stereotype looms large, as, for example, in the controversy surrounding the American photographer Robert Mapplethorpe’s (1946–1989) images of black genitalia and in modern-day examples of racial discrimination on gay dating sites. In contrast to
black men’s presumed largeness, the white imaginary has long conceived of Asian men as effeminate, and thus stereotypes of their bodies include a small penis. Despite all these cultural beliefs, surveys consistently show that most penises are actually between 5 and 7 inches when erect (Paley 1999).

Fears about penis size manifest in a variety of ways around the world. Small penis syndrome is a condition wherein a man is concerned about the size of his penis, an anxiety that persists despite reassurances by medical professionals that the penis is of normal size. This condition produces an array of social anxieties, not least of which center around public urination and sexual activity (Wylie and Eardley 2007). Other penis anxieties include koro (the belief that one’s penis is shrinking) and beliefs in penis snatching. These are often considered culture-bound psychiatric syndromes, but because they have appeared in an array of contexts, some have considered the underlying cause to be mental illness shaped by cultural beliefs (see Crozier 2012 for the evolution of this psychiatric diagnosis and Chiang 2015 for specifics on the Chinese context). Outbreaks of koro have been documented primarily in Asia (Malaysia, China, Thailand, India, Singapore, and Indonesia), with some individual cases among European, African, and American patients (Crozier 2012). Likewise, penis snatching (the belief that someone has stolen your penis) has been documented in African nations most recently but was also part of the witch hunts of medieval Europe (Lombard 2014). Magic was said to have all sorts of power over the penis. In medieval France, for example, impotence was sometimes attributed to the spell of a sorceress, as in the case of Martin Guerre (Davis 1983). These anxieties, as well as the way they are understood medically, demonstrate the widespread emphasis placed on genital size, performance, and reliability.

**Penis or Testicles?**

The term *penis* is popularly used in place of all male genitalia—penis, scrotum, and testes. Historically, though, the penis and testicles vied as the measure of a man. Because the penis was a site of excretion (of urine and seminal fluid), it was sometimes viewed as animalistic or dirty. In early Christian thinking, the penis could even be evil—a source of lust and sin (Friedman 2001). When selecting a new pope, the final test was an examination of the testicles, and when giving an oath, men often swore—or testified—by placing a hand near their testicles (Friedman 2001).

In modern times, the penis takes primacy over the testicles as the defining piece of genitalia. This change marks a shift in thinking about masculinity and the body—from an emphasis on reproduction to one on power and pleasure. The Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud’s (1856–1939) emphasis on the penis (or lack thereof) in his analysis of castration anxiety and penis envy helped solidify the penis as primary to human personality development (Friedman 2001). It was the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901–1981), though, who truly theorized the phallus, drawing the distinction between
physical organ (penis) and power symbol (phallus) that is in use today. Nevertheless, the
testicles remain significant. One can see the cultural weight of the testicles by looking at
those who have lost them, for example, to testicular cancer. Like survivors of breast cancer
who seek reconstructive surgery to regain a sense of wholeness, testicular cancer survivors
may opt for replacement with testicular implants to maintain a particular aesthetic
wholeness. Particularly interesting, implants (a product called Neuticles) are also available
for neutered pets, suggesting that the ideology of masculinity is culturally pervasive.

The Penis in Sexuality

The penis is a central part of many men’s sexuality. The penis-as-phallus is understood as
the definitive penetration tool; this explains its popular representation in mainstream
pornographic materials as large, erect, and hard. These representations led many radical
feminists to decry the penis as a tool of rape and domination (e.g., Dworkin [1987] 2007).
In one’s lived sexuality, however, the penis takes on many more roles than simply as
dominating penetrator: it can be both giver and receiver of pleasure; part of sexual
encounters with others or one’s personal self-pleasure; a source of pride, guilt, or failure;
and the literal (physical) organ or a manufactured substitute.

The Penis and Penetration

The pleasures of the penis are many. Most readily imagined is
its role as penetrator of orifices: mouth, vagina, and anus. The penis’s culturally hegemonic
job is to penetrate vaginas for the purpose of reproduction, even though the penis does and
can do much more than this. Its reproductive role is supported by many religious values, as
well as by medicine; sodomy laws, which make nonreproductive sex illegal, have also
protected this role (such laws were overturned in the United States in 2003, but they
persist elsewhere [Carroll and Mendos 2017]).

Penetration is typically understood to rely on erection. Erection is a source of anxiety for
some, and this anxiety has led to the development of a competitive pharmaceutical industry
of erection achievement and maintenance. The inability to achieve or sustain erection is
considered a medical condition in need of treatment (Potts 2000). The wide variety of
actual penises and erectile states is ignored in favor of a medically established “normal”
erection. Any deviation is classified as pathological. The failure of an erection seems to be
evidence of the lived, embodied penis’s shortcomings as phallus (Potts 2000).

Although many experience erectile problems as a source of distress, some scholars have
argued that at least some of this suffering is the by-product of the cultural (phallic)
emphasis on erection, and still others have noted that erectile dysfunction may be more a
psychological condition—the result of performance or other anxiety— than a physiological
one. In a 2015 study of hundreds of Chinese men, Everett Yuehong Zhang argues that
anxieties around impotence reflect not only physiological or psychological issues but also
the political, economic, and social changes associated with modernity. Whatever the cause,
erectile dysfunction can be treated by some very profitable drugs, such as Viagra and Cialis, or by more invasive treatments, such as injections and surgically implanted silicone rods (Potts 2000). To combat the stigma men may feel admitting their erectile problems, companies such as Pfizer, the maker of Viagra, hire big stars for advertisements. In 2002 Pfizer hired Pelé (1940–), the world-famous Brazilian soccer legend, to represent them globally. He encouraged men to talk to their doctors, although he has often been cited in interviews explaining that he has never needed the drug himself.

The Other Pleasures of the Penis The penis need not be an erect penetrator to be pleasurable. It need not be erect, and it need not penetrate—it can be penetrated, it can be enjoyed while flaccid or lusted after during urination, and it can be pleased alone. One example of the pleasures of the penis not readily captured by the hegemonic medical model of penis/phallus as erect penetrator is docking. In this sexual act, the foreskin of one penis becomes an orifice to be penetrated. Docking is unavailable if circumcised, so for many, the pleasures of a penetrated penis are unknown (Harrison 2002). In recreational (as opposed to urological) sounding, the urethra is penetrated by objects or liquids. Although unsafe sounding can damage the urethra (Breyer and Shindel 2012), it is another example of pleasurable penetration of the penis. Other penile pleasures can be found by exploring the nonerect penis as part of sexual play. This lies far outside many Western imaginations because the penis is so closely tied to all that is masculine and not feminine (and thus not soft, receptive, or passive) (Potts 2000).

Masturbation is another penis pleasure not easily captured by the reproductive model (Dikötter 1995; Laqueur 2003). In Western societies, masturbation was long seen as a sin or moral failing, and in some religions, it continues to be framed as sin. By the 1800s, however, medicine discovered the “problem” of masturbation and sought out its cure. Masturbation was believed to cause all manner of illness—seizures, paralysis, blindness, insanity. It was believed to sap men’s potency, both sexually and productively. An entire disease was invented in the 1800s, spermatorrhea, which described the loss of too much semen from chronic masturbation or sexual activity, sending Victorian England into a social panic (Rosenman 2003; Crozier 2000); in the 1900s Chinese urbanites had a spermatorrhea panic of their own, believing that men could lose important life force from uncontrolled ejaculation (Shapiro 1998). Nevertheless, masturbation—alone or with others—flourishes as one of many penile pleasures, and though religious dictates may still caution against it, medicine no longer considers it dangerous.
Display of Phallus-Shaped Vibrators. The use of dildos, strap-ons, and other penis substitutes can be used to achieve some of the functions of the penis.

Other Kinds of Penises Despite the penis’s close association with masculinity, not all men have penises and not all people with penises are men. This fact is discussed in depth below, but it is important to note the role of instrumental penises, not just the biological, fleshy ones, in sexual activity. Dildos, strap-ons, and all manner of substitutes can be used to achieve some of the functions of the penis (see Pfeffer 2017 for a discussion). Survivors of penile cancer and botched penis surgeries may choose these options, as well as some trans men who do not desire or have not pursued reassignment surgeries. Likewise, some women and nonbinary people might also use these alternatives during sex play. The pleasures of the penis are many and need not be restricted to only the flesh variety.

Penile Alterations

From piercings, tattoos, and implants to circumcision, super- and subincision, and complete removal through castration, the penis has been subjected to numerous modifications throughout human history (see Paley 1999 for an overview). Some alterations serve purely aesthetic purposes. Others serve greater purposes: religious or cultural, medical, and even punitive.
Castration Castration can refer to the removal of the testicles and scrotum only or to the additional removal of the penis (Chiang 2012). It has a varied history and has served many purposes over time. Some societies encouraged castration of vanquished enemies after battle, and others required it for positions in royal courts reserved solely for eunuchs, or even for fame among the operatic castrati, renowned for their permanently high-pitched voices. Castration has even held religious significance, especially among small Christian sects such as the Skopty in 1800s Russia who practiced self-castration as an act of godly devotion (Friedman 2001).

At its most basic, castration represents the elimination of reproductive capacity, which is why it frequently involves the removal (or destruction) of only the testicles. In the Western imaginary, this biological loss was also often seen as a desexing, a loss of masculinity. Not so in imperial China, where castration played an important role in palace life (Chiang 2012). Interestingly, Chinese castration practices removed both testes and penis but, contrary to Western expectations, did not lead to eunuchs’ loss of masculine social recognition. Europeans who encountered this practice misunderstood and used it as justification for treating China as a lesser civilization (Chiang 2012). (This was also true of the practice of footbinding in China, as well as of so-called female genital mutilation throughout Africa.)

In contrast to imperial Chinese eunuchs, castration may produce a new sex/gender category in the case of the hijra in South Asia. The term designates a specific social category—a kind of third sex/gender—some of whom are completely castrated (meaning penis and testicles are both removed). Not all hijras are castrated, though, and not all hijras share the same gender identity (Bakshi 2004).

Castration has also been employed as punishment, especially for sexual crimes. Chemical castration—the use of pharmaceuticals to suppress desire, rather than the surgical removal of the gonads—is legal in several US states as punishment for child molestation or sexual abuse. Castration, both surgical and chemical, has been used as a “cure” for homosexuality in the United States, Britain, and Nazi Germany. Famously, Alan Turing (1912–1954), the English code breaker and inventor who helped turn the tides in favor of the Allies in World War II (1939–1945), was subjected to chemical castration for his homosexuality.

Castration appears in few recent popular cultural sources, but George R. R. Martin’s fantasy novel series titled A Song of Ice and Fire (the first volume of which was published in 1996), and its television adaptation, Game of Thrones (2011–), introduces several castrated characters. Varys, castrated early in his life, serves as a court official; Theon Greyjoy is castrated as part of his torture while imprisoned; and the Unsullied are a group of enslaved soldiers, all castrated to ensure their obedience and focus. Among older works, Honoré de Balzac’s (1799–1850) Sarrasine (1830) is significant, featuring a castrato character, Zambinella, as is Roland Barthes’s (1970) analysis of the novella, which details its
Castration has also featured as a theme in psychoanalytic feminist film theory, as in the work of Laura Mulvey (1975) and Kaja Silverman (1988).

Circumcision Like castration, circumcision has a varied history. The procedure itself varies by context and purpose. As a basic definition, circumcision is the surgical removal of the foreskin (prepuce) from the head (glans) of the penis. Circumcision appears in Neolithic cave drawings and ancient Egyptian art, suggesting it has been practiced for millennia. About one-third of men around the world are circumcised, and most of these circumcisions were performed for cultural or religious reasons. The procedure is most common in Africa but also occurs with frequency in the Middle East, Australia, and the United States.

Circumcision features prominently in both the Jewish and Muslim faiths. In Islam, the practice is related to the belief that the prophet Muhammad was born without a foreskin. It is not mandated by the Qur’an but performed frequently in accordance with tradition, so age at circumcision varies from place to place. In Judaism, the act of circumcision—which takes place in a ritual Brit Milah, or bris, ceremony and is often performed by a ritual circumciser called a mohel—is understood as a covenant with God and is mandated unless there are health concerns, such as hemophilia, in the infant. There is a growing minority in Judaism that rejects circumcision, arguing, for example, that the ritual is patriarchal (Kimmel 2001), or unnecessarily painful, and opting instead for a ceremony with no cutting.

Circumcision also has a fascinating medical history. The surgery has been recommended as a cure for all manner of illness—from epilepsy to paralysis—and is closely associated with the rise of an anti-masturbation movement in the West (Darby 2005). The supposed dangers of masturbation, detailed above, caused great panic in Victorian times, and circumcision presented a relatively easy solution.

Today, few national or international medical associations recommend the procedure. The World Health Organization has recommended its application in sub-Saharan African nations as part of the fight against HIV. In the United States, a 2012 statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics suggests that the benefits outweigh the risks, so it continues to be fairly widely practiced there. The evidence in favor of circumcision is mixed. It seems to prevent female-to-male HIV transmission and to protect against penile cancer and human papillomavirus, although many of its benefits can also be achieved through safe-sex practices or good hygiene, rather than permanent genital alteration. Claims that circumcision is more hygienic (because the foreskin traps sloughed skin cells and secretions, known as smegma) also hold little weight, as the foreskin is easily cleaned by simply retracting and gently washing it. Unless a person has phimosis, a condition where the foreskin cannot fully retract, circumcision is rarely medically necessary; even then, some phimosis cases can be treated with steroid creams or physical manipulation.
A Pediatric Nurse Dresses a Toddler following a Medical Circumcision in Massachusetts. Medical circumcision is widely practiced in the United States, where the medical community touts the procedure’s benefits in preventing disease transmission and promoting hygiene.

The limited benefits and spotty evidence in favor of circumcision have led to the rise of an anti-circumcision social movement in the United States, Canada, Australia, and parts of Europe. This movement argues that circumcision is a violation of medical ethics when performed on nonconsenting infants and children; that it is an unnecessary medical intervention; and that it may cause lasting and irreversible damage, such as loss of sensation, erectile dysfunction, scarring, pain, and, in extreme cases, loss of the penis or death. Exemplifying this ongoing debate, a German court in Cologne ruled in May 2012 that nontherapeutic circumcision constituted illegal bodily harm on a child. Many saw this as an attack on German Jews and Muslims. Before the year ended, the government passed a law protecting the religious practice and parental consent to the procedure. As of late 2017, no country had banned the surgery (despite significant legislative efforts against female circumcision, commonly called female genital mutilation, and despite efforts by anti-circumcision activists to demonstrate similarities between the two practices).

Circumcision has also been performed as an aesthetic surgery. In Japan, for example, circumcisions are done for cosmetic reasons. And in the United States, many parents circumcise sons for aesthetic reasons (e.g., to look like the father or to be attractive to future sexual partners). Studies have suggested that heterosexual women in the United States prefer a circumcised look—perhaps because it is familiar— and there are some in
the gay community who prefer it as well. In fact, some gay dating sites ask for circumcision status—cut or uncut—suggesting that penile appearance is a relatively important criterion for sexual attraction.

Related to circumcision, though different in surgical character, are the practices of subincision and super-incision. Subincision usually involves cutting the penis from the base to the urethral opening, along the underside of the shaft, but may also refer to a slit in the foreskin on the underside. Superincision usually describes a slit in the foreskin, on the top of the organ, but may also describe a procedure similar to subincision—a slit along the length of the shaft, in this case at the top of the organ. Neither practice is as common as circumcision, but all are performed as rites of passage. Subincision has been noted in Australia, Papua New Guinea, and Kenya; super-incision is recorded in New Zealand and other parts of the Pacific (Kennedy 2014). The risks associated with these surgeries are high, especially damage to the urethra, and vary according to the length of the slit.

**The Penis in Gender Transition**

Much of the above discussion assumed a penis on a cisgender man. This is because the penis has been a central part of the embodiment of masculinity and because Western gender ideology assumes a direct relationship between biological sex and social gender roles. However, as societies’ understanding of gender becomes more complicated, it is clear that the penis does not make (or unmake) the man. Indeed, people of all gender and sexual identities can possess penises. This final section explores the role of the penis for men and women of transgender experience and for intersex people.

**The Penis and Transgender Bodies** Neither the bodies nor the identities of humans are easily captured in simple binary boxes: the hijra of South Asia and the two-spirit people and berdaches in Native American cultures are among the best-known nonbinary gender identities. Prior to colonial interference, many non-Western societies allowed for variation in gender identity and performance. In the West, the term *transgender* is generally used to refer to individuals whose identity does not match the sex category they were assigned at birth. Thus, some women have penises and some men do not. How one resolves the conflict between assigned category and actual identity—and whether one even sees a need to resolve the difference—varies individually and culturally.

Some trans women (sometimes transwomen or transwomens) who have not had/will not have surgery may choose to tuck or otherwise disguise the penis, whereas others simply accept the body with which they were born. Trans men (sometimes transmen or trans-mens) who do not wish to have (or cannot afford) surgery may purchase penis alternatives for a number of purposes. Packing—the use of an object to create the appearance of a penis in one’s pants—has been used by trans men, drag queens, lesbians, and genderqueers. Because most cismen stand to urinate, this may be desired by trans men. Thus, alternatives
may allow standing urination through the use of a cup that collects urine at the urethral
opening and directs it through a tube in the artificial penis. To approximate a penis during
sexual activity, the typical options are dildos and strap-ons (see above). Testosterone
therapy regularly causes enlargement of the clitoris, which also can harden during arousal,
and for some, this functions as a penis alternative.

Not all transgender people want or will have gender confirmation surgeries; bottom
surgery, or surgery on the genitalia, is particularly uncommon (see Stryker and Whittle
2006 and Stryker and Aizura 2013 for more on trans experiences). For those who do seek
surgical alteration of the body, the penis may present opportunities or challenges. Trans
men who seek the surgical creation of a penis may undergo a number of procedures,
including phalloplasty or metoidioplasty. The former involves the creation of an appendage
resembling a penis out of skin from other areas of the body (e.g., forearm, thigh, abdomen).
The aesthetics, functionality, and sensation are often not ideal, and complications can be
significant, which is why many men of transgender experience do not opt for this
procedure. The latter, metoidioplasty, is more common and involves severing ligaments
around the (hormonally enlarged) clitoris, freeing and elongating it. In this procedure, the
full sensation of the clitoris is retained, and fewer surgeries are needed.

For trans women seeking surgery, the existing penis is turned into a vagina and clitoris. The
penis is inverted to create the vaginal opening and the head of the penis is fashioned into a
clitoris. Because the nerves of the glans are retained, this clitoris is sensitive and can allow
for orgasm. The scrotal skin is used to create labia. Significantly, the presence of foreskin
can help this process (in part by ensuring more length in the penis itself), an argument that
some in the anti-circumcision movement use in their opposition to circumcising. In other
cases, part of the colon may be used to create a vaginal opening. Bottom surgery has not
always meant the creation of alternative genitalia. In the first half of the nineteenth century,
for example, some trans women wanted simpler alterations, such as castration
(Meyerowitz 2002). A castration procedure known as orchiectomy (or orchidectomy), the
removal of one or both testicles, is another option for trans women who seek to rely less on
external hormonal medication to suppress testosterone. The surgery was popular in
Thailand in the trans and “ladyboy” communities, as well as for those outside the country
who traveled there for surgery; in 2008 the Thai health minister banned cosmetic
castration for underage patients, and since then age and evaluation criteria have been
employed (Chokrungvaranont et al. 2014).

Pop culture references to these surgeries are becoming more numerous. The popular
American reality TV show I Am Jazz (2015–) explored these surgical options as the
transgender title character pursued a surgical transition. Dr. 90210 (2004–2008), another
reality show, followed a surgeon who specialized in gender confirmation. Although there is
a growing number of surgeons in the United States who specialize in transgender surgeries,
Thailand has become a popular destination for the surgeries, with patients from around the
world citing both good results and lower costs.

**The Penis and Intersex Bodies** Penises vary in shape and size. Some individuals are born with ambiguous genitalia that are not readily identifiable as either male or female (in a traditional medical sense); the ambiguity, here, is decided by a physician using a normative scale. Clitorises that are too long by this standard may be surgically reduced, regardless of risk to sensation or function, and penises that are deemed inadequate—for standing urination or vaginal penetration, the two markers of a masculine and thus phallic penis—may be surgically altered to create a “female” appearance (Preves 2002). Individuals whose bodies—in terms of either genitals or chromosomes—are not readily identifiable as male or female are diagnosed as intersex (having one of the “disorders of sex development,” as they are controversially termed in the medical literature). In past decades, intersex people were called *hermaphrodites*, but this term has fallen out of usage (much like the older *transsexual* instead of *transgender*) and is generally considered offensive unless a person self-identifies as such.

In past decades, intersex conditions were immediately treated with “normalizing” surgery, but the emergence of a politically active intersex social movement has led to a reconsideration of this practice. Nonconsensual alteration of intersex children's bodies was deemed a violation of the United Nations Convention against Torture (which went into effect in 1987) by the United Nations Committee against Torture. Most physicians now recognize the importance of leaving the decision to patients when they are older. Like transgender people, many intersex individuals decide against surgery, opting instead to embrace their bodies and determine their own gender identity.

Where other cultures have made space for individuals who fall outside the sex/gender binary, there has been little space for intersex people in the Western imaginary, though that space may be growing. In popular culture, Jeffrey Eugenides's novel *Middlesex* (2002) focuses on the topic; despite the book’s popularity, some in the intersex community have been critical because the narrative suggests that intersex conditions result from incest. In film, the Argentine director Lucía Puenzo’s *XXY* (2007) and the American director Lisset Barcellos's *Both* (2005) are notable and were well received by the intersex community.

**SEE ALSO** *Clitoris; Eunuchs; Hijras; Intersex Identities; Orgasm and Orgasmology; Two-Spirit*

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People Like Us (PLU)

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An early LGB organization in Singapore, established in 1993.

PLU stands for “People Like Us”; it is an organization, a euphemism, and a world-making project. In its short twenty-plus-year history, it has established an unprecedented mode of creative and political resistance. Its ambitious collective vision has, however, caused many of its activists to face personal and political censure, dismissal, and irrational rejection from the civil service. Yet, at the same time, the neologism has expanded and been appropriated beyond its original meaning. The ambiguity, and correspondingly the flexibility, of the phrase lies in the double meaning of the word *like*. It can refer to a measure of similitude between “people” and “us” or an expression of collective attraction. The phrase also encompasses the binary implications of its words: people versus individual, and us versus them. The term has additionally been used and abused by apologists and denialists alike ever since the founding and christening of the social group by Joseph Lo and others in Singapore in 1993. This entry elaborates on the political structures that buttressed the multifaceted history of PLU in Singapore and beyond.

PLU was initially conceived as an informal gathering of friends who, through word of mouth, came together in one another’s houses in the early 1990s. Their intention was to raise awareness and increase understanding of gay and lesbian issues. Some of the topics that concerned them included health care, social politics, and legal matters. Within two years, they found a centralized location at the Substation, an arts venue, and expanded their operations through weekly forums. These attracted a turnout of around 50 to 100 people (Chua 2014). Emboldened by the popularity of its activities, the organization attempted to register as a company in 1995 and as a society in 1996 and 2004, but the applications were all rejected by the state authorities. With the rise of new “civil societies,” PLU with the sponsorship of the gay web portal Fridae established the annual Singapore Pride Season, otherwise known as IndigNation, in 2005 (Koh and Soon 2012).

As is the case with most activist organizing, social politics among the proponents, the general public, and the state were inevitable. Throughout PLU’s twenty-odd years of existence, the political mobilization of PLU and other grassroots offshoots—such as the queer women’s group Sayoni and the counseling business entity Oogachaga— can be classified into three different types of sociopolitical structures: macropolitics, mesopolitics,
and micropolitics. PLU has engaged publicly in a form of macropolitics in its attempts to
officially register with the Registrar of Companies and the Registrar of Societies, which
were rejected by the authorities as “unlawful ... prejudicial to public peace, welfare or good
order” (Lo 2003, 134). The organization’s follow-up actions in the form of appeal letters to
the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Prime Minister’s Office were also apparatuses on this
structural level of political activism.

On the micro level, ideological and interpersonal differences in opinion have remained
commonplace. Two cases in point are the agenda setting and composition of the
organization. Some members of the group preferred to focus their time and effort on
community building, whereas others wanted to make government engagement the group’s
priority. The few women in the group also felt that lesbian issues had been marginalized
from the forum and related activities, resulting in the splintering of the initial group. These
and many other internal quibbles became part and parcel of the micropolitics that old and
new members of PLU had to grapple with on a regular basis. Other than gender
representation, the demographic categories of class, language, and race were very much
neglected in the PLU’s constitution. Most of the founding members were cisgender (a
person whose self-identity conforms to the sex assigned at birth), upper/middle class,
anglophone speakers of Chinese descent. As a result, the activities that they organized
markedly left out the concerns of gays, lesbians, and transgenders from other demographic
profiles.

A notable exception is the programming for the annual pride festival, IndigNation. Spread
across the month of August, the array of events ranges from literary, filmic, and visual arts
events to community forums on cultural, health, legal, and social matters. The public nature
of many of the meetings, featuring ethnic minorities, trans men, and gays who are hearing
impaired, engendered the mesopolitics of LGBT activism. These activities, which require
government permits, encompass mesopolitical tactics of invention and creation. The
intermingling of procedures and people with different identities thus mediates between the
micro and macro orders of political actions and affords both community building and state
engagement at the same time.

More importantly, an indirect consequence of PLU’s failure to achieve state recognition is
its timely provision of an alternative identity of empowerment in the early 1990s. PLU, as
opposed to the locally derogatory terms gay and homosexual, became a vernacular
euphemism used to identify people who are attracted to others of the same gender
(Zubillaga-Pow 2012). Eventually, certain entities—such as the now-defunct queer youth
group PLUME (People Like You and Me) and the travel guide PLU Travel Orbit (PLUTO)—
adopted the label for their own group names and associate their respective members and
clientele with it (PLUGuide). Since the late 1990s, the appellation has also garnered
popularity in neighboring Malaysia and Thailand, generating a transnational imagined
community through print and the internet (Haritaworn 2012; AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi
Andolan 1999). With the recent advent of academic queer theory and international human rights advocacy, LGBT and SOGIE (sexual orientation and gender identity and expression) are gradually becoming local substitutes for PLU in everyday parlance. After slightly over two decades of world making, PLU has today been relegated to a level of moribund usage.

SEE ALSO Asia Pacific Transgender Network; MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia; Transgender Organizations in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

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Performance Artists in Latin America

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An overview of important queer performers, with a particular focus on those in Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Peru, Puerto Rico, and Mexico.

Performance is a body-and-action art form usually (but not exclusively) presented as solo interventions in public spaces and art galleries. Queer artists around the world have found performance art to be an ideal medium for the creation of memorable and provocative statements that affirm their identities and challenge homophobia and heteronormativity. While the pioneers of this art form as it is known today came primarily from Europe and the United States (Marina Abramović from Yugoslavia, Joseph Beuys from Germany, Carolee Schneemann and Chris Burden from the United States, to cite only a few), it is important to acknowledge the specific aesthetic and political genealogies of performance art stemming from countries of Asia and Latin America.

This article focuses on LGBTQ artists from Latin America and the Caribbean who not only resist entrenched patriarchal and homophobic social systems but also, as in the case of Brazil, Chile, and Argentina, confronted the right-wing military dictatorships of the 1970s and 1980s. The current generation of LGBTQ performance artists in Latin America grapples with such issues as the ongoing AIDS epidemic, neoliberal globalization, violence and discrimination against LGBTQ people, transgender rights, and the affirmation of a politicized “postporn” sexuality. The work of these artists appropriates international queer politics from a decolonial *cuir* (that is, a Latin American iteration of *queer*) position mindful of how gender, class, and ethnicity intersect. They perform their specific identities grounded in local politics and cultural practice, using terms such as *joto* (faggot), *loca* (crazy woman), and *muxe* (a Zapotec term used by female-identified men in some indigenous communities from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca, Mexico).

Context

The emergence of conceptual art in Latin America coincided with the political upheaval brought about by the 1959 Cuban Revolution and the ensuing coups d’état in many South American countries (Brazil in 1964, Chile in 1973, and Argentina in 1976, to name a few). In this Cold War scenario of right-wing forces versus left-wing student groups and rural guerrillas, violence took the form of systematic arrests, torture, and the physical
disappearance of thousands of people, especially in the aforementioned countries, but also in Mexico, where a massacre of students and local residents was perpetrated by military forces on 2 October 1968 in a residential complex in Mexico City just days before the opening of the Olympic Games in the city.

During the 1960s and 1970s, several Latin American playwrights and directors began to “come out of the closet.” In Brazil, Nelson Rodrigues (1912–1980) published his groundbreaking play *O beijo no asfalto* (The kiss on the asphalt) in 1960, dealing with the issue of homophobia (a first in Latin American theater), while in Paris, the legendary Copi (1939–1987), born and raised in Argentina, became known for his radically queer plays *Eva Perón* (1969) and *El homosexual, o la dificultad de expresarse* (1971; The homosexual, or the difficulty of expressing oneself). Although Copi’s work was originally published in French, it has been widely translated and performed throughout Latin America. In Mexico, lesbian director Nancy Cárdenas’s 1973 adaptation of Mart Crowley’s *The Boys in the Band* (1968) opened to much controversy in a mainstream theater in Mexico City. Years later, playwright José Antonio Alcaraz and actor-director Tito Vasconcelos were responsible for spearheading a Mexican gay theater movement with the 1980 production of *Y sin embargo se mueven* (And yet they move).

The political confidence and visibility gained by gay and lesbian activists after the New York Stonewall riots of 1969 influenced the early LGBT movement in Latin America and the Caribbean, which initially adopted the “sexual liberation” discourse, affirming visibility and demanding an end to homophobic persecution. The fight against violence and discrimination toward trans-identified people became visible much later, toward the beginning of the present century. The first publicly constituted homosexual group in South America, known as Nuestro Mundo (Our World), appeared in Argentina in 1967, with a worker- and union-based membership. Pioneering feminist and gay activists were keen on establishing solidarity with the larger progressive movement. For example, a manifesto published in 1975 by Mexican activists and writers Luis González de Alba, Carlos Monsiváis, and Juan Jacobo Hernández proclaimed that “homosexual liberation is another form of social liberation” (De la Garza 2017).

Performance artists in Latin America derive material from local cultural traditions, such as carnivals and *carpa* theater (Mexican variety shows of the early twentieth century, full of sexual puns and political parodies). For example, Hélio Oiticica (1937–1980), a key Brazilian artist of the tropicalist movement of the 1960s, played with gender ambiguity and carnivalesque cross-dressing, wearing his *parangolés* (sculptural costumes) as he danced in public spaces to the rhythm of samba or abstract music. In Mexico, a thriving political cabaret scene emerged in the 1980s, thanks mainly to the work of Jesusa Rodríguez and Tito Vasconcelos, with shows that celebrated lesbian and gay identities while using drag to parody everyone, from the Mexican president to the pope. The crossover success of these performances owed much to the political urgency that recalled classic *carpa* numbers.
Rodríguez and Vasconcelos have also been prominent activists in Mexico’s LGBTQ movement, often making performative interventions in the local pride parades. The following sections take a closer look at some of the key groups and artists from Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Peru, Puerto Rico, and Mexico.

Performance Artists in Brazil

Queer performance art in Brazil includes Dzi Croquettes, a trailblazing group that emerged in Rio de Janeiro during the early 1970s. Dzi Croquettes became famous for the use of radical cabaret and burlesque shows full of defiant drag numbers, a remarkable achievement considering this was the height of Brazil’s violently repressive military dictatorship (1964–1985). The all-male group’s name pays homage to the Crokettes, a San Francisco–based countercultural theater ensemble of the 1960s. The Brazilian group had a language of its own derived from the use of cross-dressing and sensuality in the Rio Carnival, as well as the psychedelic motifs and musical innovations of the 1960s tropicalist movement.

Dzi Croquettes’ first show, *Gente computada igual a você* (1972; Computed people just like you), combined monologues with dance numbers in drag. Performed initially in underground clubs in Rio, the show was later taken to venues in the city of São Paulo. This and other gleefully raucous performances defied conservative morality, making the group an easy target for censorship—which, of course, only increased the public’s interest. The performances were full of irony and double-entendres, and their extravagant frocks, made of recycled clothes from all walks of life, mixed colorful skirts with football stockings and other garments. The group lived as a queer family, less concerned with “gay power” issues—which they deemed as too commercial—than with the need to include all sexualities and races (*Aliaga and Cortés 2014*).

Dzi Croquettes gained international fame when they performed in Paris in 1973 and 1974, earning the admiration of stars like American entertainer Liza Minnelli. The thirteen-member group (which included choreographer Lennie Dale, writer Wagner Ribeiro de Souza, and performer Ciro Barcelos) was at one point joined by women performers but ultimately disbanded in 1976. The award-winning documentary *Dzi Croquettes* (2009; directed by Raphael Alvarez and Tatiana Issa) has helped keep the legacy of this group alive for contemporary audiences.

After the turn of the millennium, a new generation of LGBTQ artists emerged in Brazil, working with trans and postporn issues. Pêdra Costa is a trans artist and anthropologist based in Vienna, Austria, as of 2018, whose work articulates a critique of neocolonialism and an affirmation of the queer immigrant body. The group Coletivo Coiote (Coyote Collective) became known in 2012 for their aggressive interventions in the streets of Rio de Janeiro, vowing to undertake “terrorism with the asshole” ("*terrorismo com o cu*") to
destabilize compulsive heteronormativity (Vergara 2015, 27). Miro Spinelli, based in Rio de Janeiro, gained attention with the 2015–2017 project *Gordura trans* (Trans fatness), where h/she explores the politics of subjectivation and the abject display of the queer/trans fat body.

**Performance Artists of Chile and Argentina**

Chile and Argentina are two Latin American countries from the so-called Southern Cone that suffered US-backed military coups, followed in the first case by the dictatorship of General Augusto Pinochet (r. 1973–1990), and in the second by a highly repressive military junta (1976–1983). This section focuses mainly on Chile, where, during the dictatorship, conceptual artists managed to speak truth to power by means of codified performances and unannounced public interventions. One of the first artists to do so was Carlos Leppe (1952–2015), whose *Happening de las gallinas* (1974; *Happening of the Hens*) “challenged traditional concepts and taboos associated with the body, sexuality, and gender in Chile” (Neustadt 2008, 163). Leppe went on to produce work with photography and video, displaying his body in poses that suggested torture and at the same time a queer sexuality under siege by the military regime. In 1975 he created an installation in a gallery of the capital city of Santiago that was made of a wooden frame with three hangers, each one with a large-format photograph of the artist suspended upside down. Two images showed him dressed in a gown that suggested a female opera singer. The images were unsettling, as the artist’s body wore the prostheses of female breasts breaking through the gown’s fabric. The middle image was of the artist’s naked torso wearing surgical gauzes over his breasts and genitals.

Openly gay artists Pedro Lemebel and Francisco Casas worked together from 1988 until 1997 under the name *Las Yeguas del Apocalipsis* (The Mares of the Apocalypse), orchestrating provocative performances such as *La conquista de América* (1989; The conquest of America), staged on Columbus Day (12 October) at the central patio of the Chilean Commission of Human Rights. In that piece, Lemebel and Casas danced together, barefoot and shirtless, wearing only black trousers and their hands holding white scarves, over a map of South America covered with shards of broken Coca-Cola bottles. They were dancing *La Cueca Sola*, a national dance that was often performed in plazas by the mothers and wives of young activists that had been “disappeared” by the regime. With this deceptively simple yet powerful performance, Lemebel and Casas denounced the wounding of bodies of its citizens (suggested by the broken Coke bottles covering the map) by imperialist intervention in South America and the violence exerted by the Pinochet dictatorship on sexual diversity. *Las Yeguas* moved on to create their most emblematic work, *Las dos Fridas* (1989–1990; The two Fridas), a photo performance and installation piece where they replicated the famous self-portrait by Mexican artist Frida Kahlo (1907–1954), in which she is depicted as two women holding hands and with their hearts
exposed. Lemebel and Casas cross-dressed as Frida— their torsos again exposed—in an image that suggests queer suffering and solidarity. The photo-performance was printed as a postcard and circulated widely among LGBTQ groups across Latin America and beyond.

More recently, Chilean activist and performer Víctor Hugo Robles (1969–) gained international attention through his persona El Che de los Gays (The Che Guevara of the Gays), created in 1997. By queering the iconic symbol of the Cuban Revolution, Robles's public performances seek to raise awareness of homophobic public policies and the ongoing AIDS epidemic, which is especially deadly for poor and working-class gay youth. The thirty-two-minute documentary El Che de los Gays, directed by Arturo Álvarez in 2005, chronicles Robles’s artivist (artist-activist) work. In 2015 Robles published in Chile his memoirs, titled El diario del Che de los Gays (The Che of the Gays' diary).

A younger generation of radical artivists in Chile is represented by the Colectivo Universitario de Disidencia Sexual (CUDS; University Collective of Sexual Dissidence), founded in 2002. CUDS members define themselves as “postfeminist sexual dissidents who organize bodies to create actions of sexual terrorism in authoritarian spaces” (quoted in Aliaga 2014, 84; translation by Antonio Prieto-Stambaugh), in reference to the pornoterrorismo or “pornoterrorist” movement. The collective’s founder, Felipe Rivas San Martín (1982–), performed a controversial piece titled Ideología (2011; Ideology), in which he walked around an installation that displayed archival material on Chile’s history. At one point, he stopped before a picture portrait of Salvador Allende (1908–1973), the socialist president deposed during the 1973 military coup. To the dismay of the audience, Rivas masturbated and ejaculated over the picture of this iconic hero of the Latin American Left. Critic Juan Vicente Aliaga read this gesture as “an exercise that demystifies the Father
In Argentina, there was, as mentioned above, a tradition of gay theater dating back to the 1960s. Performance art has thrived since then, with two particularly noteworthy trans performance artists active today. Susy Shock (1968–) is a Buenos Aires–based singer, activist, writer, poet, and fanzine artist known for her performance-manifesto “Yo reivindico mi derecho a ser monstruo” (2011; I affirm my right to be a monster), calling for a depathologizing of trans identity. Her activism contributed to the passing of a historic 2012 gender-identity law in Argentina allowing individuals to alter their gender on official documents without having first to undergo surgery or receive an official diagnosis. In a similar vein, Naty Menstrual (1975–) is a trans woman who began cross-dressing during the 1990s in underground venues of Buenos Aires, where her spoken-word performances caught the eye of editors who offered to publish her poems. Her work draws inspiration from the aforementioned Copi and Pedro Lemebel, as well as Manuel Puig, Charles Bukowski, and Truman Capote.

**Performance Artists of Peru**

Peru has a rich cultural heritage, being the home of the ancient Mochica, Nasca, and Inca indigenous civilizations, as well as present-day Quechua and Aymaras. The country was besieged by internal conflict when the Maoist-inspired Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path) guerrillas waged war on the government from 1980 to 1992. Notable theater and performance groups have emerged in this context, such as Yuyachkani, founded in 1971 and still active today.

The Chaclacayo group (1983–1990), formed by Helmut Psotta, Sergio Zevallos, and Raúl Avellaneda, created performances in public spaces such as city streets and beaches that responded to the surrounding political violence while challenging heteronormative sexuality. Zevallos’s *Rosa Cordis* (1986) was a performance tableau mixing religious and queer imagery, in which he crossdressed as an eroticized Saint Rose of Lima (1586–1617), the patron saint of the capital city of Lima. The Chaclacayo group “aimed to define a beauty made up of obscenities and link it to a magnificent and miserable dramatic mise-en-scène that resembled an opera of abjection” (Lerner Rizo-Patrón and Villacorta Chávez 2008, 152; translation by Antonio Prieto-Stambaugh).

Artist Giuseppe Campuzano (1969–2013) created the Museo Travesti del Perú (*Peru’s Transvestite Museum*), an ambitious performance and installation project that aimed at queering his country’s official history. Under the provocative slogan “toda peruanidad es un travestismo” (all Peruvianness is transvestism), the traveling exhibit made a critical revision of archive materials and objects from the pre-Columbian, colonial, and contemporary periods, demonstrating an underlying queer aesthetic sensibility in images...
ranging from androgynous Catholic saints to cross-dressing in indigenous dance traditions. The Museo Travesti del Perú directly challenged official history as a heteronormative and colonialist construct. Campuzano published a richly illustrated book to accompany the exhibit in 2008. Additional information in English, along with images and a video clip are available online at the Hemispheric Institute of Performance and Politics website (http://hemisphericinstitute.org/hemi/en/campuzano-presentation).

Performance Artists of Puerto Rico

The island of Puerto Rico has a uniquely complex geopolitical situation, as its commonwealth status makes it a de facto Latin American colony of the United States. Queer Puerto Rican performance artists usually move back and forth between the island and the mainland United States, which makes them translocal artists, but also, as scholar Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes (2011) argues, translocas, a term that suggests the “transgeneric transitoriness” of artists with a queer diasporic subjectivity. Transloca playfully uses the Spanish word loca (literally “crazy woman,” but also “effeminate”), which gay people in Latin America embrace as an affirmation of defiant femininity.

Freddie Mercado (1967–) uses flamboyant drag alluding to Puerto Rican pop culture and religiosity. Mercado avails himself of his training in theater and visual arts to create bizarre personas with elaborate makeup and spectacular self-made dresses, sartorial installations that often include papier-mâché dolls and other objects. Thus transformed, the artist can be seen strutting down the streets of the capital city of San Juan or appearing in gallery exhibits and theatrical performances. Mercado’s work is at the same time grotesque, humorous, and dreamlike, using surreal montage techniques that challenge not only gender normativity but also mainstream notions of race, nationality, and Caribbean identity (La Fountain-Stokes 2009).

Pepe Álvarez (1980–) belongs to a more recent generation of queer Puerto Rican artists. His work mixes dance, multimedia, and conceptual performance addressing the relationship of body, space, and identity. Performances such as Parentela (2005; Family) and A dos aguas (2013; Slanted rooftop) use a small wooden house as a leitmotif, suggesting the quest for a safe space that requires the collaboration of a family or community to be built. The latter performance was developed with several young artists who worked with people from their working-class neighborhoods in order to develop a participatory “community map” that involved the idea of home building as a way of collective empowerment.

Performance Artists of Mexico

Outside the thriving political cabaret scene mentioned above, Mexican performance artists have only recently begun to openly address LGBTQ issues. One of the first to do so was
Katia Tirado (1965–) with *Exhivilización: Las perras en celo* (*1995; Ex-civilization: Bitches in heat*), a powerful performance that was staged as a two-woman wrestling match in a ring surrounded with four sculptures of erect penises. Tirado and her co-performer wore Mexican wrestler masks, facing away from each other, their bodies linked by elastic ropes and a rubber hose connecting their vaginas. During the match, they struggled to reach the tips of the penis sculptures to make them “ejaculate” with fireworks. As they did so, the performers appeared to both fight and caress each other, in a paradoxical dance of phallocentric pain and homoerotic pleasure (*Prieto-Stambaugh 2003*). More recently, Tirado teamed up with Austrian visual artists Gin Müller and Jan Machacek to create *Melodrom: The Making of a Rebellious Telenovela* (*2014*), a multimedia performance featuring Tirado cross-dressed as She Guevara, a trans version of Che Guevara.

Lukas Avendaño (1977–) has emerged as one of the most noteworthy performance artists in Mexico for work that addresses his *muxe* identity. *Muxe* is the local term for male homosexuals in the indigenous Zapotec community of Juchitán, Oaxaca, known for social acceptance. In his piece *Réquiem para un alcaraván* (*2012; Requiem for a stone-curlew bird*), Avendaño queers Mexican nationalist representations of Zapotec women (whose traditional dress was made famous by Frida Kahlo), while at the same time embodying the...
mixed pleasure and pain of being identified as *muxe*. His cross-dressing performance interweaves ritual dances with autobiographical passages, and includes moments that involve audience members, as when a traditional *muxe* wedding is staged between Avendaño and a male spectator, at a time when same-sex marriage was being hotly debated in Mexico ([Prieto-Stambaugh 2014](#)).

A younger artist who has caught the attention of the local LGBTQ community is Felipe Osornio (also known as Lechedevirgen Trimegisto). Born in the city of Querétaro in 1991, Osornio has collaborated with Spanish *pornoterrorismo* artist Diana Torres and is known for a series of performances and photo montages based on his manifesto “Pensamiento puñal” ([2013](#); “Fag way of thinking”). In this text, Osornio affirms his identity as a *puñal* (a derogatory term in Mexico equivalent to “faggot”) while also creating a radical epistemology of subaltern queerness where marginalized sexuality, class, and ethnicity converge to powerful effect: “I'm a bronze *puñal*, an old-fashioned cyborg, my gadgets are needles and blades, an ethno-cyber-punk covered with barbed wire, a *cholo* dream-catcher. I'm brown, my skin burnished like an Apocalyptic Jesus Christ” ([Osornio 2013](#); translation by Antonio Prieto-Stambaugh).

In 2014 Avendaño and Osornio cocreated *Amarranavajas* (Blade tier), performed in a community-funded student center in downtown Mexico City, in which they aimed to articulate “a decolonial-criu semantics” ([Prieto-Stambaugh 2016, 41](#)). Avendaño appeared dressed as an extravagant transdominatrix Aztec warrior, naked except for his shiny red high-heeled boots and scarlet loincloth. He performed a defiant choreography surrounded by the audience, as he recited passages of the “Pensamiento puñal” manifesto. Osornio wore a red long-sleeved shirt and red leather pants with cowboy boots depicting painted images of “souls of the Purgatory.” His “Mexican Macho” appearance contrasted with actions that suggested a body vulnerable to pain and disease, using religious imagery in combination with medical instruments. As the performance progressed, the artist's pain was transformed into a call for community empowerment and resistance to all forms of discrimination.

Another young artist who queers Mexican stereotypes of gender is Lia García (1989–), a transgender woman whose work plays with images of the *quinceañera* (the coming of age celebration for Mexican girls turning fifteen) and the bride to address social perceptions of women’s rituals in Mexico. In her performance *Voz en construcción* ([2015; Voice under construction](#)), she appears as an archetypal mermaid who “seduces” the audience with her masculine voice as a way of exploring the social anxiety provoked by a transgender body in the public sphere.

**Conclusion**

LGBTQ performance artists in Latin America are gaining increased global recognition for
their way of challenging dominant stereotypes of gender, sexuality, religiosity, nationality, ethnicity, and class. Although this entry has focused mainly on Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Peru, Puerto Rico, and Mexico, there are other countries with important artistic scenes, such as Colombia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Costa Rica, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic. However, in these countries there is a relative scarcity of published information about queer performers, who often work in underground venues or appear in unannounced urban interventions. It is hoped that new research will fill in this void.

The artists featured in this entry often also work as activists, challenging hetero- and homonormative ideologies, celebrating queer/cuir bodies and erotic desires, and working on alternative community building. Some, like “The Che Guevara of the Gays,” promote public policies to make available retroviral medicine for lower-class youth exposed to HIV. After the turn of the millennium, new issues came to the forefront, such as same-sex marriage and transgender rights. Latin American performance artists embody a decolonial politics by affirming local identities and grassroots movements, demonstrating that English terms such as *gay* or *queer* need not erase the diversity of gender subject positions worldwide.

**SEE ALSO** *Cabaret Theater in Latin America and the Caribbean; Hemispheric Institute Digital Video Library; Madame Satã (1900–1976); Museo Travesti del Perú; Pornoterrorismo and Post-Porn; Vargas, Chavela (1919–2012)*

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Phone Apps

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The cultural impact of dating apps aimed at LGBTQ individuals.

The web-based online dating platforms Gay.com, Gaydar, and PlanetRomeo paved the way for phone apps aimed at LGBTQ communities. When the first geosocial smartphone app, Grindr, was released in 2009 it quickly became an important tool for gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM) to engage in different forms of sociability, including dating, friendship, and networking (Goedel and Duncan 2015; McGlotten 2013; Woo 2013). However, it is primarily known as a hookup app for casual sex. A then-unique affordance of this dating app was geolocation, which allowed users to identify one another via proximity.

Other apps quickly followed, including Scruff, Jack’d, Hornet, and Surge, as well as ones aimed at people who identified as lesbians, bisexuals, or otherwise same-sex–loving women, such as Brenda, Zoe, and Daatch, later renamed Her. There are far fewer dedicated apps for women, and none is as successful as those for male-identified MSM and heterosexuals. Several contributing factors play a role in this phenomenon, including assumptions about lesbian sexuality, particularly that they prefer models of longterm sociability rather than casual hookups (Murray and Ankerson 2016). The “problem” of lesbian sexuality has made it difficult for designers and developers, who initially modeled lesbian-focused apps on those for gay men, and who struggled to find ways to capitalize on lesbian romantic and sexual practices (Murray and Ankerson 2016).

Many established web-based dating/hookup platforms for men, such as Manhunt, PlanetRomeo, and Adam4Adam, to name only a few, also released their own smartphone applications. New apps targeting specific demographics continue to be released, such as Grizzly (for bears, or burly, hairy men who display markings of traditional masculinity) and Daddyhunt (for those interested in intergenerational intimacies). Grindr served as a model for these apps, as well as for apps such as Tinder, which initially targeted heterosexual communities and which is often mistakenly identified as the geosocial dating app that paved the way for others.
Gay Dating Apps. Phone apps have become an important tool for LGBTQ persons to meet those who share their orientation, particularly as dating apps allow for filtering according to one’s unique sexual subculture, such as bear, butch, femme, geek, leather, transgender, twink, and poz.

Although mobile dating apps have been adopted globally, cultural contexts shape their popularity, as well as the particular ways in which they are used. In Europe, for instance, while Grindr is used widely, many also use PlanetRomeo, which has been a favored platform in Germany and many European countries since 2002. Hinge has been widely adopted by the gay community in Sydney, Australia. In New York City, Jack’d is primarily associated with men of color. Hornet, like Jack’d, while popular in the United States, is not widely used elsewhere. Blued, now in global partnership with Hornet, is considered the largest gay social media app in the world; it originated in China and is now popular in many other Asian countries. Among lesbian dating applications, Butterfly is popular in Hong Kong (Choy 2017; Tang 2017) and 9 Monsters in Japan (Brännmark 2017). In Brazil, Disponível (available), now renamed Crush, is one of the most widely used apps in Latin America for men seeking sex with men. These differing contexts reflect different modes of engagement and interaction, as well. There are a number of ways social norms shape how these apps are used. Across North America, Grindr is widely seen as tawdrier than apps such as Tinder, which requires users to authenticate their identities by syncing their accounts with Facebook. In Hong Kong, lesbian users of Butterfly must negotiate conservative familial pressures with their desires for romantic sociability, although this is also true not only for lesbians who do not use the app, but non-lesbians across Asian contexts (Tang 2017). In India, as elsewhere, the accessibility of smartphones has created class-based hierarchies; there, using a smartphone app such as Grindr can be a way for middle-class professionals to keep “the riff-raff” away (Dasgupta 2017, 45). Additionally, across contexts, language operates as a powerful sorting tool, as many of the most popular apps are designed for English speakers.
Frequently, LGBTQ people also use other social media dating applications not specifically geared toward them. Tinder, OkCupid, and Match.com are all popular dating platforms, with their own smartphone apps, that LGBTQ people commonly use. These apps are especially important for LGBTQ women, for whom fewer dedicated apps exist. Additionally, Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Snapchat, Twitter, and WhatsApp also function as supplements to gay smartphone apps. These platforms are used to verify others' identities and engage in forms of impression management (Blackwell, Birnholtz, and Abbott 2015), including those that not only display a broader range of individual characteristics but also situate them within larger social contexts. As supplements, they often develop their own niche sexual subcultures tied to but extending beyond the use of mobile applications (Wignall 2017). Smartphone apps are, therefore, part of broader and increasingly complex media ecologies and are frequently used in conjunction with other networked media (Mowlabocus 2010).

Problems with Apps

Often, as is the case with many new media technologies, hookup apps inspire ambivalent feelings in users. On the one hand, they offer possibilities for sex, dating, friendship, and even professional networking. On the other hand, these apps can be a source of anxiety and frustration. Profile creation is a challenging process that requires users to present the best version of themselves in order to attract partners, and the process must be tailored to the particular applications (McGlotten 2013). Dissembling and other types of unreliable behavior are prevalent and are a source of anger. For example, “catfishing” (deceitful behavior designed to obtain users’ photos or otherwise trick them) is widespread. “Ghosting” is also common, though not exclusive to LGBTQ gay social dating apps. It refers to practices that include not replying to messages and unexpectedly and inexplicably blocking users or otherwise disappearing from what had been ongoing social interactions. Spambots are another source of irritation; users respond to messages only to discover they are not speaking to an actual person but to an automated agent whose purpose is to solicit users for financial information, either for nefarious purposes or, more banally, to pay for services such as pornographic websites or vitamin supplements (Cockayne et al. 2017). Finally, although the terms of service explicitly forbid advertising for paid services such as those offered explicitly by massage therapists or implicitly by those seeking “generous” partners, a gray economy of sex work persists, although unlike catfishing, ghosting, or bots, these practices are not troublesome to all users; indeed, for many, these services are one of the affordances of smartphone apps.

While the geosocial nature of apps allows users to know their relative distance from one another, this capacity also presents unique problems. For example, many men and women do not want to be located, for a variety of reasons including an unwillingness to make their sexual behaviors and identities public and, especially, locatable. Some users are concerned
that employers might discover them online, others that their partners might discover their infidelities. The stakes are higher for men in countries where homosexuality is especially stigmatized or illegal. Since its release, a number of crimes from robbery to murder have been tied to Grindr and other mobile social networking applications around the world, including in the Middle East, Russia, and Chechnya. Grindr and other applications responded to concerns about security flaws that allowed the locations of users to be discovered even when the location feature had been disabled (Mowlabocus 2014), as in 2018 when Grindr released a patch that ended the ability of users and third parties to access user data. As of 2018, however, many security flaws have persisted. New controversies have emerged as well: in 2018 it was revealed that Grindr had shared the HIV status of its users with other companies (Ghorayshi and Ray 2018).

Finally, a particularly difficult challenge members of marginalized and stigmatized groups face is the pervasiveness of discrimination (McGlotten 2013; Woo 2013). Racism, ageism, fat phobia, and effeminophobia are so widespread that phrases such as “no fats, no femmes” (Han 2008) and “no spice, no rice” (meaning no Latinos, no Asians) have saturated gay vernaculars and are frequent topics of conversation both on- and offline. Likewise, the social pressures on LGBTQ people, especially gay men, to conform to certain bodily norms have been termed “body fascism” (Pronger 2002; Roth 2014). Discriminatory attitudes are widespread but so, too, is the backlash against them. Many users’ profiles contain critiques of such exclusionary language and practices and also expressions that signal their openness to a variety of ethnicities, races, and ages, as well as to trans, nonbinary, and genderqueer identities. Since 2017, Grindr has expanded the ways in which users may describe themselves beyond specifying age, weight, and sexual preferences. Now one may also identify with a particular gay “tribe”—bear, butch, femme, geek, leather, transgender, twink, poz, and so on—and specify a gender identity (such as cis man or trans man) and preferred gender pronouns. Sero-sorting is another way users identify and signal preferences for sexual partners and sexual practices (Race 2001). One’s HIV status can either expand or limit erotic opportunities. The efficacy of HIV treatments and the introduction of the HIV preventive preexposure prophylaxis (PrEP), however, have profoundly affected MSMs’ sexual practices, so even though discrimination against HIV-positive individuals persists, the significance of HIV status has been somewhat diminished. Apps now offer the option to include descriptors such as “Negative, on PrEP” (Grindr) and “Treatment as Prevention” (Scruff). And although apps do not provide categories to select one’s preferences regarding drug use, often dubbed “chemsex,” users can express a desire for “party and play” or “PNP.” HIV status—whether one is negative or positive—PrEP, and chemsex each shape contemporary sexual practices, affording users opportunities to engage in a variety of sexual intimacies and collectivities even as these continue to be disparaged in the popular gay press and in medical discourse (Dean 2009; Hakim 2018; Race 2018).
Cultural Significance

The cultural significance of smartphone apps is situated within longer histories of gay male sociability, especially in bar cultures, bathhouses, bookstores, and cruising (Chauncey 1994; Delany 1999). Given the historical barriers to access to the public sphere, much less to cultures of public sex, women have had fewer opportunities to engage in these particular practices, although they have developed their own cruising cultures (Bullock 2004) and have cultivated other opportunities for romantic and erotic contact, including, like gay men, at bars and private parties (Kennedy and Davis 1993). These opportunities have expanded since the women's and gay liberation movements; persons designated female at birth are active on social dating/hookup applications, seek out casual sex as well as romance, and have developed an array of kink scenes. Nevertheless, the practices enabled by smartphone apps are especially tied to gay male sexual histories especially insofar as the apps facilitate not only casual but anonymous sex. Anonymity, in particular, is a thread that weaves through gay sexual histories; modern urban spaces allow men to be anonymous and seek out "no strings attached" sexual encounters (Higgs 1999). Many users of hookup apps likewise choose to be anonymous, by not including photos or any other identifying information about themselves or by signaling a preference for "discreet" sexual experiences. One finds in the grids of gay dating apps not only the now paradigmatic headless torso but also many blank profiles without photos or any other identifying information. Smartphone apps are also tied to these histories through often cruel practices of social ranking—antecedents to the discriminatory attitudes described above (Bersani 1987). Importantly, apps have also created contexts for new identifications, possibilities for connection, and sexual practice; attendant to these are the emergence of new modes for communication, including the use of specific emojis that sidestep and condense traditional linguistic markers. Many users' profiles include emojis that convey users' desired sexual practices. For example, in the language of emojis, eggplants and bananas are a shorthand for penises, rain for semen, and peaches and cakes for buttocks; when used in combination, such as eggplant, peach, and rain, they signal the desire for, in this case, anal sex.

Particularly for MSM who do not necessarily identify as “gay,” apps that facilitate sex provide entrée, for those so inclined, into broader gay social worlds. Although there is no comparable history of cruising among lesbian and bisexual women, sex plays a similarly important role in introducing women into LGBTQ communities; lesbians do cruise, too (Bullock 2004). “Community,” of course, is always partial and incomplete insofar as the boundaries of communities are determined as much by exclusion as inclusion. Moreover, community as a concept and set of experiences is always undergoing transformation. Smartphone apps expand opportunities to cultivate a shared sense of belonging across virtual and real-life contexts, even as they have changed what it means for LGBTQ people to be-in-common.
Future of Phone Apps

Since 2015, some hookup apps have sought to remake themselves as lifestyle brands that, typically through various forms of corporate partnerships, extend their reach into media, fashion, and other domains. Some also produce their own original content. These rebranding efforts include emphasizing the role apps can play in creating a sense of community. In-app notifications inform users about local social networking opportunities and advertise for products, parties, and other events, especially in the free versions of the apps. In response to research that showed that apps have increased transmission of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among MSM (Landovitz et al. 2013), app developers have engaged in public health outreach efforts, informing members about increased local risks of STIs or about where they can access free STI testing and the HIV preventive PrEP, which has transformed the ways MSM negotiate sexual risk, and which has been added as a selectable option in many apps’ HIV-status category. Some apps also encourage forms of political organizing, from drawing attention to the plight of LGBTQ refugees fleeing repressive regimes in their home countries to promoting get-out-the-vote efforts. For example, responding to targeted violence against gay men in Chechnya in 2016 and 2017, the Grindr app launched a campaign to support LGBTQ persons in Chechnya.

Some nostalgic commentators have argued that smartphone apps represent the death of gay culture insofar as the rise of the apps appears to have coincided with the disappearance of gay public spaces—especially bars, but also cruising and other sexual venues. While these phenomena are likely correlated, it is difficult to establish a causal relationship. In key ways, social dating apps extend and supplement earlier forms of queer sociability; they are ultimately about connection (Roach 2015). People use apps to arrange dates that may lead to long-term relationships or friendships, as well as casual sexual encounters. Like earlier mediated forms of communication that afforded LGBTQ people opportunities to connect—personal ads, newsletters, party lines, chat rooms—smartphone apps provide another means to establish social connections, even if these connections are passing rather than enduring. Apps are especially important for LGBTQ people living in rural environments, or in explicitly hostile ones, where there are few, if any, dedicated spaces for them to socialize. Similarly, these applications are widely used by queer youth across geographic locales, again in conjunction with other media to learn more about their gender and sexual identities.

Smartphone apps are now thoroughly integrated into the lives of LGBTQ people. They are firmly situated within LGBTQ histories, reflecting, reproducing, and refracting patterns of socialization, from the central role of sex to the persistence of discrimination. These apps do not represent an end point to these histories; new media technologies are sure to emerge that, like these apps, simultaneously build on, extend, and transform the social contexts in which they are situated.
SEE ALSO Bars and Cabarets in Europe; Bars, Working-class, in Mexico; Cruising and Cruising Grounds; Internet in Africa; Internet Queer Sites in the Middle East; Language; MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia; New Media in Asia

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Photography, first developed in France in the 1830s, became an important medium in the articulation of homoerotic desire, beauty, and body ideals in Europe. Queer male beauty imagery clustered around two distinct archetypes—the classical ideal and militant muscular masculinity—whereas lesbian photography was slower to develop owing to the prohibitive cost of materials and social and class barriers that affected women more profoundly than men. By the twentieth century, in the years leading up to the sexual revolution, queer photography, whether photographs of stylized pickups or party shots, was a crucial strategy of resistance and community building. It created opportunities to articulate and honor same-sex desire. At the same time, police photography, both the images generated by investigators and those confiscated from members of the gay and lesbian scene, served a more coercive function in enforcing hegemonic norms. Similarly, images played an important role in sexology, with visual documentation of gender and sexual nonconformity supplementing medical definitions of deviance.

After the decriminalization of same-sex sexuality in the 1960s across western Europe, homoerotic imagery entered the mainstream as part of the commodity culture of advertising. The relaxation of censorship also meant that ever more explicit photos could be published in gay men’s magazines, chiefly but not solely published in Amsterdam. Exhibitions of erotic photography also emerged onto the scene in the 1980s, influenced by the success of Robert Mapplethorpe (1946–1989) in the United States. By the late 1980s and 1990s, there was a palpable shift in magazine and scene publications away from natural bodies toward images of fit, tanned, young physiques, a visual response to the ravages of HIV/AIDS. What once served the queer communities in helping to visualize alternative images of healthy, strong bodies and robust desire had the unintended effect of creating out-of-reach body norms. A rise in body image dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, and impossible-to-reach class, race, age, health, and beauty standards arose in what was quickly becoming an increasingly commodified queer scene.
Wilhelm von Gloeden Photograph of Two Taormina Boys. Gloeden’s photos from the late nineteenth century featured shepherd boys from the remote Sicilian seaside community of Taormina elegantly posed in Arcadian settings. His work drew on the mixed iconography of feminized masculinity, homoerotic desire, and working-class consciousness.

Nineteenth- to Mid-twentieth-Century Historical Overview

In the nineteenth century, the visualization of classical male beauty was deeply connected to the rise of middle-class rights, tastes, and privileges in the age of science, liberalism, and empire. As intellectuals turned their attention to the classical world for the roots to their republican ideals, men’s bodies acquired new importance as emblems of antiquity and the European inheritance. Whereas some saw these images as emblems of universal man in a state of nature, others saw in them vestiges of a more permissive age. In the remote Sicilian seaside community of Taormina, the Prussian aristocrat Wilhelm von Gloeden (1856–1931) resuscitated classical motifs in the Hellenistic staging of erotic male beauty. Far removed from the iconography of friendship circulating in the United Kingdom, Gloeden’s was a more earthy vision of the beauty of sexual awakening. His subjects were Taormina’s shepherd boys elegantly posed in Arcadian settings, and his photographs drew on the mixed iconography of feminized masculinity, homoerotic desire, and working-class consciousness circulating in the late nineteenth-century Victorian cult of Saint Sebastian (d. c. 288), which venerated the young Praetorian guard martyred by arrows for giving aid to Christian soldiers. The rediscovery of the Sebastian martyrdom, drawn from the Victorian encounter with Renaissance literature, gave same-sex-desiring men an appropriate icon of
suffering on which to hinge their own sorrows. Gloeden's images circulated as postcards and were traded in private collections. They were part of the early transnational tourist imaginary, as gay travelers from across western Europe trekked to Italy in search of visual pleasure made flesh.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MARLO BROEKMAN AND DIANA BLOK

“The Lovers” (1980) by Marlo Broekmans and Diana Blok. The two women (Diana Blok and Bernardien Sternheim) embracing in this photo are intended to represent love and death. Broekmans and Blok formed a unique photographic partnership between 1978 and 1981 in which they shared roles as subjects in front of the camera and as photographers behind. In their work they attempted to portray the authentic female self rather than the female as conventionally defined by men.

If the nineteenth century brought classical tropes into circulation in the public realm, the twentieth century saw reactions to elite and middle-class morality and class privilege, ushering forth alternative visions of queer eroticism. Anti-bourgeois, anti-modernist social movements advocated a return to a simpler life, promoting the veneration of a more earthy masculinity alongside the more classical image of natural man. Fascist, Communist, and working-class movements of the 1930s similarly tapped into this vision of male physicality and comradeship, creating homosocial spaces where, some contemporaries feared, the cultivation of male bonding might spill over into outright homosexuality. The Nazis represent the extreme example of how photography was employed to document and identify gay men who fell foul of social and gender norms, although, as the photography
theorists John Tagg (1988) and Allan Sekula (1984) have argued, images always played a coercive regulatory role since photography's inception as a medium. The Nazis inherited a long tradition of police photography, which crossed national boundaries and formed a core feature of the regulation of queer life.

Images from Case Files

Images would play a signature role, too, in medical, sexological, and psychiatric case files, identifying the physical features and gender markers that signified gay men, lesbians, and trans persons. Sometimes, however, trans persons pushed back at the medical community, exchanging letters and personal images in an attempt to shape the visual discourse that defined them in the medical arena. This was the case in the first magazine devoted to transsexuality (as transgenderism was then called): Das 3. Geschlecht (The third sex). This popular magazine, published between 1930 and 1932 and connected to Magnus Hirschfeld’s (1868–1935) famed Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Science; located in Berlin), published images that would be taken up in transatlantic sexological networks, influencing the work of US-based researcher Alfred Kinsey (1894–1956) and even appearing in Harry Benjamin’s 1966 book The Transsexual Phenomenon, which drew on these images to help make the case for more humane treatment of trans patients. Hirschfeld’s institute and the visual archive he had accumulated were targeted specifically by the Nazis for the way they normalized queer bodies across the gender spectrum, highlighting in the extreme how deeply political photography was to queer legibility.

Various Trends in the Postwar Era

Mass media, new social movements, and the growth of fitness and body culture movements—together with demographic shifts in the decades after 1945—meant that changing social, aesthetic, gender, and visual markers of queer bodies and identities gained greater traction. The decriminalization of homosexuality in many parts of western and eastern Europe in the 1960s, together with greater economic power and access to film stock and cameras, meant that same-sex desire among women and racialized minorities also emerged onto the scene with greater visibility in this expanding public sphere. Galleries were able to mount exhibitions of material previously deemed illegal and risqué, allowing for greater diversity of images. This, too, evolved in stages, with photographs by lesbian photographers presaging the work of photographers of color. In Amsterdam in the 1970s, Marlo Broekmans and her Uruguayan lover Diana Blok produced photobooks of self-portraits celebrated in the lesbian scene, while a decade and a half later the queer photographer Ajamu X would critically engage with black male eroticism in stylized portraits and group photos. The Black LGBT Archive and the rukus! Federation that Ajamu helped found with Topher Campbell would agitate for greater visibility of black, queer artists and activists in
the United Kingdom. This suggests the need to think about different time lines for photographic constructions of same-sex identity and desire when factoring in gender, race, and postcoloniality. Access to materials, the political climate, and the pace of liberal social and legal reforms, especially of censorship, also help explain why certain countries and cities countenanced the growth of queer photographic practices over others. This changed somewhat first with the advent of the Polaroid camera and later with digital technology, which has made it easier for everyday people across Europe to use photography for erotic camera play and stylized self-portraits, which further has aided queer communities in appropriating the image as part of self-definition and as resistance to hegemonic ideals.

SEE ALSO Butt Magazine; Khookha McQueer (1987–); Pornography; Sexual Revolution in Europe

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*Pinhua Baojian* (1849; Sen Chen)

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*Chinese novel depicting homoerotic relations between members of the literati and the female impersonators of kunqu opera.*

*Pinhua baojian* (Precious mirror for ranking flowers) is a Chinese novel written by Sen Chen (c. 1796–1870) and published for the first time in 1849. It is set in the capital city of Beijing and focuses on the representation of the homoerotic relations established between elite literati, wealthy merchants, and young female impersonators (dan) of kunqu opera. While also featuring some purely mercenary transactions, the novel primarily foregrounds male romances that are predicated on chastity—even on the complete lack of any carnal desire—and on a sentimental affinity that erases the social gulf between the elite literati and the socially debased actors.

### The Novel’s Model

Radicalizing the discourse on love carried out in the eighteenth-century classic *Honglou meng* (Dream of the red chamber), *Pinhua baojian* champions the aesthetics and affectivity of “sublime love” (*McMahon 2002*). Although, beginning in the late sixteenth century, a sizable number of works of fiction had been produced that explored the topic of love between men, *Pinhua baojian*’s most important literary predecessor is undoubtedly *Honglou meng* (both in terms of sentimental and sexual relations), from which Chen borrows both the basic romantic ideology and key aspects of the narrative plot. There is a notable difference between the two novels, however, pertaining to gender. *Honglou meng* involves a love triangle between a young man and his two female cousins—one the source of his most passionate attachment, and the other who will eventually become his wife—whereas *Pinhua baojian* instead follows the romance between a young elite man, Mei Ziyu, and an opera actor of female roles, Du Qinyan, and the parallel story of his marriage to a woman, Wang Qionghua, who uncannily looks just like his beloved boy-actor. If *Honglou meng* moreover hinted at a triangular bliss that it finally failed to deliver, in *Pinhua baojian* the protagonist manages in the end not only to enjoy a harmonious marriage with a woman but also to preserve the affective connection with the young actor, who gets redeemed from his lowly status and practically adopted into his family. In this way, *Pinhua baojian*’s Ziyu is allowed to salvage both his social obligations and his romantic yearnings: to have a devoted
wife and keep his beloved male friend, too. In spite of the ostensible parallelism between Ziyu's two relationships, however, it must be emphasized that the novel is especially concerned with the homoerotic one between the two young men; the very fact that Ziyu's wife turns out to look like the boy-actor symbolically suggests the derivative nature of his heterosexual liaison. The latter appears to be in other words a reflection, perhaps one could even say a copy, of his homoerotic one, which remains the ultimate romantic standard the novel aims to portray as ideal (Vitiello 2011).

**Placing the Novel in Its Social Time**

The world depicted in *Pinhua baojian* is related to social practices current at the time it was written, especially in the capital city of Beijing. There was a long history of male prostitution in China that gravitated around the theater, the boy-actors (especially female impersonators) having traditionally doubled as prostitutes. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, the theater became a key site of Beijing social culture (Goldman 2012). As a result, the imperial capital also became the center of male prostitution. The actors typically entertained their patrons/aficionados after their performances, when they shed their female clothes and resumed their masculine personas (Goldman 2012; Wu and Stevenson 2010). The vogue of such actor-prostitutes, known as "gentlemen" (xianggong), apparently reached its peak between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries in Beijing, precisely the time and place in which Chen’s novel is set. *Pinhua baojian* is the first novel that looks specifically at this chapter of erotic culture and zooms in on the particular romantic relations between actors and scholars flourishing in that milieu. Before becoming the object of a fictional representation, this social phenomenon had already found a literary expression in a connoisseurial genre of writing known as *huapu* (flower registers) that was devoted to the aesthetic appreciation and ranking of the looks and performing skills of female impersonators. Such expertise earned their owners a social capital that could be spent to strengthen ties within the male literati elites. For this reason, it has been suggested that Chen’s novel can be ultimately considered a fictionalization of such connoisseurial writings and practices (Wu and Stevenson 2010).

Being traditionally tied to the business of male prostitution, the actor was burdened by an ambiguous social status. This explains the novel's heartfelt concern with discriminating between morally superior boys unjustly trapped in their debased station, who are deservedly treated as equals by their romantically inclined patrons, on the one hand; and ordinary male prostitutes, who deserve instead to be despised together with their vulgar clients, on the other. As for the idealized actors, they are appreciated for being the ultimate embodiments of feminine beauty, being at the same time pitied for being perfectly fine men, virtual literati who, because of adverse circumstances, have had the misfortune of falling into a socially loathed position. It follows that the fuel of the romances the novel's
author most cares about is the desire on the part of the actors’ sophisticated patrons to liberate and redeem them from their lowly condition.

As mentioned, at the center of the narrative there is one romance cast as exemplary of the ideal love between men. Another germane romance—that between Tian Chunhang and Su Huifang (apparently inspired by a real, and legendary, homoerotic affair that occurred just a few decades before the novel’s publication)—represents an important strand in the novel’s plot, in that it reinforces its core romantic ideology. A series of mundane, mercenary relations between vulgar wealthy men (usually merchants) and actor-prostitutes play a similar role, if this time in a contrastive fashion. In these crude affairs the romantic fantasy finds its all-too-real obverse; and in fact only in the representations of mercenary relations does the reader find descriptions of sexual acts, whereas the novel’s “superior” lovers, when they meet, are always rigorously clothed and have hardly any physical contact at all. Indeed, Pinhua baojian’s preeminent romance is characterized by the lovers’ continued separation and yearning to see each other. In fact, they barely ever meet; the few encounters between them are moreover drowned in tears, as if suffering and the deprivation of the beloved’s sight were the real essence of the romantic experience, as opposed to its mundane, carnal fruition. Although other characters do not understand the chaste romance of the “superior” lovers, those who sympathetically witness their love understand that chastity is supposed to be the basis of the sublime love of a scholar for a boy-actor. For the novel’s “superior” characters, a passion for boys is thus the mark of an enhanced aesthetic and romantic sensibility. As various characters state throughout the novel, the scholar’s attitude toward a boy-actor ought to be “an aesthetic delight devoid of sexual desire” (hao se bu yin). It is such an attitude that defines the ideal male romance between a renowned scholar (mingshi) and a famous actor (mingdan)—what might be called the “literati homoeroticism” that the novel proposes as an aesthetic and romantic ideal (Vitiello 2011).

Are the Boy-Actors in the Novel Virtual Women?

It has been pointed out that the boy-actors of Pinhua baojian are a variation on the female courtesans of a time-honored romantic literary discourse predicated on the redemption of a most talented and virtuous woman who is a model of moral behavior and who, as such, should be lifted out of her lowly condition and made to join the “decent” society she spiritually belonged to in the first place (Wang 1997). Some scholars have for this reason argued that the novel’s boy-actors ultimately stand for female courtesans and are to be considered for all practical purposes virtual women, suggesting that the novel should be read metonymically—that one should see through its rhetorical device and read women for men (Wang 1997; Starr 1999). This critical approach, however, would have the consequence of paradoxically erasing the male homoerotic romance from the novel, a move that does not appear to be justified either by the external evidence (the social scenario
described above) or by the fictional narrative itself (Vitiello 2011).

As for the latter, one could recall, for example, the debates found occasionally in the novel that center on the contrasting and ranking of male and female beauty, and implicitly of homo- and heteroeroticism (and resolved typically to the detriment of the latter). Even though the idealized boy-actors in the novel inevitably remind the reader of the countless literary representations of courtesans, it is worth noting that some actual female prostitutes do appear in the novel, if mostly presented as a lower type of entertainment compared to the elegant female impersonators (who are more often contrasted to lower-level male prostitutes). Moreover, the very form the “superior” actors’ redemption takes in Pinhua baojian—joining the ranks of the literati—is in itself gender specific, as it involves their full remasculinization, thus indicating that their male identities have never truly been overlooked, let alone entirely erased. Finally, as for the hypothesis that the homoerotic liaisons celebrated in the novel are presented as youthful experiences to be eventually superseded by heterosexual relations at the onset of maturity (Starr 1999), it is important to note that the novel’s ending clearly confirms the homoerotic nature of the relationship between Ziyu and Qinyan, even after the actor has been redeemed and has become a virtual brother/friend of the protagonist. The novel’s last scene features in fact (the now ex-actor) Qinyan falling asleep on Ziyu’s arm, thereby symbolically (and pointedly) evoking the most canonical literary standard of homoerotic relations—that is, the 2,000-year-old story of Emperor Ai of the Han dynasty who cut off the sleeve of his own robe to avoid awakening his male favorite who had fallen asleep with his head lying on it, and from which the expression “cut sleeve” (duanxiu), one of the key terms of the Chinese lexicon of male homosexuality, is derived (Vitiello 2011).

In conclusion, while the boy-actors’ beauty and demeanor in Pinhua baojian is no doubt associated with femininity, and their charm is inextricably tied to gender ambiguity, this does not mean that they are perceived as virtual women; the novel’s characters are perfectly aware of their fundamental boyhood. On one occasion, one sophisticated patron of boy-actors states that, because it is not proper to bring women along in public, the actors are the best compromise, having the face of a girl but a male body. In this regard, there is a metafictional moment toward the narrative’s ending, when the author says that, because the two lovers, being two men, could not crown their romantic destiny, heaven out of pity had made for Ziyu a girl that perfectly resembled Qinyan. In other words, Ziyu’s wife, Qionghua, needs to be narratively summoned to bail out her husband from his impossible romantic predicament; and the same actually applies to the other exemplary romantic couple in the novel. In both cases, women not only allow men to fulfill their social and filial obligations through marriage but also—as the novel’s conclusion suggests—provide a space to accommodate their homoerotic yearnings and relations (Vitiello 2011).

Pinhua baojian continued to be reprinted into the 1930s and was shortly before then identified by the foremost intellectual and writer of the period, Lu Xun (1881–1936), as the
predecessor of the long list of late nineteenth-century novels about brothels and female prostitution. It is witness to the literary resilience of the novel that it has, in more recent times, inspired the Taiwanese writer Wu Jiwen’s *Shiji mo shaonian’ai duben* (1996; *The fin-de-siècle boy love reader*), which offers a rewriting of Chen’s novel in which the main characters anticipate the subjectivities of late twentieth-century gay men (Sang 2014).

**SEE ALSO** *Fire (1996; Deepa Mehta); MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia; Tongzhi Literature, Taiwan*

## BIBLIOGRAPHY


Although homophobia was never a central tenet of National Socialist (Nazi) ideology (as anti-Semitism was), the party leadership clearly considered homosexuality as a serious threat to the German nation. For the National Socialists, sexuality was inextricably tied to race, citizenship, and power. In 1937, for example, Nazi leader Heinrich Himmler (1900–1945) told a group of SS lieutenants that “all things which take place in the sexual sphere are not the private affair of the individual, but signify the life and death of the nation” (quoted in Burleigh and Wippermann 1991, 193). Because sex was the means through which race was reproduced, the architects of the Nazi state were obsessed with comprehending and controlling human sexuality.

Homosexual Germans occupied a legal and ideological gray area in the Nazi state. Their German ethnicity granted them citizenship in the Third Reich. Yet, their alleged sexual deviance violated the ultimate law in Nazi Germany: the supremacy of the “master race” above the desires and interests of the individual. According to Nazi ideology, when gay men and lesbians forsook their sexual duty to provide offspring for the fatherland, they surrendered the rights and protections of full citizenship, which were reserved for heterosexual Aryans. Germans who engaged in homosexual behavior, therefore, were perceived as both racial and political threats to the German Volk (nation).

Although there was disagreement over what constituted, caused, or dispelled same-sex desire, the predominant belief held by most Nazi leaders was that homosexuality was a set of particular behaviors, a vice that potentially anyone could fall victim to; it was not considered something that was inborn and constituted a subjective identity. Therefore, the National Socialists waged what they saw as a campaign against homosexuality, rather than seeking the physical extermination of homosexuals themselves. This campaign progressed in stages throughout Germany. The first step was to destroy the lively queer subcultures that existed with varying levels of visibility across Germany’s urban centers. The second step was to use the law to deter homosexual behavior. In the summer of 1935—at the same time that they passed the infamous Nuremberg Race Laws—Nazi jurists amended
Paragraph 175, the national antisodomy law that had been a part of Germany's penal code since the unification of the nation in 1871. The new version of the law criminalized all “indecency” among men, which meant that everything from sex and mutual masturbation to a kiss, holding hands, or a stolen glance was illegal (Giles 2005). The new version of Paragraph 175 continued decades of legal precedent by excluding any mention of female homosexuality; thus, lesbians were not subject to arrest or conviction under the law.

The third aspect of the Nazis' antihomosexual policies focused on punishing men accused of homosexuality and ultimately seeking to “cure” their alleged deviant behavior. The number of Paragraph 175 convictions handed down by German courts rose by an astounding 900 percent in the first five years of Nazi rule (Dickinson 2007). In all, around 100,000 German men accused of homosexuality were arrested between 1933 and 1945. A majority of these arrests were the result of civilian denunciations (Micheler 2002). Of those men arrested, 53,480 were ultimately convicted and given either a fine or a prison sentence (Hoffschildt 2002).

Between 5,000 and 15,000 men accused of homosexuality were incarcerated in concentration camps during the Third Reich. Gay prisoners were labeled with a variety of markings, from a range of different colored triangle badges (green denoting criminals, black for “asocials,” and red for political prisoners) to the numbers “175.” By the end of the 1930s, however, a pink triangle had become the standard badge for gay concentration camp prisoners. At any given time, gay men made up usually less than 1 percent of the total prisoners in a camp (Knoll 2002). Undoubtedly, there were lesbians in concentration camps, too, but they were not necessarily arrested for being a lesbian. Some of the lesbian prisoners may have worn a black triangle, although there are also records indicating that some wore other badges.
A Chart of Prisoner Markings Used in German Concentration Camps. The Nazi regime had an elaborate system of badges sewn onto concentration camp prisoner uniforms that enabled guards to identify the alleged grounds for incarceration. In this chart, the column second from the right designates the various symbols used for homosexual prisoners. In addition to the basic pink triangle, there were also symbols indicating (proceeding downward from the pink triangle) homosexual "repeat offenders," homosexuals assigned to the camp’s "disciplinary unit," and homosexual Jews.

The widespread homophobia that permeated German culture at the time followed gay prisoners into the camps. The men with the pink triangle faced discrimination and violence not only from the guards but from fellow inmates as well. As a rule, gay men were spared the gas chambers and were not sent to death camps because the Nazi leadership considered them first and foremost Germans who could be reintegrated as productive members of society once they were “cured” of their vice. While reeducation remained the Nazis' official policy, there are numerous documented instances of the systematic murder of gay men both within and beyond concentration camps. Moreover, the combination of forced isolation in separate barracks, harder work details, smaller food rations, and deadly medical experiments created an environment that caused the death of the majority of gay men sent to concentration camps. An estimated 65 percent of men imprisoned on grounds of homosexuality died in the camps (Giles 2005).

Continued Persecution in the Postwar Period
Because the pink triangle prisoners had violated the German penal code, the Allied forces regarded them as criminals once the war in Europe ended in May 1945. Thus, when Allied troops liberated the camps, they often transferred gay inmates who still had time on their sentence to local prisons to serve the rest of their term. And although the victors began a process of denazification to eliminate unjust and discriminatory laws passed by the Nazi judicial system, the Allies allowed the 1935 version of Paragraph 175 to remain in effect in their zones of occupation. Courts in the German Democratic Republic (GDR; East Germany) ruled to revert Paragraph 175 to its pre-Nazi version in 1950, just one year after the country was founded. In the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG; West Germany), however, lawmakers and jurists continuously decided to uphold and enforce the Nazi version of the law. One gay concentration camp survivor stated poignantly at the end of the war, “Liberation was only for others” (Seel 1995, 88).

Even when gay survivors in Germany decided to face the social repercussions of speaking publicly about their experiences, they had to admit to acts that remained illegal. There were several legal challenges to the constitutionality of Paragraph 175 in the FRG, but in 1957 West Germany’s Federal Constitutional Court declared once and for all that the 1935 version of Paragraph 175 would remain in effect. The court stated that the law predated the Nazis, and although Nazi jurists had reworded it in 1935, the essence of the law was untainted by National Socialist ideology. Therefore, the court framed Paragraph 175 as a German law that was still needed to protect the moral fortitude of the West German people. The gay men who had been arrested under the Nazi regime, the court concluded, were not victims of “typical Nazi injustice” but were instead criminals who had been constitutionally punished for their crimes.

Agents of the West German legal system used Paragraph 175 with gusto. Between 1949 and 1969 over 100,000 men were arrested, and more than 59,000 of those men were convicted (Hoffschildt 2002). Because the East German government had reverted the law to its pre-1935 version, there were drastically lower numbers of arrests and convictions of gay men in the GDR (rarely more than 100 convictions per year). After passage of an amendment to the East German criminal code in December 1957, authorities all but stopped enforcing Paragraph 175 (Huneke 2013).

While it is important to emphasize that the situation for West German homosexuals had certainly improved after the defeat of the Third Reich, the continuities in law, social attitudes, and even police and judicial personnel are striking. In 1963 the historian and theologian Hans-Joachim Schoeps felt justified in claiming that “for homosexuals, the Third Reich hasn’t ended yet” (86; translated by W. Jake Newsome).

**Pink Triangle as Gay Liberation Logo in Germany**

During the 1960s, the political landscape in the Federal Republic of Germany underwent...
significant shifts. Konrad Adenauer (1876–1967), who had been chancellor of West Germany and leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) since 1949, resigned in October 1963. By 1966 the left-wing Social Democratic Party had come to power as a coalition partner with the CDU. Three years later, liberals and Social Democrats composed the majority in the parliament. The 1960s also witnessed extensive changes in social, cultural, and political values across the globe. It was in this context of social change that the West German parliament amended Paragraph 175 in 1969, decriminalizing sex among men over the age of twenty-one. The amendment of the law opened the space for the emergence of an organized, politically active gay rights movement (Schwulenbewegung) in West Germany in the early 1970s.

One of the first gay liberation groups in West Germany, and eventually the largest and most significant one, was the Homosexuelle Aktion Westberlin (HAW; Gay Action Group of West Berlin). One of the primary concerns of the group, which was founded in August 1971, was how to make gay activists visible to the rest of the West German public. Increased visibility was meant to demonstrate that gays and lesbians, while a minority, could become an influential political force. Moreover, members of the HAW asserted that adopting and wearing an official gay symbol would force the symbol’s wearer to “come out” and publicly identify as gay, which was seen as a first step to ending suppression against gays and lesbians in society. Several possibilities for a new gay logo were put forward for consideration.

In 1972 a Hamburg publishing house released Die Männer mit dem rosa Winkel (The Men with the Pink Triangle [1980]), the autobiography of a gay concentration camp survivor under the pseudonym of Heinz Heger. For members of the HAW, the title of the slim book offered a solution to the gay movement’s problem of identification and visibility. HAW members asserted that, given their country’s history, the pink triangle was the perfect symbol for West Germany’s gay rights movement. They noted that the Frankfurt group RotZSchwul (Red Cell Gays) had already begun using the pink triangle unofficially. In October 1973 the HAW became the first group in the world to officially adopt the pink triangle as a gay rights logo. Gay liberation groups across West Germany soon followed the HAW’s lead and began using the pink triangle to draw parallels between discrimination in the past and the present.

The spread of the pink triangle signified the dissemination of a specific strain of gay activism throughout West Germany. The coming out of individuals, the formation of gay organizations, and the adoption of a gay liberation logo all created an awareness among gays and lesbians that there were people like themselves throughout the Federal Republic, who shared not only similar sexual desires or orientations but also an aspiration to engage in political activism.

The Pink Triangle in North America
In early 1974 James Steakley, an American graduate student who had spent time in West Germany and had even joined the HAW, introduced English-speaking audiences to the history of the Nazis’ campaign against homosexuality when he published his article “Homosexuals and the Third Reich” in *The Body Politic*, a gay liberation newspaper based in Toronto. In August of that year, activists in New York City wore pink triangle armbands as they protested in support of a gay rights bill being considered by the city council (*Jensen 2002*). The arrival of the pink triangle in New York City came just ten months after the HAW had adopted it as its own logo. By the end of the decade, and especially by the 1980s, gay activists in the United States and Canada were using the pink triangle and other Holocaust imagery widely in their activism. In February 1981, for example, the Metropolitan Toronto Police initiated a large-scale raid on locations that were known to be hangouts for gay men and lesbians, culminating in the largest mass arrest of civilians since World War II. Afterward, demonstrators wore shirts that read “Germany 1934, Toronto 1981” (*Lynch 1981*). These four short words sought to draw a thread of continuity between the persecution of gays in the Third Reich and the discrimination gays faced decades later in Toronto. Back in the United States, when members of the planning committee for the 1987 National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights decided on a logo, they chose a symbol that they knew powerfully bound together issues of civil rights in the present and a dark chapter of history. The official logo was a silhouette of the US Capitol dome superimposed over a pink triangle.

By the end of the 1980s, the debates resulting from the rising death toll of the AIDS crisis were also drawing rhetorical ties between sexuality, citizenship, and the Nazi past. The deaths of thousands of people—many of whom were gay men—paired with inaction on the part of the administration of US president Ronald Reagan, resulted in numerous comparisons with the Holocaust. In 1986 six leftist organizers in New York City unveiled a poster that was meant to motivate gay and lesbian communities to aggressively demand support during the AIDS epidemic. The poster, composed of a fuchsia triangle with the peak facing up, imposed over a solid black background and the bold motto “Silence = Death,” was adopted the following year by the activist group AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). The poster would come to represent AIDS activism around the world. AIDS activists holding posters or wearing shirts adorned with a pink triangle and the “Silence = Death” motto asserted that everyone had a right to health care, regardless of sexuality or HIV status, a clear stance against comments by some conservative politicians and social commentators who suggested that the rights of health care were not understood as universal.

Therefore, while the pink triangle became politicized in West Germany, it was gay activists’ use of the symbol in the United States and Canada that gave the logo—and the history it represented—a wider resonance and significance in contemporary debates about sexuality, civil liberties, and human rights. Once the pink triangle gained prominence as an activist logo and cultural icon in North America, it was then further traded, adapted, and
transformed through international networks of activists throughout the Atlantic world and ultimately across the globe.

**Memorializing the Nazis' Gay Victims**

In both East and West Germany, there was a long history of denying that “the men with the pink triangle” were victims of Nazi injustice. Resistance to acknowledging gay victimhood was often the strongest during discussions for the various commemoration and memorialization ceremonies for the victims of National Socialism. In 1960, for example, Hans Zauner, then mayor of the town of Dachau, told a reporter, “You must remember that many criminals and homosexuals were in Dachau. Do you want a memorial for such people?” (quoted in Jensen 2002, 321). Despite resistance, gay rights groups across West Germany organized ceremonies throughout the 1980s to commemorate the Nazis’ gay victims. Beginning in 1984, gay groups in East Germany began laying a wreath at the main memorial at the former Sachsenhausen concentration camp, located near Berlin.

In December 1984 a collection of gay rights groups in Austria dedicated the world’s first permanent memorial to the gay victims of Nazi persecution by installing a commemorative plaque at the memorial site of the Mauthausen concentration camp. The memorial is a pink granite triangle with an inscription that reads: “Beaten to Death, Silenced to Death; to the Homosexual Victims of National Socialism; from the Homosexual Initiatives of Austria.” The triangle plaque and inscription came to be a model for nearly all subsequent memorials to the Nazis’ gay victims. Over the next two decades, memorials were established in seven locations throughout Germany, including the national Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime, which was dedicated in Berlin in 2008.

Germans were not the only ones to memorialize the men with the pink triangle. As of 2017, there were at least eight monuments or plaques outside Germany dedicated to the Nazis’ gay victims. An additional six memorials use the symbol of the pink triangle and are dedicated to victims of violence against the LGBTQ community, but not specifically to gay victims of the Nazi regime. The existence of these memorials indicates that people throughout the world feel that the Nazis’ campaign against homosexuality is neither a chapter of German history specifically nor the history of a particular minority group. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the pink triangle past had become a moral lesson with global resonance about human rights in democratic societies.
Compensation, Justice, and Victimhood

After World War II, West German lawmakers and jurists excluded gay men from the official definition of Nazi victimhood. Because they were not considered victims of Nazi injustice, gay survivors were not eligible for restitution of confiscated property, financial compensation, or legal rehabilitation for unjust criminal convictions. When West Germany passed the Federal Compensation Law of 1956, gay survivors were summarily excluded. When the General War Consequences Act was passed a year later to provide financial aid to those who had “suffered excessively” during the war, gay men were technically allowed to apply. Only fourteen gay men in all of West Germany filed a petition. All fourteen were denied.

Facing increasing pressure from minority rights groups, the West German parliament agreed in June 1987 to establish a “hardship fund” for victim groups who had been left out of previous compensation processes. The federal hardship fund regulations clearly asserted, however, that these benefits were not official compensation or a redress for injustice. As a result of the impenetrable maze of bureaucratic red tape, documentation,
time, and effort required for aid from the federal hardship fund, only seventeen gay survivors applied. Two were granted recurring payments; six were issued a one-time benefit payment. One applicant died before the committee reached a decision. The remaining eight applications were rejected for various reasons. Because the federal government proved reluctant to help these victims, five of the West German states implemented their own hardship provisions between 1987 and 1990. Out of these five states, twenty-one gay men applied for aid; eleven received payments, while the other ten were rejected.

While Paragraph 175 had been amended in 1969 and fully repealed in 1994, it was not until 17 May 2002 (amid discussions of funding the national Memorial to the Homosexuals Persecuted under the National Socialist Regime) that the parliament of unified Germany officially apologized to all gay victims of the Nazi regime and annulled their unjust convictions. The decision also made any gay survivors who were still alive eligible for full restitution, including financial compensation. The government’s apology and pardon came so late, however, that most survivors had already passed away.

The German government’s 2002 pardon was only for men convicted under Paragraph 175 during the Nazi regime, not those convicted under the same law in West Germany between 1949 and 1969. In May 2016, after decades of pressure from gay rights groups, the German parliament announced that it planned to annul the post-1945 convictions and grant compensation to the estimated 5,000 wrongly convicted men who were still alive. As of August 2017, the parliament had yet to approve the legislation.

**Shared History, Shared Identity**

Through its use in social activism, the pink triangle became a way to add potency to activists’ claim that, in a post-Holocaust world, no government had the right or moral authority to regulate the sexual lives of its citizens or to use policies that discriminated against minorities. In both West Germany and the United States, activists rhetorically linked antigay policies to Nazism and asserted that as long as their governments continued discriminating against the LGBTQ communities the ideals of liberal democracy had not yet been fully achieved. Moreover, the sharing of memories and histories contributed to the transformation of gays and lesbians into an international political minority and helped establish a gay identity that transcended local and national boundaries.

The pink triangle originated as a concentration camp badge—a mark of damnation. Yet, through decades of grassroots activism, the writing of a more honest and accurate history, and the process of international memorialization, gay men and women transformed the pink triangle into a symbol that gave people the courage to come out, form an international community, and take pride in claiming a positive identity.
The opinions expressed herein are those of the author and are not to be viewed as official statements of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

SEE ALSO ACT UP; Bathhouse Raids, Toronto (1981); HIV/AIDS in the United States; Human Rights in Europe; Marches on Washington; Museums and Memorials; Nationalism and Sexuality in Europe

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Pinkwashing

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The practice of championing gay rights as a way to distract attention from discrimination against other groups.

The term *pinkwashing* is used to describe a form of discourse, frequently political, in which a government or activist highlights the progressive nature of a country, political party, or organization in order to distract people from, or conceal, other ways in which said country, political party, or organization behaves in an oppressive and/or nonprogressive manner toward other peoples or groups. It is most frequently used in criticism of Israel’s policies toward LGBT individuals and Palestinians, as Israeli politicians have often highlighted the former in order to portray Israel as more progressive than surrounding Arab countries.

Pinkwashing is closely related to the concept of homonationalism, a term that was coined by Jasbir K. Puar, a queer studies scholar at Rutgers University, to describe

*a form of sexual exceptionalism—the emergence of national homosexuality ... that corresponds with the coming out of the exceptionalism of American empire.... This brand of homosexuality operates as a regulatory script not only of normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects. There is a commitment to the global dominant ascendancy of whiteness that is implicated in the propagation of the United States as empire as well as the alliance between this propagation and this brand of homosexuality.*

*(2007, 2)*

This idea of homonationalism can be seen in the Israeli context, as well as the American and European contexts. In its public relations materials, Israel frequently foregrounds its tolerance of LGBTQI individuals in comparison with Palestine in order to render itself sympathetic. The United States also foregrounds its support for LGBTQI rights in comparison to the Middle East for similar reasons, which is discussed in greater depth later
in this entry. Additionally, pinkwashing discourses can be seen in Europe, particularly on the right wing of the political spectrum. Two of the most notable examples would be the platform of Dutch right-wing gay politician Pim Fortuyn and the response by a sizable portion of white French gay men to Marine Le Pen’s political campaign in 2017.

**Examples in Israel, the United States, and Europe**

One of the best-known examples of pinkwashing was when Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, while speaking in front of the US Congress in 2011, made the statement that “Israel has always embraced this path [of Western freedoms] in a Middle East that has long rejected it. In a region where women are stoned, gays are hanged, Christians are persecuted, Israel stands out.” Another example of an extremely common trope in Israeli pinkwashing discourse is exemplified in Yossi Klein Halevi’s 2002 article for the *New Republic* titled “Refugee Status.” In it, Halevi makes the claim that

*Palestinian homosexuals are increasingly seeking refuge in the only regional territory that does: Israel. In the last few years hundreds of gay Palestinians, mostly from the West Bank, have slipped into Israel.... The liberal world has never taken interest in their plight. Perhaps it’s because that might mean acknowledging that the pathology of the nascent Palestinian polity ... won’t be uprooted by one free election.*

(12–13)

These oft-repeated claims—that LGBT Palestinians are able to take refuge in Israel proper, that the liberal world has not “taken an interest in their plight” (unlike Israel), and that they are able to survive only because Israel has—are heavily interrogated by Jason Ritchie in his article “How Do You Say ‘Come Out of the Closet’ in Arabic?” Ritchie notes that many of these LGBT Palestinian refugees have been “imprisoned or deported” (2010, 559) and that they have been appropriated by Israeli nationalist discourse in order “to confirm the racist narrative of gay-friendly Israel versus homophobic Palestine by becoming the queer Palestinian victim, who flees the repressiveness of ‘Arab culture’ for the oasis of freedom and modernity that is Israel” (563).

The concepts of pinkwashing and homonationalism are frequently deployed in tandem in right-wing American political discourse. Puar illustrates how both were deployed in the construction of the torture techniques used in the Abu Ghraib scandal of 2003–2004, claiming that the homosexual overtones of the torture that took place in the US military–run Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq derived from two constructions of “the queer” that have been
formed by US hegemony: the homonational Western or Westernized queer who has been integrated into the nation and what Puar has termed the “monstrerterrorist-fag”—that is, an Orientalist trope applied to Arabs and Muslims in which they are portrayed as simultaneously sexually deviant and sexually repressed and homophobic (2007, 20–22, 45–47, 86–88).

Another example of pinkwashing and homonationalism in US politics can be seen in Donald Trump’s 2016 presidential campaign. For example, during the Republican national convention that year, right-wing provocateur Milo Yiannopoulos organized a party targeted toward gay men called “Wake Up!” At that event, speakers such as right-wing Dutch politician Geert Wilders and Islamophobic blogger Pamela Geller focused on the “threat” Muslims posed to the LGBT community, as opposed to LGBT rights issues in the United States. Arguing that a “pro-gay” stance had to be inherently anti-Islam, Geller in her speech stated that “the Democrats pay lip service, and talk about transgender bathrooms.... That’s not gay rights in the 21st century. Gay rights in the 21st century is the persecution, oppression, execution of gays living in Muslim countries under the Sharia” (quoted in Pinto 2016). By emphasizing the oppression of gay people living in the Muslim world, this discourse produced by the Trump campaign is intended both to distract the listener from the LGBTQI rights situation in the United States and to encourage that listener to support violence against the Muslim world in the name of “gay rights.”

It is also important to draw attention to examples of pinkwashing elsewhere in the world that are outside of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One example is the platform set out by Dutch politician Fortuyn, who argued that because Islamic countries were intolerant of homosexuality, and that tolerance of homosexuality was an important aspect of Dutch society, immigration to the Netherlands must be halted to prevent the importation of homophobia (Osborn 2002).

Additionally, as John Whittier Treat argues in his article “The Rise and Fall of Homonationalism in Singapore,” while the Singaporean government has an explicitly homophobic legal code, they have allowed and even encouraged queer-themed events and courses in queer theory in the country for the purpose of allowing Singapore to be constructed in Western discourse as modern in comparison with its neighbors and at the same time reap the economic benefits of LGBT tourism and spending in the country (Treat 2015).

Another important example of pinkwashing in Europe can been seen in the campaign of Far Right politician Le Pen in France in 2017. According to an unofficial survey conducted by Hornet, a gay social network, 36.5 percent of gay French voters were planning to vote for Le Pen for prime minister of France, even though her party, the National Front, promised to eliminate the institution of gay marriage in France. Referred to, interestingly enough in the French press as “homonationalists,” most gay Le Pen supporters cited terrorist attacks
perpetrated by ISIS and homophobic attacks against gay men by Muslim immigrants to France as their primary reasons for supporting her (Murdock 2017).

Platforms Associated with Pinkwashing

There are several organizations, websites, and events that are particularly associated with the deployment of pinkwashing discourse regarding Israel and that often come up in discussions of pinkwashing. These have frequently served as “flashpoints” for debate and protest on the topic, and they have regularly used the arguments of pinkwashing discourse. Three of the most notable are the Israeli organization A Wider Bridge, the website GayMiddle-East.com, and the annual Tel Aviv Pride Parade.

A Wider Bridge A Wider Bridge is one of the most noteworthy Israeli LGBT groups that has been associated with pinkwashing. Describing itself as “the North American LGBTQ organization building support for Israel and its LGBTQ community,” Wider Bridge provides news coverage on LGBT issues in Israel and presents coverage of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a decidedly pro-Israel bent, featuring articles such as “Berlin: LGBT People Pro-Israel at Pride” (Avni 2015) and “From One Queer Muslim to Another” (2016), an op-ed written by Nadiya al-Noor, a queer Muslim woman arguing that the critique against Israel of pinkwashing is “just tired anti-Semitism.” She argues that ignoring Israel’s successes with LGBTQI rights because of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is unfair, as is limiting Israel’s identity to the conflict. Noor further claims that this focusing on the conflict when, for example, the Turkish occupation of Northern Cyprus is ignored, singles out Israelis simply because they are predominantly Jewish instead of Muslim.

Because of Wider Bridge's perceived association with pinkwashing, approximately 200 people at the National LGBTQ Task Force’s annual conference in Chicago on 23 January 2016 protested a reception being hosted by Wider Bridge there. Initially, criticism of the event had led to the reception being canceled; however, the National LGBTQ Task Force reversed that decision a few days prior to the conference. The protesters chanted “no justice, no peace” and, according to the Washington Blade, “held signs that read, among other things, ‘no pride in apartheid’ to draw attention to the Israeli government’s treatment of the Palestinians.” The protesters forced the reception to stop, and the invited speakers from Israeli LGBT rights group Jerusalem Open House for Pride and Tolerance were forced to leave the room (Lavers 2016).

GayMiddleEast.com Edited by Dan Littauer, the nowdefunct website GayMiddleEast.com was the subject of massive controversy among the Arab LGBTQI community in 2011 and 2012. According to activist Scott Long (2012), GayMiddleEast.com began as “a tourism site for non–Middle Easterners, with a seeming emphasis on sex tourism [in the Middle East],” and later began to position itself as a clearinghouse for information on LGBT rights and activism in the region. Long further observed that Littauer had an “obvious political bias
against reporting negative information about Israel” on the website, and a coalition of Arab LGBTQI activists drafted a statement criticizing the website for concealing the connections to Israel of the people running it (Queer Shadow Gallery Collective 2011). (Littauer and Assaf Shabi Gatenio, the owner of the website, were both born in Israel.)

![Protest against Israeli Pinkwashing in London, 2016](https://www.alamy.com/iphone-7-review-for-free-celebration-of-queer-pride.html)

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**Protest against Israeli Pinkwashing in London, 2016.** Protestors hold a sign that reads “No to Pinkwashing, No Pride in Israeli Apartheid” at a rally in Altab Ali Park. The term pinkwashing is most frequently used in criticism of Israel’s policies toward LGBT individuals and Palestinians, as Israeli politicians have often highlighted the former in order to portray Israel as more progressive than surrounding Arab countries.

**Tel Aviv Pride Parade** The annual gay pride parade in Tel Aviv, Israel, has frequently been involved in controversy associated with pinkwashing. In 2016 the pro-Palestinian organization Pinkwatching Israel launched a call for a boycott of the parade (as is done every year by groups that oppose the Palestinian occupation). The group, on its website, included videos that juxtaposed the separation wall, checkpoints, and violence against Palestinians by Israeli soldiers with scenes of revelers at the parade. Along with the videos was a statement that read, in part:

Tel Aviv is known as a “top gay destination.” However, gay pride brochures fail to mention that it is also an hour away from the world’s largest open prison, Gaza, and that it is built on stolen land. They forget to mention that the gay
soldiers you dance with in the pride parade check, arrest, and kill Palestinians on a daily basis. After your day of pride, some tour operators will take you to Bethlehem or the Dead Sea, without telling you that you will travel through the illegally Occupied Palestinian Territories, or that the wine you are drinking in the Golan Heights comes from businesses that have been declared illegal under International Law.

(PINKWATCHING ISRAEL 2016)

The Israeli anarchist group Mashpritzot has also protested the pinkwashing that they perceive the Tel Aviv Pride Parade as engaging in by holding a “die-in” in 2013, where they painted their bodies pink and laid as if dead on top of a giant rainbow flag in the middle of the event (Meronek 2014). During the Gaza War of 2014, writers on both the Palestinian and the Israeli sides called attention to how the war began shortly after the Tel Aviv Pride festival that year (Kamin 2014; Khoury 2016). Because of the ongoing war, the Jerusalem Gay Pride Parade was postponed twice because participants were concerned about the image that it would send if the parade took place at the same time as the war (Kamin 2014).

Pinkwashing and Activism

Accusations of pinkwashing have spurred activists to protest a large number of LGBT-themed events sponsored by Israel in other countries. One of the best known of these protests in the United States occurred in 2010 during Frameline’s annual San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival, which included among its sponsors that year the Israeli Consulate General. Widely reported protests led by the group Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism (QUIT) picketed the event while holding signs reading “Stop Pinkwashing Israel’s Crimes” and “Israeli Government Out of Frameline,” as well as “culture-jammed” signs advertising the festival by pasting speech balloons critiquing Israeli actions over the heads of the people depicted in the advertisements (QUIT 2010; Bay Area Campaign to End Israeli Apartheid 2010).

Another significant controversy took place in Toronto in 2010, when the organizers of Pride Toronto decided to ban the phrase “Israeli apartheid” on signs at the event after “pressure from city councilors, mayoral candidates, and Jewish advocacy groups.” The group Queers against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) claimed that this action was an attempt to ban them from participating in Pride Toronto, even though the executive director of the event said that “no group or person is banned from participating” (Dale 2010). Pride Toronto eventually reversed its decision, and the group was allowed to march (Creelman 2010).

In 2011 QuAIA attempted to march again in Pride Toronto, and after attempts to cut city
funding for the event based on the claim that the phrase “Israeli apartheid” was discriminatory, city manager Joseph P. Pennachetti issued a report stating that “the City ... cannot ... conclude that the use of the term on signs or banners to identify QuAIA constitutes the promotion of hatred or seeks to incite discrimination” (Pennachetti 2011). However, QuAIA decided not to participate in Pride Toronto that year, even after the decision was made, and instead decided to host a community event “to raise awareness of Israeli apartheid” (QuAIA 2011).

Critiques of Pinkwashing

There have been many criticisms leveled against both the concept of pinkwashing as a whole and against actions that protest LGBT-themed events sponsored by or associated with Israel. (It is interesting to note that outside of Puar, there has been little analysis of pinkwashing and homonationalism by the academy outside of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.) One criticism exemplified in a 2016 article in Haaretz by journalist Allison Kaplan Sommer is that “gay pride in Tel Aviv should be celebrated and the occupation and oppression of Palestinians should be struggled against.” Another criticism that has been made by Syracuse University professor Miriam Elman (2015), among others, is that one should also be able to critique the situation of LGBT individuals in Gaza and the West Bank, which is indeed dire, as homosexuality is a felony in Gaza, and Palestinians in the West Bank are frequently subjected to violence and discrimination.

These criticisms should be carefully examined, as well as the criticism of Noor (2016), who argues that “the accusation of ‘pinkwashing’ is a common tactic used by the anti-Israel movement to silence gay Israelis, negate their struggles, spit on their successes, and turn LGBT people against the only state in the Middle East where they would not be treated as criminals.” In a region where homophobia runs rampant and the only nation in the region that has had an explicitly nonhomophobic political agenda is accused of violating international law through its occupation and the human rights violations that have taken place as a result of it, the issue of pinkwashing and the arguments for and against it need to be analyzed.

SEE ALSO alQaws; The Bubble (2006; Eytan Fox); Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; Einayim Pkuhot (2009; Haim Tabakman); The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Homonationalism in Africa; Orientalism in Gay Pornography about the Middle East

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Poets in Latin America

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The works of four major twentieth-century poets from Argentina, Mexico, and Chile that include queer elements.

A significant issue in writing about lesbian and gay poets in Spanish America (a term used instead of “Latin America” because Brazilian poets are not addressed in this entry) is the use of terms and concepts that were forged on the basis of US-European cultural models that took nary an account of sometimes considerably different and nationally variable Latin American sociopolitical circumstances. One example of this would be the Counter-Reformation theology that has informed so much of Spanish American history. Another would be the profound intermingling of indigenous cultures, with their own sexual ideologies, with the Counter-Reformation. Although the latter quickly became hegemonic on the continent, to this day indigenous and African cultural influences are strong in many places.

The issue of terms and concepts may be seen historically in the case of the Mexican nun-intellectual Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651–1695). Despite key same-sex poems and arguably lesbian emphases in important prose works, there remains often rabid opposition to designating her as “lesbian.” And yet, Mexican lesbians have claimed that she is “the grandmother of all of us.” These questions also arise with regard to the much-praised self-exiled Cuban gay novelist Reinaldo Arenas (1943–1990), whose suicide in New York is in part linked to his inability to identify with the so-called metropolitan gay lifestyle. His psychosocial coordinates were simply too much in conflict with what he saw and how he was being “advertised” in the United States. As a consequence, any discussion of the topic is fraught with ideological conflicts.

Admittedly, with Arenas the subject is not poetry specifically. Yet he is a pertinent point of reference for the enormously controversial issue of how such a high-stakes issue as (homo)erotic desire is imbricated in complex cultural paradigms. And while certainly, narrative prose has been as much an important vehicle of queer writing in Latin America as it has been elsewhere in the West, it often has a sociohistorical specificity that, as in the case of Arenas, keeps it from easily “translating” into American culture. Poetry, by contrast, has the advantage of being able to eschew sociohistorical specificity, something that is, indeed, often seen in the more “universal” Spanish in which it is written (as opposed to the
oft-pronounced dialect markings of prose narrative). Also, when one understands how emotionally comprehensive poetry may be, it is easy to see how it has so much dominated what may be viewed as the classic core of Spanish American literature. Moreover, the vagueness and emotional comprehensiveness of poetry has often made it difficult to see the queer paradigms at work. This not only is true for the poets discussed here but also can be underscored with reference to the great icon of Spanish American poetry, the Nicaraguan modernist Rubén Darío (1867–1916): despite being a master paragon of lyrical poetry for well over a century, with the existence of an immense amount of scholarship on his work, it has been only in recent years that homoerotic details of his personal life have come to light (e.g., his love letters to the famed Mexican poet Amado Nervo [1870–1919]) and that it has become possible to speak of the homoerotic dimensions of his poetry. This is a circumstance, one might argue, in which poetry is a privileged vehicle of the broadest dimensions of human experience; at the same time, however, the complexity of poetry may make it difficult to tease out controversial dimensions, such as those associated with queer sexuality.

**Alejandra Pizarnik (1936–1972)**

Although not particularly well known among US readers, Argentine Alejandra Pizarnik (also a suicide) is unquestionably Latin America's most influential gay poet. The quality of her poetry gained early recognition (especially in Mexico and France), and by 1960 she was living in France and hobnobbing with the cream of the French literary and intellectual establishment. A Guggenheim Fellowship in 1968 and a Fulbright Scholarship in 1971 are indications of the recognition of her work while she was still very young. To a large degree, Pizarnik has received recognition because of the deep complexity of her poems, which possess a very surreal quality and demand an intense scrutiny from the reader. In this sense, she does not write about lesbian love in anything resembling a romantic manner but rather treats psychological and emotional processes as fields of emotional turmoil. Indeed, the title of one of her most important collections, *Extracción de la piedra de locura* (1968; *Extraction of the stone of madness*), seems to offer an overarching metaphor for her work and to point toward the schizophrenia that led to her institutionalization in Buenos Aires and to her suicide while on home leave from the mental hospital where she had been residing.
Cover of La Condesa Sangrienta by Argentine Poet Alejandra Pizarnik. La condesa sangrienta, first published in 1971, was Pizarnik's most important and controversial work. The book's eleven lyrical vignettes focus on the nefarious practices of the historical figure of Erzsbeth Báthory, a sixteenth-century Hungarian noblewoman who reportedly tortured to death some 650 young female victims, in part to use their blood in cosmetic practices designed to extend Báthory's youthful beauty.

It is difficult to overestimate the influence of Pizarnik's work, both in terms of its profound imbrication with the processes of women's emotions that have become central to feminism and in the way in which anything resembling lesbian paradigms eschews any facile reinscription in the lyric sentimentality of compulsory heterosexuality. Her poetry is less a question of lesbian thematics than it is an embodiment of the French feminist theorist Monique Wittig's famous dictum—spoken in the context of deconstructing binary gender categories in order to demonstrate that “woman” is a construction of enforced patriarchal, heteronormative codes—that “Lesbians are not women” (Wittig 1992, 32). Indeed, Pizarnik's most important—and most notorious—work, La condesa sangrienta (1971; The bloody countess), is not poetry in a conventional sense but a corpus of eleven lyrical vignettes that reference the nefarious practices of Erzsbeth Báthory (1560–1614), a Hungarian noblewoman who reportedly tortured to death some 650 young female victims, in part to use their blood in cosmetic practices designed to extend Báthory's youthful beauty. She perished while imprisoned in her own castle for her crimes.

While Pizarnik’s brutally lyrical evocations of the activities of Báthory and her accomplices
Xavier Villaurrutia (1903–1950)
The Mexican Xavier Villaurrutia is hardly known in the English-speaking world, but in Latin America he is a crucial figure in the intersection of a life of homoerotic desire with a major poetic movement, in this case Mexico’s Los Contemporáneos (The Contemporaries) movement, many of whose members were gay, but none with the tightly wound intensity of Villaurrutia’s existential texts. Villaurrutia brought the gay commitments of the 1920s and 1930s in Mexico into relief, and he is fundamental to present-day understanding of how prominent the gay strand of Mexican national and internationalist poetry was in that period. (The Contemporáneos movement constituted an urban poetic vanguard that sought to promote cultural sophistication in a Mexico still imbued with the traditional masculinist vitalism that sparked the Mexican Revolution [1910–1920] and the social and political structures it left as a legacy in the reconstruction of the country after 1920.)

One of the most noteworthy features of Villaurrutia’s poetry is the absence of Spanish-language gender markers. This absence is evident in the identification of the first person, although it is not unusual for the reader to assume that it is the biographical poet or his surrogate speaking, and there is no doubt as to the conventional social designation of Villaurrutia as a male speaking subject. Where the matter becomes distinctly notable is in the absence of gender marking for the second-person addressee of the poems, which in the case of amorous or erotic poetry is assumed to be the lover of the poet (i.e., the male speaking voice). Such a destitution of gender markers, which are really quite difficult to
avoid in Spanish—particularly when the nature of lyric poetry is to make attributions to the object of emotional address, attributions that the binary structure of the language systematically requires be marked for gender—may also affect third-person referents. This striving for a genderless mode of expression has little to do with a much later feminist agenda of striving to overcome the inherent sexism of, like most languages, Spanish. Instead, it is one aspect of queering Spanish, with the goal of questioning, suspending, and disrupting the language’s insistence on the heterosexist binary distribution of human subjects.

Given the intense homophobia in Mexico in the early part of the twentieth century (there is a veritable reign of heterosexual terror in Mexico following the decade-long Mexican Revolution), Villaurrutia chose not to risk writing openly homoerotic poetry. While his contemporary Salvador Novo (1904–1974), who is best known for his prose works, was able to pull off often outrageous gay camp, Villaurrutia, like most of the members of the very queer-marked Contemporáneos group, opts for circumspection. Nevertheless, prevailing heterosexism has worked to normalize Villaurrutia’s poetic expression, and criticism has had no trouble in both overlooking the absence of gender markings in his poetry and in attributing heterosexist—heterosexualizing—understandings of his poetic discourse. If the homophobic solution is to assume that the bulk of the English playwright and poet William Shakespeare’s sonnets addressed to a young man are mere “poetic convention” (the same occurs with the Mexican nun poet Juana Inés de la Cruz, with her poems addressed to other women), in the case of Villaurrutia’s syntax, it is assumed that the “undermarking” of gender must necessarily be understood to be heterosexist.

It is this “necessary” understanding that provides for a semiotic tension in his poems grounded in the challenge to the reader to perceive what the import of the suppression of gender marking might be. Villaurrutia’s so-called nocturnes are customarily described as existential propositions about the impossibility of love, the displacement of affection, the sterility of a universe inhabited by the poetic “I,” and the despair that comes from the inability to establish meaningful (i.e., erotic) human communication with the other inhabitants of that universe. Certainly, on one level the conventional lament over the vagaries of human sexual love is compounded by the particular barriers to love erected by the double helix of homophobia and compulsory heterosexuality. Yet, if the reader is unable to “catch on” to this latter added dimension of fickle Eros, the poetry still seems to work as a consequence of the poet’s eloquence in propounding a particular so-called existential cluster of sentimental motifs.

Thus, in a poem such as “Ellos y yo” (Them, and Me) the reader might be content to understand the poet’s lament over being unfortunate in love where others are successful—that is, the lament of the poetic “I” over his human failings: “Ellos saben vivir, / y yo no sé” (They know how to live, / and I do not). Certainly, this is a convincing lament, especially when the poet reprises it at the end of the poem: “Ellos saben vivir [...] / Yo: solo sé
llorar….” (They know how to live [...] / I only know how to cry....) (Villaurrutia 2004, 194, 195).

Leaving aside the suspiciously unmanly recourse to crying, a homoerotic reading of the poem might appear in the reader’s wondering why the narrator is unable to live, and exactly what the semantic scope of the verb “to live” is here. The poem was written in a period in which there was much psychologically driven talk of love as an integral part of human experience. This is an interpretation that brings with it the often explicitly stated proposition that “to live without love is to be as good as dead” (not to mention the particularly Freudian take on sexuality, which is intensely scrutinized in Mexico at the time). Thus, the poem invites the reader to wonder why it is, exactly, that the poet does not know how to live. Or, as he says at one point, they know how to kiss and I do not even know what that is. He goes on to say that “Me da miedo probar / a saber....” (I’m scared to even try / to find out....). But this and “mil cosas más” (a thousand things more) the author will never know. It is when the reader is able to move from the absence of gender marking (e.g., specifically here not saying that he is unable to kiss a woman, that he is unable to live through love for a woman) to a consideration of what the impediments might be for the poet to learn to live sexually that there can emerge an understanding of how this is not a conventional lover’s lament.

To be sure, Villaurrutia’s poems are dotted with references that one can easily attribute to the so-called same-sex underworld: the very dominance of the motif of the nocturne and the dead of night, the reference to public parks (with their nocturnal sex) and other circumstances of unapproved sexuality, the sense of the sterile emotional universe of someone who flees social intercourse (a coefficient of the “fear” previously mentioned), and the sense of méconnaissance (or misrecognition, in the sense that our understanding of life inevitably misses the mark) in the commerce with others: “Como una voz que no oiré jamás / así tú me amarás” (Like a voice I’ll never hear / that’s how you’ll love me, dear; from the poem “Presentimiento” [Premonition]) (Villaurrutia 2004, 200, 201). The rather curious syntax here serves as a correlative of the inevitable erotic disconnect that the homophobic understanding of homoaffective love ordains must occur. Because it is the poet who is speaking, his is the voice to be heard. Yet the emphasis falls on what the speaking voice cannot hear, as though it occupied itself with speaking insistently (i.e., the sustained composition of poetic texts) because it itself cannot hear the other. And while the other will speak of love, it cannot be heard, as though the conditions—such as sharing a common dialect of spoken love—for communicational exchange did not, could not exist or were irreparably disrupted.

All poetry is ultimately metapoetic, because a recognized cultural function is to address the most profound disconnects of human experience, and linguistic disconnect is, in a very real sense, the universal overarching existential disconnect. For this reason, Villaurrutia’s poetry is insistent in the failures of the language of love, made all the more acute when the
brutal impediments to homoaffective love can be attributed to that failure. Villaurrutia’s meditations on love would appear to escape the gender marking of the heterosexist paradigm. This is so because the latter banishes homoaffectivity in an abyss of nonmeaning. In this abyss, linguistic truncation is the overarching attribute of emotional nonlife: “Soledad, aburrimiento, / vano silencio profundo” (Loneliness, boredom, / hopeles silence deeply wrought; from the poem “Nocturno Solo” [Lonely Nocturne]) (Villaurrutia 2004, 70, 71).

Both Pizarnik and Villaurrutia are typical of a poetic stereotype: while they maintained relations with other individuals of shared (erotic) interests, they were essentially loners in the pursuit of their literary commitments. A subsequent mystique or aura has emerged surrounding the figure of Pizarnik, in large measure stemming from the conjunction of so many factors that confirmed her status as an outlier: her Jewish origins, her status as an unconventional woman, her early all-consuming successes, her foreign experiences, her schizophrenia, her confinement to a mental institution, and, ultimately, her suicide (in her mid-thirties). While her writing can hardly be suggestive of any romantic coloring, the image of the mentally damaged poet continuing to seek refuge in her mother’s home is unquestionably the stuff of literary legends.

Néstor Perlongher (1949–1992)

By contrast, if the Argentine Néstor Perlongher—who, like Pizarnik, was also from the south-end working-class city of Avellaneda that is part of Greater Buenos Aires— was one of the most prominent writers of his day to succumb to AIDS, his legendary status is more the consequence of political activism than the clichés of the creative genius. Perlongher played a major role in bringing gay life out of the shadows during the period of neofascist military dictatorship (1976–1983), particularly the whole demonstrative panorama of the feminization of masculinity and the figure of the transvestite/transsexual that still dominates the Argentine queer gender imaginary. (Lesbians, while hardly welcome in Argentina, were able to fly much more below the radar than gay men during the period of intense militarization imposed by the armed forces, obsessed as they were with a masculinist ideology and manly virtues.) Perlongher had played a key role in the 1971 founding, under a previous homophobic and violent military dictatorship, of the Frente de Liberación Homosexual (Homosexual Liberation Front), reputed to be one of the first militant gay organizations in the world; it was in turn heir to an earlier group dating from 1967.

A social anthropologist as well, Perlongher moved to São Paulo, Brazil, to do graduate work at the University of Campinas. He was appointed professor of anthropology at the University of Campinas in 1985, and he died of AIDS in São Paulo in 1992. Perlongher published his Campinas graduate thesis as a book, O negócio do michê: Prostituição viril em São Paulo (1986; The occupation of the taxi boy: Male prostitution in São Paulo), which was
subsequently published in Spanish in Buenos Aires. This is unquestionably Perlongher’s most influential work, although it is read in tandem with his literary prose and his poetry. Although Perlongher has been accused of romanticizing the solidarity/erotic liaisons between the taxi boys, *O negócio do michê* is nevertheless the first sociological study of its kind in Latin America, and it established parameters for understanding male-male sexuality in Latin America that are still referred to today. An important geographical dimension of Perlongher’s study concerns the unique features of Brazilian/Spanish American male homoaffectivity—mediated by both culture and language—in the realm of prostitution.

Yet, while Perlongher’s prose has been extensively praised—this sociological document and his short stories and essays informed by both personal experience and academic research—he is also remembered for his poetry. And like the compositions of his compatriot Pizarnik, Perlongher’s poetry is extremely dense and stripped of sentimentality. Perlongher also earned a Guggenheim Fellowship (*1992; presented posthumously*), and his work enjoys recognition throughout Latin America. However, where Pizarnik’s writing never had an overt reference to military-inspired violence and the deeply ingrained homophobia that inspired that violence, Perlongher brings together both the political and the sexual in his own interpretation of how the personal is political and how there is no personal refuge, not even in the romantic love of more Anglo-American–inspired Latin American gay poets, in the political and any personal commitment to it. In a word, the poetic subject is not saved from homophobic violence; rather, the poetic voice would have the reader understand that the political process in Latin America is a guarantor of annihilating violence that goes far beyond circumstantial current events. Perhaps the *michê* (taxi boy) is able to take refuge in the solidarity of his trade, but that is not the case for the subject of homoerotic desire in Latin America as a whole.

One of Perlongher’s most cited works is the long poem “Cadáveres” (*Corpses*), for which
there exist two separate translations into English. Appearing in the grimly titled *Alambres* (1987; *Wires*)—the title refers not only to the wire fences of prisoner detention camps but also to the wires of the instruments of electric torture—“Cadáveres” references the almost surrealististically multiplying bodies of political dissidents and guerrilla fighters of the resistance. In the rather unusual case of Argentina, those bodies included sexual pariahs who were persecuted to a degree not found elsewhere in the authoritarian and neofascist regimes of Latin America of the closing third of the twentieth century. These mutilated and murdered corpses figure a grotesque expropriation of the bodies of the subjects of same-sex desire (either discovered to “be” such or assigned that attribution by the agents of sociosexual control who were beyond challenge), and they figure a sexual history for Argentina that has little to do with the culture of an insouciant Anglo-American gay lifestyle. Although much has changed in Argentina and elsewhere in Latin America with regard to lesbian and gay rights, homophobic violence remains underaddressed in any systematic way.

**Gabriela Mistral (1889–1957)**

One of the most important gay icons of Spanish American poetry is Gabriela Mistral, who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1945. The fact that Mistral was sponsored for the award by US First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (1884–1962), at a time when post–World War II women were just beginning to acquire a healthy array of public voices, lends Mistral’s recognition a particularly lesbian poignancy in the context of the blatant misappropriation of her work by the masculinist and homophobic agents of cultural power in her native Chile, accompanied by an equal measure of distaste for her lesbian (or, at least, nonfeminine) persona and the strident refusal to even consider the implications of her gender nonconformity.

In actuality, Mistral penned little in the way of anything that can be called overtly lesbian verse. Nevertheless, despite the way in which nationalist interests emphasize the interrelated maternal and schoolmarmish aspects of Mistral’s poetry (in a country in which female grade-school teachers were expected to be essentially lay nuns), there is a significant displacement of conventional heterosexuality: a troping of the conventions of female-male love, especially from the point of view of a presumably subservient (indeed, often emotionally needy) female voice when addressing the male interlocutor; and even, perhaps, a certain parodying of emotional commonplaces. It is now widely known that Mistral, who was viewed by the Chilean establishment principally as an iconic educator of children, did not think much of the mythification of the grade-school teacher as a saintly paragon. Indeed, Mistral played important roles as a diplomat, as a voice of humanistic values, and as a spokesperson for an emerging Latin American feminist agenda, which explains her extensive friendship with Roosevelt. Thus, it is difficult today to read her famous “La oración de la maestra” (*The teacher’s prayer*), so often recited in official
educational ceremonies, as completely “straight” in its implied characterizations of the supine handmaiden of God and the state in the education of innocent children. It is this sort of almost saccharine maternalism that makes Mistral so readily available as a poet of institutional nationalism, while at the same time constituting a problematic discourse that is of interest to queer interpretations:

Lord! You who were a teacher, I beg you to forgive my teaching. Forgive my name as a teacher, You who were for the entire world....

Permit me to be more a mother than the mothers themselves, so that I may love and defend as they do those who are not flesh of my flesh. May one of my pupils be a perfect line of poetry and allow her to be pierced by my most penetrating melody when my lips can no longer sing.

(AUTHOR’S TRANSLATION)

Mistral, therefore is most prized for the overall queerness of her personal life (four known female partners), which included her quite difficult relationship with her homophobic native country that, on the one hand, lionized her for certain prominent thematic aspects of her work, while repudiating her for the questionable dimensions of her origins, her humanistic convictions, and her personal life. In this sense, Mistral stands in opposition to Chile’s other Nobel laureate (1971), Pablo Neruda (1904–1973). Neruda, who is important for many literary accomplishments, is most remembered, however, for the profound and frank heterosexual love of his poetry, in juxtaposition to which Mistral’s oeuvre is veritably a lesbian contestation.

An adequate anthology of Spanish American queer poetry remains to be assembled. Perhaps it would be impossible, given not only the extensive array of poetic practices that include, to one explicit degree or another, so many references to homoaffective love and desire, but also how one might want to insist that all significant cultural production is, to one degree or another, queer marked. The poets examined here would, in any event, be veritable anchors of any such anthology, and their importance would be confirmed by how the queer dimensions of their work, discussed in this entry, would very much underline such an anthology as a whole.

SEE ALSO Antes que Anochezca (1992; Reinaldo Arenas); Frente de Liberación Homosexual; Literature, Caribbean (Anglophone and Creole); Literature, Caribbean (Francophone)

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Popular music would never be what it is today without its strong LGBTQ pull. From its origins in rock and roll from the 1940s and 1950s, popular music included a wide range of styles from the early 1960s onward. Historically, popular music helped steer an antiestablishment cultural movement in the United Kingdom and United States that gained momentum with the civil rights movement and protests against the Vietnam War. In 1969, with the Stonewall riots and subsequent gay rights movement, music was behind the queer community’s fight against government regulations that persecuted sexual minorities. Historically, musicians and bands have partaken in, and shaped, the sexual revolution, which challenged the normalization of heterosexuality and monogamy. Epic tracks testify to this, such as Dusty Springfield’s “You Don’t Have to Say You Love Me,” k.d. lang’s “Constant Craving,” Melissa Etheridge’s “Come to My Window,” the Who’s “I’m a Boy,” the Kinks’ “David Watts” and “Lola,” Tracy Chapman’s “Fast Car,” the Beatles’ “You’ve Got to Hide Your Love Away,” and the Tornados’ “Do You Come Here Often?”

LGBTQ identities were discernible in popular music long before Stonewall and are traceable back to the birth of the blues, jazz, and Weimar cabaret (the last a trend that emerged in late 1920s Germany). The intrinsic relationship between music and identity is always predicated on race, gender, sexuality, class, age, and citizenship; hence, divergences from “normalcy” have standardized queer forms of expression. Predating rock and roll, the singers Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, and Ma Rainey (the “mother of the blues”) addressed topics of same-sex attraction, with Rainey often donning men's top hat and tails to express her nonheterosexuality, or rather, female-masculinity. Her hit “Prove It on Me Blues,” recorded in 1928, was the first resistance song that explicitly proclaimed a woman’s sexual interest for another woman. Blues would never have been the same without these bisexual women who demonstrated the potency of gendered Otherness as an expression of human behavior.

**Early Pioneers: Artists and Their Managers**

Through the ages, musicians’ identities have played a pervasive role, expanding the possibilities for self-expression. In the mid-1950s, rock and roll performer Little Richard
(né Richard Penniman) employed a falsetto singing style that complemented his flamboyant look. The lyrical hook “A wop bop a loo bop, a wop bam boom!” in his song “Tutti Frutti” (1955) was borne out of explicit references to anal sex and queer men (slang: fruity) in an over-the-top mix of camp and drag. Notably, the original lyrics were censored by Little Richard’s producer and not played in the United Kingdom. As one of the original pioneers of rock, he set the agenda for those who followed: Elton John, Mick Jagger, David Bowie, Madonna, Prince, Morrissey of the Smiths, and Holly Johnson of Frankie Goes to Hollywood. Then there was Johnnie Ray, often considered the “father of rock and roll,” who bridged the style of Frank Sinatra and Elvis Presley in an unorthodox and distinctly queer way. Ray's crooner voice, frequently mistaken for being black and female (his major influence being gospel), was transgressive. His performances stirred up a frenzy among his teenage audiences. Openly bisexual in an era when homosexuality was criminalized, he gained notoriety in the media through various arrests for solicitation. Ray's highly energetic performances were outrageous for their time, with his popularity sealed toward the end of his life in the United Kingdom and Australia rather than in the United States. Ray was also associated with the Los Angeles gay activist community, with personal friends including gay icons Judy Garland and Charles Pierce.

By and large, the unique relationships between artists and their managers have steered queerness in popular music. During the 1960s, many managers were up-front about their nonhetero sexuality: Robert Stigwood of Cream and the Bee Gees, Simon Napier-Bell of the
Yardbirds and Marc Bolan, Billy Gaff of Rod Stewart, Kenneth Pitt of David Bowie, Barry Krost of Cat Stevens, and Larry Parnes of Tommy Steele and Billy Fury. In addition, Brian Epstein’s openness about being gay had a major bearing on his managing the Beatles, illustrated not only in their music but also in their politics and image; he restyled their long hair look, with mop-top hair and tightfitting single-breasted, mohair suits, which many deemed effeminate. EMI chairman Joseph Lockman, who signed the Beatles, also declared his homosexuality, as did Andrew Loog Oldham, manager of the Rolling Stones, who put the band into drag for photo shoots and placed Mick Jagger on the road to being one of the most camp and dandified performers of all time. In addition, Jagger’s experimentation with glam-rock fashion and gay culture was influenced by his close contact with icons Rudolf Nureyev, Truman Capote, and Andy Warhol.

**Shifting Personas and Sensibilities**

In contrast to glam rock (or glitter rock) in the early 1970s was the English working-class mod look from the 1960s. A mod revival commenced in the late 1970s in the United Kingdom, spreading to the United States in the early 1980s. As a reinvention of the nineteenth-century Parisian flaneur, with sharp contours of tailored suits and shoes borrowed from the jazz boom of the late 1950s, the mods distinguished themselves from the rockers, a biker culture with distinctly different musical preferences. Links between the mod scene, glam rock, alternative rock, and art rock were established by David Bowie, who drew stylistically on Elvis Presley and Little Richard.

While the glam rocker Jobriath became the first gay musician to sign to a major label (Elektra) in the United States in the early 1970s, Bowie was the most talked about artist in the United Kingdom. Constructed on shifting personas such as Arnold Corns, Major Tom, Ziggy Stardust, Halloween Jack, Aladdin Sane, the Thin White Duke, and Jareth the Goblin King, Bowie’s inimitable style turned to a Warholian pop-art aesthetic that was quirky, camp, and androgynous. Mostly, it was the brazen politics of his coming out to *Melody Maker* in 1972 that marked a watershed in rock history; greatly inspired, fans, gay and straight, would rethink their sexuality and gender roles. Contesting conventions and gender norms in his songs and appearance (clothes, makeup, hair, and mannerisms), Bowie would demonstrate the transgressive power of pop music. This was particularly discernible in his tactics of gender play evident in the albums *Hunky Dory* (1971), *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars* (1972), *Aladdin Sane* (1973), *Diamond Dogs* (1974), and *Heroes* (1977). Revolutionizing attitudes toward gender and sexuality, Bowie dismantled the boundaries that keep people apart; he proved to generations that being queer is a “natural” part of human existence. Moreover, he showed that glam rock and pop styles are about ideology and authenticity (*Auslander 2006; Hawkins 2016*).

A close friend of Bowie was the New York hipster Lou Reed. Throughout his career, Reed sustained a degree of opacity around his sexual orientation. His song "Walk on the Wild
Side” (1972), produced by Bowie and Mick Ronson, contained lyrics that unsettled normative sex roles. Referring to transsexuality, transvestites, oral sex, and male prostitution, this song was risqué, released when homosexuality was still certified as a mental illness by the American Psychiatric Association in its *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. Reed’s close collaboration with Warhol involved his importing avant-garde rock music into the popular arena as a platform for highlighting difference and sexual ambiguity. Reed would be a spokesman for transgender people, collaborating in 2004 with Antony (later to become Anohni) on the track “Fistful of Love” (2005). In line with Warhol, he addressed aspects of sexuality that broke with conventions and norms, his cause being to fight for people of minority sexualities.

Albeit from a different perspective, Dusty Springfield’s sexuality also drew much media attention. In an interview with the *Evening Standard* in 1970, Springfield came out as bisexual. A major icon of the Swinging Sixties, this blue-eyed soul singer from England based much of her style on Motown, which she introduced to the United Kingdom. Springfield’s style of singing, ultraglamorous look, and camp disposition turned her into role model.

Janis Joplin, whose bisexuality was public knowledge, died at age twenty-seven in the same year Springfield came out, leaving behind legendary tracks such as “Piece of My Heart,” “Me and Bobby McGee,” and “Ball and Chain.” It was also around this time that Elton John declared his bisexuality; he would come out as gay only in 1988, starting the Elton John AIDS Foundation in the early 1990s. Among the numerous nonhetero contemporaries of Springfield and John were rock legends Freddie Mercury, front man of the group Queen; Pete Townshend, lead guitarist and main songwriter for the Who; and Dave Davies, lead guitarist of the Kinks. In effect, all these musicians provided vital sites for contesting and celebrating gender difference—that is, before the arrival of AIDS.

**AIDS and the 1980s**

For many, AIDS set the clock back. Artists now struggled for AIDS awareness, battling against prejudice. Among those who bravely became associated with HIV/AIDS patients and their causes was Madonna Louise Ciccone, an activist for AIDS victims, who experienced the loss of close friends to the disease. Her video for “Like a Prayer” (1989) would become an ode to religious freedom, the atrocities of AIDS, and equal rights, while her album *Erotica* (1992), with tracks such as “Deeper and Deeper,” confronted taboos of sexual desire and homosexuality. Madonna’s solidarity with the LGBTQ community has gone down in history. As one of the most significant queer icons in pop, she had as her mission to denounce homophobia, racism, and misogyny, supporting marginalized cultures, such as blacks, transgendered persons, Hispanics, Muslims, the Roma people, and lesbians. Her work would emancipate gender by foregrounding queerness and the LGBTQ community in the majority of her songs. *Erotica*, simultaneously released with her controversial book *Sex*, became a milestone in pop from the 1990s onward, empowering a
new generation of female artists, such as Beyoncé, Christina Aguilera, Pink, Britney Spears, Nicki Minaj, Lady Gaga, and Janet Jackson.

Like her contemporary Prince, Madonna developed Bowie’s strategies of gender play, taking them to new heights. Prince, who died in 2016, will be remembered as a pansexual effete male artist who always wore makeup, high heels, and unisex clothing. In the song “Controversy” (1981), from early in his career, he asked, “Am I black or white? Am I straight or gay?” In contrast to Bowie and Madonna, Prince was African American, with a quite different set of challenges. Rejecting clichés of the macho black male performer, he liberated the stricture of masculinity. Parody became his main tool. Significantly, women were more part of his world than men, in the recording studio, on stage, and in his private life. Mirroring his own fluid identity, his musical style was crossover; he constantly readjusted to new technologies, trends, and production techniques. Instating his original, androgynous identity in the 1970s, he staked out the territory for dissident masculinity among future generations of pop artists.

While Prince was arguably one of the queerest males in popular music, there were other overtly nonheteronormative celebrities and bands, predominantly based in the United Kingdom: Boy George from Culture Club, Bronski Beat, Eurythmics, Soft Cell, the Pet Shop Boys, Wham!, Erasure, Frankie Goes to Hollywood, Morrissey of the Smiths, and others. A spate of straight artists also raised the bar for queer visibility; among these were Billy Bragg, Michael Jackson, Dolly Parton, Diana Ross, and Barbra Streisand. All these artists had a strong LGBTQ following and expressed their solidarity with marginalized groups throughout their careers. MTV, with its launch in 1981, showcased popular culture and its subjectivities by playing music videos twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. It also seized the opportunity to respond to the AIDS epidemic in 1985 with a provocative campaign that targeted teenagers and safe sex. Various organizations sprang up, dedicated to the fight against AIDS in pop music. The Red Hot Organization, for instance, was established in 1990 in response to the hardships encountered by New York artists. Featuring celebrities such as Annie Lennox, David Byrne, Tom Waits, U2, Deborah Harry, Iggy Pop, and k.d. lang, the album Red Hot + Blue was released in 1990, selling over 1 million copies. Significantly, this became the template for many other releases by Red Hot, such as Red Hot + Dance, No Alternative, Red Hot + Country, Stolen Moments: Red Hot + Cool, Red Hot + Bothered, and Red Hot + Rio 2. The impact of Red Hot and its numerous album releases was to raise donations and create awareness of HIV and AIDS on a global scale. In Latin America, the bisexual singer Cazuza (Agenor de Miranda Araújo Neto) in 1989 became the first national figure in Brazil to come out as HIV positive, and he played a crucial role in raising awareness about the transmission and effects of AIDS. After his death a year later, his mother founded the nongovernmental organization Viva Cazuza, which still directs royalties to HIV-positive children and adolescents.
As one of the most mediated forms of entertainment, popular music puts identities continuously on display (Hawkins 2016, 2017). In 1998 George Michael, who originally rose to fame in the duo Wham!, created a media stir when he came out. Caught by an undercover Los Angeles police officer (who allegedly tried to solicit him) at Will Rogers Memorial Park in Beverly Hills, he turned this incident to his advantage by putting his hands up and confessing on national television. Directly following this incident, his song and video “Outside” was released. It became a potent retort to the hypocrisy around gay bashing and prejudice. Satirizing the Los Angeles police force and California law, the video graphically captured the struggles of LGBTQ people. At the climactic point depicting Michael dancing with his Village People look-alike troupe, the men’s lavatory magically transforms into a disco floor. Michael’s arrangement of “Outside” is hi-NRG (pronounced “high energy”) disco, a response in itself to the resistance movement of LGBTQ communities that accelerated in the 1970s. The politics of outing himself to disco demonstrated how this style continued to survive and subvert conventions some twenty years after the infamous “disco demolition night” on 12 July 1979, at Comiskey Park in
Chicago. At the height of this event, between two games of a scheduled baseball doubleheader, a huge crate of disco records was spectacularly exploded, at which point thousands of White Sox fans charged onto the field.

In quite a different way, Kurt Cobain of Nirvana, four years Michael's junior, turned to a subgenre of alternative rock, grunge, also known as the Seattle sound. Cobain’s own complex identity spurred him on in negotiating and resisting norms. Uneasy with his own straightness, he would claim that he always felt gay in spirit. A self-proclaimed feminist and anti-racist, he committed himself to the cause of LGBTQ rights. By the time of his death in 1994 at age twenty-seven, Cobain had reconfigured white US rock music as a queer genre (Hawkins 2016). Often appearing in dresses on stage, he would disturb the divide between male bonding and homosexuality by lovingly kissing Nirvana's bass guitarist, Krist Novoselic. In addition, a long-standing feud between Cobain and Guns N’ Roses was rooted in Cobain’s deep disdain for the homophobic and misogynistic attitude of that group’s lead singer, Axl Rose. As political activist, Cobain with Nirvana issued a statement in 1992 against the proposed (and ultimately defeated) Oregon Ballot Measure 9, which would have removed the LGBTQ community's antidiscrimination protection.

**Eschewing Norms in Songs**

Inherent in the majority of popular songs are narratives of love. Songs are invitations for listeners to think about their identities and eschew conventions and norms. Consider the liberation and hope for millions in tracks such as Gloria Gaynor's “I Will Survive,” Diana Ross's “I'm Coming Out,” Cher’s “Believe,” “Smalltown Boy” by Bronski Beat, “I Want to Break Free” by Queen, “Go West” by the Pet Shop Boys, “Y.M.C.A” by the Village People, Culture Club’s “Do You Really Want to Hurt Me,” Lady Gaga’s “Born This Way,” Frankie Goes to Hollywood’s “Relax,” “Battle Cry” by Angel Haze, “You Make Me Feel (Mighty Real)” by Sylvester, and Logic’s “1-800-273-8255.” Powerful sentiments are communicated by these songs’ memorable musical riffs, hooks, and production. Importantly, it is the voice that becomes the signifier of sexual identity. A fitting example is R.E.M. front man Michael Stipe, who incorporated into his albums subject matter that is oriented toward political activism and tolerance of gender fluidity. His voice, which defined R.E.M.’s sound, has always worked in tandem with the band’s fashionable image and “new” masculinity. It was with the release of the album *Monster* in 1994 that “a new openness about sexuality in Stipe’s interviews” was detectable (Maus 2006, 205). That R.E.M. muddied its style by revising rock, infusing it with other styles, such as disco, contributed to the band’s appeal, especially for fans considering alternative forms of identity.

Musical performances harness expectations of identity—usually, the straighter the genre, the less likely to disturb norms (Whiteley and Rycenga 2006; Hawkins 2017). This is borne out of the strong reactions to the metal icon Rob Halford of Judas Priest after he discussed his homosexuality in an interview with the *Advocate* in 1998. Heavy metal, known for its
embodiment of conservative social norms, has fewer gay icons and audiences than many other genres. Hence, it would take sixteen years before two high-profile metal artists followed Halford in coming out, as Cynic members Paul Masvidal and Sean Reinert did in 2014. Also, Kristian Eivind Espedal, better known as Gaahl and the front man of the Norwegian black metal band Gorgoroth, came out as gay in 2008, and front woman Otep Shamaya of the nu metal band Otep, revealed to the media in 2005 she was lesbian.

Creative Impulses

Following the launch of her career in 2008, Lady Gaga became a major queer icon, celebrating difference and displacing gender norms. While gender experimentation is fodder to media hype, it is often the result of a creative urge to try new things. The New York band Scissor Sisters, formed in 2001, combined glam rock, disco, pop rock, and electroclash in its debut album Scissor Sisters (2004), an arrival point in popular music history. The group's original musical signature was built on the legacy of Madonna, Elton John, George Michael, the Pet Shop Boys, Freddie Mercury, and Kylie Minogue, as it challenged heterosexual hegemony via its “genderqueer” strategy (Leibetseder 2012). Together with colead singer Ana Matronic, Jake Shears would emphasize a gay sensibility in Scissor Sisters’ songs, videos, and live onstage antics, earning a reputation for being shocking, subversive, and delightfully outrageous.

While Scissor Sisters was increasing in popularity, Lady Gaga’s career was launched. Her breakthrough came with her debut studio album, The Fame (2008), and its reissue, The Fame Monster (2009), which fused glam rock, disco, goth, and synthpop. Lady Gaga, a
YouTube phenomenon in her own right, quickly established herself as a major queer icon, celebrating difference and displacing gender norms. Through drag, she demonstrated that variations in femininity could widen the space for women and minority groups to empower themselves. As part of the post-Madonna generation, Lady Gaga extended the politics of representation into spaces that were shaped by new forms of technological production and social media. Toying with gender norms, she disturbed stereotypes through strategies such as “bio queening” (Halberstam 2012; Iddon and Marshall 2014; Hawkins 2016).

Inextricably linked to feminism and notions of otherness, bio queening involves artists who are biologically female performing in an exaggerated manner and appropriating male drag queens.

A rapper of Afro–Puerto Rican descent, Destiny Nicole Frasqueri, known as Princess Nokia, grew up within the queer community of New York City. Identifying as bisexual, Princess Nokia rose to fame through her performances in the gay community. In 2017, she made headlines by slapping a white male in the audience at one of her shows for mouthing sexist and racist comments. Like many artists of her generation, Nokia released her material on YouTube. Her second track, “Bitch I’m Posh,” went viral on SoundCloud, paving the way for her debut album, *1992 Deluxe*, released in September 2017. Another female artist known for queening is Nicki Minaj, often acclaimed as the “black Lady Gaga.” Minaj would emerge as one of the most famous female rappers of all time during the first decade of the twenty-first century. Taking hip-hop and rap in new directions, Minaj became a beacon for minority groups, with a large gay following. Addressing the problem of suicide among gay teenagers, she has been a fierce spokeswoman for equality and antidiscrimination.

Notwithstanding her own alleged bisexuality, Minaj has steered away from stereotypes by exaggerating her construction of femininity. In the video of her hit “Anaconda” (2014), she slams racism, misogyny, and structures of patriarchy in a highly aestheticized pornosphere. Drake, who is a featured guest on the track, also appears in a scene in the video. In the climactic moment, Minaj uses a lap-dance sequence to disempower the male. Following in the steps of Queen Latifah, Salt-N-Pepa, and Missy Elliott, Minaj situates the black female body in a context that refutes traditional classifications.

Trans Artists

Transgender pop artists have always been part of the music industry. In the 1950s, the actress and nightclub singer Christine Jorgensen became the first white trans woman to draw media attention. Historically, trans men have been less represented than their female counterparts, notable exceptions being Billy Tipton, Mina Caputo, and Beth Elliott. It is important to point out that *agender* artists, such as Angel Haze, choose the pronoun “they” to refute conforming to structures of genderqueer classifications (Leibetseder 2017). Other notable transgender artists include the black Colombian trans woman Janer, La Gata, Jessica Xavier, Joe Stevens, Alexandros N. Constansis, Lucas Silveira, and Dana
International. Without exception, transgender artists in popular music focus not only on aspects of gender redefinition, sexuality, and the complexity of intersectionality but also on the political issues that necessitate recognition and survival.

**Into the Future**

In the early years of the second decade of the twenty-first century, a new stream of LGBTQ hip-hop artists emerged. Frank Ocean released his album *Channel Orange* (2012), about his desire and love for a man. Turning to social media to access their fan bases, a new generation of African American musicians, influenced by queer ball culture and drag, would identify with the label queer hop (as opposed to homo pop). Azealia Banks, Zebra Katz, Le1f, Mykki Blanco, and Angel Haze queered hip-hop at the same time certain white artists gained visibility. Additionally, the country artist Steve Grand ached for his lover in the song and video “All-American Boy” and the pop artist Troye Sivan narrated the struggles of same-sex relationships in a trilogy of music videos, while the indierock singer-songwriter John Grant lamented being HIV positive on the track “Ernest Borgnine” (2013). Kissing, holding hands, having sex, and facing suicide are powerful narratives integrated into these heartbreaking tales of queer relationships. Will Young, Miley Cyrus, Sam Smith, Olly Alexander, Beth Ditto, Alex Newell, Lowell, t.A.T.u., and Mary Lambert have also pushed LGBTQ rights to the forefront of public awareness in their acts.

At the close of the second decade of the twenty-first century, a significant shift occurred as many straight men and women shared the voices of LGBTQ artists. In particular, transgender people became more conspicuous, with artists such as Anohni speaking out on issues that deal with being a trans woman. Her trans voice became a powerful mediator of sexual fluidity, representative of a gradually shifting public perception of what gender is. Similarly, trans artists Angel Haze, Mykki Blanco, Ezra Furman, Shea Diamond, Mina Caputo, Black Cracker, Cash Askew, Laura Jane Grace, Laith Ashley, Shawnee, Ryan Cassata, KC Ortiz, and Lucas Silveira gained visibility in mainstream pop. The tremendous effort that goes into shaping identities in popular music involves stories of survival through happenings that map out performers in extraordinary ways. Sexual freedom, in all its diversity, requires dissolving queerphobia/homophobia by getting fans to rethink sexual orientation and the possibilities for articulating their own gender in any number of contexts.

**SEE ALSO** Afropop Music; Eurovision Song Contest; Harlem Renaissance; The Lesbian Music Movement; Thai K-Pop

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Pornography

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The depiction of nonnormative sex acts in written and visual forms throughout history.

Images and descriptions of various forms of same-sex and opposite-sex desires and acts have existed for millennia, serving a variety of purposes over the course of human history. In some instances, they were intended to stimulate the senses and inspire sexual desire. In others, depictions of sexual acts were meant to serve explicitly political purposes by creating opportunities to critique monarchs or government officials. The word pornography—which is Greek in origin and translates roughly as “to write about prostitutes”—was not used to describe material of this sort, in any kind of sustained way, until the nineteenth century. Still, historians interested in this topic have frequently applied the term to a variety of representations from different periods and regions ranging from seventeenth-century England (Toulalan 2007) to twenty-first-century China (Jacobs 2012). As a field of study, explorations of pornography have generated considerable scholarship since Steven Marcus produced his landmark study The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-nineteenth-Century England (1966), as evidenced by the creation of the journal Porn Studies in 2014.

Scholars interested in the subject of sexual representation have tended to struggle with definitions. Some, for example, have sought to differentiate pornography from erotica, with the former, as historian Karen Harvey (2005) has noted, defined as material that contains explicit and repeated references to sexual organs and acts, and the latter being more likely to achieve its erotic ends through the use of allusion and metaphor. Still others, such as historian Ian Moulton (2013), use the phrase “erotic writing” to describe sexual representations in the early modern period. For the purposes of this entry, the word pornography is used in its widest and most encompassing sense to trace the long history of erotic representations intended to stimulate desire while simultaneously, perhaps, performing other cultural functions such as self-assertion and self-realization (Waugh 1996). Pornography is assumed to be one of the many ways in which elements of the LGBTQ+ experience might be reconstructed. To borrow from historian Lisa Sigel, “It acts as a mirror—or, more accurately, as a series of broken mirrors—that reflects, refracts, and distorts a picture of sexuality” (Sigel 2002, 2).
Erotic Images in the Ancient World

Images and texts that might be considered, broadly, as part of the history of pornography date to the ancient past. In the Greek world (c. 750 BCE–146 BCE) sex between men, in particular, was a feature of life in many of the diverse independent states that made up the archipelago. Reverence for the athletic nude body was a prominent feature of these cultures, reflected in the public statuary that dotted the landscapes of many Greek cities. While these works of art, familiar to many contemporary museumgoers, must have certainly piqued the erotic interests of ancient Greek men and women, other artistic forms were more clearly intended to titillate and excite sexual passions. Erotic verses, for instance, were recited at public and private celebrations, and depictions of sexual contact between the erastes (older men) and the eromenos (adolescent youths) were a common theme on the painted vases and drinking vessels that remain a vital source for historians interested in studying this period (Hupperts 2006).
Erotic images were also a feature of life in ancient Rome and the Roman Empire (c. 500 BCE–450 CE). While some moralists argued that homosexual relations were a pernicious import from Greece, and Roman law penalized sex between Roman citizens and freeborn boys (slaves were not covered by this law), it is clear that same-sex eroticism was an important part of Roman culture. Visual material that both depicted same-sex love and excited sexual passions survives and reminds us that, as in the case of the Greeks, relations between men and between women were not necessarily socially proscribed. For instance, a first-century CE silver drinking vessel, referred to as the Warren Cup, contains two erotic depictions of men having anal sex. It was purchased by the British Museum in 1999 for £1.8 million and has been the subject of academic disputes, with some claiming that it is a forgery (Alberge 2014). Similarly, images of various opposite-sex and same-sex acts have been unearthed in the excavated remains of the city of Pompeii, a Roman imperial resort located in what is now southern Italy, which was covered by hot volcanic ash when Mount Vesuvius erupted in 79 CE. Found in a brothel and in a bathhouse, these images of men having anal sex and women engaging in cunnilingus were meant to advertise the services of prostitutes and to stimulate desire (Williams 2010).

A tradition of erotic writing and imagery was also present in several non-Western contexts in the ancient period. In China during the Jin dynasty (265–420 CE) a tradition of erotic poetry that described male prostitution and sexual acts between men emerged (Hinsch 1990). Other ancient writings contained erotic content that could be used to instruct and to stimulate pleasure. One source, written in the classical Indian language of Sanskrit sometime between the second and the fourth centuries CE and titled the Kama Sutra, discussed sexuality in a frank and open manner. Intended as a commentary on various aspects of the human existence—as well as a rumination on love, desire, pleasure, and a whole host of experiences and emotions—it was also clearly used to stimulate the senses with descriptions of multiple sexual positions and same-sex relations. The subject matter of the Kamasutra was diverse and included descriptions of women using dildos and discussions of oral-sex techniques (Carton 2006). Similarly, depictions of same-sex behaviors were a feature of temple art in northern India (particularly in the district of Odisha). Carved sculptures on the outside of temple entrances were frequently explicit and depicted women engaged in sexual acts with other women or men, mutually masturbating or performing oral sex. Ceramic art produced in the period 150 to 800 CE by the Moche on the northern coast of Peru also dealt with erotic themes and in a number of instances depicted anal sex between male figures (Weismantel 2004).

The Tenth to the Seventeenth Centuries

Christianity and Islam, both of which took hold in Europe, the modern-day Middle East, and parts of Asia in the late ancient and early medieval periods, condemned homosexual acts, seeing them as crimes against nature and violations of God’s plan for humanity (though
Christianity tended to denigrate the pleasures of the flesh more than Islam, which placed a higher premium on sexual pleasure. Despite official injunctions against sodomy, male homoerotic texts and images still emerged as a component of medieval culture in Christian and Islamic territories. Celebrations of friendship between men in Christian Europe often contained homoerotic elements. The monk and theologian Anselm of Canterbury (1033–1109) ruminated in his writings on the nature of love in letters he wrote to his religious brothers at the Bec monastery in Normandy, France (Vaughn 2010). While historians have debated the degree to which pronouncements of this sort were sexual (as opposed to spiritual), the homoerotics of these texts must be considered as part of a broader history of textual and visual representations of desire. Islamic poetry and prose works, including one text titled The Meadow of the Gazelles: In Praise of Beautiful Youths by the Egyptian Muhammad al-Nawadj (c. 1383–1455), lauded the beauty and sexual allure of adolescent boys and young men. Intended to highlight varied expressions of human sexuality, texts of this sort reveal the ubiquity of erotic celebrations of same-sex desire (Patané 2006).

Sexually explicit images emerged as an important component of the visual cultures of China and Japan in what European historians tend to identify as the early modern period (1500–1750). In China, erotic writing and visual art depicting same-sex relations were prominent features of seventeenth-century culture. Works such as Jinpingmei (1611; The golden lotus) and Tuan-hsiu-pien (c. late 17th century; Records of the cut sleeve) contained detailed descriptions of sex between men. While less common, descriptions of sex between women appeared in seventeenth-century texts that detailed, for example, activities in a Buddhist convent. Illustrations, scroll paintings, and prints also depicted sexual acts in explicit terms. One showed a woman using a dildo to pleasure another, while multiple paintings from the period graphically illustrated men engaged in anal sex (Carton 2006). The tradition of erotic art was a prominent feature of Japanese culture during this period, as well. Known as shunga, these works appeared in painted form, in woodblock prints, and in books, and were especially popular during the Edo (or Tokugawa) period in Japanese history (1603–1868). Brothel scenes and depictions of anal sex between men, in keeping with several Japanese traditions that sanctioned these relations between older and younger Buddhist monks, samurai warriors, and actors, were prevalent features of these works (Clark et al. 2013; Screech 2009).

**European Traditions—Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries**

In Europe the emergence of a vibrant and extensive print culture in the late fifteenth century transformed the ways in which erotic art was produced and distributed in that region of the world. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries pornographic texts and images were a common feature of European cultures. Much of this printed work was frequently expensive (though prices did begin to decline from the seventeenth century)
and beyond the reach of the many ordinary men and women who remained illiterate. It was also often, in terms of intent, not exclusively about arousing sexual desire or providing erotic pleasure. As historian Lynn Hunt has observed about pornographic texts and images in this period, “If we take pornography to be the explicit depiction of sexual organs and sexual practices with the aim of arousing sexual feelings, then pornography was almost always adjunct to something else until the middle or end of the eighteenth century” (1996a, 10). In many instances, this work used explicit descriptions of human sexuality to address political developments such as the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660 or the power of the Catholic clergy and the aristocracy in prerevolutionary France.

Work depicting same-sex acts abounded in this context. Pietro Aretino (1492–1556), an Italian author, produced a fictional series of dialogues between two prostitutes in a 1534 publication that detailed both sameand opposite-sex acts. Sex between women was depicted both textually and visually, in particular, in The Dialogues of Luisa Sigea (c. 1659), a book by the Frenchman Nicholas Chorier (1612–1692). The acts highlighted in this text tended to be kissing, manual stimulation, and pubic rubbing. Though frequently criticized as a sterile or unproductive endeavor in this period, sexual acts between men were also represented in this flourishing print culture. The play The Farce of Sodom, or the Quintessence of Debauchery, first published in the late seventeenth century, discussed sex between men in explicit terms with the intention of both producing shock and stimulating desire (Toulalan 2007). This tradition of depicting same-sex acts in textual and visual forms continued into the eighteenth century. In England, modern pornographic traditions (with a primary emphasis on pleasure) were inaugurated by the publication in the 1740s of John Cleland’s Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure (known also as Fanny Hill), a work that contained descriptions of sexual relations between women and between men alike.

**Pornography and Its Regulation—The Nineteenth Century**

The politically oriented pornography that proliferated during the era of the French Revolution (1789–1799) and critiqued the ancien régime by portraying, for example, members of the prerevolutionary National Assembly engaged in anal sex (Hunt 1996b) came to influence British traditions in the early nineteenth century, most notably the work of a London pornographer named William Dugdale (c. 1799–1868). Pornographic novels and texts that depicted homosexual acts or flagellation scenes between members of the same sex became a dominant feature of the book trade in mid-century Britain and elsewhere. In metropolises throughout Europe, the display of obscene literature in booksellers’ windows was an important part of the public culture of the city. Specific districts catered to the consumers of pornographic texts (such as the purported sexual memoir My Secret Life, published privately in the 1880s), the most notable being London’s Holywell Street, a thoroughfare near the Thames in the borough of Westminster (Nead 2000). It was in these spaces that same-sex-desiring men could purchase, in 1881, The Sins
of the Cities of the Plain, a pornographic novel that contained graphic descriptions of sex between men.

While various laws against obscenity had been enacted in different regions of the world before the nineteenth century (e.g., a 1722 Japanese regulation against shunga and other forms of erotica), this era saw increased efforts to suppress the distribution of pornography. Britain's Obscene Publications Act (1859) and laws in other European countries sought to enforce new standards of moral purity and maintain bourgeois gender ideals. In the United States in 1873, moral purity campaigners such as Anthony Comstock (1844–1915) persuaded the federal government to pass an act suppressing both the trade in and circulation of obscene literature, which included not just pornography but also material about contraception (Horowitz 2002). It is important to note that these efforts occurred at the same time that sexological definitions of normative and deviant sexuality emerged and antihomosexual laws were passed in Germany (in 1871) and Great Britain (in 1885).

New censorship laws were intended to thwart both the trade in pornographic texts and, increasingly, printed images, particularly those that appeared in the form of photographic cartes de visites (small images pasted onto cardboard). The trade in these images was global, with Paris functioning as an important center in Europe. Depictions of same-sex acts including fellatio, cunnilingus, anal sex, and mutual masturbation were common in this material and have been preserved in specialized archives such as the Kinsey Institute at Indiana University (Waugh 1996). Historian Dan Healey (2001) has noted that some social observers and legal officials in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Russia commented on the tendency of homosexual men to possess various sorts of pornographic postcards. Increased international travel and the movement of goods around the world meant that images from Africa, Asia, and the Middle East circulated freely by the 1880s and 1890s and contributed to the fetishization of non-European bodies during the age of high imperialism. Cheap and accessible pornographic postcards from this period also explored homosexual desire, with one set showing a female couple undressing as a preamble to sexual contact. Similarly, the now famous photographs by Wilhelm von Gloeden (1856–1931) of Sicilian and Tunisian young men, taken in the 1890s, were enormously popular among men who had sex with men (Waugh 1996). They were also further expressions of the Orientalist tendencies present in published works, including the essay by Sir Richard Francis Burton (1821–1890) on the “Sotadic Zone” (a region that included the Mediterranean and the Middle East where, he alleged, sex between men was a common practice), which was published with his English-language edition of tales from the region, The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night (1885–1886).

**Pornography—The Early Twentieth Century**

Although textually oriented pornography did not disappear entirely in this period, the
marked turn toward the visual at the fin de siècle, embodied in the craze for postcards, foreshadowed important changes in the years after 1900. Some sources from this period, such as the Brazilian text O menino do Gouveia (1914; Gouveia’s boy), continued to combine explicit prose with detailed images of anal sex between older and young men (Green 1999). But the move toward pictures was undeniable. This era, a crucial one in the history of erotic images, witnessed both the growth of the pornographic magazine and the rise of the pornographic film, each of which was important to the formation of modern sexual subjectivities (Waugh 1996). Increasingly, as more explicit gay and lesbian identities developed in the late 1920s, the consumption and possession of sexological literature, novels dealing with same-sex desire, images of nude bodies, and pornography became an important way to delineate one’s place in the community of the same-sex desiring. Yet, legal restrictions on access to materials defined as obscene continued in many places around the world, occasionally limiting their consumption. For example, in Britain in 1928 access to The Well of Loneliness, an important lesbian novel by Radclyffe Hall (1880–1943), was challenged successfully in the courts, and the novel was banned as obscene.

These attempts to limit cultural representations of same-sex desire or material thought to be sexually stimulating did not keep them from appearing, though. Same-sex–desiring men (and to a lesser extent, women) could stimulate their fantasies in the early twentieth century by reading physical culture magazines or nudist publications common in Europe, North America, and parts of Asia. Aside from the magazines themselves, advertisements in American publications such as Muscle Builder and Strength and Health remind us that there was a robust trade in nude, male images among the readership of these magazines (Krauss 2014). The magazine format was especially important in Germany, where a flourishing same-sex–desiring and gender-nonconforming culture existed prior to the emergence of the Nazi state in 1933. One publication, founded by Adolf Brand (1874–1945) in 1896 and popular into the twentieth century, contained homoerotic images and nude photographs that occasionally got the magazine’s publisher in trouble with German officials. Other publications produced by the German entrepreneur Friedrich Radszuweit (1876–1932) appealed to same-sex–desiring men and women with erotic drawings and glossy pictures (Beachy 2015).

Similarly, erotic films began to appear shortly after the medium first gained cultural salience in the early years of the twentieth century. While male homosexuality seems to have been relatively rare in this early material, scenes between women (intended to stimulate men) were a feature of silent films of the 1920s that were played in brothels and in all-male environments in the United States, France, and Argentina (among other sites). Referred to as “stag” films, these cultural products attracted a variety of audiences by depicting homoeroticism or fleeting same-sex acts. Indeed, as Thomas Waugh and others have noted, these films’ use of “camp” and references to alternative sexual practices may have appealed to those who were covertly queer (Waugh 1996; Church 2016). Stag films were not the only nude productions from this era. Amateurs such as the American Otis
Wade created a series of home films from the 1930s through the 1950s that depicted nude men boxing and wrestling, masturbating, performing fellatio, and engaging in intercourse (Waugh 1996).

**The Emergence of Modern Pornography**

Images and publications intended for primarily gay male audiences proliferated in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1950 French author Jean Genet (1910–1986) directed the film *Un chant d’amour* (A song of love), which depicts male desire in a prison setting, employing images of masturbation and male penises. The film also dealt with the issue of interracial desire, literally revealing both European and North African bodies. Consumable items other than films appeared around this time, including new types of physique magazines that, as cultural products, fell somewhere between early twentieth-century physical culture magazines and the more explicit gay pornography that would take off in the 1970s. In the United States, the leading publication (begun in 1951) was *Physique Pictorial*, a venture started by Bob Mizer (1922–1992), founder of the Athletic Model Guild, an organization intended to represent the many young men who entered the modeling and acting professions following World War II (Krauss 2014). Mizer was not alone in his efforts. In Great Britain photographer and entrepreneur John Barrington began a similar venture in 1954 with the publication of *Male Model Monthly* (Smith 1997). While British consumers were drawn to American aesthetics and magazines, it is important to note that British aesthetics, too, were celebrated in publications such as *Man Alive: The Magazine of Britain's Top Physique Photographers* (first edition published 1958). Same-sex–desiring women had access to pornography that depicted opposite-sex acts or lesbian relations intended for male audiences, but customer-specific lesbian pornography seems to have been relatively limited in this period. That said, in English-speaking countries women had access to representations of female same-sex eroticism in lesbian pulp fiction by authors such as the American Ann Bannon (1932–).

Obscenity laws continued to regulate what could appear in print and in film, but by the 1960s, many traditional restrictions began to fall away as social attitudes about sexuality and nudity shifted and laws began to soften. With the advent of gay activism and radical liberationist politics in the late 1960s and 1970s, celebrations of gay and lesbian identities entailed not just the emergence of movements such as the Gay Liberation Front (in the United States, Great Britain, and Canada) and the Front Homosexuel d’Action Révolutionnaire (Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action) in France but also the appearance of increasingly explicit pornography. In the United States gay magazines in the 1970s began to feature discussions of gay culture, full frontal nudity, and explicit sexual narratives. This trend was also evident in Great Britain, where the porn entrepreneur Alan Purnell started a magazine called *Him Exclusive* in 1974. This venture, which still had to contend with government censors, was a new kind of endeavor, committed to discussing
gay sexuality in a frank and open way and providing readers with alluring images that were anything but coy or ambiguous in meaning (Deslandes 2013). Similarly, a variety of explicit textual sources and images in this period documented the sex lives of trans individuals and contributed to their eroticization among different populations (some straight-identified and others queer). In the 1960s and early 1970s, for instance, pornographic memoirs such as Vivien Le Mans’s Take My Tool (1968) and Lyn Raskin's Diary of a Transsexual (1972) documented both gay sex and postoperative transsexual relations with heterosexual-identified men (Escoffier 2011).

The rise of print pornography during these years was accompanied by the rapid expansion of sexually explicit films that catered specifically to both heterosexual and homosexual audiences and built on earlier traditions, most notably stag films and work by artists such as Genet. In the United States and Great Britain, a trade in illicit films depicting same-sex acts between men developed in places such as San Francisco, New York, and London. Often shot on 8-millimeter film, these works were frequently distributed surreptitiously, literally “under the counter” (Waugh 1996). A vibrant soft-core industry that quickly achieved an international reach emerged during this period in Scandinavian countries such as Sweden and Denmark, where both homosexuality and pornography were decriminalized earlier than in Western Europe or North America. As with all forms of pornography, for many watching these films, pleasure was derived from viewing body types and aesthetics that were thought to represent particular national or ethnic traditions (Larsson 2017). The spread of soft-core films from Scandinavia and elsewhere, and their ability in some cases to evade censorship laws by simulating sexual acts and avoiding direct images of genitals, penetration, oral sex, or ejaculation, led to the growing popularity in the 1960s of what are sometimes referred to as “sexploitation” films. Depicting various acts and desires, these films had their origins in nudist-oriented features from the 1950s. By the 1960s these films became more explicit and began to explore more fully a diverse range of new topics including female homosexuality as the 1969 Swedish film Ur kärlekens språk (Language of love) did. As the 1960s gave way to the 1970s, attempts to prevent the release of these films were met with court challenges, some of which resulted in a loosening of restrictions (Stevenson 2010).

In the United States in particular, the film industry was transformed in several important ways in the late 1960s. The issue of homosexuality in film was brought to the fore with the release of John Schlesinger’s 1969 film Midnight Cowboy, which was set in New York City and focused on the relationship between a young man from Texas, Joe Buck, and a con man, Ratso Rizzo. While critics have disputed the nature of the relationship between Buck and Rizzo, the film’s depiction of male prostitution, violence, and same-sex intimacy earned it an X rating from the Motion Picture Association of America, which had implemented a new system in 1968 for assessing the age-appropriateness of films. Despite the X rating (a designation that came to be used almost exclusively for soft- or hard-core pornographic films), Midnight Cowboy went on to earn three Academy Awards, an indication that the
lines between pornography and art may have blurred in this period of rapid social change (Waugh 1996; Moon 1998).

While mainstream directors were attempting to deal with homosexuality and same-sex desire in more explicit ways, in the years immediately following the Stonewall riots in 1969 a thriving new gay pornography industry was producing a multitude of hard-core films (depicting “real” as opposed to simulated sex in explicit ways) for specialty theaters and home viewing. The most famous of these early movies was 1971’s *Boys in the Sand*, filmed on Fire Island in New York, which launched the career of the first real gay porn star, Casey Donovan (1943–1987). Films for same-sex–desiring women were limited in this period, but as Heather Butler (2004) has noted, depictions such as those in the 1968 sexploitation film *The King* provided relatively positive representations of lesbian sensuality and desire. The pornographic film industry, though dominated by Americans, was also present in other regions of the world. In Great Britain porn entrepreneur Alan Purnell produced an hour-length feature, *Hard Dollar Hustler*, and in France photographer Jean-Daniel Cadinot (1944–2008) began to turn his attention to pornographic films in the late 1970s. New pornographic traditions emerged in this period, as porn scholar Mireille Miller-Young (2014) has observed in her work on black women in pornography. With reference to what she refers to as “soul porn,” Miller-Young illustrates the ways these 1970s films could depict African American agency and at the same time, exploit earlier traditions of racial fetishization and objectification, especially when they were produced by whites.

By the 1980s gay porn (especially in the form of videotapes) was becoming a big business that created major stars such as Jeff Stryker (1962–) and Ryan Idol (1964–). As the AIDS crisis reached its height during the 1980s, the industry faced the issue of condom use, with some arguing that porn should continue to be about the fulfillment of fantasies and others (such as the gay American actor Glenn Swann) contending that pornographic films had an obligation to promote and teach about safe sex (Escoffier 2009). The late 1980s and 1990s saw a growing internationalization of the industry that led to the development of new centers of gay pornographic production in the Czech Republic and Hungary. In part, the growth of these centers was born out of economic desperation in these countries, where sex workers and performers were easily found as they struggled with the transition from Communist to capitalist economies (Jacobs 2007). BelAmi Studio, founded in 1993 in Slovakia, capitalized on this moment and became a major producer of gay pornography as the twentieth century gave way to the twenty-first. In post-Communist Russia, as historian Healey (2010) has noted, gay films began to appear during the 1990s and early in the next decade. While many of these, such as the Military Zone series, were made by foreign directors using Russian actors, some were indigenous, such as the film *Kazaki* (2004; *Cossacks*).

**Sex Wars and Contemporary Pornography**
The pornography industry was not without its detractors during this period. The 1980s witnessed the so-called feminist sex wars, a series of polarizing debates that divided feminists on a number of issues related to sexuality, including pornography. On one side were anti-pornography feminists such as Catharine A. MacKinnon (1946–) and Andrea Dworkin (1946–2005), who argued that pornography degraded women, perpetuated patriarchy, and encouraged sexual violence. On the other side of the divide were women such as Ellen Willis (1941–2006) who embraced “sex-positive” feminism, decrying puritanism and authoritarianism and arguing that the healthy enjoyment of female sexuality was central to liberation. Sex-positive lesbians used this opportunity to create their own explicit magazines, such as Bad Attitude and On Our Backs. Additionally, in 1985 a specifically female production company, Fatale Media, was created by Nan Kinney to produce pornographic films made by and for women. Depictions of same-sex relations between women and teenage boys (in both romantic and explicit terms) also appeared in Japanese manga (comics) and anime (animated films) beginning in the 1970s (Shamoon 2004).

Even as these debates were unfolding, the pornography industry was diversifying in significant ways. Entrepreneurs sought to capitalize on a variety of tastes and acts deemed transgressive by the majority culture, in an attempt to expand their market. One tradition that emerged in the early 1990s was what has been called “tranny” or “shemale” porn. Representative movies such as those in Joey Silvera’s Big Ass She-Male Road Trip series featured straight-identified men having sex with trans women who had breasts and female features but retained their penises. Many of these films involved scripts that relied on a certain amount of gender and sexual play and a moment of revelation (sometimes referred to as a “tranny surprise”) when the central male-to-female actress’s “true” genitalia are exposed to her unwitting partner (s), usually during a moment of intimacy. As film and literary scholar John Phillips (2006) has observed, “Transsexual pornography plays on the tension between concealing and revealing to generate maximum excitement in the viewer” (2006, 154). By early in the first decade of the twenty-first century, so-called strap-on videos in which female-to-male trans actors used dildos to penetrate male-bodied men also began to appear with greater regularity (Escoffier 2011).

This era also witnessed a continued fetishization of racial difference. Building on historically contingent stereotypes of Asian men as passive and feminine, films featuring Asian characters such as Secret Asian Man (1984) cast them as subservient and submissive to white men (Capino 2006). Attention to this gendering and positioning of Asian men in gay pornography was first introduced in the seminal work of Richard Fung, who published an important essay on the topic, “Looking for My Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn” (1991). A recent study on Asian American masculinity and sexual representation by Tan Hoang Nguyen (2014) offers a reassessment of what the author labels Asian “bottomhood” in a variety of cinematic productions. In his work, Nguyen seeks to destabilize the top/bottom binary and the supposed fixity of racial categories by blurring
important lines between the masculine and the feminine, agency and victimhood, and pleasure and pain (Nguyen 2014). The tendency to fetishize racial “Others” was not, of course, exclusive to the United States. In France in the 1990s and the next decade, filmmaker Jean-Noël René Clair’s series Studio Beurs cast a colonialist gaze onto the bodies of French Arabs in poverty-stricken Parisian suburbs (beurs being the term for second- and third-generation French residents of Arab descent; Rees-Roberts 2008). While racial fetishization was common in this period, it is important to note that some men of color such as Enrique Cruz and Tiger Tyson (1977–) created videos that sought to capture African American and Latino sexual cultures more accurately (Escoffier 2009).

Since the 1990s, pornography geared to the same-sex desiring and depicting same-sex acts has been dramatically transformed by the rise of the internet. Pornographic images and films are ubiquitous on the web, with a nearly endless supply found on sites such as Xtube and Pornhub catering to a variety of interests and identities. On these sites, pornographic videos featuring trans actors appear alongside those geared to individuals interested in BDSM, leather, or interracial sex. Many of these sites blur the distinction between the professional and the amateur, with do-it-yourself videos having a considerable presence. For example, female-to-male trans porn actor Buck Angel has commodified his body online by promoting himself as a “dude with a pussy” in an effort to engage in a range of nonnormative gender performances and appeal to a diverse array of sexual desires (Jacobs 2007, 100). Similarly, ordinary people can acquire porn-star status by streaming themselves stripping, masturbating, or having sex with partners on sites such as Chaturbate. Blurring another line, international websites such as Manhunt and social media apps such as the US-based Grindr and Scruff and the Beijing, China–based Blued function not just as digital spaces where individuals can connect for romance and sex, but also as de facto porn sites, with individuals posting nude pictures and depictions of sexual acts. The internet represents a new frontier for both consumers and historians of porn. As the ending point for this entry, it reminds us that the history of pornographic images is ongoing and an area of study ripe for further exploration.

SEE ALSO Boys Love (Yaoi) Manga; Moche Pottery; Orientalism in Gay Pornography about the Middle East; Phone Apps; Photography in Europe; Pornography in Asia; Pornoterrorismo and Post-Porn; Pulp Fiction, Gay and Lesbian; Sexual Revolution in Europe; Sexual Revolution in the United States; The Well of Loneliness (1928; Radclyffe Hall)

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The queering of pornography produced in Asia, with a focus on film and digital media.

The transnational circuits of pornography in various parts of Asia cut across multiple mediums ranging from woodblock prints, illustrations, scrolls, erotic poetry, paintings, performance forms, and storytelling practices. The focus of this entry, however, is primarily on print, cinematic, and digital media productions that are centrally located in modern capitalist regimes of sexuality. There is a diverse range of linguistic and cultural differences in the geographical terrain broadly termed as “Asia”; this entry deals principally with the regions categorized as South Asia, East Asia, and Southeast Asia.

When looking at multiple contexts in Asia, one encounters the dispersed trajectories of graphic sexual representations that often invite censure and yet persist as the heady underside of public culture. As Tan Hoang Nguyen argues, the “unanticipated flashes” of embodied affective responses while encountering moving-image media are crucial to mapping the nonlinear terrains of queerness in Asia (2014, 25). LGBT movements in different parts of Asia deploy the shifting nature of the pornographic for subjective explorations of sexuality and for community formation. The representational practices, modes of address, and codes of identification of commercial pornography, such as the “top-bottom” dynamics in Asian and Asian American gay porn, has opened up new directions for the study of sexuality, race, and the global formations of queerness (Fung 1991; Nguyen 2014).

A QUEER READING OF THE CHINESE SOFT-CORE FILM SEX AND ZEN II (1996)

This sex drama is the second film of the hit series Rouputuan (marketed as Sex and Zen in the West) from Hong Kong. Rouputuan Er Yunuxinjing (marketed as Sex and Zen II in the West) reveals the sexual exploits of a despotic lord who forces his daughter, Yiau, to wear a chastity belt and attend school disguised as a boy to preserve her virtue. A saga of sex and scheming begins when a demon known as the Mirage Lady enters the lord’s household disguised as a beautiful woman with immense sexual prowess. The Mirage Lady uses her sexual power to draw the energy out of her victims, both men and women, until they die. After killing several other members of
the household, she kills Yiau's father by making his insatiable penis explode, setting up a dramatic confrontation with Yiau. The actress Qi Shu (1976–), who later moved out of the B-grade circuit to achieve superstardom, plays the lead role of the Mirage Lady. In the film credits, in publicity materials such as posters, and in user comments on YouTube, the female stars Shu and Loletta Lee (1966–) are given top billing. The film taps into the commercial market for soft-core pornography.

The Sex and Zen series is based on the erotic novel from Qing China *Rouputuan* (1657; *The Carnal Prayer Mat* [1996]). Scholars have argued that both the implicitly homoerotic and the explicitly homosexual relations between men in this early modern text are erased in its contemporary adaptations that are marketed to appeal to heteronormative desires of men (*Chiang 2015*). But in spite of these erasures, *Sex and Zen II* transports us to an irreverent and fantastic world of sexual and gender play. The climax of the film is an electrifying sex scene between the Mirage Lady and Yiau where the Mirage Lady metamorphoses into a “man-mixed-woman” and penetrates Yiau with her penis. The homosexual encounter between the two women and the gender crossing of the Mirage Lady drive this erotic revenge drama. With its fixation on prosthetic, transferable, and perishable penises, its scenes of women’s sexual ecstasy, such as Yiau’s orgasmic dreams, and its shape-shifting of bodies and desires, this film opens up possibilities for a queer reading. The third film of this series, which was released in 2011, is the first Chinese 3-D pornographic film.

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**Prohibition and Proliferation**

In such countries as Japan, India, and Singapore, the consumption of pornography for private purposes is legally sanctioned; but there are multiple controversies over the public circuits of pornography. In other countries, such as China, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia, pornographic materials are actively banned. Yet, these differing legal positions and policies cannot be translated into a neat mapping of the status of pornography in these countries. For example, the wholesale ban of pornography in mainland China, which also functions as a means to control political content, is less effective in regulating online
pornography in comparison to Hong Kong, which has a permissive policy but enforces a more orderly classificatory system (Yan 2015).

Rather than conceptualizing censorship as a repressive mechanism, scholarship from the second decade of the twenty-first century has focused on the productive relation between pornographic objects, circuits, and forms of censorship (Mazzarella 2013; Hoek 2014). In multiple contexts in Asia the recognition of LGBT identities and desires has been tied to the proliferation of erotic print and visual media forms. Scholars note that in Japan in the 1920s the popularity of the cult genre of *ero-guro nansensu*, or “erotic grotesque nonsense,” ran parallel to newly emerging interest in “queer sexuality” (McLelland 2011, 2015). In this period there was an increase in representations of male and female same-sex relations and gender nonconformity that later had an impact on the publication of early queer commercial magazines after World War II (1939–1945) in Japan (McLelland 2011). Erotic print media, which also popularized sexology, played a generative role in shaping the discourse of homosexuality with commercially successful gay magazines such as *Barazoku* (Rose tribe), which started publication in 1971 and had a successful run until 2004.

The Philippine porn industry is one of the most lucrative underground porn industries in the Asian region, making huge profits by recording, producing, and marketing pornographic materials. The flea markets in downtown Manila showcase a wide range of contemporary DVD products, including straight and queer pornography, marking it as an urban milieu that partakes of queerness through its own pirate technologies (David 2006). Another popular black market in queer pornography can be found in Thailand. While Thailand’s penal code prohibits the production, possession, and distribution of obscene publications, the enforcement of these laws is relaxed, and commercial gay culture has proliferated alongside the larger heterosexual entertainment industry. Peter A. Jackson (2011) observes that in the twentieth century Thai gay capitalism was often an underground phenomenon, linked to a black market in illegal pornography; but in the twenty-first century Thai gay and lesbian capitalism has increasingly become a legitimate, aboveground phenomenon with the rapid growth of mainstream investment in the commercial gay scene. Thus, the traffic in queer pornography in such Asian cities as Bangkok, Manila, and Tokyo constitutes nodal points that play a decisive role in shaping global cultures of queerness.

**Erotic Film Cultures**

There is a long history of production of erotic films in various regional contexts in Asia. These “dirty” films are often exorcised from sanitized histories of national cinema. Ali Nobil Ahmad comments on the “barefaced provocation” of Pashto and Punjabi musical numbers that cater to the working poor from Pakistan and Afghanistan (2016, 11). These films are also characterized by low production values and belong to genres of excess, such as horror, romance, and action. These regional film industries have also tapped into changing
technologies, such as VCDs, DVDs, and digital networks; Japanese adult videos have been highly popular in China and Taiwan since the 1990s.

Soft-porn theaters in India and Bangladesh that screen films containing “cut-pieces” (illegal pornographic bits that are inserted at the stage of exhibition) have functioned as a male domain of sexual pleasure that carries an air of disrepute. But these cinematic productions have also facilitated the stardom of leading actresses. The South Indian soft-porn film industry in the 1990s and early in the following decade led to the stardom of the actress Shakeela (1973–), whose films generated box-office receipts rivaling those of male superstars. Pashto films such as *Haseena atimbum* (1990; *Haseena atom bomb*) and *De khwar lasme spogmay* (1997; *Half moon*) gave cult status to voluptuous action heroines. Soft-porn theaters, marked as seedy and unruly, have also historically functioned as gay cruising spots in various cities and towns in Asia. The spatial and bodily practices facilitated by these collective spaces of film viewing have a significant role in fashioning queer cultures.

Scholars argue that sensational “body genres,” such as horror, romance, and exploitation dramas, often throw open the realm of queer sexuality. Katrien Jacobs (2015) explores soft-core erotic films from Hong Kong since the 1990s such as the *Yu pu tuan* (Sex and Zen) series and the *Liu jai yim taam* (Erotic ghost story) series, which stage queer scenes in supernatural settings. Ben Murtagh (2013, 83) observes that provocative Indonesian films, such as *Pembalasan ratu pantai selatan* (1989; *Lady Terminator*) and *Gadis metropolis* (1991; *Metropolis girl*), which project the stock figure of the “murderous lesbian,” have put into circulation gay, lesbi, and waria (transgender) representations on-screen. It is in these messy circuits of excess and sensationalism that normative sexual arrangements come under stress and unravel in disruptive ways.

**Digital Media and Pornography**

Transnational circuits of pornographic materials have been central to shifting media economies since the first years of the twenty-first century, with the popularity of mobile phones and increasing internet penetration. Nishant Shah (2007) observes that the internet does not merely become a medium for the circulation of pornographic materials; the interactions on multiple platforms such as IRC (internet relay chat) and blogs shape the category of netporn. There are multiple cracks and slippages in the conception of objects deemed to be pornographic, and attempts to curtail its flow are often met with greater innovation by users, distributors, and producers (Malhotra 2010).

This proliferation of interactive digital media networks has led to battles over censorship. Jacobs (2015) observes that in China’s rush toward cosmopolitanism and consumption there is a relative openness to sex entertainment industries that coexists with stringent antiobscenity measures. Jacobs traces how, in the face of these paradoxical formations,
Netizens are critical of massive corporate networks and attempt to build smaller crossborder initiatives. Noncommercial queer online micro movies, sexually explicit DIY (do-it-yourself) videos, sex blogs, and naked self-portraits are various tactics through which queer activists and artists in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan participate in shaping sexual cultures in the face of stringent policing mechanisms by governing agencies. In other contexts, such as Thailand, increasing internet accessibility and the growth of queer social networking sites, such as Camfrog, since 2000 have supported the proliferation of real spaces and venues of queer consumption and socializing (Jackson 2011).

LEZHIN: SOUTH KOREAN WEBTOONS FOR MATURE AUDIENCES

The website Lezhin, owned by Lehzin Entertainment, carries the tagline “Your Fantasy — Our Content.” This portal, which offers premium webtoons for mature audiences, was established by South Korean blogger Heesung Han in 2013. It is offered in Korean, Japanese, and English, and it serves the global market. This is a paid site, though some chapters of a title are offered for free. Most titles include sexually explicit content. The obscenity laws in South Korea treat manhwa (Korean comics) published online differently from print publications, so the more graphic and risqué manhwa often takes the form of webtoons.

One of the main categories, boys’ love (BL), appears as a prominent link on the website’s landing page, featuring titles such as Make Me Bark and I Am Yours, Blood and Soul. A popular BL series distributed by Lezhin, Killing Stalking, by the female artist Koogi, moves into the edgy realm of obsession, torture, and sadism. From fluffy romances and everyday erotic stories set in schools and workplaces to sadomasochistic dramas, the website offers a wide range of material. In addition to BL, the site also features girls’ love (GL), a genre involving sexual and romantic relations between women, linked to lesbian-themed works in manga since the 1970s, with titles such as Elixir, Girl in the Birdcage, and What Does the Fox Say. The titles are categorized as “mature,” “romance,” or “fantasy,” and there are warnings for explicit content. The flourishing online presence and global marketing of erotic manhwa from East Asia points to the transnational terrains of queer cultures of pornography.

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Queer Crossings

Pornography in Asia points to the volatility of codes of desire. Poorva Rajaram (2015)
comments on how, in her search for lesbians on-screen in India, she came across a playlist on YouTube titled “hot lesbo” consisting of sequences from multiple regional language films that featured “women-on-women” scenes: “They weren't ‘lesbians,’ but the videos spoke in a double-tongue: these women were clearly playacting the role of both a man and a woman. At another level, they were also women romancing each other.” Through these gyrations of doubleness, cultural artifacts orchestrated for heterosexual masculine consumption are reappropriated into a lesbian economy of desiring.

The queer circuits of pornographic film productions are opened up in the studies on “pink films,” the largescale production of erotic films by independent studios since the early 1960s in Japan. While there are a small number of gay pink cinema productions, such as 

*Kyokon densetsu: Utsukushiki nazō (1983; Beautiful Mystery)* and *Anata-ga suki desu, dai suki desu (1994; I like you, I like you very much)*, the bulk of these productions feature heterosexual sex acts. Yet the film-viewing culture facilitated by pink cinema is around libidinal encounters between men that cannot be mapped onto a linear project of gay identity formation. In pink cinema theaters “displaying heterosexual porn stories to audiences of heterosexual men who are there to have sex with other straight or queer men, there is no simple way to trace gender positions from screen representation to spectator performance” (Arnold 2015, 18). Experimental queer cinematic productions such as *Sugar Sweet (2001)*, *I.K.U. (2001)*, and *Ho yuk (2002; Let’s Love Hong Kong)* consciously play on the borderlines between pornography, virtuality, and queerness.

The unpredictable crossings between content, address, and embodied modes of reception in the mise-en-scène of pornography allow for heterogeneous conceptions of queerness that can take into account affective domains of shame and submission. In an insightful analysis of queer moving images from Asia, Nguyen argues that commercial gay porn “invite[s] viewers to identify with the bottom as much as, if not more than, the top” (2014, 11) and he argues for “a politics of bottomhood that opposes racism and heteronormativity without scapegoating femininity” (2014, 15). Nguyen’s interventions conceptually engage with pornographic forms in order to open up critical ways to dismantle racism alongside heteronormativity.

**Fan Cultures**

It is important to look at the flourishing fan cultures of another popular form from Japan, *yaoi* or boys’ love (BL)—a genre of manga (animation and text-based fiction) for women, created by female artists, featuring intense homoerotic relationships between idealized youthful male characters. Although this genre is marketed primarily to young heterosexual women in Japan, in practice the fantasy world of yaoi attracts a wide range of readers, authors, and reading practices.

There is a vibrant network of production and circulation of yaoi and BL to different parts of
Southeast Asia and East Asia, such as the Philippines, South Korea, and Taiwan, through local yaoi fan meetings and active participation in online fan community sites (Martin 2012; Fermin 2013). Fans tinker with the gender and sexual regulations that shape their local contexts using these immersive forms that disrupt the “synchronicity of ‘sexual identity’ and sexual fantasy” (McLelland 2003, 58). In such contexts as the Philippines, yaoi is identified with issues of homosexuality, and the themes of these genres function as spaces for the development of lesbian sexual identities (Fermin 2013).

Scholars have argued that bara manga, which is marketed to homosexual men, has to be contextually analyzed in relation to the narrative and artistic practices in such popular gay magazines as Barazoku and Bádi in Japan (Baudinette 2016). Instead of characterizing bara manga as hypermasculine and reading it solely in contrast to the androgynous male figures in yaoi, Thomas Baudinette (2016) observes that different styles of bara create diverse representations of gay subjectivity. He also argues that erotic bara, which often deploys sadomasochistic plot elements, is not intended to fashion gay subjectivities and practices; the exaggerated muscular bodies and close-ups of anal and oral penetration aim at arousal and should be seen as a marketing strategy. Thus, the transnational fan cultures of manga and its linkages to queer desires open up a rich field for analysis.

**Mass Media and Sexual Journeys**

It would be misleading to position the commercialized industry of pornography and its market-driven practices as “queer counter culture” or to celebrate it as consciously putting into motion oppositional sexualities (Boellstorff 2003, 23). Female-friendly pornography production companies, such as Silk Labo in Tokyo, also capitalize on set conceptions about what women would like to see on-screen (Hambleton 2016). Therefore, it is necessary to take into account the more contingent and unstable relations between mass media and subjectivity and trace how queer subjects and groups deploy these materials in inventive ways for their own ends.

Joseph N. Goh (2017) observes that in Malaysia, in the light of the legal prohibition of all materials deemed to be indecent, pornography shares similar spaces with the criminalization of nonheteronormative sexual expressions. Goh draws on his interviews on issues on sexuality and faith with “gay-identifying” and “bisexual-identifying” men in Malaysia who primarily access pornography through the internet and use such websites as Pornhub and RedTube. In these candid narratives, the respondents characterize pornography consumption as a means for the performance and sense making of sexuality. Pornography thus becomes the instrument through which they “secure ‘permission’ to enter into the realm of sexual pleasure on their own terms” (Goh 2017, 457) and complicate the scripts of morality and deviance. Goh maps the mediated process of queer self-fashioning that moves beyond simple notions of illegality and vilification.
In her 2016 personal narrative about coming to terms with her transgender identity in India, Nadika Nadja foregrounds the formative role of pornography, ranging from Nancy Friday’s *Forbidden Flowers* (1973) to Crash-PadSeries.com:

> My coming out as a trans person happened slowly. Tentatively. Seeking firm ground and fast friends. And as I came out and became confident in my identity, I came out as someone who loved porn. All kinds of porn. It was porn that told me it was okay to be a girl even if others thought you were a boy. And that it was okay to like girls, even if you were a girl who was thought of as a boy.

In South Asian alternate digital media sites, there are multiple narratives about using the internet for accessing pornography as a way of exploring queer sexuality and for building online community networks. An area in need of further research is how queer subjects in different parts of Asia with differential access to media technologies draw on the expanding world of pornographic practices to navigate their sexual journeys.

There are significant efforts underway by feminists and queer groups to tap into digital technologies, visual art, writing, and filmmaking in order to create an alternate body of erotic productions that can speak to queer desires. But queer possibilities are also at play in the larger field of public cultures of sexuality in Asia, be it a soft-porn thriller, commercial gay porn, the *jhatka* (jerk) of a Hindi film heroine in a song-and-dance sequence, or the excitement of being part of a community of yaoi/BL fans. It is in these proliferating commercial circuits of the pornographic, alongside activist initiatives to produce queer porn, that the varied imaginations and practices of “queer Asia” can be located.

**SEE ALSO** Boys Love (Yaoi) Manga; Orientalism in Gay Pornography about the Middle East; Otaku Sexualities in Japan; Pornography; Pornoterrorismo and Post-porn; Sex Work in Asia

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Pornoterrorismo and Post-Porn

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An artistic and political practice active throughout Latin America that aims to liberate and empower sexuality through the subversive resignification of pornographic images.

Pornoterrorismo is an artistic and political practice that uses explicit representations of the body in performance art, poetry, film, body art, music, and other artistic devices to question sexual and gender normativity and to promote a sex-positive attitude. Originating conceptually in Spain with the work of Diana J. Torres and taken up and reinterpreted throughout Latin America, especially in places such as Argentina, Chile, and Colombia, it can be understood as a form of post-porn critique because its response to the oppressive sexual representations of mainstream pornography is not censorship but rather the subversive resignification of pornographic images. The “Pornoterrorist Manifesto,” signed by many artists from all over the world and published online in 2009, defines it as “a form of insurgence, divergence, counter-hegemony, subversion, a sexual insurrection, and an objection to gender” (Torres et al. 2009; translation by author). Pornoterrorismo uses art, especially performance art, as a laboratory to liberate and empower sexuality, to experiment and play with nonnormative fantasies and desires, and to make visible a wide range of queer bodies and pleasures. Even though the word terror is included in its name, its ultimate purpose is not to generate fear—although a liberated sexuality can be scary—but rather a state of excitement and arousal that shakes and provokes the audience to think about the politics of bodily representation. Some of the themes that emerge in pornoterrorism include BDSM, ecosexuality, queer sex, non-ableist sex, do-it-yourself and amateur sex videos, menstruation, visceral images and fluids, excrement, fisting, squirting, de-genitalized pleasure, and the use of dildos and other sex toys. Pornoterrorism also purposefully depicts bodies that are not typically included in mainstream pornography (at least in a necessarily positive light), such as ones that are fat, old, pregnant, and trans.

Pornoterrorismo is an artistic practice closely linked to the Spanish queer scene—especially to people such as Torres, who first published Pornoterrorismo in 2011, but also to other Latin American post-porn artists, including Leonor Silvestri from Argentina, Felipe Rivas San Martín from Chile, Nadia Granados from Colombia, and Felipe Osorno from Mexico. It has been strongly influenced by gender and sexuality studies, especially by queer theory, sex-positive feminism, transfeminism, and porn studies. In addition to being a form...
of sexual and gender critique that questions mainstream pornography, it also questions institutionalized art, the capitalist economic system, and international and local social injustice.

**Beginnings**

In September 2001 Torres and Pablo Raijenstein were invited to create and stage an artistic performance in Madrid. A few days before their presentation, the terrorist attacks known collectively as 9/11 occurred in the United States. Affected by the ways the media handled the attacks, especially in light of the anti-Muslim propaganda they promoted, Torres and her partner realized that they needed to change their original performance to address terrorism “but in a very dirty way,” as Torres noted in a 2009 interview that was posted on YouTube in 2010. In a classic post-porn strategy, their new performance resignified and sexualized the images provided by the media: they created an image of a woman in a burka penetrating the anus of a man with an American flag draped over his body. They called this performance “pornoterrorismo”—coining the term—not only because it was a sexual parody of the increasingly tense relationship between Islam and the United States but also because they wanted to provoke the audience by using the term terrorism in an artistic intervention and by linking it to the pornographic. A few years later, Torres reflected on the powerful connection of these two terms: “Is there a more beautiful fusion than that of the words ‘porn’ and ‘terrorism’? The erotics of terror, an unexplored land that opens itself up like a corpse for an autopsy” (Torres 2014, 50; translation by the author).

It is clear, however, that the means of violence involved in pornoterrorist interventions differ greatly from those of traditional terrorist attacks. The preferred weapons of pornoterrorismo are not guns or bombs but rather politicized bodies, sex, and fluids in imagery and text. These weapons seek to terrorize society’s rigid morality but only as a response to the terror that queer people experience on a daily basis. Torres has suggested that the etiology of the word terror includes the onomatopoeia “trrrrr,” the phonetic representation of a tremor: “And I am convinced that many people would tremble if the world was the way I imagine it, they would live in fear just as I do in their own world” (Torres 2014, 53).

Torres’s 2001 performance was not immediately followed by other pornoterrorist actions by herself or others. It was only in 2006 that she decided to dedicate herself fully to developing this kind of performance. New groups and artists, both in Spain and Latin America, had begun to emerge around that time following a similar postporn spirit, such as Post-op, Quimera Rosa, the Go Fist Foundation, Girlswholikeporno, Lucía Egaña Rojas, María Llopis, and Itziar Ziga from Spain; Ludditas Sexuxuales and Acento Frenético (Frenetic Accent) from Argentina; and Colectivo Universitario de Disidencia Sexual (CUDS; University Collective of Sexual Dissidence) and Hija de Perra (Daughter-of-a-Bitch) from
Post-Porn, Mainstream Porn, and Porn for Women

Many artists whose works engage pornoterrorist and postporn practices, both in Spain and Latin America, consider the work of Annie Sprinkle (1954–) a starting point for their own artistic interventions (Torres 2014; Llopis 2010; Milano 2014). Even if the term post-porn was coined by the Dutch artist Wink van Kempen in the 1980s, Sprinkle is usually regarded as responsible for popularizing the post-porn movement in the early 1990s. Sprinkle is an American ecosex activist, sex-positive feminist, and performance artist. She is also a former prostitute, porn actress, and porn director. In the early 1980s, dissatisfied with the mainstream porn movies she was working in, she decided to make her own films. In 1981 she wrote and directed Deep inside Annie Sprinkle, a movie that parodies porn conventions in order to tell a story from the perspective of the empowered female protagonist. As the film scholar Linda Williams suggests, what is novel about Sprinkle’s work “is that she injects elements into this narrative that disrupt the active male/passive female paradigm of conventional pornography” (1993, 124). A few years after creating porn videos, Annie applied her sexual expertise to creating artistic performances and thus became one of the most iconic names in the world of post-porn. Between 1989 and 1996, she toured around the world with the Post Porn Modernist Show, a theater piece that included the famous “Public Cervix Announcement,” an act in which she invited the audience to investigate her cervix with a speculum and a flashlight.

As is well known, pornography was one of the dividing lines in the so-called feminist sex wars of the late 1970s and early 1980s. Spanish and Latin American post-porn artists align themselves with sex-positive feminists, and they dismiss anti-pornography positions from feminists such as Catharine A. MacKinnon (1989) and Andrea Dworkin (1981), who argue that porn is inherently degrading for women: “Pornography permits men to have whatever they want sexually … women bound, women battered, women tortured, women humiliated, women degraded and defiled, women killed” (MacKinnon 1989, 326–327). Even if they agree that mainstream porn is faulty, post-porn performers reject the political value of censorship and state control. The post-porn answer to hegemonic porn is not the elimination of pornography but rather queerly creative porn.

Post-porn is also wary, however, of the kind of work done by people such as Erika Lust, a Spanish porn director who specializes in making “porn for women.” For Lust, porn for women should be able to show what women want: hard-core sex but also romance, a good narrative, intimacy, “oral sex performed on women,” “consensual sex,” “modern men that share our values” (2008, 40; translation by the author). Lust also assumes that porn for women should be aesthetically pleasing. For instance, the female protagonist should wear “a cute Miss Sixty, Armani, or Mango dress” (24). Pornoterrorismo questions not only mainstream porn but also the sexual essentialism behind this sort of porn targeted for
women. According to María Llopis, leaving behind commercial porn for this new kind of porn would be like “jumping from a hot plate only to land on the flames” (2010, 12; translation by the author).

Post-Porn in Latin America

Latin American post-porn can be dated back to late in the first decade of the twenty-first century, when a group of underground artists influenced by feminism, LGBT activism, and queer theory turned dissident sex into an integral part of their artistic production. By early in the next decade, there were many post-porn festivals, workshops, and exhibitions taking place in major Latin American cities such as Buenos Aires; Lima, Peru; Mexico City; and Santiago, Chile. Latin American post-porn picks up some ideas from American queer theory and European post-porn but does so to deliver a message that addresses regional specificities (Milano 2014). For instance, it deals with the criminalization of abortion, institutionalized and ordinary machismo, femicides and male violence, homo-and transphobia, the rigid sexual morality of the Catholic Church, postcolonial problems, and the colonial legacies of social and racial inequality. In addition to this, Latin American post-porn artists distrust new forms of gay and trans normalization, and they question hegemonic forms of feminism that focus mainly on obtaining legal reforms. The post-porn critique of homonormativity is especially relevant in countries such as Argentina, Uruguay, and Brazil where LGBT demands, particularly same-sex marriage, have become part of each respective state’s political agenda.

Thus, the social and political histories of Latin America have directly shaped post-porn production throughout the continent. This is the case, for instance, with the video performance “Ideologia” (2011; Ideology), by the Chilean artist Felipe Rivas San Martín. This piece combines Chilean archival footage from the period before Augusto Pinochet’s military dictatorship with BDSM images and gay porn. Meanwhile, Rivas reads a text about his activist past and masturbates. The video is a provocative reflection on the homoerotics of left-wing politics, and it ends with a “cum shot” of Rivas on a picture of Salvador Allende, the Chilean socialist president who was overthrown by Pinochet’s coup in 1973. Despite being selected for an exhibition at the Centro de Extensión in Valparaiso, Chile, in 2016, by the National Council of Culture and Arts, the video was later censored by the Chilean Ministry of Culture because it contained sexual images not suitable for minors.

Another example of how local social issues make their way into post-porn art is the work of the Colombian artist Nadia Granados, also known as La Fulminante. Abortion, compulsory motherhood, and male violence are common topics in her work. La Fulminante, her over-the-top artistic character, embodies the stereotype of the horny, sexy Latina but with a twist: she is too shocking, too provocative, and sometimes even gross and repulsive. In her performance “Clean Car, Dirty Conscience,” presented at the 2012 Rencontre Internationale d’Art Performance in Quebec, Canada, she washes a car covered with mud, pouring water...
over both the car and herself, imitating the archetypal porn scene of the sexy car wash. A man inside the car interrogates her using a megaphone, asking a series of abusive questions, first personal and then sexual, simulating a visa interview for entering the United States. The piece starts and ends with Granados in a trash bag, implicitly alluding to the ways in which victims of femicide are sometimes found in many Latin American cities, such as those along (or near) the US-Mexico border. The performance is thus a critique not only of the dehumanizing immigration policies of developed countries but also of the misogynist dehumanization of women who are literally turned into trash as a result of male violence.

PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN BY PATRICK ALTMAN, COURTESY OF ÉDITIONS INTERVENTIONS

Colombian Artist Nadia Granados Performs "Clean Car, Dirty Conscience" at the 2012 Rencontre Internationale d'Art Performance in Quebec, Canada. In this piece, Granados, also known as La Fulminante, hijacks the archetypal porn scene of the sexy car wash to critique not only the dehumanizing immigration policies of the United States but also the misogynist dehumanization of women.

Other important Latin American post-porn artists include Leonor Silvestri, part of the Argentine group Ludditas Sexxxuales, who has collaborated with Diana J. Torres reciting poems in collective performances, and the Mexican artist Felipe Osornio, also known as Lechedevirgen Trimegisto (meaning “milk of the Virgin of Trimegisto”), whose work addresses the violence and vulnerability of queer masculinity in homophobic cultures. The artistic works of Frau Diamanda from Peru, Azael Valderrama from Colombia, Hija de Perra
from Chile, and Acento Frenético from Argentina are also worth mentioning.

**Feminism, Queer Theory, and “Cuir” Theory**

Post-porn and pornoterrorismo are self-reflective movements that have been strongly informed by critical theory, especially sex-positive feminism, transfeminism, queer theory, and pornography studies. Some of the books most commonly cited by Latin and Spanish post-porn artists are *Gender Trouble* (1990) by Judith Butler, *Testo Junkie* (2013) by Beatriz (Paul B.) Preciado, and *King Kong Theory* (2009) by Virginie Despentes. These authors are invoked to attack male domination, heteronormativity, and sexual essentialism, to support a performative account of gender and sexual identity, and to defend sex work and sexual dissidence. Preciado and Despentes are also considered active members of the Spanish post-porn scene. Preciado is particularly important because he organized the “Post-porn Marathon” at the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art in 2003, probably the first major post-porn festival in Spain. Some of these post-porn writers and artists, such as Preciado or the members of CUDS, defend the need to produce dissident knowledge in traditional spaces, such as universities or museums, whereas others prefer to publish books with independent, small book publishers and organize talks, debates, and study groups in underground places.

Many post-porn artists have published their own work on gender, sexuality, and pornography. Some of the most important post-porn books are *El postporno era eso* (2010; That was post-porn), by Llopis; *Pornoterrorismo* (2011), by Torres; *Por un feminismo sin mujeres* (2011; For a feminism without women), edited by Jorge Díaz and copublished by CUDS; and *Ética amatoria del deseo libertario y las afectaciones libres y alegres* (2012; Ethics of love, liberatory desire, and free and happy affectations), by Ludditas Sexxxuales. The Argentine scholar Laura Milano has written one of the most systematic and comprehensive studies about the international post-porn scene: *Usina posporno* (Post-porn industry), published in 2014.

Rivas (2011) has coined the term *cuir*—which in Spanish sounds like, and builds off, the English word *queer*—to refer to the appropriation and resignification of American queer debates and arguments by Latin American thinkers, showing the affinities but also the distance between theories about sexual and gender dissidence in Latin America and the United States. Many cuir writers, such as Rivas, Silvestri, and Milano, are active members of the post-porn scene in their respective countries, and they use post-porn productions as a source for their own theoretical reflections. Post-porn festivals, in turn, include talks and conferences about nonnormative gender and sexuality, and cuir thinkers are usually invited to participate in them.

**Post-Porn Circulation**
Post-porn art is presented both in institutional spaces—such as museums, universities, and theaters—and in marginal places such as squatted houses, co-ops, employee-owned factories, and subaltern cultural centers. The former locales are chosen by those thinkers with ties to academia, such as Preciado, whereas the latter are usually preferred by those artists closer to anarchism and punk rock, such as Go Fist, Torres, and Silvestri.

One of the most common ways to promote the production and dissemination of post-porn art and cultural practice is festivals. These events usually combine performance art, video projections, open calls for amateur porn videos, workshops, and talks. They are one of the most important ways of bringing together post-porn performers from different Spanish-speaking countries (but also with the wider international audience and participation in mind). Several examples include the Barcelona edition of the international festival Queeruption, the Muestra Marrana (Filthy Exhibition), which started in Spain but then moved to Latin America (first to Mexico City in 2015 and then to Quito, Ecuador, in 2016); the PorNo PorSi festival, which has taken place in Bogotá and Buenos Aires; and the Chilean festival Dildo Roza (Dildo Rub). These festivals are usually self-organized, self-financed, and nonprofit. Sometimes they use crowdfunding to support the event, and they tend to reject commercial sponsors. Besides showing pieces by wellknown post-porn artists, they also organize workshops that promote horizontal relations and interactions between the performer and the audience, as well as open calls for do-it-yourself porn videos.
As stated earlier, another form of spreading post-porn ideas is book publishing. Many post-porn writers are strong opponents of the privatization of intellectual property, and they decide to release their books under Creative Commons licenses (Torres 2014) or to publish manuscripts under a special copyright licensing agreement that allows the public to freely access, reproduce, adapt, or distribute copies of the work as long as any resulting copies or adaptations are bound by the same licensing agreement (Ludditas Sexxxuales 2012; Díaz 2011). Most post-porn artists share videos of their performances on their blogs and Vimeo accounts, pointing to how they have embraced open-access digital cultures as a platform for accessible dissemination to wide audiences.

Finally, another important space for post-porn production and experimentation are the workshops that many pornoterrorist artists regularly organize. These include the Female Ejaculation Practical and Experimental Workshop, organized by Torres; the Squirting and Prostate Massage Practical Workshop, hosted by Silvestri and Ludditas Sexxxuales; and the various ecossexual workshops that Annie Sprinkle and Elizabeth Stephens have coordinated in Gijón and Barcelona, Spain, in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Even though it is still an underground practice, the proliferation of international festivals and the easy access to post-porn digital products are turning pornoterrorism and post-porn into sites of increasing interest not only for gender and sexuality scholars and activists but also for the general public. In 2015, for instance, a post-porn festival at the University of Buenos Aires caused such a scandal that most media outlets in Argentina were constantly talking about post-porn. All of a sudden, post-porn was on everyone's lips. Like so many other marginal practices that have gained mainstream attention, the challenge for post-porn and pornoterrorism in the years to come will probably be how to cope with its increasing popularity while staying true to its queer spirit of provocation.

SEE ALSO Hemispheric Institute Digital Video Library; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Performance Artists in Latin America; Travesti and Trans Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Pride Demonstrations in Europe

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A historical and contemporary look at pride events held around Europe.

Since the first marches were held in western European countries in the 1970s, Gay Pride—also known in Europe as Christopher Street Day after the street in New York City’s Greenwich Village where the Stonewall Inn is located—has been a subject of controversy. Early marches were small demonstrations with a few hundred participants, but by the 2010s, parades in some major European cities could draw more than a million marchers and observers. At the same time, in the three decades after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, other pride marches have come under violent attack from right-wing radicals, particularly in postsocialist countries, highlighting the uneven acceptance of LGBTQ rights across Europe.

Western European Beginnings, 1970–1990

The first pride march was held in New York City in July 1970 to commemorate the 1969 uprisings at the Stonewall Inn. The first pride march in Europe was held in London in July 1972 to similarly commemorate Stonewall; about 2,000 people attended (Plummer 1999). It was not until 1977, however, that organizers in Barcelona held the first pride march on the continent. Although police repressed the march, activists continued to organize marches in Barcelona and Madrid in subsequent years (Llamas and Vila 1999).

The year 1977 saw one of the first gay rights demonstrations in the Netherlands, which also had connections to the United States. Following the repeal in Dade County, Florida, of a recently passed ordinance outlawing discrimination against gay men and lesbians, protestors took to the streets of Amsterdam on 25 June 1977, leading to the formation of groups that, in 1979, would collaborate with the preexisting LGBT organization Cultuur en Ontspanningscentrum (COC; Center for Culture and Leisure) to organize the annual Roze Zaterdag (Pink Saturday), an event often equated with pride celebrations (Schuyf and Krouwel 1999). Much like in the Netherlands, French gay and lesbian activists came together in 1977 to organize the first pride event in Paris, which drew about 400 demonstrators. German activists organized the first Christopher Street Day celebrations in Berlin and Bremen two years later (Leroy 2010; Beljan 2014).
ATTACKS ON PRIDE DEMONSTRATIONS IN MOSCOW

Following the decriminalization of homosexuality in Russia in 1993, limited public space opened up for lesbian and gay Russians. Beginning in the late 1990s, initiatives like the Festival of Lesbian Art and the Festival of Women’s Songs were launched in Moscow with little resistance (Stella 2013). However, in 2005, when Nikolay Alexeyev, leader of the newly established organization GayRussia, announced that he would apply for permission to organize Moscow’s first pride festival, he was met with vocal public opposition. The city government granted permission to hold the planned conference and cultural events but refused to permit the march, scheduled to be held on the central thoroughfare of Tverskaya Street (Stella 2013). The march took place anyway but was violently broken up by neo-Nazis and Orthodox protesters.

Although the city government has consistently refused to grant permission, small marches have taken place each year since 2006. Marches in 2007, 2008, and 2012 were met with homophobic violence, as well as police harassment and arrests, with the police notoriously lenient toward homophobic attackers (Stella 2013; Baer 2011). In other years, activists avoided violence by keeping secret the location of demonstrations (Stella 2013). Although the European Court of Human Rights ruled that banning pride events violated the right to peaceful assembly, in 2012 Moscow officially banned pride events for 100 years (Ammaturo 2015; Horne et al. 2017). The following year, the Russian parliament approved a broad bill that made illegal all public promotion of homosexuality, effectively banning pride events across the country (Ammaturo 2015). Even with the legal crackdown and homophobic backlash, small groups continue to hold pride demonstrations and other protests in the face of violent repression.

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Although drawing inspiration from the United States and from each other, pride events remained relatively local during the 1980s and did not develop evenly. Across the board, marches took up issues such as HIV/AIDS and related discrimination. However, in France, the repeal of antihomosexuality laws in 1982 led to general disaffection that manifested in a decline in the number of Paris Pride participants from 10,000 in the early 1980s to 2,000 to 3,000 by the second half of the decade (Fillieule and Duyvendak 1999). In contrast, the number of pride participants in the United Kingdom grew exponentially during the 1980s, and the Netherlands and Germany saw growth as well, despite ongoing internal divisions (Plummer 1999; Schuyf and Krouwel 1999).

Expansion, 1990–2018

During the 1990s and the next decade, pride parades expanded in both size and geographic range. New local pride events were organized in some western European countries. In 1994 Italian activists organized the first Rome Pride, which drew a crowd of about 20,000 (Di Feliciantonio 2016). French activists organized the first pride march in Marseille that same year and in Montpellier, Nantes, and Toulouse in 1995. In 1996 activists in both Amsterdam and Brussels organized the first citywide pride marches (Hekma 2014; Eeckhout 2011).

Pride began to take on a particular European meaning in the 1990s and the next decade as well. In 1992 the first EuroPride was held in London, attracting a crowd of 100,000 people (Caudwell 2017). EuroPride quickly became a popular annual event and is hosted in a different European capital each year. With the inclusion of postsocialist countries into the European Union, EuroPride also began to take place in eastern European cities, first in Warsaw, Poland, in 2010 and then in Riga, Latvia, in 2015.

Pride events in some postsocialist countries have been directly linked to European integration. Following the incorporation of the rights of sexual minorities into the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (EU) in 2000, pride marches have sometimes served as a litmus test for LGBT acceptance. Commenting on the 2012 ban of Belgrade Pride, Birgitta Ohlsson, Swedish minister for European affairs, suggested that the ban might complicate Serbia's path to EU membership (Kahlina 2015). The following year, to explain her support for a pride march in the Croatian city of Split, Minister of Foreign Affairs Vesna
Pusić stated that, “Now that we finally became European in a political sense, it is time to start to behave accordingly” (Kahlina 2015, 78).

**Backlash, 2000–2018**

Pride events have drawn special attention in eastern Europe, not least because of a violent backlash in some postsocialist countries. In the Balkans, about 1,000 demonstrators attacked Belgrade’s first pride march in 2001, causing pride events to be banned there until 2010 (Taylor 2014). In 2002 the first Zagreb Pride was also attacked. In 2011, 4,000 to 10,000 counterprotesters violently attacked pride participants in Split, but, unlike Belgrade, the attack led to increased policing rather than an official ban (Moss 2014). In the Baltic, Riga Pride was attacked between 2005 and 2009. When organizers in Riga combined with organizers in Estonia and Lithuania to create Baltic Pride, the march was attacked in 2010 in Vilnius, but since then the event has been more heavily protected by police (Caudwell 2017). Moscow, in particular, has made headlines for violence against pride parades, which have been held intermittently since 2005 despite being officially banned each year until 2012, when they were banned until 2112.

Violence has not been limited to eastern Europe. In 2006, following Britain’s defeat in the World Cup, some disgruntled fans attacked a pride gathering at Trafalgar Square in London (Winn-Lentsky 2007). At the same time, Slovenia’s first pride march in Ljubljana in 2001 and Estonia’s first pride march in 2011 were met with little to no opposition, highlighting the difficulty of casting eastern Europe as monolithically homophobic (Caudwell 2017).

**Internal Criticism**

Some LGBTQ activists have criticized pride for being alternately heavily commercialized, apolitical, or exclusionary. In 1997, following the introduction of charges for floats at Berlin’s Christopher Street Day parade, some activists organized an alternative pride event in the traditionally working-class and immigrant neighborhood of Kreuzberg, which was held annually until 2017 (Kalender 2011). In 2010 American philosopher Judith Butler refused Berlin Pride’s Civil Courage Award, citing the complicity of some of the organizers in racist practices and stating that the award should instead go to several queer-of-color groups, including Gays und Lesbians aus der Türkei (Gays and Lesbians from Turkey), lesbische und bisexuelle Migrant_innen, Schwarze Lesben und Trans* (LesMigraS; Lesbian and Bisexual Migrants, Black Lesbians and Trans*), SUSPECT, and ReachOut. Some eastern European activists have also argued that the exporting of pride events represents a form of “cultural imperialism,” and pride’s concomitant identity politics do not easily map on to sexual subjectivities in some postsocialist countries (Stella 2013). In addition, some activists and scholars have further criticized the exporting of pride to eastern Europe as condescendingly pedagogical, in that it is used to educate eastern Europeans about sexual progressivism in order to integrate these regions into Europe (Caudwell 2017).
SEE ALSO Anti-gender Movement in Europe; Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo, Brazil; Pride Parades and Marches; Sexual Revolution in Europe

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Pride parades are events organized annually by LGBTQI activists and communities across the world. These events may fulfill various functions, including commemorating crucial events in queer history (e.g., the Stonewall riots of 1969, the HIV/AIDS crisis in the 1980s); serving as a sounding board for claiming human rights and engaging in political protest against governments and institutions; and celebrating the culture, diversity, and pride of the LGBTQI community.

Pride events may acquire different configurations, depending on the purpose, the historical context, and the geopolitical location in which they take place (Lundberg 2007). In some countries, often depending on the sociopolitical attitudes toward the LGBTQI community, these events take the form of marches that resemble political demonstrations more than parades celebrating pride and diversity; Baltic Pride is a case in point (Davydova 2012). In other locations, where pride parades have become institutionalized events, the element of celebration is more prominent, with a carnival-like atmosphere. One of the most notable examples of this latter type of pride event is the Sydney Mardi Gras Parade (Altman 1997; Johnston 2005). When the carnival element of pride events is emphasized, it is common to see organized floats, performances, and various groups parading while displaying often ironic features of their own subgroup or identity (e.g., dykes on bikes, drag kings and queens, bears, etc.). Often, pride events feature national flags or the famous rainbow flag in all forms and shapes (Lundberg 2007). Scholars have debated the role of pride parades in “normalizing” (Peterson et al. 2017) LGBTQI identities and/or promoting “homonormativity” (Johnston 2005) and “homonationalist” narratives (Puar 2002; Ammaturo 2016).

At a glance, pride parades and marches entertain a fundamental relationship with bodies, given their potential to “mark” different (nonheterosexual) bodies (Johnston 2005) and channel the (re)production of LGBTQI-stereotyped corporeality and aesthetics (Enguix 2009). At the same time, these events are also crucially connected to the notion of space (Valentine 1993; Johnston 2005; Ammaturo 2016), given their fundamental role in “queering spaces” that are traditionally considered to be heterosexual (Valentine 1993).
Another distinctive element is pride events' fundamental connection with urban settings, particularly “gayborhoods.” In many global cities, the organization of pride events is tightly connected to the use of space in specific gay or gay-friendly neighborhoods, such as the Castro in San Francisco, Greenwich Village in New York, Soho in London, and Chueca in Madrid. Additionally, often underlying these events is a dialectical distinction between LGBT participants and (presumably straight) onlookers (Berlant and Freeman 1992; Johnston 2005; Ammaturo 2016) as well as a crucial distinction between the public and private spheres (Enguix 2009; Lundberg 2007). Furthermore, in many contexts gay pride parades are characterized by a heightened—as well as problematic—presence of corporate sponsors that help finance the organizations and the events.

Traditional historiography maintains that the first pride parades and marches were organized in 1970 in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago in the aftermath of the infamous Stonewall riots of 1969 in New York (Bruce 2016). These events (Christopher Street Liberation Day March in New York and Christopher Street West in Los Angeles) took their names from the street where the Stonewall Inn was located. After the 1970 commemoration of the riots, pride parades grew in importance and events began to be held in an ever-growing number of cities across the United States, Canada (Kates and Belk 2001), and various countries in Europe. The first parades in the United Kingdom (Walton 2010) and Germany (Griffiths 2015) were held in 1972, followed by Spain in 1977 (Enguix 2009), and France (Blidon 2009) and Italy (Rossi Barilli 1999) in 1979. In Australia, the first Sydney Mardi Gras Parade, today one of the largest and most popular pride parades in the world (Johnston 2005), was organized in 1978 (Markwell and Waitt 2009).

While the Stonewall riots are typically thought to have marked the beginning of gay liberation activism, they were crucially preceded by resistance and activism in the aftermath of World War II (Bérubé 2010), both in the United States (Armstrong and Crage 2006) and throughout Europe (Rupp 2014). Organizations such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis (Enguix 2009) in the United States, Der Kreis in Switzerland, and Cultuur en Ontspanningscentrum (COC) in the Netherlands (Rupp 2014) were precursors of the LGBT activism of the 1970s. Keeping in mind a critical approach to the romanticization of Stonewall as the founding moment of LGBT activism (Jagose 1996), nonetheless, the Stonewall riots did represent a watershed in queer history (D’Emilio 1992), leading to the spread of discourses of “pride, defiance and visibility” (Johnston 2005, 4). At the same time, initially, pride events predominantly catered to white, male participants, marginalizing ethnic minorities, women, and transgender people (Bruce 2016).

Throughout the 1980s, pride parades multiplied and attracted an ever-growing number of participants. This was partly due to the advent of the HIV/AIDS crisis, as Kevin Markwell and Gordon Waitt (2009) have suggested. Paradoxically, the HIV/AIDS crisis brought the community closer together, enhanced visibility and coming out, and contributed to the
politicization and activism of many members of the LGBT community (Altman 1988; Seidman 1988). People living with HIV, as well as members of organizations such as ACT UP, joined pride parades to raise awareness and demand public recognition of the epidemics that various national governments had blatantly ignored. By the beginning of the 1990s, the organization of pride events had become increasingly institutionalized and, in some contexts, even acknowledged by local municipalities (Markwell and Waitt 2009), which started to invest in cultural and artistic events in order to attract visitors and tourists. The 1990s also saw the celebration of the first EuroPride, in Madrid in 1992, and in 2000, the first WorldPride, hosted by the city of Rome.

The Globalization of Pride Parades

Globalization has profoundly affected the ways LGBTQI identities have been framed across different latitudes. While Dennis Altman (1997) has cast doubts on the existence of a unified, global definition of the term gay, he has nonetheless used the term global gay to signal a specific model of homosexuality of Western imprint that has been adapted in various geosocial and political contexts throughout Asia, North Africa, and elsewhere. Other scholars (Binnie 2004; Massad 2008) have also reflected on the implications of the globalization of “gay” identities. While these engagements predominantly focus on male homosexuality, similar attention is given to the globalization of other identities within the LGBTQI community, such as transgender persons (Dutta 2013), lesbians (Woodcock 2004), and bisexual persons (Hemmings 2007).

Carol Southall and Paul Fallon (2011) have noted that in 2010 more than 350 pride events were held across the world. Beginning in the 1990s, pride events were organized in various countries in Latin America, with some exceptions such as Mexico in 1979 (López-Vicuña 2004), with the pride event in São Paulo in Brazil becoming one of the biggest and most renowned in the world (Encarnación 2011). In the Caribbean and Central America, the most important events have been held in Mexico and in Cuba since 2012 (Mezzofiore 2011). In 2015 Jamaica also hosted a pride parade for the first time (Davis 2015). In Africa, the first pride event was held in Johannesburg in 1990 (Reid and Dirsuweit 2002), but despite its success, Johannesburg's celebration has been criticized for being too “white” and “elitist” (Barbier 2017). Given the criminalization of homosexuality in many countries in Africa, it remains difficult for LGBTQI persons to enjoy the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association. Nonetheless, in spite of official hostility, activists organized a pride-like event in Uganda in 2014 (Nyanzi 2014). Some countries in the Middle East/North Africa region also must contend with the criminalization of homosexuality when attempting to organize events. In Israel/Palestine there have been organized gay pride parades since 1998 (Solomon 2003), and in 2017 Lebanon held its first pride event (Kanso 2017). In Turkey, pride events have been held since 2003 (Durgun and Kalaycioğlu 2014). The pride events are objects of intense political scrutiny in Turkey.
(Öktem 2008) and tensions in Israel/Palestine, due to queer/liberal activists’ opposition to pinkwashing (Gross 2014). Across the Asia-Pacific region (excluding Australia and New Zealand), the first pride parades and marches were held in 1994 in the Philippines and in Japan, followed by Taiwan in 1997 and Thailand in 1999 (Sanders 2005). In mainland China, the first event was held in Shanghai in 2009 (Chan 2009). In 2005 Hong Kong began holding events (Wong 2007). In Singapore, where homosexuality is still criminalized, the first IndigNation events were held in 2005, and in 2009 the now popular Pink Dot SG event (Lazar 2017) was established. Although homosexuality is still criminalized in India, pride events have been held there since 1999 (Agrawal 2012). During these events, organizations such as the Naz Foundation (Basu 2016) have seized the opportunity to protest against Section 377 of the criminal code, a relic of British colonialism that criminalized homosexuality.

Pride events were largely absent from countries in central Europe and the Balkans until the end of the 1990s, when activists managed to organize events in some parts of this wide geopolitical region. In the Russian Federation, attempts to organize pride parades have been consistently blocked (Stella 2013) despite rulings of the European Court of Human Rights (such as Alekseyev v. Russia) condemning the bans and impediments. The passage in 2013 of the Russian gay propaganda law (Polsdofer 2013) and the persecution of gay men in Chechnya in 2017 (Walker 2017) have worsened the situation for LGBTQ persons in the country. The situation is similar in former Soviet republics in Central Asia, such as in
Kyrgyzstan (North 2016), where the LGBTQ community continues to be repressed. In central Europe, pride events have been organized since 1997 in Hungary (Renkin 2015), since 2001 in Poland (O’Dwyer 2012), and since 2011 in the Czech Republic (Vuletic 2013). Pride events have also been organized in various countries in the Balkan region: in Serbia beginning in 2001, and resuming in 2009 after an eight-year hiatus (Slootmaeckers 2017); in Croatia since 2003 (Kuhar 2011); and in Albania since 2012 (Likmeta 2012). In Bosnia and Herzegovina, activists have organized the Queer Sarajevo Festival intermittently since 2008 (Zarenkiewicz 2016). Some commentators view the expansion of pride parades in countries across Eastern Europe partly as a signal of the countries’ desire to demonstrate adherence to so-called European norms (Ammaturo 2014; Slootmaeckers et al. 2016). In this regard, it is important to recognize the key roles played by the European Union (Slootmaeckers et al. 2016) and the Council of Europe through the European Court of Human Rights (Ammaturo 2014) in helping LGBTQ communities in Eastern Europe and the Balkans ensure that their rights to freedom of expression and assembly are respected.

Parallel to the globalization of Western LGBTQI identity terms, there has been increasing participation by nonbinary persons and intersex activists in communities and events traditionally dominated by gay and lesbian activists. Collaboration and patterns of inclusion among the various segments represented in the LGBTQI initialism are often problematic (Stone 2009). Nonetheless, a significantly diversified range of actors are increasingly taking part in community initiatives and pride events across the world. Some pride events also cater to specific segments of the LGBTQI community, such as dyke marches (Brown-Saracino and Ghaziani 2009) and trans pride events (McConnell 2014). Others particularly target other groups whose identity may be transversal to sexual orientation and/or gender identity. An example is the Folsom Street Fair in San Francisco, which caters to the leather and BDSM (bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism) community (Teunis 2007). Furthermore, parades increasingly include various ethnic and national minority groups, LGBTQI asylum seekers and refugees, and members of various religious denominations.

**The Commodification of Pride Parades**

Over the years, pride parades and marches have acquired a further significance that goes well beyond their immediate function of representing the achievements, human rights claims, and visibility and pride of LGBTQI communities worldwide. Scholars (Altman 1986, 1997; Puar 2002) have interrogated from different critical perspectives the intersections between the globalization of LGBTQI identities and their commodification. Particularly since the 1990s, LGBT (or more specifically, gay) tourism has been increasingly linked with the consumption of specific events and lifestyles, giving rise to the expressions “pink pound” and “pink dollar” (Southall and Fallon 2011, 223). In this regard, Lynda Johnston has noted the role that gay pride parades have played in enhancing the “commercialisation
and commodification of queer lifestyles” (2005, 100).

Until the mid-1990s, Southall and Fallon (2011) have argued, gay travel was a niche market with only selected gay-friendly destinations. Conversely, Jasbir Kaur Puar (2002) has observed that during the 1990s, the industry of gay and lesbian tourism was at its peak. Other commentators, such as Dereka Rushbrook (2002) and Gabriel Giorgi (2002), have interrogated the geographical expansion of gay and lesbian tourism in connection with commodification and globalization. Traditionally, gay travelers have been depicted as affluent, with high disposable incomes (Southall and Fallon 2011), and the term queer tourism generally indicates affluent gay tourists rather than a diverse range of queer travelers. In this regard, some scholars (Puar 2002; Johnston 2005) have critically reflected on the exclusiveness, in terms of class, race, and gender, of queer travel and tourism. Within this context, pride parades are the most “visible and dynamic components of the LGBT tourism system” (Southall and Fallon 2011, 224).

The identification of this partly untapped market has meant that since the 1990s, various countries have increasingly sought to capture this segment of tourism by promoting themselves as gay-friendly destinations. Often, this is through the official promotion of annual pride parades held in major cities such as San Francisco, New York, Los Angeles, Montreal, São Paulo, Sydney, London, Amsterdam, and Paris. Further resources are dedicated to the marketing of pan-European pride events, such as EuroPride, as well as global events, such as WorldPride. In many countries, the commodification of pride parades also normally leads to the targeted marketing of queer customers by restaurants, bars, and hotels (Johnston 2005).

The commodification of pride parades has some important consequences for the nature, dynamics, and politics of these events. Various commentators (Valentine 2002; Rooke 2007; Binnie and Skeggs 2004) have investigated the dynamics whereby pride parades have been permeated by commercial interests. The commodification of pride events, which echoes David T. Evans’s (1993) discussion of the commodification of (homosexual) desire as a strategy for inclusion of gay individuals in the citizenry, is closely connected to the possibility of these events becoming depoliticized (Ammaturo 2016). The presence of corporate sponsors, in particular, may be problematic, but the organization of pride events worldwide has become increasingly complex and requires substantial financial resources.

Steven M. Kates and Russell W. Belk (2001) have mapped trajectories of resistance through consumption and resistance against consumption during pride parades. They argue that during pride parades, individuals may resist dominant culture either through (excessive) consumption or through active critique of the commercial cooption of pride parades by commercial actors. At the same time, the globalization of queer tourism in general can be said to have some ambiguous features. As Puar (2002) has argued, the motivations and implications of queer travel oscillate between trying to promote forms of transnational
solidarity networks between activists and fostering a liberal paradigm of freedom based on patterns of consumption enabled by the so-called pink dollar. The commodification and commercialization of pride parades, therefore, can be said to represent, at least partly, an expression of the normalization of the LGBT and queer movement through co-optation into the nation-state, as well as into global neocapitalism (Ammaturo 2016).

**Opposition and Backlash to Pride Parades**

In countries where homosexuality is criminalized and/or LGBTQI persons are directly or indirectly persecuted, organizing a pride event may be impossible and/or dangerous. This may be because of obstacles to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly and association for LGBT groups, or it may be related to general societal hostility and a generalized climate of homophobia or transphobia. In some instances, opposition, backlash, or clampdowns on pride events are enacted by institutional actors in the executive, legislative, and/or judicial spheres. In other cases, opposition to pride parades comes from noninstitutional actors, such as religious groups, nationalist groups, or other organized groups belonging to civil society at large. Furthermore, while some forms of opposition are peaceful, others can escalate into violent confrontations and attacks.

The proliferation of pride parades across the world during the twenty-first century has been subject to episodes of institutional opposition as well as backlash by noninstitutional actors in various countries. In Europe, the most significant instances have been registered in Poland (Gruszczynska 2009) and the Russian Federation (Stella 2013). In these countries, either the authorities have enacted administrative bans on the organization of pride events or they have imposed administrative impediments that have made organizing pride parades onerous. There also have been numerous instances of backlash and protests organized by nationalist and/or religious groups in Serbia (Slootmaeckers 2017), Georgia (Roth 2013), and Croatia and Montenegro (Kahlina 2013). Another notable example of institutional opposition to pride parades has been registered in Turkey, where the government first banned pride marches in Istanbul in 2015 and in 2017 extended the ban to the capital, Ankara (BBC 2017).

SEE ALSO ACT UP; Bathhouse Raids, Toronto (1981); BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism); Daughters of Bilitis; Gay European Tourism Association; HIV/AIDS; HIV/AIDS in Europe; HIV/AIDS in the United States; Marches on Washington; Mattachine Society; Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo, Brazil; People Like Us (PLU); Pride Demonstrations in Europe; Resorts; Stonewall Riots, International Effects of; Travel/Travelogues on the Middle East

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Psychoanalysis in Argentina

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The development of Argentina as a center of psychoanalysis in Latin America.

Within the last fifty years, Buenos Aires has become perhaps the most renowned international center of the consumption and diffusion of psychoanalysis. Today, the city not only boasts one of the largest psychoanalytic communities of the world, but psychoanalytic terms and concepts have permeated into everyday speech: psychoanalysis became a filter through which various sectors of urban Argentina have come to interpret reality.

Although the “psychoanalytic boom” started in the early 1960s, the presence of psychoanalysis in Argentine culture has a much longer history. Sigmund Freud, the Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis, himself ([1914] 1955) mentioned a paper on psychoanalysis delivered in Buenos Aires as early as 1910 by the Chilean doctor Germán Greve (1869–1954). By the 1920s and 1930s, psychoanalysis was known and discussed by several psychiatrists active in Buenos Aires and other major cities. In 1936 Fernando Gorriti (1876–1970), a prestigious South American psychiatrist, wrote a book in which he analyzed seventy-four dreams of a patient following “Freud’s method.” By the 1930s, psychoanalysis was also a common staple in popular publications. In the early 1930s jornada, a widely read newspaper, even included a column in which readers were invited to submit their dreams to be analyzed by someone who signed as “Freudiano” (Plotkin 2007). At present, Argentina boasts the earliest extant psychoanalytic institution affiliated with the International Psychoanalytical Association (IPA) in the Spanish-speaking world: the Asociación Psicoanalítica Argentina (APA; Argentine Psychoanalytic Association), established in 1942. Since 1943 the APA has published uninterruptedly Revista de psicoanálisis, South America’s first psychoanalytic review.

The Psychoanalytic Boom of the 1960s: Between Modernity and Tradition

The Argentine psychoanalytic boom of the 1960s had diverse roots. Like many major cities in the world, Buenos Aires and other large cities in Argentina underwent a fast-paced process of social and cultural modernization during the 1950s and 1960s. However, in contrast with most European countries and the United States, the modernization in Argentina took place under conditions of restricted political freedom. After the fall of the
authoritarian—although formally democratic—regime of Juan Perón in 1955, the country suffered a long process of political instability, including military dictatorships that lasted through 1983, when democracy was finally restored. Moreover, in the late 1960s, the country saw the emergence of radical guerrilla movements that were harshly and illegally repressed by the military, thus resulting in an increasingly violent environment.

Society was changing fast. In the 1960s women, who had been enfranchised in 1947, entered the job market and the system of higher education in large numbers. Yet, this process of social and cultural modernization was limited by the restrictions imposed by state repression and also by the conservative values still predominant among various sectors of society. Thus, conditions were ripe for the diffusion of a system of thought that could provide explanations for social and cultural changes without threatening accepted views. Psychoanalysis hence came in handy because it incarnated those tensions between modernity and tradition. Analysts introduced a new vocabulary, legitimizing advanced discourses on sexuality and a certain rupture with traditional cultural patterns. At the same time, however, psychoanalysts promoted family models and gender roles that were compatible with traditional views. For instance, the Austrian-born Marie Langer (1910–1987), the only female founding member of the APA and a prestigious analyst recognized as a pioneer in the analysis of female sexuality, wrote the following in 1951:

At the sight of a mouse, our grandmothers climbed on a chair and raised their skirts crying for help, but ... they had no problems with breast feeding their children. Nowadays, young women know how to drive cars ... and even airplanes, but frequently either they do not know how to feed a baby or they give up this task.

(13; TRANSLATION BY MARIANO BEN PLOTKIN)

Arnaldo Rascovsky (1907–1995), another founding member of the APA who was also very active in the media, elaborated the popular theory of “filicide,” according to which there is a phylogenetic tendency of parents to destroy their children. Thus, the murderous oedipal child, who wanted to get rid of his father to have sexual access to his mother, in Rascovksy's view, became a victim of his parents' homicidal desire. Therefore, such behavior as sending newborn babies to nurseries, not breastfeeding them, and even sending older children to kindergartens amounted to “micro-abandonments”—that is, mild forms of filicide. In a 1975 book, Rascovsky wrote that “the increasing participation of women in multiple industrial, professional ... activities ... has been carried out at the expense of the maternal function. The maternal function implies constant presence and emotional support during the early development of the child, not disrupted by other activities” (14–15; translation by
Plotkin). For both Langer and Rascovksy, women could find total fulfillment only in motherhood.

On other issues, such as homosexuality, at least until the late 1970s psychoanalysts also held views that did not differ much from those held by criminologists and psychiatrists around the beginning of the twentieth century. Even though it is well known that Freud did not consider homosexuality a mental disease, as he made clear when he treated a homosexual woman (Freud [1920] 1957), Argentine psychoanalysts persisted for decades in seeing homosexuality as a disease that could (and should) be “cured.” Until at least the 1980s, homosexuals were discouraged (if not openly prevented) from becoming psychoanalysts. Although, by displacing the discourses on sexuality from the traditional realms of religion, eugenics, or sexology, psychoanalysis introduced a rupture in the conceptualizations of sex and gender, the most prestigious APA members still adhered to visions of homosexuality that in some cases were not all that different from those promoted by positivist criminologists in the early twentieth century. Thus, the Spanish-born Angel Garma (1904–1993), one of the founding members and a longtime leading figure of the APA, wrote in 1944 in Revista de psicoanálisis that homosexual relations usually degenerated into quarrels, jealousies, and envy that could lead to crime and homicide. In the late 1960s and 1970s many psychoanalysts interviewed by the media on homosexuality expressed similar opinions (Bazán 2004), even though, by then, gay men had already established their first political organizations (with lesbians getting organized later). Therefore, psychoanalysis constituted a discourse that was disruptive and conservative at the same time. This proved to be particularly attractive to a society that not only was torn between modernity and tradition but was also living under repressive dictatorships.

**Popularization and Politicization of Psychoanalysis**

In the late 1950s prestigious analysts from the APA began to be routinely featured in the media. Moreover, in those years, the first university programs in psychology were created at public universities. Unlike in most countries, the programs in Argentina showed a clear psychoanalytic orientation from very early on. Even today, the largest such program—the one offered by the University of Buenos Aires—concentrates almost exclusively on psychoanalysis, particularly on a version of it rooted in the ideas of the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1901–1981). During the 1960s and 1970s, psychology became a popular profession for women who wanted to pursue university studies, replacing schoolteaching as a career of choice for many of them. The psychoanalytic (clinical) orientation of the psychology programs created a possibility for women to work at home in a society still bent on traditional gender roles. Moreover, psychology, which in Argentina (unlike in most countries) is considered a synonym for psychoanalysis, opened up a legitimate space for women to talk publicly about female sexuality. Female
psychologists were routinely featured in popular magazines and television shows as experts (legitimized by possessing a specialized scientific knowledge) on sexuality. Their views, however, were sometimes congruent with those held by traditional sectors associated with Catholicism. Most female psychologists and psychoanalysts in the 1960s and 1970s, for instance, opposed the use of birth control pills (Plotkin 2001). Once again, psychoanalysis introduced changes in social mores, or legitimized ongoing ones, but did so with ambivalence.

In contrast with Europe or the United States, Argentina did not produce a specifically Argentine school of psychoanalysis. In the early days of the APA, analysts were ardent adherents of the object relations theory of the Austrian-born British psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (1882–1960) (Plotkin 2001; Dagfal 2009). Their emphasis on preoedipal relations and on intrapsychic developments, as opposed to more concrete traumas of sexual abuse, could be explained by this theoretical allegiance. Later, starting in the early 1970s, Lacan's version of psychoanalysis gradually gained ground, and it has remained predominant to this day. The absence of a specifically Argentine version of psychoanalysis facilitated the appropriation of psychoanalysis by different social, cultural, and political environments. Different interpretations of psychoanalysis were simultaneously compatible with the demobilization of society imposed by the military dictatorships and with the political radicalization of certain sectors of society in the late 1960s and 1970s.

The APA was considered a politically conservative institution. However, in 1971, for the first time in the history of the psychoanalytic movement, a sizable group of senior analysts resigned from the institution and from the IPA for political reasons. They tried to create a politically committed version of psychoanalysis, but the bloody dictatorship that took power in 1976 cut their intentions short. Most of them were forced into exile, and a handful of them were killed or “disappeared.” While the main psychoanalytic institutions kept growing unmolested, other people used psychoanalysis as a form of resistance against the dictatorship. Some analysts even took members of the guerrillas under treatment at high personal risk, while others became active in the emerging human rights movement.

In spite of the conservatism of the official psychoanalytic institutions (which, by 1976, included two IPA-affiliated societies in Buenos Aires, plus many independent ones), by the mid-1970s, leftist intellectuals of all persuasions recognized psychoanalysis as an appropriate subject to think and talk about. The reasons for this are complex. First, for some people psychoanalysis had become a highly politicized discipline. The secessionists of 1971 not only challenged the APA’s (and the IPA’s) rigid institutional frameworks but also contributed to generating broader debates about the place of psychoanalysis in society, discussions that transcended the “psy” community, composed of psychologists (most of whom practiced psychoanalysis), psychoanalysts, and psychiatrists. Second, there was an already large and increasing number of followers of Lacan’s doctrines. Whereas traditional orthodox psychoanalysis had been closely associated with clinical practice, Lacanian
psychoanalysis was perceived as a cultural phenomenon. Contrary to the majority of APA members, most Lacanian analysts did not hold medical degrees but rather had backgrounds in such disciplines as philosophy, literature, or psychology. Some of them even enjoyed an already established reputation as writers or critics. This was a clear advantage in a country such as Argentina, where the intellectual elite had traditionally been small and fluid. A case in point was Oscar Masotta (1930–1979), a well-known multifaceted leftist intellectual who, by the mid-1960s, when he began studying Lacanian psychoanalysis, was already influential in the areas of philosophy, literary criticism, and pop art. Masotta soon became a leading figure of Lacanian psychoanalysis in Argentina. He is recognized as one of the earliest introducers of Lacanism into Spanish-speaking countries. His prestige attracted many progressive intellectuals to psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis and the Dictatorship

The murderous military dictatorship of 1976 placed terror at the center of its strategy for disciplining and demobilizing society. The official discourse was anti-psychoanalytic. As one of the generals in power declared, Karl Marx and Freud were ideological criminals. Some generals even associated psychoanalysis with terrorism (Plotkin 2012). Paradoxically, however, in those years the Argentine “psychoanalytic culture” all but consolidated. Members of the “psy” professions were not singled out for persecution by the military because of their profession. Rather, those who suffered repression were targeted as a result of their real or alleged leftist sympathies. At the same time, however, the APA refused to publicly denounce the dictatorship at international forums. Instead, it even accepted funding from the military government to organize an international conference in 1976 (Plotkin 2001). Many psychoanalysts shared their general worldview (including their views on sexual and gender transgression) with conservative sectors of society. APA members routinely participated in seminars and conferences sponsored by the government. The institution continued to grow; by 1979 it was the fourth-largest psychoanalytic institution in the world. In parallel, Lacanian psychoanalysis also got consolidated, although its practitioners did not seem to have been particularly interested in the most transgressive aspects of Lacan's theory on sexual and gender differences discussed by Patricia Gherovici in her works (e.g., Gherovici 2017).

Even more disturbing than the psychoanalytic community’s failure to denounce the abuses of the dictatorship was the military appropriating for its own purposes certain elements of the psychoanalytic discourse: those promoted by the most conservative sectors of the increasingly heterogeneous psychoanalytic community. The same categories that psychologists and psychoanalysts were using to explain juvenile criminality were appropriated by the government to explain political subversion. Through television ads, parents were encouraged to provide psychological support to their children in times of crisis in order to keep them safe from politically subversive temptations (i.e., becoming
political activists or members of a guerrilla organization). Additionally, media-friendly psychoanalysts (mostly from the APA) appeared regularly in the state-controlled media to underline the importance of traditional gender roles and the family as the foundations of a healthy society. Leftist subversion was characterized as a mental disease similar to psychosis, neurosis, homosexuality (which was conceived as a disease), or drug addiction. The military associated any deviation from what it considered “normality”—particularly any sexual deviation—with leftist political activism. The military even used the services of some independent psychologists in its concentration camps to determine which prisoners were apt for “reeducation” (while the rest were killed) (Plotkin 2012). At the same time, however, many psychologists and psychoanalysts became fierce defenders of human rights and opponents to the military regime.

**Twenty-First-Century Developments**

In the twenty-first century, although the hegemony of psychoanalysis as a therapeutic technique has been questioned from several quarters, psychoanalysis as a broadly defined cultural artifact continues to be vibrant. In 2001, when Argentina underwent one of the worst economic and political crises in its history and most forms of social knowledge had lost legitimacy, psychoanalysts became public intellectuals who were routinely called on by the media to explain the origins and the nature of the crisis (Plotkin and Visacovsky 2007). As a professional group, however, psychoanalysts did not seem to be at the social vanguard on issues related to sex and gender.

Argentine society has undergone important changes in terms of visions of gender and sexuality in the first two decades of the twenty-first century. A country that introduced legal divorce only as late as the mid-1980s, Argentina in 2010 became the first country in Latin America (and the tenth worldwide) to pass a national law that fully recognized same-sex marriage, including the right to adopt children. The “egalitarian marriage law” (as it is commonly known) was the result of an active campaign launched by the Federación Argentina de Lesbianas, Gays, Bisexuales y Trans (Argentine Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transsexuals), a group that became very active and highly visible since its founding in 2005. Except for the most conservative groups linked to the Catholic Church, this piece of legislation enjoyed broad support across society. Since 2010, gays, lesbians, and transsexuals have also been admitted as officers in the armed forces, and in 2011 for the first time a male lieutenant colonel married a male captain, both officers on active duty in the army.

In 2012 Argentina’s National Congress passed another foundational law that allowed people to freely choose their gender without the requirement of submitting to surgery or other medical procedures of gender change. However, the law also established that the federal state must cover the costs involved in any related medical procedures and treatment for transsexual individuals who choose to undergo gender reassignment surgery.
and/or hormonal treatment. The law explicitly rejects the pathologization of transsexualism. Although psychoanalysts were not particularly active in the preliminary discussions on either law, a few of them addressed the issue in different media. Once again, many of them (including those of Lacanian persuasion) continued to consider homosexuality as a pathology that needed to be treated while expressing doubts about the efficacy of those laws.

SEE ALSO Argentina’s Gender Identity Law; Biological Essentialism; Fin de Siècle Sexuality

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Psychopathia Sexualis (1886; Richard von Krafft-Ebing)

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Influential reference work on sexual pathology that classified homosexuality as a pathological aberration and a symptom of hereditary degeneracy.

Psychopathia sexualis (Sexual psychopathy) was first published in 1886 and became the leading reference work of sexual pathology in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its author, Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902), was a major psychiatrist of his day and a professor of nervous diseases at the Universities of Graz (1872–1889) and Vienna (1889–1902). His best seller categorized and labeled almost all deviant sexual phenomena of his era, including sadism, masochism, fetishism, and exhibitionism. The book elaborately discussed homosexuality and homosexual acts, which were forbidden by Austrian and German penal law.

Background

When Krafft-Ebing published his first articles on konträre Sexualempfindung (usually translated as either "antipathic sexuality" or "contrary sexual sensation"), he was familiar with less than a dozen case histories of invert, or umnings, words then used to describe homosexuals. This small number did not discourage him from putting forth a general theory of homosexuality. According to him, the congenital “contrary sexual feelings” could be explained as an inherited pathological aberration of the brain and a functional symptom of hereditary degeneracy or degeneration. As Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895) and Carl Westphal (1833–1890) had already proposed in their investigations from some years before, Krafft-Ebing assumed that homosexuals have essentially different sexual feelings and contrary characteristics (Eder 2011). Their “inversion” determines their whole character: therefore, men desiring men were interested in female clothes and activities; the reverse was true for women desiring women. It was further contended that in the “worst” case even the whole body converges to the other sex. As a typical sign of degeneration most of these people also experienced psychic anomalies.

Krafft-Ebing was a follower of Bénédict Augustin Morel’s (1809–1873) degeneration theory, which since the 1860s had found supporters across Europe. According to Morel, the degenerative phenomena could be located in the person’s appearance, brain, and nervous system. This physical lack, caused by heredity, has tremendous social and cultural
consequences for the person affected. Former psychiatrists made use of the heredity model to answer moral questions from a biological and anthropological viewpoint. Krafft-Ebing argued that signals of the degenerate basis of homosexuality could be found during childhood and adolescence, such as in strong sexual impulses and forms of behavior that do not fit to the child’s sex. In subsequent years “contrary sexual” love developed as a gushing emotion and exalted demeanor. Moreover, by one’s gait and gestures the fully pronounced type can be recognized. To Krafft-Ebing, it was a sign of aberration that so many homosexuals are talented in the arts and literature and yet suffer from madness and moral insanity. As the most conspicuous symptom of degeneracy, the contrary sexual sensation occupies the whole consciousness and all expressions of life.

© INTERFOTO/ALAMY
Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Author of Psychopathia Sexualis (1886). Krafft-Ebing's reference work on sexual pathology categorized and labeled almost all deviant sexual phenomena of his era, including homosexuality and homosexual acts. He explained these “contrary sexual feelings” as an inherited pathological aberration of the brain and a functional system of hereditary degeneracy.

The Book's Contents

From 1886 to 1903, Psychopathia sexualis (with the subtitle with Especial Reference to the Antipathic Sexual Instinct: A Medico-forensic Study) was published in twelve editions and contained an increasing number of case histories, most of them on the “contrary sexual
“sensation” (Oosterhuis 2000, 152). The cases were divided into “perversity” and “perversion”: perversity contained all forms of same-sex acts, which, owing to exceptional circumstances, primarily occurred in prisons, barracks, or boarding schools. These acts were committed by persons who did not suffer from inborn “homosexuality.” When they returned to their former lives, the delinquents adopted “normal” heterosexual intercourse again. Within the group of “true” perverts Krafft-Ebing saw various degrees of development:

1. Traces of hetero-sexual, with predominating homosexual, instinct (psychosexual hermaphroditism).
2. There exists inclination only toward the same sex (homo-sexuality).
3. The entire mental existence is altered to correspond with the abnormal sexual instinct (effemination and viraginity).
4. The form of the body approaches that which corresponds to the abnormal sexual instinct.

(1906, 336)

He thereby emphasized the importance of congenital feeling: “The determining factor here is the demonstration of perverse feeling for the same sex; not the proof of sexual acts with the same sex. These two phenomena must not be confounded with each other; perversity must not be taken for perversion” (286). Genuine homosexuals would constitute a sick and perverse type of human being.

With this classification Krafft-Ebing questioned the assumption of the criminal responsibility of same-sex offenders. If this kind of sexual desire was manifested by a natural drive, homosexuals should not be persecuted by law. Paragraph 175 of the criminal code of the German Empire and Paragraph 129 of the Habsburg monarchy’s criminal code held severe penalties for “fornication against nature.” Krafft-Ebing suggested that same-sex sexual interactions should be punished only when they are committed in front of an unconcerned third person or by violence. Furthermore, pederasts should be punished, because their young victims are not mature enough to give consent.

According to Krafft-Ebing, female homosexuality was uncommon. For this kind of sexual relationship he could refer only to a few observations, so he conceptualized the idea of “lesbian love” as an analogy to the male model. Moreover, he tried to explain how such females differed:
(1) It is more difficult to gain the confidence of the sexually perverse woman; (2) this anomaly, in so far as it leads to sexual intercourse, inter feminas, does not fall (in Germany at any rate) under the criminal code, and therefore remains hidden from public knowledge; (3) sexual inversion does not affect woman in the same manner as it does man, for it does not render woman impotent; (4) because woman (whether sexually inverted or not) is by nature not as sensual and certainly not as aggressive in the pursuit of sexual needs as man, for which reason the inverted sexual intercourse among women is less noticeable, and by outsiders is considered mere friendship.

(1906, 395–396)

Krafft-Ebing believed that so-called Mannweiber (manly women) constitute an obvious "specie," which was characterized by more or less female versus male attributes. Because of their congenital degeneration, most of the lesbians should have masculine feelings and a male sex character.

As a sexual pathologist, Krafft-Ebing suggested a precise division of labor between the courts and psychiatrists: the former should be responsible for the prosecution and punishment of the pederasts, the latter for the diagnosis and assessments of the contrary sexuals. By diagnosing same-sex perversion, the sexual pathologists would find out that most of the “homosexuals” do not identify themselves as degenerate invalids or psychiatric patients. Surprisingly for the pathologists, most of them seemed to be happy with their “perverse” sexual sensation and suffered mainly from the social prejudice and the severe laws. Nevertheless, Krafft-Ebing argued, the contrary sexuals should consult one of the Nervenärzte (nerve doctors) to find out the scientific and objective reasons for their feelings. With this medical improvement, they would be able to identify themselves as a homosexual subject or as a so-called homosexual.

**Significance and Impact**

Autobiographical letters of confession and the case materials that were published by Krafft-Ebing showed that most of the “homosexuals” were influenced by the idea of the pathological model and its categories of self-perception. During his research and correspondence with the patients, he came in contact with members of the middle and upper classes who told him about their sexual lives, emotions, and practices that did not fit into contemporary bourgeois morals. Many of them attributed themselves to psychiatric categories. They explained their life as a “perverse” case history and constructed their identity under the concept of “contrary sexuality.” It is misleading, however, to classify
Krafft-Ebing and other contemporary sexologists only as agents of a pathologization and the “homosexuals” as helpless and passive objects of psychiatric discourse. As most of the patient letters prove, the homosexual life story was influenced by the interaction of self and foreign images. Harry Oosterhuis summarized this complex relationship by noting that “new ways of understanding sexuality emerged out of a confrontation and intertwining of professional medical thinking and patients’ self-definition. The theory of degeneration and an emphatic understanding of individual predicaments existed side by side” (Oosterhuis 2000, 212). Reading such case histories, “homosexuals” could find out that they were not alone and that their feelings could be explained in rational and “objective” scientific terms.

Thereby, the narratives provided a specific biographical structure that began from childhood and family education and continued to first sexual experiences. Moreover, they offered stories about the individuals’ aversion to and fear of a sort of “coming out” while writing to the psychiatrist. Although the pathological point of view dominated in Krafft-Ebing’s book, the biographical narratives of his patients and correspondents had a lasting impact on the development of (homo)sexual identities. These individuals spoke about themselves, and they spoke the “truth” about their experiences within the medical and pathological frame of perversion and perversity (Savoia 2010). They thus demonstrated that sexual identity is not given by nature or an intrinsic drive. It emerged as a socially patterned narrative based on a society’s given supply of sexual scripts and modes of looking at and understanding one’s self. As Philippe Weber expressed it in the title of his 2008 book on sexual pathology and homosexuality: Psychopathia sexualis was the starting point for “the urge to narrate.”

Additionally, Psychopathia sexualis conveyed as well the idea that “homosexuality” had an essential impact on a certain identity. The best seller found a wide readership, and its narratives provided recognition of and identification with unusual sexual lives (Ammerer 2011). Krafft-Ebing’s taxonomy of sexual deviance (e.g., the terms homosexual and heterosexual that were invented some decades before by Karl Maria Kertbeny [1824–1882]) dominated both the medical context and commonsense thinking. His psychiatric categories and terms became the templates for literary characters that represented same-sex love, sexuality, and identity. For instance, Thomas Mann (1875–1955) used his understanding of Psychopathia sexualis to characterize sexually deviant characters in Buddenbrooks: Verfall einer Familie (1901; Buddenbrooks [1924]). This novel illustrated the etiology of homosexuality—with homosexuality, in this case, being an outcome of the congenital sociophysical decline of the Budden-brook family. On the one hand, it showed that the breakdown is caused by the forces of modernity, such as the hectic nature of urban life, neurasthenia, and decadence. On the other hand, the “contrary sexual sensation” of Mann’s main characters arms them with an increased artistic sensibility, aesthetics, and Geist (mind) (Schaffner 2011).

The psychiatric strategies of Psychopathia sexualis became an object of satire, too. Frank
Wedekind’s polemic poem “Perversity,” for instance, was originally titled “Krafft-Ebing.” Oskar Panizza’s (1853–1921) *Psychopathia criminalis* (1898) criticized the social implications of the psychiatrists’ classification and the reductionist nature of pathological case writing (Lang, Damousi, and Lewis 2017). Krafft-Ebing’s authority was also used to promote homosexuality itself. For example, in the classic lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928), by the English author Radclyffe Hall (1880–1943), which told the story of a “female sexual invert” called Stephen Gordon, Krafft-Ebing was referenced by name. This literary figure is conceptualized on the basis of pathological ideas, showing that various forms of sexual desire can exist within one sexual preference. Gordon is pictured as a sexually active female “invert” who defines herself as “a sexy and sexed martyr” (Bauer 2003, 37).

Even though Krafft-Ebing started his career as a theorist of degeneration, he found his path through his communications with his patients and correspondents. In his later years, he became an advocate for a more individual and psychological understanding of sexual feelings. As a result of the autobiographical confessions of his correspondents and the influence of other sexologists, such as Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), and Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935), he changed his view of the degenerative and pathological origins of the contrary sexual sensation (Oosterhuis 2012). In the last edition of *Psychopathia sexualis*, which was authorized by himself, Krafft-Ebing claimed that

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this abnormality must not be looked upon as a pathological condition or as a crime, but the development of the vita sexualis with its reacting effects upon the mind and the moral sense; it may proceed with the same harmony and satisfying influence as in the normally disposed, a further argument in favour of the assumption that antipathic sexual instinct is an equivalent for heterosexuality.
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*(1906, 446)*

**SEE ALSO** Biological Essentialism; Institut für Sexualwissenschaft; *The Well of Loneliness* (1928; Radclyffe Hall)

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The cultural production and activism of queer Puerto Ricans living in major US cities and their continued connection with the island.

When assessing literary and cultural production by queer Puerto Ricans, it is essential to consider the influence and contributions of those living in the diaspora. According to the 2010 US census, 4.6 million people who identify as Puerto Rican live in the United States, with the majority of these living in New York, Florida, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. The reasons for these migrations over the years are diverse and are discussed below, but it is important to note that for many queer Puerto Ricans who moved from the island to the United States, questions of gender and sexuality were at the center of their relocation. It is not possible to speak of the Puerto Rican diaspora as monolithic, particularly because inflections of Puerto Rican culture in Chicago, for example, will differ from those in New York, Orlando, or rural Massachusetts. Therefore, this entry focuses on queer Puerto Rican cultural production in the diaspora through the entanglements between literature, activism, and performance art.

Sylvia Rivera and the Young Lords

In a talk given in 2001, Puerto Rican–Venezuelan transgender activist Sylvia Rivera (1951–2002) recounted the summer night in 1969 when she threw the second Molotov cocktail of the Stonewall riots in New York City, widely considered to be a turning point in LGBTQ activism in the United States. While the riots have become a symbol of LGBTQ resistance, the contributions of Rivera and of other trans women of color have historically been relegated to the background of early gay and lesbian activism in the United States. Rivera told this story at the Lesbian and Gay Community Center (now known as the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Community Center) in New York City to illustrate not just continuous efforts to whitewash the history of LGBTQ resistance, but also the persistence of marginalized members of the community in making their voices heard. After the Stonewall riots, Rivera, along with Marsha P. Johnson (1945–1992), went on to found STAR: Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries, a trans and gender nonconforming activist group that would remain active in various ways until Rivera’s death in 2002.
Rivera and many of the Young Lords were part of the first generation of Puerto Ricans born and raised in the United States after the mass migration of Puerto Ricans to cities like New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia. Their migration was due in part to Operation Bootstrap, a policy that during the 1940s and 1950s shifted the Puerto Rican economy from agriculture
to industrial production and export. The collaboration between Rivera and the Young Lords marked a great departure from the discourse surrounding any form of dissident sexualities or gender nonconforming identities that were prevalent in Puerto Rico.

**Manuel Ramos Otero and the Experience of Sexile**

In his 1995 article “Toward an Art of Transvestism: Colonialism and Homosexuality in Puerto Rican Literature,” Arnaldo Cruz-Malavé underscores and critiques the general absence of gay and lesbian Puerto Rican literary subjects for the better part of the twentieth century. Citing gay Puerto Rican poet Carlos Rodríguez Matos, he notes that from 1942 to 1973 (i.e., from the publication of Carlos Alberto Fonseca's poem “En voz baja ... a un efebo” [Quietly...to an Ephebe] to Víctor Fragoso’s “El reino de la espiga” [The kingdom of the wheat spike]) there is no overt mention of gay and lesbian subjects in Puerto Rican poetry. Cruz-Malavé also indicates that the erasure of gay and lesbian desire is not just constrained to literature, but to Puerto Rican life and culture in general. Víctor Fragoso (1945–1982), the poet signaled here as the rupture in that poetic silencing of gay and lesbian desires, was based in New York City and would go on to produce a rich, though relatively unknown, body of work that prominently explored gay and Puerto Rican identities. In recent years, such scholars as Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes and Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel have brought attention to the fact that while the economic and political motivations for Puerto Rican migration to large metropolitan areas of the United States have been recognized and studied for many years, sexuality as motivation has been largely ignored.

In 1997 Manuel Guzmán coined the term *sexile* to refer to the “exile of those who have had to leave their nations of origin on account of their sexual orientation” (Guzmán 1997, 227). Manuel Ramos Otero (1948–1990) is one of the figures that exemplify this notion of sexile in the Puerto Rican case. Ramos Otero moved to New York City in 1969 and began publishing poetry and short-story collections in the early 1970s. He returned to Puerto Rico shortly before he died of AIDS in 1990. His texts prominently featured gay Puerto Rican men living in New York City. In an interview published shortly after his death, Ramos Otero says that he moved to New York City immediately after finishing his bachelor’s degree at the University of Puerto Rico because he felt that he would not be able to live freely as a gay man on the island.

First of all, it was the best option for leaving my home. Second, I couldn't stand the repressive atmosphere in Puerto Rico anymore. I realized that New York was a city where I could live without feeling persecuted all the time. In Puerto Rico, I was subject to a lot of persecution because I was so open with my sexuality.
The persecution he mentions refers to the contentious relationship that he maintained with other writers in Puerto Rico. The open discussion of his sexuality in his work put Ramos Otero at odds with the literary establishment in Puerto Rico. For example, in an interview published in 1977, Puerto Rican writer José Luis González addressed how sex and the erotic have been successfully incorporated into contemporary Puerto Rican literature. Despite such claims, González was reluctant to include Ramos Otero within this group of writers, claiming that he is “obviously a very talented writer who has not yet developed the artistic distance necessary to transform his own experiences into literature” (Díaz Quiñones 1977, 47).

**Ramos Otero’s Queer Diasporic Writings** Ramos Otero makes note of this in the short story “Descuento” (“The Untelling”), included in his last short-story collection, *Página en blanco y staccato* (The point blank page). Referring to González’s critique and to the central place gay love and desire have in his texts, he writes, “Understanding that one of the cruelest political battles takes place in bed, I learned that the only remaining alternative (however much I might try to avoid it) was to return to the story of love and avenge myself on the inquisitors of Puerto Rican literature” (Ramos Otero 1988, 101–102).

Related or not to these “inquisitorial” tendencies, the truth is that for the better part of the 1990s and the next decade, Ramos Otero’s work was largely unobtainable. Early in the first decade of the twenty-first century, only one of his books, *Página en blanco y staccato*, was available in bookstores. The rest of his work circulated among readers in the know in photocopy form. A key turning point for the circulation of Ramos Otero’s work, as well as for that of many other writers, is the 2007 publication of the first-ever anthology of gay, lesbian, and queer literature from Puerto Rico and its diaspora, edited by Moisés Agosto, David Caleb Acevedo, and Luis Negrón, titled *Los otros cuerpos: Antología de temática gay, lésbica y queer desde Puerto Rico y su diáspora* (The other bodies: Gay, lesbian, and queer anthology from Puerto Rico and its diaspora). In this collection, Puerto Rican queerness is fully understood as a diasporic project. It includes authors who spent most of their careers both on the island and in the United States. The volume is dedicated to the memory of Ramos Otero and includes his short story “El cuento de la Mujer del Mar” (The story of the woman of the sea), marking the first time since the early 1990s that one of his works was put into wide circulation. *Los otros cuerpos* has been regarded as a turning point in the understanding of queer cultures in Puerto Rico, and it is particularly significant that Ramos Otero functions as somewhat of an organizing figure for this new phase of queer literature on the island.

In 2011 the Instituto de Cultura de Puertorriqueña (ICPR; Puerto Rican Cultural Institute)
reedited Ramos Otero’s only novel, La novela bingó (The bingonovel), originally published in 1976 in New York City. In 2013 Ramos Otero’s posthumous poetry collection, Invitación al polvo (Invitation to dust), was reprinted with great success. His work has also been adapted for theater and performance. His short story “Loca de la locura” (Queen of madness) was adapted by Teatro Pregones as El bolero fue mi ruina / The Bolero Was My Downfall in 1997 and has been performed regularly since. Puerto Rican performance artist José “Pepe” Álvarez adapted La novela bingó into a multimedia performance piece titled LA MAMUTCANDUNGO in 2015, demonstrating the renewed interest in and continuing relevance of Ramos Otero’s work for queer artists both on the island and in the diaspora.

**Archiving and Memorializing a Queer Life** In 2014 the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University announced that it had recently acquired Ramos Otero’s personal archive as part of its new Latino Arts and Activism Collection. This collection includes the personal archives of writers such as Jack Agüeros (1934–2014), Rosario Ferré (1938–2016), and Cuban-born Dolores Prida (1943–2013), as well as the photographic archive of La prensa, the oldest Spanish-language newspaper in the United States. This collection was founded and is curated by Puerto Rican filmmaker and scholar Frances Negrón-Muntaner. In her own work, Negrón-Muntaner engages many of the themes that Ramos Otero sheds light on in his texts. For example, in her 1994 film Brincando el charco: Portrait of a Puerto Rican, Negrón-Muntaner addresses the questions of “sexile” so present in the works of Ramos Otero. The filmmaker plays “Claudia,” a lesbian Puerto Rican artist struggling to find community in the United States. The film highlights not only the difficulties of dealing with homophobic family members, but also the issues of being a queer artist of color in the United States.

The Ramos Otero papers now housed at Columbia University are unique in that, as a result of having been handled by various family members and friends since the author’s passing, they offer a very broad perspective not just on what the writer himself considered important, but also on what his family and friends deemed to be archivable. Among letters from the author to friends and family, one can find extensive correspondence among these friends and family detailing the aftermath of the writer’s death of complications from AIDS in 1990. Manuscripts can be found alongside books that, because of their publication date after the author’s passing, clearly belonged to other family members. The archive invites the user to think about the ways that diasporic networks and kinships shape how queer lives are archived and memorialized.

**HIV/AIDS Activism**

It also important to note the role that queer Puerto Ricans played in the fight for accessible treatment and general care for those with HIV/AIDS. Negrón-Muntaner, along with Peter Biella, directed the documentary AIDS in the Barrio (1989), which focuses on the effects of the epidemic among Latino communities in Philadelphia. Moisés Agosto, who would go on
to edit *Los otros cuerpos*, was one of the founding members of the Latino caucus of ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power). In 1992 Agosto also edited a special issue of *SIDAhora* (AIDSNow) dedicated to arts and literature. *SIDAhora* was a Spanish-language magazine published by the People with AIDS Coalition. Work by writers such as Néstor Perlongher (1949–1992) of Argentina, Severo Sarduy (1937–1993) of Cuba, and, of course, Ramos Otero was included in the issue. This is of particular significance because it appears to be one of the first attempts at constructing a hemispheric network of queer HIV-positive writers and artists.

Agosto’s engagement with Puerto Rican communities affected by the HIV-AIDS crisis extended beyond New York City. In an interview given to the ACT UP Oral History Project, Agosto narrates his experience with the group in New York City, as well as his organizing efforts to bring members to Puerto Rico to engage local communities in the fight against HIV/AIDS. This group’s intention was not to begin an ACT UP chapter in Puerto Rico (although one eventually started) but to help local communities start their own movement for accessible care on the island. Some of the materials produced for this visit are currently archived at the New York Public Library. One protest sign in this collection stands out. A Puerto Rican flag was spray-painted on white poster board; on top of the flag, in black paint, is written “EL E.L.A. ME MATA” (The Estado Libre Asociado [or Commonwealth status of Puerto Rico] is killing me). While this poster was made for a meeting of the National Commission on AIDS that was held on the island, activists were very clear that this fight was about more than HIV. It was not just the epidemic that was killing them but a colonial regime perpetuated by the United States which began with US annexation in 1898 following the Spanish-American War. Following in the footsteps of activists like Rivera, this was an intersectional struggle: by advocating for the decolonization of Puerto Rico, they were also advocating for their own queer liberation.
A Puerto Rican Flag Decorates a Memorial to Those Killed in the Mass Shooting at the Gay Nightclub Pulse in Orlando, Florida, 2016. Twenty-three of the forty-nine people killed during “Latin Night” at Pulse on 12 June 2016 were Puerto Rican. In the aftermath, queer activists used the tragedy to highlight the violence perpetrated on queer Latinx bodies in American society.

The 2016 Pulse Nightclub Shooting

Building on this history of social and cultural engagement led by queer Puerto Ricans, it is important to highlight two recent events that have been transformative for these communities. The first of these was the mass shooting at the gay nightclub Pulse in Orlando, Florida, on 12 June 2016. That night, Omar Mateen opened fire on a crowd gathered for Pulse’s weekly “Latin Night,” killing forty-nine people and wounding fifty-eight others. According to the New York Times, 90 percent of the victims were Hispanic or of Hispanic descent. Twenty-three of those killed were Puerto Rican (Álvarez and Madigan 2016).

While media outlets focused mostly on the shooter’s connections to the terrorist group ISIS and on the issue of gun regulation in the United States, the fact that this was an attack on queer Latinxs (a gender-neutral term used to refer to Latino communities in the United States) was pushed aside in favor of a whitewashed narrative of a threat to the American way of life. In the aftermath of the shooting, Puerto Rican novelist Justin Torres wrote a piece for the Washington Post titled “In Praise of Latin Night at the Queer Club,” in which he brings to the forefront the lived experience of queer Latinxs in the United States. Once
more, the concerns over being accepted by families and over having to leave one's country to be able to live as an out queer person were highlighted. He speaks about the violence enacted on black and brown queer bodies, both physically and institutionally. Violence, for Torres, is not just street harassment and physical harm. It is also perpetuated by immigration policy, trans bathroom laws, and the Puerto Rican debt crisis. But Latin Night at the queer club offers a respite from that violence:

> You didn’t come here to be a martyr, you came to live, papi. To live, mamacita. To live, hijos. To live, mariposas.

> The media will spin the conversation away from homegrown homophobic terrorism to a general United States vs. Islamist narrative. Mendacious, audacious politicians—Republicans who vote against queer rights, against gun control—will seize on this massacre, twist it for support of their agendas.

> But for a moment, I want to talk about the sacredness of Latin Night at the Queer Club. Amid all the noise, I want to close my eyes and see you all there, dancing, inviolable, free.

*(TORRES 2016)*

**Hurricane Maria**

The second transformative event was the passing of Hurricane Maria over the island in 2017. On 20 September, the category-four hurricane made landfall on the east coast of Puerto Rico. The damage caused by the storm was unprecedented. All systems of infrastructure—communications, electricity, water distribution—collapsed for months. Even more destructive than the storm, however, were the crippling slow reactions by both the local and the federal governments.

Queer communities in the United States responded to the crisis by setting up fund-raisers that would offset the institutional violence many queer Puerto Ricans on the island would be facing. Among the many relief efforts, a group of queer Puerto Ricans in New York founded the Queer Kitchen Brigade. In order to address the growing fresh food shortage on the island, the Queer Kitchen Brigade gathered to can and pickle fresh fruits and vegetables that would be sent back to the island. They also collaborated with the Puerto Rican Resilience Fund to help build a seed bank for farmers in Puerto Rico. In the two months after the hurricane, the brigade grew beyond New York, with trips to Philadelphia to teach others how to can and pickle food. To extend their reach, they also published a zine called *U CAN TOO! Un Cuir [Queer] Canning Guide*, which explains their canning processes to others.
interested in participating.

On the island, a group of performers, one of whom was noted queer performance artist Mickey Negrón, founded a traveling theater troupe that staged ¡Ay, María! in public spaces in all Puerto Rican municipalities. The play emphasizes community building in the face of disaster, and offers its audience a space in which they can process more than just the day-to-day struggles with lack of electricity, water, and other basic needs. The performance also addresses the growing militarization of the island in the months after the hurricane and the neglect and corruption of both federal and local governments, reminding audiences that the true disaster was not a natural one but a political one. ¡Ay, María!, the Queer Kitchen Brigade, and other queer- and feminist-aligned groups that have been active in the aftermath of the hurricane are further evidence of the importance of queer discourse in the fight for social and economic justice in Puerto Rico. These groups and the other figures discussed in this entry exemplify the ways that literature, performance, and activism have intersected in queer Puerto Rican communities from the late 1960s to the present.

SEE ALSO ACT UP; Poets in Latin America; Stonewall Riots, International Effects of

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Pulp Fiction, Gay and Lesbian

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The publication of cheap paperback novels dealing with gay and lesbian characters, often in sensationalistic ways, starting in 1950.

Gay and lesbian pulp fiction refers to the proliferation of cheaply produced paperback novels with gay and lesbian themes available in the United States during the mid-twentieth century. During this period a number of paperback publishing houses cashed in on increasing public interest in homosexuality, coupled with relaxations to censorship and obscenity laws, to produce thousands of gay and lesbian pulp fiction titles. Lurid cover art combined with titles such as *We Walk Alone, The Strange Ones, Edge of Twilight, These Curious Pleasures*, and *Whisper His Sin* evoked the notion of homosexuality as something that existed on the margins of society and in urban underworlds where immorality abounded.

Pulp novels were not known for their literary merits, being very hastily produced, often by inexperienced writers, with little to no editing. Instead, they focused on sensationalism to sell copies. Dealing with the controversial and then taboo topic of homosexuality, they were part of a wider boom in pulp fiction publishing that traded in sex, violence, and social obsessions or themes that were at the time considered risqué, such as adultery, juvenile delinquency, white slavery, interracial relationships, drug use, and prostitution.

Gay and lesbian pulp fiction holds an important place in LGBTQ history as it provided the first opportunity for many gay, lesbian, and bisexual people to see depictions of same-sex desire in print. Through reading about gay men and lesbians falling in love, having sex, and forming relationships, often set against the backdrop of an emerging gay scene, many people realized that they were not alone in their desires. Joan Nestle (1983) has gone as far as to term it “survival literature.” Gay and lesbian pulp fiction also brought awareness of homosexuality and same-sex desire to mainstream heterosexual audiences. In this way, gay and lesbian pulp fiction can be seen as part of the creation of a visible gay and lesbian culture that transpired in the latter half of the twentieth century.

**Major Differences between Gay and Lesbian Pulp**

Although they emerged at the same time and within the same social and cultural contexts,
the histories of gay pulp and lesbian pulp are very different. Lesbian pulp fiction was a mass-market publishing sensation, with estimates of more than 2,000 titles published from 1950 to 1965. Gay pulp fiction, however, never captured as broad an audience. Whereas lesbian pulp fiction was often marketed to a heterosexual male audience, gay pulp fiction was predominantly marketed to gay men. As a result, far fewer gay pulp novels were produced and sold. In addition, the definition of gay “pulp” is more complicated than that of lesbian pulp, as the type and quality of gay novels produced in the standard pulp paperback format ranged from literary works through to explicitly pornographic titles. Lesbian pulp fiction, by contrast, conforms more neatly to the genre conventions, tropes, and style of pulp fiction more generally.

Both gay and lesbian pulp fiction can be seen as products of their time. Plotlines were generally homophobic in nature, with homosexual characters represented as miserable social outcasts or devious perverts out to corrupt the innocent. Heterosexuality was typically cast as the salvation for gay characters who could realize the errors of their ways. Suicide, murder, or insanity often followed for those unable or unwilling to repent. However, not all gay and lesbian pulps depicted homosexuality in such bleak terms. This was particularly the case for pulps that were written by gay men and lesbians, as opposed to the swathes of moralizing pulp titles that sought to convey a conservative message, albeit through sensationalism and exploitation.

The Paperback Revolution

Before World War II (1939–1945) books were an expensive commodity available only in hardback form. Distribution was fairly restricted, as books were sold only in bookstores, and bookstores themselves could generally be found only in larger cities. As a result, reading was viewed as an elite activity. During World War II, however, the paperback emerged as a cost-effective and easily transportable way to provide reading material to US troops. The creation of the paperback book transformed the reading practices of Americans in the mid-twentieth century. Paperbacks were very cheap to produce and sold for around 25 cents apiece, as opposed to around $1.95 for a hardback. As a result of the distribution innovations of the paperback publisher Pocket Books, paperback novels were made available in a wide range of outlets, such as newsstands, drugstores, and bus stations. For the first time books were affordable and available to millions of Americans, all over the country.

Initially, publishing houses produced paperback reprints of existing hardback novels. However, demand increased so rapidly and was so high that publishers looked for new ways to satisfy a hungry reading public. The result was the paperback original (PBO), newly written titles that went straight into paperback editions. One of the pioneers of PBOs was Fawcett Gold Medal, which went on to become one of the main producers of lesbian pulp fiction. The PBO allowed for not only a material revolution in the book industry but also a
revolution in the type of fiction that was produced. Because they were typically viewed with disdain by the “legitimate” publishing world, PBOs circumvented the scrutiny of literary reviews, which dealt only with hardback books.

Their tangential relationship to the respected publishing world makes it difficult to discern readership figures for gay and lesbian pulps. Publishers Weekly recorded sales only from bookstores, and therefore many of pulp’s major outlets, such as newsstands and grocery stores, are not accounted for. Even if realistic sales figures were available, they would be unlikely to reveal much about actual readership. The illicitness but also vital importance of these novels to gay and lesbian people at the time meant that copies were routinely passed from person to person. At the same time, however, given the social and legal implications of being outed, many gay and lesbian readers threw away or set fire to books after they had read them.

**Artwork and Cover Copy**

Cover art and cover copy are among the defining characteristics of gay and lesbian pulp fiction. Provocative images of buxom, scantily clad women and bare-chested, domineering men, against backdrops of bedrooms, prison cells, alleyways, and all manner of illicit scenarios were intended to entice a readership attuned to the scandal and vice promised by the pulp market. Often, the cover art and copy bore little or no resemblance to the actual plot. Authors rarely had any say over the covers of their novels, which were designed purely to sell copies regardless of accuracy. One notable exception is Carl Corley (1921–), who did the artwork for many of the twenty-two novels he wrote between 1966 and 1971.

Artwork often exaggerated or invented heterosexual elements of novels in order to appeal to both male voyeurism and expectations of heterosexual plot resolutions. Meanwhile, the copy sought to simultaneously titillate and moralize. Cover copy frequently made reference to shining a light on a murky underworld and exposing the social ills of homosexuality so that they could be better understood and thus eradicated. This outward gesture to conservative mores and pretended sociological interest was part of a necessity to demonstrate, in order to get around censorship laws, that works were of sociological value and in the public interest.

**The Golden Age of Lesbian Pulp Fiction**

The lesbian pulp fiction boom was an explosive phenomenon of mid-twentieth century publishing. It has been suggested that the popularity of lesbian pulp fiction took even the publishing houses by surprise and that the genre emerged more by accident than by design. Over a span of around fifteen years, now known as the “golden age” of lesbian pulp, thousands of lesbian pulp titles were produced by a range of publishing houses, some of the most notable being Fawcett Gold Medal, Midwood Tower, Beacon, Avon, and Bantam. It is
widely agreed that the genesis of this golden age can be traced back to a single book: *Women’s Barracks* by Tereska Torrès (1920–2012). Published in 1950 by Fawcett Gold Medal, this PBO was a semiautobiographical account of the author’s experiences in the Free French Army during World War II, featuring a frank treatment of women’s sexuality. Although lesbianism was not the central theme, it featured various lesbian characters and liaisons, giving the paperback-reading public an insight into different “types” of lesbians.

*Women’s Barracks* was an immediate sensation, selling 1 million copies in the first year, and going through thirteen reprints between 1950 and 1964. Such was its success that in 1952 it drew the attention of the US House of Representatives’ Select Committee on Current Pornographic Materials (known colloquially as the Gathings Committee, after its chairman, Ezekiel Gathings). The committee devoted much of its five days of hearings to discussing the novel as an example of how paperback books were promoting moral degeneracy. It is widely held that the resulting notoriety helped to sell even more copies of
Keen to capitalize on the success of *Women's Barracks*, Dick Carroll, pulp fiction editor at Fawcett Gold Medal, approached the author Marijane Meaker (1927–), herself a lesbian, to produce a novel that would focus on a lesbian relationship. Under the pseudonym Vin Packer, Meaker penned the 1952 novel *Spring Fire*, which told the story of sorority sisters Leda and Mitch, who enter into a lesbian love affair but are discovered by the rest of the sorority. *Spring Fire* was even more of a success than *Women's Barracks*, selling 1.5 million copies in its first year of publication. *Spring Fire* also set the tone for the lesbian pulp fiction genre, reflecting the contradictions of a society that was clearly fascinated to read about lesbianism but which required reassurance of the ultimate normality morality, and superiority of heterosexuality. Meaker recalled the initial conversation between her and Carroll:

\[ \text{Carroll: You cannot make homosexuality attractive. No happy ending.... Our books go through the mails. They have to pass inspection....} \]

\[ \text{Meaker: In other words, my heroine has to decide she's not really queer.} \]

\[ \text{Carroll: That's it. And the one she's involved with is sick or crazy.} \]

*(PACKER [1952] 2004, VI)*

The ending of *Spring Fire* sees Leda institutionalized after a total nervous breakdown, while Mitch realizes she never really loved her and is instead ready to move on with her life. The lesbian cliché of heterosexual rehabilitation for one character and death or insanity for the other became a staple of the lesbian pulp fiction genre. What were tragic endings for lesbian readers were reassuringly normative, and in that sense heterosexually “happy.”

The tragic/heterosexual resolution was one of several formulaic lesbian pulp components. Another staple, frequently used, was an all-female setting, such as sorority houses, college dorms, prisons, and, of course, lesbian bars. In addition, psychoanalytical explanations of lesbianism, popular at the time, were regularly employed in explaining characters’ motivations and backgrounds.

**Lesbian Authors and Lesbian Readers**

Although thousands of lesbian pulp titles were produced, the vast majority were written by men and pitched to a heterosexual male audience. Following the initial success of *Women's Barracks, Spring Fire*, and other formative lesbian pulp titles, a variety of paperback
publishing houses produced a steady stream of lesbian-themed novels. They hired pools of emerging authors to write potboilers, with very little turnaround time and very little editing. The result was a torrent of formulaic pulp that appealed to prurient interest and voyeurism.

Amid this glut, a small group of lesbian authors produced an estimated 100 positively written lesbian novels aimed at a lesbian readership. Some of the most significant and important lesbian pulp authors were the aforementioned Vin Packer (who also wrote lesbian nonfiction as Ann Aldrich, and, later, children’s books as M. E. Kerr), Ann Bannon, Valerie Taylor, March Hastings, Paula Christian, Joan Ellis, Sloane Britain, Artemis Smith, and Randy Salem. Yvonne Keller (1999, 2005) has done substantial work in identifying and outlining what she terms “pro-lesbian pulps,” or those lesbian pulp titles that portray lesbianism in positive terms and feature happy, or at least ambiguous, endings for lesbian characters. As Keller states, these pro-lesbian pulps were overwhelmingly written by lesbian authors, who were writing for a lesbian audience.

**Ann Bannon and Valerie Taylor** Ann Bannon (pseudonym of Ann Weldy [1932–]) is perhaps the most famous author of lesbian pulp fiction. Between 1957 and 1962 she wrote the five novels that make up her Beebo Brinker series and which secured her reputation as “the queen of lesbian pulp fiction.” In 1957 she released *Odd Girl Out*, which went on to become the second-best-selling PBO that year and which ushered in a new wave of positive depictions in lesbian pulp. Bannon’s heroine, the flawed but endearing butch Beebo Brinker, and the array of characters around her captured the hearts of a generation of women drawn to Bannon’s depictions of lesbianism and coming-of-age in the postwar United States. Bannon received hundreds of fan letters over the years from women who wanted to thank her for her novels and also ask her where they could find lesbian women in real life.

Ironically, Bannon was, at that time, living a closeted married life in Philadelphia and visiting Greenwich Village’s gay bars on the weekends, gathering material for her novels and glimpsing for herself the lives that lesbians were living. Bannon’s popularity has endured, and, thanks to reprints by lesbian feminist and mainstream presses over the years, she has reached out to new generations of readers. Her series has even been turned into a play, *The Beebo Brinker Chronicles*, which ran off-Broadway in 2007 and was nominated for a media award from GLAAD (formerly the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation).

It has been suggested that Bannon’s canonization in the lesbian pulp world has led to other, equally important writers being overlooked, most notably Valerie Taylor (pseudonym of Velma Nacella Young [1913–1997]). Taylor, author of some of the most positively written lesbian pulps, including *The Girls in 3-B, A World without Men*, and *Journey to Fulfillment*, recalled her reasoning in coming to the genre:
I began writing gay novels around 1957. There was suddenly a plethora of them on sale in drugstores and bookstores ... many written by men who had never knowingly spoken to a lesbian. Wish fulfillment stuff, pure erotic daydreaming. I wanted to make some money, of course, but I also thought that we should have some stories about real people—women who had jobs, families, faults, talents, friends, problems; not just erotic mannequins.

(1989, 1)

Taylor played a major role in lesbian rights campaigning. She belonged to the Daughters of Bilitis and Mattachine Midwest and contributed her work to the lesbian publication the Ladder. She devoted many years to activist causes, including LGBT rights, feminism, elder rights, and peace campaigning.

**Gay Pulp Fiction**

Whereas lesbian pulp fiction is relatively easy to identify, with a familiar pulp style and formulaic settings and characters, as well as a clear time period (1950–1965), gay pulp fiction is much more difficult to define. The first paperback gay novels, appearing in the late 1940s and early 1950s, were reprints of hardback editions, notably Blair Niles’s *Strange Brother* (1931), Gore Vidal’s *The City and the Pillar* (1948), and Harrison Dowd’s *The Night Air* (1950). These titles were respected works of literature, treating homosexuality with subtlety. Susan Stryker (2001) notes that compared with the relatively large number of prewar lesbian-themed texts from which paperback publishers could draw, there were very few treating male homosexuality.

The late 1950s saw another small flurry of paperback reprints, notably James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* (1956). Alongside came a smattering of PBOs, again nowhere near the numbers seen in lesbian pulp fiction. One of the most positive portrayals was in Lonnie Coleman's *Sam* (1959), in which the main character is surprisingly well adjusted, engaging in healthy relationships, and surrounded by a circle of friends.

Throughout the pulp fiction decades various alternative publishing houses specialized in catering to a gay male market. However, they had to be covert in their advertising in order to avoid censorship and prosecution. They did not always succeed, and this, coupled with the financial difficulties of running such small, secretive presses, meant that many such publishers came and went. Among the more successful of these was the small but established Greenberg Press, which published several of the period’s most significant works, including André Tellier's *Twilight Men*, Richard Meeker's *Better Angel*, Nial Kent’s
The Divided Path, and James Barr’s Quatrefoil, the latter of which has gone on to be a gay fiction classic.

After a series of US Supreme Court decisions that paved the way for more pornographic material to be published, a new wave of gay pulp took hold. These novels were targeted specifically to a gay male audience seeking explicit erotic material. They typically had thin plots strung together with a series of increasingly graphic sex scenes, known as “hots.” Editorial convention suggested that these should make up around 20 percent of pulp novels. Considering that the average pulp ran to only around 45,000 words, there was little room for character development once the “hots” had been included. One of the most prolific publishers of graphic gay pulp was PEC French Line, which published around eighty titles from 1966 to 1971, including the unsubtly titled Gay Whore (Jack Love), Hollywood Homo (Michael Starr), and Gay Stud’s Trip (Bert Shrader).

As in lesbian pulp, much gay pulp took on the moralizing tone of the times. Protagonists were regularly depicted as being dragged down into underworlds of homosexuality and vice against their better judgment. Tragedy often befell those who could not claw their way back out. Again, however, as with lesbian pulp, some less reactionary representations did find their way onto the shelves. In some cases, this was achieved through sensitive renderings of gay male identity and sexual relationships. In the later part of the pulp era explicit porn novels reveled in celebrations of graphic male sexuality without the need to kowtow to censorship and moral equilibriums.

The Song of the Loon It is widely held that the most successful and significant gay pulp fiction novel was Richard Amory’s (1927–1981) Song of the Loon, published by Greenleaf Classics in 1966 (along with two sequels, Song of Aaron and Listen, the Loon Sings). Michael Bronski (2003) cites an estimate by Tom Norman, the author of American Gay Erotic Paperbacks: A Bibliography (1994), that 30 percent of gay men in the United States purchased a copy. It inspired a porn film in the 1970s and even a parody novel, Fruit of the Loon (1968). Drawing on the conventions of the pastoral, Song of the Loon depicts a mythical West where Native American and Euro-American men live together in sexual and spiritual harmony, free from the constraints of civilization and basking in the naturalness of homosexual love.

Critical Responses
SOURCE: GREENLEAF CLASSICS, INC.

Cover of Song of the Loon (1966). This novel by Richard Amory is widely considered to be the most successful and significant work of gay pulp fiction. Drawing on the conventions of the pastoral, Song of the Loon depicts a mythical West where Native American and Euro-American men live together in sexual and spiritual harmony.

Despite defining and dominating gay and lesbian fiction of the postwar period, gay and lesbian pulp has not always attracted scholarly attention. This is partly because of its presumed lack of literary merit, as well as the often problematic depictions of gay and lesbian people as psychologically troubled and doomed to a life of misery. This meant that, following the gay liberation movement, some scholars, critics, and community members were keen to distance contemporary LGBTQ scholarship from what they saw as an embarrassing and damaging part of LGBTQ history. Lee Lynch’s influential 1990 personal essay titled “Cruising the Libraries” states just such a view: “I devoured the books, loved the characters, identified completely. This was a mistake. These books, while validating because they acknowledged the existence of lesbians by portraying us, destroyed any incipient pride I might have had in my true fairy self.... The characters were more miserable then [Jean-Paul] Sartre’s, and despised as well” (40).

However, toward the end of the twentieth century and gathering pace in the twenty-first
century, scholars in LGBTQ studies have taken another look at gay and lesbian pulp, finding positive depictions of an emergent gay and lesbian consciousness. In addition, these scholars have argued that although gay and lesbian pulps are often problematic in their depictions of homosexual identity, they are a product of their time. They are situated in the complex social, cultural, and political milieu of a United States struggling with new and often contradictory views on sexuality and gender following the upheaval of World War II, and culminating in the various social justice movements of the late 1960s and 1970s.

The much larger number of lesbian pulp novels produced than gay pulp novels is mirrored in the critical treatment each genre has received. There is now a substantial body of secondary literature on lesbian pulp fiction. There remains relatively little secondary material on gay male pulp. What does exist tends toward annotated bibliographies and anthologies. In part this is a result of the difficulty in tracing gay pulp titles. Another factor is the difficulty in defining gay pulp fiction as a particular genre. One work that attempts to synthesize the world of gay pulp fiction is Bronski's *Pulp Friction* (2003). Stryker devotes a section of her 2001 book *Queer Pulp* to an overview of gay pulps.

**Demise and Legacy**

In 1965 the publishing frenzy that was lesbian pulp fiction came to a sudden end. The very sequence of events that led to the demise of the lesbian pulp genre allowed gay pulp fiction to enter its more explicit and niche phase. Following a series of US Supreme Court decisions throughout the 1960s it became much easier to publish and distribute explicit material. The result was a groundswell of pornographic publishers trading in magazines and erotic novels. They began producing lesbian-themed material that was explicit in a way that lesbian pulp fiction never was. Simultaneously, the paperback publishing world lost interest in lesbian pulp, possibly because of waning public interest in an increasingly liberal society where sex was becoming more openly discussed.

Meanwhile, this very same turn of events allowed for the open publication of explicit gay male pulps. A similar groundswell of small publishing houses, such as the mail-order book service and publisher Guild Press and a number of California-based publishers including several prolific offshoots of Greenleaf Classics, produced a range of gay pulp catering to a variety of niche sexual tastes. Gay male pulps therefore continued through the “free-love” days of the late 1960s and into the post-Stonewall era of gay liberation, where gay sex and sexuality were celebrated in the pages of these “one-handed reads.”

In the twenty-first century, gay and lesbian pulp fiction has enjoyed something of a renaissance, as new readers have sought to both reclaim this element of LGBTQ history and revel in the camp and kitsch artwork now available in everything from fridge magnets to postcard books. Coffee-table books such as Stryker’s *Queer Pulp* and Jaye Zimet’s *Strange Sisters* (1999) celebrate both the lurid artwork and the tales of mid-twentieth-century
queer love within. All this suggests that gay and lesbian pulp fiction continues to both titillate and delight.

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As a British colony from 1842 to 1997, Hong Kong has followed British laws that criminalize male homosexual conduct. Even though the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 decriminalized private male same-sex conduct in the United Kingdom, the colonial government made no effort to follow the change (Kong 2011). It was not until July 1991 that the colonial government agreed to decriminalize male homosexual acts on condition that they are between two men over age twenty-one and take place in private. Meanwhile, the age of consent between a man and a woman is sixteen. The inequality inherent in this age difference was challenged in court through the case known as Leung T. C. William Roy v. Secretary for Justice and ruled, in 2005, as violating the right to equality (Hartmann 2005).

The Hong Kong legislation never policed sexual conduct between women and remained silent on the topic of lesbianism. In 1983 a court report by the Law Reform Commission stated that no age of consent for sex between women could be established, given the lack of available information on lesbian sex. As a result of state silence on lesbianism, female homosexuality was deemed insignificant and irrelevant to the issue of discrimination and therefore unnecessary to discuss in the media or legal space (Tang 2011).

In July 1997 Hong Kong became a special administrative region of China. In 2009 an amendment was passed stipulating that same-sex couples would also be covered by Hong Kong’s Domestic Violence Ordinance. However, Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, the minister for labor and welfare, stressed that same-sex marriage/partnership would not be recognized “as a matter of legal status” (PinkNews 2009).

In 2015 a British woman known by the initials “QT” sued the Hong Kong Immigration Department on the grounds of discrimination for refusing to grant her a dependent visa. Joined in a UK civil partnership in 2001, QT wanted to join her partner, known in court documents as “SS,” in Hong Kong where the latter had been working for years. QT’s application for a spousal visa had been denied twice. In March 2016 the case was dismissed by Hong Kong’s High Court. The judge ruled that the director of the Immigration
Department was right to treat QT and her partner as unmarried persons because legislation did not include civil partnerships or same-sex marriages within Hong Kong's concept of marriage. Ming Gwong Se (Society for Truth and Light), a Hong Kong–based conservative Christian organization, applauded the ruling for its defense of marriage as the fundamental institution for social stability (Loeng 2016).

QT appealed to the Court of Appeal. The case was heard on 15–16 June 2017 to settle whether the recognition of an overseas civil partnership as one between “spouses” would contradict or affect the legal definition of marriage in Hong Kong. The British lawyer Dinah Rose, who was handling QT’s case, argued that although Hong Kong legislation did not recognize polygamous marriage either, the Immigration Department once allowed a sponsor to bring with him any one of his spouses at his own choosing (Lai 2017). She argued that heterosexual polygamous marriages should not be treated differently than same-sex civil partnerships.

During the appeal, twelve leading financial institutions applied to back up QT in the court as interveners. They asserted that the discriminatory immigration policy hindered their ability to recruit global professionals, negatively affecting the whole financial industry in Hong Kong (Lau 2017). The court denied the application, even while acknowledging that the Immigration Department’s denial of a spousal visa to QT is contradictory to the department’s aim: encouraging talented people to live and work in Hong Kong, while maintaining stringent immigration control.

On 25 September 2017 the Court of Appeal ruled in favor of QT. Although the judge directly stated that granting QT a dependent visa does not validate any kind of same-sex union, he acknowledged that the Immigration Department’s definition of “spouse” as applicable only to a union between a man and a woman constituted indirect discrimination for QT. This historic victory was a big step for those fighting institutional discrimination against LGBTQ people in Hong Kong. The Equal Opportunities Commission of Hong Kong, an independent statutory body, welcomed the ruling and urged the government to develop a comprehensive legal framework to protect LGBTQ rights (Lau 2017). “It does not provide much help to local LGBT individuals in Hong Kong,” the chief executive of Rainbow of Hong Kong, a local LGBT nongovernmental organization, told the press (Radio Free Asia 2017; translation by Billy Gong). He found that the case reflected the backwardness of the policy toward same-sex couples and urged the government to start drafting antidiscrimination legislation.

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On Friday, 11 May 2001, a party attended predominantly by gay men on a floating disco called the Queen Boat was raided, according to Human Rights Watch, by members of “the Cairo Vice Squad and officers from State Security Investigations,” resulting in the detention of “some three dozen men” (Long 2004a, 22). The Guardian (London) also reported that “about a dozen Europeans, along with a Saudi, a Qatari and a Kuwaiti, were released on the spot” and that “women were also allowed to leave the boat” (Dawoud 2001). The men arrested on the boat, as well as several other allegedly homosexual men arrested before 11 May (Long 2004a), ultimately became the group described in the English press as the Cairo 52 and in the widely distributed Saudi newspaper Al-ḥayāt as Qawm Lut al-judud, or “The New People of Lot” (Ṣalāḥ 2001b).

In November 2001, according to Amnesty International (2003), of the fifty-two men arrested, “the court sentenced 23 men to prison terms of between one and five years. Twenty-one were convicted of ‘habitual debauchery,’ one of ‘contempt of religion’ and another on both charges.” In a 2008 interview with journalist David Khalili, the Egyptian filmmaker Maher Sabry reported that in May 2002 all the verdicts except for two (the men convicted of “contempt of religion”) were retried in a civil court. The second trial of the remaining fifty men ended in March 2003 with twenty-one sentenced to three years in jail (Khalili 2008). In subsequent appeals trials, according to the US Department of State (2004), on 4 June and 16 July, fourteen of the convicted men had their sentences reduced to time served and probation, requiring them to spend their nights in police custody. Two of the remaining seven did not attend the appeals trials, and the other five did not appeal, becoming fugitives in the eyes of the Egyptian state.
The Queen Boat on the Nile River in Cairo, Egypt. The Queen Boat, a well-known Cairo nightspot, became the focus of an investigation into alleged homosexual activity involving fifty-two Egyptian men. The resulting trials created a sensation in both the Egyptian and international media in 2001 and 2002.

Media Reaction

The case became rapidly sensationalized by the Egyptian media and made its way to the Western press. It was covered in strikingly different ways by the two media groups. Whereas the Western media focused on the violations of human rights that took place over the course of the Queen Boat trials, Arabic-language media focused on the more sensationalistic aspects of the case and the accusations made by the prosecution, in which the Cairo 52 were called “Satanists” and “Followers of Lot.” Arabic-language media also repeated claims by investigators for the prosecution accusing the men of having used the internet to form a secret group that considered the famous homoerotic poet Abū Nuwās (c. 756–c. 814) to be a prophet and that intended to subvert religion and engage in group sex; these investigators also claimed that a gay wedding was taking place on the boat at the time of the arrests (Salāhalāh 2001a). Other journalists living in Egypt and the Arab world also echoed arguments made by the prosecution that Western condemnation of the arrests and convictions was the result of globalization and the forcing of Western values onto Egyptian culture (Rashwān 2001).

Journalists for English-language media, however, focused more on the reports made by human rights organizations, such as Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, and on the mistreatment of the
men, allegations of torture, and what they perceived to be the draconian nature of their
arrests and sentencing (Hawley 2001; BBC News 2001; Dawoud 2001). British
celebrities, including Elton John, Ian McKellen, and Emma Thompson, signed a petition in 2002 calling
for the release of the twenty-three men who were initially convicted in Egyptian court (BBC
News 2002b). Other news editorials also accused the administration of US president
George W. Bush of turning a blind eye to the arrests and convictions in Egypt, while
condemning groups such as the Taliban, because it did not want to jeopardize relations
with Egypt, considered a US ally (Boston Phoenix 2002).

**Trial Proceedings**

Scott Long claims that the trial was the result of political feuding between wealthy and
powerful Egyptian families, observing that “the lead defendant, Sherif Farhat, was a
businessman related by blood and marriage to eminent Egyptians” (2004a, 22). He was
arrested before the other men were, along with some of his associates from work and
elsewhere, to support the prosecution’s claim that he belonged to a “homosexual
organization.” It was believed by Farhat’s family and some of the men arrested that
Farhat’s arrest was the result of a political vendetta (Long 2004a).

While the initial charge against the men was *fujur* (debauchery), which does not explicitly
criminalize homosexual conduct in the legal codes, the charge of *fujur* has been used,
according to Long, repeatedly in Egyptian court cases to mean “noncommercial male
homosexual conduct” (Long 2004a, 14). Because charges of *fujur* were not considered a
matter of state security, the additional charge of “contempt of heavenly religions” was
levied against two of the men who were arrested (24).

In order to justify this charge, the claim was made by the prosecution that the men arrested
were part of a cult, led by Farhat, that existed for the purpose of promoting homosexuality.
In his book *Unspeakable Love* (2006), Brian Whitaker mentions that the “State Security
officers claimed to have found a booklet in [Farhat’s] home entitled *Agency of God on Earth: our
Religion is the Religion of Lot’s People, our Prophet and Guide is Abu Nawas [sic]*” (129–
130). These claims, as well as the previously mentioned ones made by the prosecution,
were picked up and repeated by the Arabic-language media (Salāh 2001a).

The trial proceedings were heavily covered by both the Egyptian and international media,
with the identities and faces of the defendants widely publicized. Although the men were
kept from contact with their families, several of the men’s families learned where they were
and what happened to them through the newspapers. Additionally, the trial was made open
to the public and was heavily attended not only by the media but by casual observers as
well (Long 2004a).

**Human Rights Abuses**
In an article on the Queen Boat trials, Long described the atrocities that the men who were arrested in the Queen Boat raids (as well as in other situations for alleged homosexual conduct) were subjected to; they were “beaten with whips or hoses, suspended in excruciating positions, burned with cigarettes, subjected to electrical shocks” (2004b, 13). He also reported that the defendants were forced to go through “forensic anal exams” to see if they had had homosexual intercourse, a detail that was also mentioned by Al-ḥayāt (Salāḥ 2001b). The New York Times Magazine also reported that the men were “beaten, bound, [and] tortured” throughout the course of their imprisonment (Azimi 2006).

Both the New York Times and Human Rights Watch claimed that the Queen Boat trials led to the expansion of previous practices of internet and phone surveillance by the Egyptian government in order to entrap Egyptian gay men (Azimi 2006; Long 2004a). Long (2004a) further reported that undercover police officers were posing as gay men on internet dating sites in order to meet and arrest gay men, and that the Egyptian vice squad was compiling lists of gay men that they would at times round up, detain, and torture for up to weeks at a time, sometimes inviting them to parties for the purpose of arresting them.

Critiques

Nationalist rhetoric was frequently deployed by the Egyptian government and in Egyptian editorials to justify the Queen Boat arrests and the treatment of gay Egyptians. Long (2004b) reported that the Egyptian government claimed that the arrests were necessary to defend Egyptian cultural values and that foreign criticism of the trials and the arrests was an attempt to impose Western cultural values on Egypt. This view was reiterated by writers for the Egyptian press, who further pointed to local Egyptian human rights groups not condemning the arrests as a sign that this was an imposition of Western human rights values on the Arab world, while also claiming that international human rights groups—just like the cult that the defendants of the Queen Boat trials were accused of belonging to—were seeking to overturn Arab-Islamic values, and with them Arab-Islamic civilization (Rashwān 2001). In an interview with the BBC News (2002a), however, Hisham Kassem, director of the Egyptian Organization for Human Rights, said that, because of extremely homophobic attitudes held by the Egyptian people, they were not able to speak publicly against the Queen Boat trials and arrests for fear of being unheard when they spoke against human rights violations against other persecuted groups in Egypt.

One of the most significant critiques of the Queen Boat trial proceedings and its coverage in the media both inside and outside the Arab world was leveled by Columbia University professor Joseph Massad. In his 2007 monograph Desiring Arabs, he claims that the “Gay International” capitalized on the events of the Queen Boat trials in order to further their aim of globalizing Western concepts of gay and lesbian identity, contending that they attempted to refashion the trials as an Arab equivalent of the Stonewall riots. Massad argued that as the men on trial denied that they were gay, and resisted being photographed
as part of the trials, a parallel between these events and the very public nature of the Stonewall riots is false.

Long responded to Massad’s claim that international LGBT groups were engaged in a globalizing and colonialisit project by pointing out, first, the colonialisit roots of Egyptian laws criminalizing fujur, and, second, that these laws “[stemmed] from a law against prostitution passed in 1951,” which “arose out of anti-colonialisit fervor for recovering national integrity. Both the Muslim Brotherhood and secular nationalists wanted to erase the shame of licensed brothels maintained by the British, where Egyptian women serviced the country’s military overlords” (2004b, 16). Long further points out that the rhetoric criminalizing sex acts in the Arab world mostly came from Europe as an influence of colonialisim and that most laws pertaining to sex in Egypt were derived from Napoleonic law. Responding specifically to Massad’s claim that the “Gay International” was responsible for imposing Western norms of sexuality on the Arab world, Long describes human rights organizations such as the one that he works for as “NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] with miniscule budgets and infinitesimal cultural power,” claiming instead that Western concepts of gayness have come to be in the Arab world through a process of circulating global discourses and “corporate and commercial forces [underlying] the flow of images and information that is creating hybrid cultures almost everywhere” (15).

Long also argued that the actual reason behind the Queen Boat arrests was not to persecute homosexuals but to provide a pretext for the expansion of the Egyptian security apparatus in order to crack down on the “dissenting left” in Egypt (2004b, 20). This is an idea further expanded on by Nicola Pratt in her 2007 article “The Queen Boat Case in Egypt: Sexuality, National Security, and State Sovereignty.” In it, she claimed that “the punishment of homosexuality was not only represented as a means of securing Egyptian manhood but also as a means of protecting Egyptian national security” (137), and she argued that “the public harassment of homosexual men represents an opportunity to regain control of the ‘inner domain’ of the nation” (138). Additionally, Pratt contended that this criminalization of homosexuality was an attempt by the Egyptian government to assert its power in the wake of economic decline. Through this assertion of power and the emphasis on making the Egyptian national identity understood as a specifically heterosexual one, Pratt claimed that the Egyptian government was attempting on some plane to “resist global inequalities” (144).

SEE ALSO The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; ISIS Gay Trials

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The term *queer domesticity* refers to intimate LGBTQI+ arrangements of the activities, space, style, and finances of the home, as distinguished from kinship or family. The concept strictly concerns the setting up and administration of a household as opposed to the family structure.

**Queer Domesticity in Popular Culture**

For many outside the queer community, the concept of queer domesticity is largely shaped by television portrayals of LGBTQI persons in urban queer settings in the United States or the United Kingdom. The 1993 British miniseries *Tales of the City*, which aired in the United States a year later, was the first to present such a portrayal. Adapted from a book series by American author Armistead Maupin (1944–), *Tales of the City* depicted the lives of a group of people living in a boardinghouse in San Francisco that included several characters with nonnormative sexualities. Other popular television series in this genre include *Queer as Folk*, which first aired in the United Kingdom in 1999 (and then had an American-Canadian spin-off that aired on Showtime from 2000 to 2005), about a group of gay men in the postindustrial city of Manchester and its famous Gay Village, and *The L Word* (also on Showtime; 2004–2009), about a group of lesbians in Los Angeles. On American network television, the shows *Will and Grace* (1998–2006; revived in 2017) and *Modern Family* (2009–) featured a mixture of gay and straight domesticities in New York and California, respectively.

**The History and Social Conditioning of Queer Domesticity**

In real life, queer-identified people have set up living arrangements and made homes in divergent ways throughout modern history, even in the years before the appearance of these popular culture presentations and the liberalization of Western legislation that allows for civil unions and same-sex marriage. Class, marriage, and parenting status, along with the rural or urban context, were arguably the most significant factors affecting queer domestic arrangements before the change in the legal landscape. Also, persons with private income, such as an inheritance or a significant family allowance, had access to a greater
variety of options in designing their household settings in alternative ways than did those in a more challenging economic position. On the other hand, historically, in rural and urban working-class settings, it was often seen as normal for same-sex persons to share rooms and beds both to economize and because of the lack of space.

Gender is the most profound aspect influencing the history and social conditioning of queer domesticity in the modern history of nation-states. Women who desire other women have had fewer economic options, though perhaps more social space to create queer households than men who desire men. Because women often earn less and are more restricted in their use of public space than men, their queer relationships have played out in the domestic sphere more often than those of men. A pair of women teachers, shopkeepers, domestic workers, or nurses could share a home without being suspected of illegitimate intimate relations. They could shield themselves from social disapproval and oppressive laws that criminalized homosexuality by disguising their lesbianism under more socially acceptable relationships, such as same-sex friendship or economic convenience for women who are single for reasons related to their profession. Yet whereas men could live alone as “bachelors” but not as couples, women living alone were often seen as sexually suspect, and it was hard for them to find a place to live. For example, in the Nordic welfare countries, which have often been hailed as early havens for gender equality and working women, divorced women often had trouble finding homes to rent until well into the 1970s. A divorcée was seen as “sexually loose,” and a threat for married men; this view was exploited not only in popular literature and common gossip but also in pornography.

Because of the history of “the closet,” as well as social and legal discrimination, queer domesticities are different from heterosexual unions in that nonmarried men living together—unless in such exceptional (and temporary) all-male contexts as army barracks or seasonal work camps—raise more suspicion than women who live together. Sociological, historical, and anthropological scholarship has shown the difficulties faced by gay men who share households, as they must challenge the prevailing norms of gender in the home while also enduring the disapproval of their society and culture. For example, in such countries as Russia that promote the importance of women in the home, men are often expected to be absent from domestic affairs. Men setting up a home together and sharing domestic tasks have also been perceived as strange in other modern societies. In the United Kingdom, a 1950s-era memo from the Law Society declared that “male persons living together do not constitute domestic life” (Cook 2014, 3). Gay men have thus been perceived as a threat not only to kinship and family but also to domesticity. However, many British queer men, such as the famous gay author Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) and the romantic socialist architect Charles Ashbee (1863–1942), not only set up beautiful homes, but also signaled how interior design might be politicized in divergent ways.
A Communal Kitchen in a Kommunalka, Saint Petersburg, Russia, 2015. A kommunalka (an urban flat with private rooms and a shared kitchen common) has provided Russian women a way to live with their female lovers and to create queer domesticities while presenting a “normal” heterosexual living situation in the eyes of the society and the authorities.

Architecture and Interior Design

Modern architecture and urban planning in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was mostly done by men because women were accepted—and then only gradually—into the profession only starting in the twentieth century. Feminist and queer architecture are still very small fields today. However, many lesbian and gay people who were among the pioneers of interior architecture have arguably made an impact on how we think of domestic aesthetics in the West, including trends in furniture and decoration. For example, the aesthete Wilde decorated his London home in a fantasy Orient style. Wilde’s distinctive divan has influenced many modern queer-identified persons or queer-style-appreciating straight people who want to follow gay and lesbian interior legacies. As the queer art historian Harri Kalha has suggested, queer designers have questioned “our familiar/familial narratives of reproductive futurism in design, a field traditionally devoted to the construction and maintenance of Nation, Home, Family and Capital; the design field continues to have designs on us all” (2011, 41).
The Queer Response to Political, Social, and Religious Realities

Different political regimes and gender policies have profoundly influenced the diversity of options for queer people setting up their domestic life. Historically, lesbians and gays have responded differently to the political and social realities of their immediate cultural environment. For example, Russian lesbians before the liberal era of the 1990s (and again after new “antigay laws” were passed in 2013) have used various strategies to protect their queer domesticity in a hostile society. They have, for example, adopted such disguises as sham heterosexual marriage or posing as “divorced” mothers. In this, the *kommunalka* (an urban flat with private rooms and a shared kitchen common) has provided Russian women a way to live with their female lovers and create queer domesticities while presenting a “normal” heterosexual living situation in the eyes of the society and the authorities. The *kommunalka* was perhaps the most important social experiment undertaken by the Soviet regime, having as much, if not more, of an effect on the outlook of inhabitants than external political realities. It remains an alternative way to organize one’s housing and domestic life outside of the heteronormative family structure. Therefore, it has been useful to lesbians who could better afford this form of housing than buying or renting their own flats, and who traditionally do not look for casual sex in the public, but have had an interest in forming micro-communes that rely on mutual care, politics, and intimacies. The legacy of the queer *kommunalka* is captured in a genre of Russian lesbian songs about it.

In addition to political regimes, religion has also had a considerable impact on queer domestic arrangements. For example, in the rural Finnish countryside in the 1950s, a group of queer women created and maintained a wayward Christian community. They built their own houses and church, designed special attire, and called themselves Sisters in Faith. They reinterpreted the official Lutheran Church’s dogma to include a range of woman-to-woman intimate domestic activities, such as embracing, hugging, dancing, kissing, and singing together as Christian. They also created a peculiar genitalia-centered anointment ritual, which was later deemed a criminal homosexual act in the eyes of the law.

Seen in historical and cross-cultural perspective, the malleability of kinship and family arrangements among LGBTQI persons shows that they have always had the desire for and have found specific strategies to build their own domestic arrangements, whether the political ideology of their society was discriminatory and hostile or democratic and accepting of diversity. Sometimes the reason for designing their own queer domesticity was the hostility they experienced in their homophobic family homes; at other times, it was the queer relationships they wanted to create or bring to their homes. Lesbian, gay, and feminist politics from the 1970s onward sought to deconstruct the heteronormative concept of home as the site where a reproductive straight couple could bring up their children that influenced the practices of queer domesticities. For example, queer squatters
in Brixton, United Kingdom, and Amsterdam in the 1970s and 1980s experimented with queering society’s domestic space, and present-day adult communes in large Western cities are building on this queer legacy.

**SEE ALSO** Boston Marriage and Women’s Romantic Friendships; Kinship in Europe; Marriage, Universal, in Europe

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Queer in Latin America

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The theoretical differences between the North American term queer and its application in Latin America.

Queer studies, politics, and culture have been an implicit component of Latin American modernity, although the use of the word queer as such is limited to a sector of academia and the arts environment more related to transnational circles. Some gay and lesbian public intellectuals, such as Mexican writer and journalist Carlos Monsiváis, Chilean writer and performer Pedro Lemebel, and Peruvian Mexican academic Norma Mogrovejo (2011), have expressed their resistance to using this term as “theoretical colonialism.” Nevertheless, they do not have the same reservation toward words such as gay or even theoretical apparatuses such as Marxism and feminism that also came from Europe or North America. Others, such as Ecuadorian academic Diego Falconí (2014) and Argentine writer and activist Valeria Flores, have used cuir as a way to Hispanize the word queer, but it is not clear whether this phonetic rewriting of the English word also necessarily redefines it. Decolonial perspectives from Latin American academia tend to emphasize local queer expressions as opposed to the globalized homonormative gay culture; hence, there tends to be less of an everyday concern with the contours of the “queer” (or the “cuir”) in Latin America.

Thus, a number of ethnographic works explore the specificities of underground sexual cultures as a way to indicate the impossibility of universalizing LGBTTTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, travesti, and intersex) identities. Works by Joseph Carrier on sexual practices in Mexican western cities, Annick Prieur on trans culture in Mexico City, Marinella Miano Borruso on muxes (the trans indigenous communities in Oaxaca), Marcia Ochoa’s ethnography on the Caracas trans scene, and Giuseppe Campuzano’s museography on travestis in Peru have revealed a diversity of practices and conceptions developed against the grain not only of the hegemonic sex-gender culture but also of the assumptions of the Euro-American gay and lesbian movement. Topics such as how bisexuality is associated with macho identity, the gray zones of double standards, and the preservation strategies of traditional queerness in some indigenous communities show that the specificities of sexual culture in Latin America are elusive when one tries to relate them to theoretical categories produced in Europe and the United States. That is a major reason to highlight these unique corporeal practices as a mark of distinction that makes
necessary a process of adaptation of modern concepts that, like queer, come from political experiences foreign to the Latin American context. It is for this distinction that the use of cuir makes sense, although in academic conversations and activism its use is more related to decolonial perspectives.

While queer studies of the theoretical type in Euro-American academia enact a criticism of identities to liberate sexual dissidents, in Latin American discussions the interpretation of queer, mainly in activist circles, is generally understood as the sum of sexual and gender diversity, underlining a militant positioning against patriarchy and heteronormative institutions. In some Latin American instances, the diversity acronym LGBTTTI includes Q, perhaps intimating that queer is an identity itself, referring to the construction of an androgynous expression in which feminine and masculine marks coexist in one body design. Political agendas of sexual diversity are in general articulated under identity discourse. For several political circles in Latin America, this makes the criticism of identity politics by the most canonical proponents of Euro-American queer theory incomprehensible or even inadmissible.

The Problem of Translation

The translation of the concept is one of the issues that comes up often in debates among queer studies specialists. For Brad Epps (2008), queer is untranslatable because, when used outside of its anglophone scope, it misses its original affective content, charged with an uncomfortable pejorative connotation. Another issue related to translation has to do with the intersection of coloniality and sex. For instance, in his analysis of the sixteenth-century bilingual Spanish-Nahuatl Florentine Codex organized and compiled by the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún (1499–1590) with the aid of several elite Nahua scribes, Pete Sigal (2007) notes how colonial translation of sexual practices that were admissible for Nahua culture transforms them into something condemnable, and even erases them with terms such as nefarious sin, loathsome and unpronounceable acts. The colonialist interpretation of some Nahua sexual practices, therefore, changes their value from being sinless to something shameful and forbidden, although it would not be correct to state that Mesoamerican cultures did not have any equivalence to the notion of sin. Colonial processes define queerness in Latin America. Scholars such as Osvaldo Bazán, Zeb Tortorici, and Sigal, who have studied the history of queer sexuality in colonial Latin America, report a vast number of cases in which sexual practices that are not legitimate under Catholic Church doctrine were brutally punished (and, at times, brazenly ignored). This violence memory, collected from the juridical archives of the colonial civil and religious administrations from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries, demonstrates unequivocally that queerness describes a zone of rejected, repudiated individuals whose abjection is partly articulated as a religious obligation, but mainly as a state mandate. That is, they are abject by rule, and it is expected that good citizens
discriminate and expel nonheterosexual individuals. But this rule is not reinforced in every case. Instead, the effect of these rules is to establish policing boundaries intended to suppress scandals (at least those involving clergy and elite members), which builds the foundations of closeted spaces to make those punishable practices invisible.

When Epps observes that the word *queer* loses its historical value in the translation, he suggests that an option would be to find a comparable word in the Latin American lexicon. The political transformation that makes an English-language insult such as *queer* a proudly used concept that connotes liberation is missed in the case of any Spanish pejorative word that could be equivalent in the Latin American context. It is not possible to translate this insulting-now-theoretical word because none of these terms has undergone such a vindicatory process. Nevertheless, the concept of *queer* is a strong platform from which to deal with oppression of sexual diversity in North America and European scholarship (though it has less resonance throughout Latin America). Scholarship mainly produced in a transnational dialogue between North and South universities uses this theoretical tool to articulate criticism aimed at social inclusion of disenfranchised populations. It is in this academic conversation where the idea of decolonization of the queer body has introduced the need for specific, localized concepts such as *muxe*, *entundado* (to bewitch or enchant), *cuir*, *cu(y)r*, and so on. For Falconí (2014), *cuir* brings postcolonial/decolonial connotations, dealing with Latin American cultural and political specificities regarding representations and practices of the body. Falconí writes, “Part of Latin American *cuir* theory (that which flirts with post/de-colonial criticism) has proposed translation as a necessity—neither always easy nor certain—that is both careful and self-assured, critical and ludic in the cultural context to be able to apply the rich queer political and theoretical apparatus in Latin America” (2014, 98; translation by Zeb Tortorici).

In Latin American literary studies there are several instances of criticism addressing the queering process of a vast literary corpus, consisting of transforming the abject into a dignified subjectivity. Various literary works since the nineteenth century represent this process of queering, even though the term was not coined yet. One can find the aesthetic operation of making the sexual dissident an admirable and desirable subject in literary works such as *Bom-Crioulo* (1895), by the Brazilian writer Adolfo Ferreira Caminha (1867–1897), which made visible, without homophobic condemnation, homosexual and interracial attraction; in some poems and short stories by Amado Nervo (1870–1919), a celebrated Mexican poet who elevates the androgynous character to the summit of beauty; and in a myriad of novelists, artists, and intellectuals who in their search for aesthetic refinement have to move away from the normative expectations of the body. Several novels published at the beginning of twentieth century present queer characters in empathetic and even celebratory terms, defying the mandatory closet that has relegated sexual dissidents to the underground; narratives by novelists such as the Cuban Ofelia Rodríguez Acosta (1902–1975) and the Chilean Augusto D’Halmar (1882–1950) are good instances. The question of reducing homophobia with aesthetic strategies is one of the central motifs
Queerness and Modernity

One of the topics queer literary and cultural studies reiterate is the connection between queerness and modernity. If homophobia represents traditional values that are associated with endemic machismo, queerness symbolizes in many instances a modernizing expression. In the first half of the twentieth century, intellectual elites in countries such as Mexico and Cuba introduced audacious representations of deviant sexualities, provoking fervent debates that brought queer subjectivities and practices to the public's attention. Literary magazines such as Contemporâneos (1928–1931) in Mexico and Orígenes (1944–1956) in Cuba openly addressed homosexuality, which provoked several debates regarding machismo and its implications in national culture. In the 1920s and 1930s these debates revolved around the question of how Mexican revolutionary culture would be expressed in terms of gender. The corollary of these controversies was the foundation of a tradition of criticism of machismo as a factor of backwardness and an obstacle for the modernization that was imperative in the dominant political discourse. Here, modernity would be understood as following standards of living developed in Euro-American countries, which also means that this external influence is deemed a new form of colonialism and even, as happened in the Cuban Revolution of 1959, interpreted as a social disease caused by capitalism.

As part of this modernity imperative, in the 1970s the gay and lesbian movement started to demand respect and equality and was oriented to the liberation of oppressed sexual identities. Years later, at the end of the 1980s, the AIDS epidemic propelled a politics of rights, ranging from medical attention to nondiscrimination in workplaces and schools. The LGBTTTTI movement evolved in recent decades into championing the agenda of same-sex marriage. This normalization of sexual dissidence is considered to fall under the scope of queer politics, even though it is based on identity vindication. This fact contradicts what Euro-American academia defines as queer, opposing it to identity politics. Queer Latin American culture, arts, and politics do not see this identity politics criticism as its main objective. This does not mean that there is a misunderstanding of the theory; it is instead a re-signifying of queer politics. Here, to translate is to displace the meaning. Queer functions as a political resource because it refers to a historical process by which bodies that were considered condemnable acquired a new value not only as acceptable, but also desirable. Hence, queer politics in Latin America is aimed at dignifying the wretched and enfranchising the excluded regardless of whether it is named “queer,” “cuir,” or “cuy(r)” — or simply left unnamed.

SEE ALSO Bom-Crioulo (1895; Adolfo Ferreira Caminha); Conquest and Sodomy in Latin America; Florentine Codex and Nahua Sexuality; Language in Latin America; Sins against


Same-sex sexuality is evident in the literary heritage of the Arab world. Male homoeroticism is a staple feature of medieval Arabic poetry (Wright and Rowson 1997), and both hadith (oral scriptural tradition) and Islamic jurisprudential dealings with male sodomy date awareness of same-sex sexuality among men back to the first Arabo-Islamic societies of the seventh century. Evidence of the existence of homoerotic desire among women in Arabic letters comes down to us in remnants concentrated in the golden age of the Islamic empire, between the ninth and thirteenth centuries (Habib 2007). With respect to the modern world, the generally accepted consensus among contemporary Western theorists is that while same-sex practices previously received significant attention in the Arab world, they do not elicit identities (El-Rouayheb 2005; Massad 2007). This elicitation, according to the consensus, began after an encounter with Western imperialism and colonialism in the mid-twentieth century and the subsequent withdrawal of British and French influences after World War II (Massad 2007).

Theorists agree that gay and lesbian identities in themselves are Western in origin, and together with the subsequent international LGBT rights movement that gained traction in the final decade of the twentieth century, these are sometimes seen as the product of urbanization and capitalist individuation in the West (D’Emilio 1983), after which the family unit no longer held sway as it once did in feudal societies, where inheritance was incumbent on marriage and the reproduction of (male) heirs. The Arab world, by extension, is often thought to have experienced a less rapid process of industrialization, where familial ties, religious beliefs, and tribal customs are still deeply entrenched in a marriage economy, which exacerbates the emergence of identitarian homosexuality.

Although this is a commonly advanced narrative of the state of same-sex sexuality and desire in the Arab world in contemporary theory, it is glaringly inaccurate in that same-sex sexual practices have never ceased to exist there, and these practices have always produced identities. While there is an evident and growing LGBT rights movement emerging in the Arab world—one that extends from global LGBT rights and adopts and grafts terminologies and taxonomies produced in the West onto preexistent, culturally
specific homosexuality (Habib 2016)—the widespread preexistence of homosexual persons is evident from the abundance of indigenous terminology to describe them. While these terms are mostly derogatory, their plentiful existence demonstrates that homosexual activity must necessarily produce identities, even if not all homosexual acts are identitarian in nature and even if these identities are often imposed pejoratively on their subjects.

Arabic exists in two primary modalities: a formalized language (Fusha) that is shared by and understood by literate users of the language anywhere in the world, and a multifaceted populist language (ʿAmiyyah) that is split into numerous dialects that vary widely in vernacular, accents, and dialects. The predominant dialects are determined by geographical location. For example, while dialects and vernacular vary in the Levant region, the countries within this geographical space are distinctly similar. The countries of the Gulf have their own similar constellation of Arabic dialects. The countries that constitute North Africa enjoy their own rich dialect as well, and Iraqi and Egyptian dialects are each distinct in their own ways. There are twenty-three Arabic-speaking countries in the world, and together they constitute the Arab world—a world rife with multiple ethnicities, religions, degrees of urbanization and rurality, and a vast diversity in social and cultural formations, sometimes within one country. The remainder of this entry is dedicated to addressing the subject of “naming” homosexuality in the Arab world as it is here defined.

**Classical Arabic Terms for Men**

In classical Arabic, which relies on formalized Arabic and is therefore universally understood by literate Arabic speakers, heritage terms describing homosexually acting men are most commonly connected to the Qurʾan and the story of Lut. The story of Lut first appears in the Torah and the Old Testament (where he is known as “Lot”), and is recounted with some variation in the Qurʾan. A luti, a man who is of or pertaining to Lut and thus the tribe of Lut, is a man who is understood to be a sodomite of other men. This term, while originally used to denote the insertive party, came to be used interchangeably for the insertive and receptive parties, and this usage is widely recognized today. All countries of the Arab world recognize the term as denoting a man who has sex with men. While the term luti is not used in the Qurʾan and does not appear in the earliest Arabic lexicons as such, its use can be traced to the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth. In Islamic literature, Ibn Abi Shayba, the collector and narrator of prophetic hadiths who died in 857 CE, appears to have introduced the term. For this reason, it is possible that the term luti’s proliferation, if not genesis, arose with Islamic jurisprudential efforts to legislate against the act.

Beyond religious texts, classical Arabic has a wide array of names to capture subtle nuances in sexual behaviors and proclivities. During the ninth century and well into the thirteenth, there was an explosion of erotological literature written in Arabic that sought to describe, chronicle, categorize, and theorize sexual activity in all its phenomena. From this rich
literature a wide variety of terms can be gleaned. *Al-maʾbun*, for example, is an Arabic word that appears in the earliest lexicons, referring to someone on whom an ill or evil has befallen (al-Farāhīdī 2003). It eventually became the term used to refer to the receptive party in an all-male sex act, thus helping to differentiate *al-maʾbun* (the one who receives the act of penetration) from *luti* (the one who performs the act of penetration). Consensual sexual encounters and rape are often not recognized as separate categories of behavior, and for this reason the prohibition of homosexuality is often seen as a prohibition of male rape of another male, leaving no room to litigate for consensual homosexual acts between adults (El-Rouayheb 2005). This might explain the semantic origin of the word *al-maʾbun* meaning one on whom an evil has befallen.

Aside from its lexiconographic roots, the word *al-maʾbun* also describes a man (usually effeminate) whose pleasure is to willfully seek penetration by other men. Heritage terms for effeminacy are at least as old as the hadith tradition, where stories about effeminate men having access to the women’s quarters date back to the life of the prophet Muhammad in the seventh century, and presumably, by logical extension, prior to that. The term *mukhannath* is a classical Arabic word used to refer to someone who is recognized to be male but who does not possess sexual desire for women, and it is usually coupled with descriptions of effeminate behavior and mannerisms. In hadith literature a mukhannath is not necessarily sexually active, or at least these early depictions do not focus on the sexual lives of such persons, other than to state that they did not desire women. Nevertheless, the term *khaneeth*, a derivative of the word *mukhannath*, is widely used (in a derogatory way) to refer to a homosexual man in countries of the Gulf, such as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait today.

**Arabic Terms for Women**

The Arabic heritage word for lesbian sexual activity is *suhaq*, from which the term *suhaqiyya* (denoting the woman who performs suhaq) is derived. Like *luti*, the word is readily recognizable anywhere in the Arabic-speaking world. Its first use and lexiconographic origin are ambiguous, but by the ninth century the word was widely used in erotological literature. It has been suggested that this word is not Arabic in origin but rather a derivation from the Greek *sapphikos* (Massad 2007). The word does appear in Omar al-Tabari's translation of a work by the first-century Greek astrologer Dorotheos of Sidon (Brooten 1996), but al-Tabari was a contemporary of the erotological literature in which this word already had appeared, and therefore it is unclear whether he imported it from Greek and Arabized it or used the prevalent Arabic term already in circulation to translate its Greek equivalent. It is more likely that the latter scenario is true. Erotological literature from the medieval period indicates that the word *suhaq* means “grinding.” Broadly, the word refers to the grinding of, for example, herbs; specifically, when used in relation to women, it refers to the grinding of the clitoris, which is seen as the distinctive
feature of sex between women. Medieval Arabic erotology appears to preclude penetration as a possible sexual activity between women. And while there are numerous terms for male homosexuality in various Arabic dialects, there are fewer terms for female homosexuality in current circulation, and *suhaq* is the predominant signifier of female homosexuality in the Arab world.

In Morocco, a country where French is spoken in greater frequency than Arabic, the word *lesbiana* has entered Arabic vernacular to name a lesbian. In Kuwait the native term *zahooq* refers to a woman who has sex with other women. Such a woman is also understood to be hypermasculine. In fact, in much of the Arab world that has not experienced a colonial encounter, the lines between transgender female-to-male persons and masculine lesbians are not as clearly drawn in the public imaginary. This renders feminine, same-sex–desiring women invisible and illegible, both contemporaneously and in what we glean from medieval literature.

In the first decade of the twenty-first century the phenomenon of female masculinity, coupled with homosexuality, began to garner the attention of local authorities in Kuwait. This followed from an increase in visibility of young adults who were legally female but who dressed ambiguously enough to be confused with boys. Their appearances in public spaces such as swimming centers and shopping malls and on social media gave rise to the terms *boyat* (a feminization and Arabization of the English word *boy*) and *sabyat* (a feminization of the Arabic word for “boy,” which is *sabi*, not to be confused with the word *sabbiyyat*, meaning “young adult females”). This resulted in moral panics, and a subsequent penal code was instituted, which led to the persecution of Kuwait’s transgender minority in 2007, leaving male-to-female transgendered persons particularly vulnerable to arrest and prosecution (*Nigst and Garcia 2010; Human Rights Watch 2012*).

**Local Terminologies and Slang**

Local terminologies give us a finer understanding of how local homosexualities are constructed in the social imaginary through language. These terminologies necessarily give rise to identity politics. For example, the slang terms for gay men in Iraq are *jarawi* and *frookh*, which mean “puppies” and “chicks,” respectively. These highly derogatory terms are used for adult homosexual men, but they also necessarily imply the male victims of pedophilic sexual abuse. In fact, there are no linguistic distinctions between pedophilia and homosexuality in Arabic slang, just as there once was no distinction between male rape and consensual homosexuality. The conflations of pedophilia with homosexuality and male rape with homosexuality often provide the rationale for enacting punitive measures against consensual homosexuality. Sometimes, however, the distinction between homosexuality and pedophilia is present linguistically, and this does not necessarily result in a more favorable view of the former. In Saudi Arabia, for example, the word *barzanji* refers specifically to a man (or young-adult male) who preys on boys.
In Saudi Arabia, the term *mubasbiss* refers to a homosexually inclined man. The origin of the word suggests something about its initial use and the setting of the scene; it refers to a person who calls out “psst, psst, psst” to someone to bring a camel to them, usually with the aim of milking it. The connection of the term with the clandestine subtleties of cruising, in which a man might call out “psst” to attract the attention of another, is compacted in the homosexual semiotics of this word. The connection of the word to desert life imbues it with the profound connection to the locality of the term’s origin and use. Not all local words for gay men can be traced back semiotically in the same way. It is unknown, for example, why *kitkal* and *hotteh* in Moroccan Arabic are used to refer to a gay man. The word *khawani*, used in Oman, may have a Farsi origin, and the word *barinthha*, from Kuwait, does not seem to have an Arabic origin either.

Most of the Arabic slang words that refer to gay men, however, do have a semantic significance. While homosexuality is often conflated with rape and pedophilia, it is also contradictorily associated with receptive passivity and effeminacy, and this is reflected in the terminology. A common construct of homosexuality around the Arab world reflects an understanding that only an effeminate man, presumed to be also a bottom (the willful *al-maʿbun*), is actually gay. The other party can be perceived, even by himself, as simply hypersexual—so sexual that he turns other men into women with his voracious appetite. This form of opportunistic homosexuality (not very different from the homosexuality seen in prisons, for example) can be gleaned from Arabic literature, if not in contemporary rural cultures and environments. In this literature the patriarch enjoys access to a variety of pleasures but usually also has a wife (or wives) and children, fulfilling the social expectation (and also his own) of his position as patriarch. Or else, in the absence of fulfilling his desire with a woman, a man may settle for something more readily accessible in a homosocially organized society. This does not preclude the existence of homosexual men who are gay, masculine, and “active,” for want of a better word; it simply indicates the general perceptions and conceptions that abound about the construct of homosexuality in language and mainstream society. In other words, we can observe, linguistically, how homosexuality is constructed as inseparable from a breach in manhood across the Arab world.

In Libya and Morocco, for example, the word *zamil* is used to denote a gay man, and in Algeria it refers to a cowardly or weak person, giving us a clue to its semantic origin. In the countries of the Levant there is a constellation of insulting terms such as *manyuk* and *manyak*, the slang terms for al-maʿbun, denoting one who is penetrated anally, and *mayet* and *mayeʿ*, which refer to a boy or man whose mannerisms are feminine; all are words for a male homosexual. The term *khawal* is used in Egypt and Sudan, and the word *tant*, the French word for “aunt,” is heard more usually in Jordan and Syria. All these words identify a homosexual as a man lacking in masculine qualities, and in all likelihood they reflect a view that only the receptive party in a sex act is a homosexual.
In Kuwait the word *taraf*, which formally refers to excessiveness or ostentatiousness, is also used to indicate an effeminate gay man, and the feminization of this word, *tarafeh*, refers to a transgender male-to-female person, indicating that a nuanced separation of the two identities is signified linguistically. This is also the case elsewhere in the Gulf, as in Saudi Arabia, where the word *thokri* refers to a constellation of gender atypical behaviors, from transvestism to female-to-male transsexuality. The term *jins*, however, both in Saudi and the rest of the Gulf, is used to refer to a transsexual person specifically. In Saudi Arabia gender-reassignment surgeries are sanctioned by the state, and transgender persons constitute a legally recognized minority who are able to change their sex on legal documents. This is the same in Egypt, where transsexualism and intersex are conflated in the heritage term *khuntha*, which was used in classical Islamic jurisprudence to discuss legal matters (such as marriage and inheritance) pertaining to intersex persons (Sanders 1991).

If it seems that there are few slang terms for female homosexuality discussed here, it is because the subject seems to produce little social discourse. The word *suhaqiyya* is the most commonly used, and the only known indigenous terms are *zahooq* in Kuwait and *banat al-'aishrah* in Syria, to “document a phenomenon that used to be prevalent among the pre-eminent female singers and the elite women of Aleppo in the 1930s” (al-Samman 2008, 303). Female homosexual proclivities are also implied among the *boyat* and *sabyat* as well. In literary Arabic one may encounter the words *mutarajjilat* and *muthakarāt*, or a slang version thereof, *mustarjilāt*, which refers to women who act like *rijal* (men). This does not necessarily imply homosexuality. In medieval Arabic literature there is one text that indicates that a subculture of suhaqiyyat in Morocco created and circulated the code word *tharifa*, which meant “witty one,” to signify that a woman was homosexually inclined (Habib 2007, 70). Absence of evidence of other terminologies is not evidence of absence, but evidence, in all likelihood, of how female sexuality is often shrouded in mystery and prohibition. Women also enjoy greater privacy, which means any subcommunities that form around sexual proclivities can be safe from the anthropologically voyeuristic gaze and social methods of surveillance and policing. The use of words such as *gay* and *lesbian* are also popular in regions of the Arab world where there has been an encounter with the West, whether through satellite television, social media, military occupations, or colonialism. And these words appear in spoken as well as written communications, just as one might use the Arabic word *masjid* in an English sentence. Gays and lesbians in the Arab world are increasingly using these words to identify themselves.

**Sexological, Positive, and Globalized Terms**

The terms that have thus far been discussed either reflect a pejorative view in which the power to name rests in the hands of a largely homophobic society, or are words borrowed from English or French. Another pejorative term for homosexuality that entered the Arabic
literary vernacular comes from Western sexology of the 1950s: the term *deviant*, with its Arabic equivalent *shudhudh* entered literary Arabic to refer to homosexuality around the time sexological literature began to investigate homosexuality as a mental disorder. *Shudhudh* generally means “deviation from the norm.” In fact, in neutral terms, when we say someone *shadhdha* (used as a verb), we mean that they strayed from the common path, they individuated, they struck out entirely on their own. *Al-shudhudh al-jinsi* became a widely used term and continues to be used in medical and jurisprudential discourse as well as conservative newspapers and magazines. It means “sexual deviance.”

However, in a climate of greater societal acceptance in the 1990s, following the success of the LGBT rights movement in 1973 in having homosexuality removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* as a psychological disorder, progressive writers and advocates in the Arab world, including Arab LGBT activists themselves, began to introduce new and positive terminology to name sexual and gender variance in Arabic. The most common term is *mithliyya*, derived from the root word *mithl*, which means “same” and serves as a literal translation of the *homo*-prefix in *homosexuality*. A gay man is referred to as a *mithli* and a woman is a *mithliyya*. This is a new, positive term that is beginning to gain wider usage in the Arab world, even among conservatives.

Adoption of a globalized framework that speaks directly to the “gay” and “lesbian” identity categories of the modern West seems to be flourishing as a result of local, grassroots efforts to reframe the conversation around homosexuality. As more and more gender and sexual minorities begin to organize in the Arab world, they are claiming and generating their own discourse about their desires and their identities (*Amer 2012*). Organized LGBT activists understand the key importance of language in determining the conceptual understanding of homosexuality, which has historically been coupled with pedophilia, rape, and even bestiality. Separating the consensual, adult homosexual reality from other practices is critical to changing societal perspectives. However, this process of globalizing the language of sexuality and sexual orientation is not without its critics, who see this as a form of cultural imperialism that is destroying indigenous sexual practices (*Massad 2007*). Less catastrophically, what these conceptual borrowings and hybridized migrations of sexual terminology seem to be doing is destroying indigenous sexual discourses in which the homosexual is misrecognized, criminalized, or medicalized. This comes with a certain level of danger because it creates in the political and social imaginary a new kind of homosexual: an organized, political entity that now requires state regulation, prosecution, or, worse, persecution. But historically, such has been the price often paid by minorities organizing for their civil rights.

SEE ALSO *Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Homosexual Acts in Shari'a; Language; Language in Africa; Language in Europe; Language in Latin America; Mukhannath; Pakistan, “Queer”*


Neorealism has been associated with Italian cinema between the mid-1940s and the early 1950s. Many film historians see the origin of neorealism in the so-called verismo, the naturalist tradition of Italian fascism. It was an attempt to establish an original Italian cinema and separate itself from the contrived cinema of Hollywood. Neorealism is usually explained with reference to the war and postwar periods, but its definition remains controversial. Most neorealist films present a population that, in light of the circumstances of the postwar period, was characterized by the trauma of postwar recovery. The films were shot in mostly gloomy rublescapes of demolished cities and employed amateur actors. The concept behind neorealism was to grasp reality and to present it without artifice. And yet, in so doing, many directors opted to depict gender and sexual norms in a way that opened the playing field to more varied, polymorphous images of desire and identity. Hence, it is important to include neorealist cinema in the annals of queer history.

The neorealist filmmakers came mainly from the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia (Experimental Center of Cinematography), a film school that was established in Rome by the regime of the ventennio, the twenty-year period of fascist rule in Italy. Some of their films, including explicit propaganda films, were even shot directly for the regime. The following six movies are often mentioned as quintessential neorealist examples: Roma città aperta (1945; Rome, open city), Paisà (1946; Pbsian), Sciuscià (1946; Shoeshine), La terra trema (1948; The earth trembles), Ladri di biciclette (1948; Bicycle thieves), and Umberto D. (1951); also sometimes cited among the prime examples are Ossessione (1943; Obsession) and Germania anno zero (1947; Germany year zero). However, because the aesthetic of realism can be found in virtually every film of that time, one could argue that the term neorealism applies to much of Italian cinema proper during the era of neorealism. During the three-year period between 1945 and 1948, more than 200 movies were filmed in Italy, many of which no longer exist today.

In the 1950s homoeroticism or queer aesthetics largely disappeared from Italian cinema in the wake of the end of the Allied occupation. Men returned home from war prisons, and with them came the reconstitution of normative family models, which served as the
Deviant Realities

The emergence of an aesthetic of realism, which gave Italian cinema worldwide fame, marks a radical historical rupture. The eye of the camera assimilated the events on the screen as a witness. It created the feeling of a passive spectator, one that might also subvert the heteronormative cinematic gaze.

Although some neorealist filmmakers, such as Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975), were themselves gay, these films were not so much about the representation of homosexual relationships as about depicting a comprehensive crisis of social norms. Although there are numerous homosexual displays in neorealism, film historiography is divided on their meaning. The Germans and the Nazis are often portrayed in neorealist movies as caricatures of homophobic stereotypes or sadistic perverts. This also applies to female so-called sexual collaborators, often portrayed as stereotypical lesbian vampires or Marlene Dietrich prototypes. Many film historians suggest this was an externalization of the Italian guilt for fascism and war, with the German fascists contrasted with the “normal” Italians. However, equating fascism with homosexuality overlooks the numerous homoerotic and positive same-sex encounters depicted in other films. These appear most commonly in the gay director Luchino Visconti’s (1906–1976) film Ossessione, which is singled out for its uniqueness. Despite this tension, in most neorealist films queer aspects are at work in various ways.

Soft Men

One way is through the equation of fascism with hypermasculinity. Sexually aggressive masculinity in the neorealist films is rejected as fascist. In full contrast to the cinema of the ventennio, the sexual passiveness of Italian men in the neorealist era has positive connotations. Most of the male characters are gentle, friendly, and affectionate caretakers. They are portrayed as wounded if not broken, and there are no heroes to be found. In the films of the 1940s, these passive male bodies are not portrayed as lesser men. That changes only through the emergence of the countless comedies of the neorealismo rosa (pink neorealism) of the 1950s with the appearance of the ridiculed, effeminate inetto (the so-called inept man) or in the numerous series of the actor and director Alberto Sordi (1920–2003) and the actor Totò (1898–1967). In its passivity and openness, the neorealist male body becomes sexually objectified, or eroticized, and, by extension, in a sense feminized. This exceptional display, alien to the films of fascism and to the films of the coming decades, emerged in the immediate wake of the end of the war, chiefly on Italian screens.

Fierce Women
As for the female protagonists, the postwar momentum between both fascism and the 1950s is most notable as a discourse on female subjectification. The heroes of neorealist cinema are heroines. They are positive figures who go beyond the image of the mother or the fallen woman who needs to be saved. Women drive the action in neorealist films, whereas men are on the margins in terms of their actions. Women appear always against any authorities, are self-confident and self-sufficient, have illegitimate children, are sexually active and aggressive, and tend to engage in adultery. The films are also full of sexual relationships between Italian women and African American GIs, or rather deserters with whom they create alliances. Almost all these subjects were considered forbidden within the cinema of the *ventennio*. In particular, the break with nativist and biopolitical or culturalist racism is unique in Western film history.

The upcoming *divismo* of the 1950s, with its beauty pageants and the return of the star system in the film business ended the period of neorealist heroines. The antidivas, such as Anna Magnani (1908–1973) or Carla Del Poggio (1925–2010), increasingly disappeared from the cinemas and were replaced by another type of woman: the *maggiorate fisiche* (the so-called Italian sex bombs), represented by such actresses as Sophia Loren (1934–) and Gina Lollobrigida (1927–).

Neorealism emphasized the individual needs of women beyond marriage and family. Children depicted in the films were not represented as great blessings for their mothers. Instead, neorealist films created networks of women who produced strong social relationships beyond patriarchal structures. This is in stark contrast with the delicate lady in the florid melodramas of the *ventennio*. The women of neorealism appear natural, without any makeup, and have wild, disheveled hair; they are dirty and loud; they spit in public. Such images of women had not yet been seen on the screen. Above all, this approach was perceived and celebrated as realistic.

**Queering Neorealist Cinema**

Even though research on the neorealist movies recognizes the weakness of men, the central role of women, and gender-inverted relationships, neorealism today is not interpreted as a particularly feminist or gender-critical cinema. Hence, a revision of the neorealist cinema as a queer genre—as something beyond the norms of femininity and masculinity—is a necessary correction in historical (film) research. The neorealism of the immediate postwar period in Italy can be read as a cinematic expression of a polymorphously perverse desire.

SEE ALSO *Pasolini’s Cinematic Adaptation of A Thousand and One Nights*

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Queer theory, since its inception, has been notoriously difficult to define. As an academic field, queer theory’s points of origin are multiple and debatable, and its focus on destabilizing fixed categories and forms of knowledge production make constructing a definition a slippery task. Furthermore, many of the field’s key theorists warn against the domestication of *queer*, arguing that its political and semantic power ultimately rests in its “resistance to definition” (*Jagose 1996, 1*). *Queer* began as a pejorative term used to describe gay and lesbian people, and it was originally understood to mean “abnormal” or “sick” (*Halperin 2003, 339*). Today, it has been reclaimed by activists and academics to name a political and theoretical response to both homophobic and transphobic violence and discrimination, as well as growing frustration with the identity politics and assimilationist strategies of lesbian and gay studies and the modern LGBT movement. *Queer* also functions as an umbrella term that encompasses a wide range of people who challenge heterosexual gender norms and the politics of mainstream lesbian and gay communities (*Barker and Scheele 2016*).

Though there are many coexisting and complementary formulations across global contexts, queer theorists are generally understood to advance ideas that challenge heteronormativity—the assumption of heterosexuality as a dominant or natural state—by emphasizing gender, sex, and sexuality as socially constructed and unstable concepts, rather than natural or biological facts. In *Tendencies* (*1993*), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick defines *queer* as a destabilizing force—an “open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonances and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning” (8)—in order to combat monolithic understandings of gender and sexuality. Queer theorists began by combining poststructuralist concepts of identity as unstable with feminist and gay and lesbian analyses of gender and sexuality as socially constructed categories imposed by the regulatory mechanisms of heteronormativity to challenge the assumptions being made about gender and sexuality. Rather than making an argument for the rights of a particular marginalized group, queer theorists consider the entire system of knowledge formation and regulation that perpetuates oppression and maintains the order of heteropatriarchy (*Hennessy 1993*). In the West, the field and its activism started as a response to the homophobia of mainstream society and a critique of feminist and gay movements that
assumed fixed and singular identities for their constituents. Instead of consolidating meanings, queer theorists have pointed to the way meaning surrounding gender, sex, and sexuality is contextual and shaped by cultural and social practices that differ historically and geographically (Barker and Scheele 2016).

Some critics argue that this narrative of the work accomplished by queer theorists constructs a false binary between gay and lesbian studies and queer theory, where previous scholarship is discounted as crude or too mired in identity politics to be productive (Halperin 2003). Indeed, queer theory's emergence is inextricable from the work of radical gay liberationists, lesbian feminists, and AIDS activists of the 1980s. In its disruption of the assumption that “woman” or “lesbian” are stable, fixed categories of identity, queer theory also draws on critique by feminists of color, who have similarly argued that the feminist movement and LGBT movements failed to consider intersecting identity categories and the multiple forms of oppression experienced by some of their members (Sullivan 2003). Challenging assumptions that sexual identity or gender were primary forms of identification that referred to a homogenous group, queer theory deconstructed these categories and offered new ways of analyzing the multiple and connected systems perpetuating oppression and inequality.
De Lauretis, Foucault, and American Queer Activism

Queer theory’s origin in the United States is usually traced to a 1990 conference at the University of California, Santa Cruz, organized by Teresa de Lauretis. Somewhat controversially, she titled the conference “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities”; thus, she is credited with coining the phrase by uniting the term queer that activists and artists had begun using in gay-affirmative organizing in the 1980s with the intellectual clout of the word theory (Halperin 2003). In her introduction to the 1991 special issue of the journal differences, de Lauretis emphasized the “speculative” nature of queer at this juncture and suggested its potential to open up conceptual space for queer people to deconstruct “our own discourses and their constructed silences” (1991, iv). De Lauretis noted the way gay and lesbian studies, in its attempt to naturalize sexuality, delimits the study of gender and sexualities by replacing dominant scripts with a “gay white historiography” (Jagose 1996, 128) that perpetuates race and gender bias. Through her conference title, de Lauretis disrupted the restrictive discourse represented by “lesbian and gay”; as she wrote, this deliberate juxtaposition “is intended to mark a certain critical distance from the latter, by now established and convenient formula” (1991, iv).

The Rise of Queer as a Category of Identity and Resistance De Lauretis drew from the work of activists begun a decade earlier. Queer became an integral concept for HIV/AIDS activism and theory in the late 1980s and early 1990s as activists sought to disrupt the complacency and silences that endangered the lives of LGBT people. As Jeff Nunokawa notes, the lack of outrage around deaths caused by AIDS was tied to a cultural belief in the virus as a gay plague and gay people already pictured as “deathbed victims” (1991, 312) in the dominant cultural imagination. Members of ACT UP, an advocacy group focused on confrontational and direct action that formed in 1987 to address the AIDS crisis, would eventually go on to form Queer Nation, an LGBT direct-action organization in 1990. Queer Nation organized demonstrations in response to a rise in anti-LGBT violence and discrimination, and they became well-known for the rallying cry “We’re here! We’re Queer! Get used to it!” (Queer Nation NY 2016). In June 1990 the New York chapter of Queer Nation distributed a pamphlet titled Queers Read This, which urged readers to resist assimilation and elitism and contribute to a revolution that would make “every space a Lesbian and Gay space” and “every street a part of our sexual geography” (Queer Nation 1990). Queer had become both an affirming category of identification and a powerful means of resisting hegemony within and outside of LGBT movements.

In this push to transform spaces and increase radical visibility, American queer activism shared important goals with the gay liberation movement of the 1970s. Gay liberation, initiated by the Stonewall riots in June 1969, represented a break from the assimilationist approach of homophile groups that had formed in the 1950s, such as the Mattachine Society, whose slogan advocated “evolution not revolution,” and the Daughters of Bilitis
(Sullivan 2003, 25). Originally, the liberationist movement sought total revolution of a capitalist system that perpetuated white supremacy, misogyny, and homophobia (Smith 1993). Over time, the movement lost this revolutionary impulse, moving instead toward an ethnic minority model in which gay and lesbian people focused on winning civil rights and assimilating into dominant structures (Cohen 1997).

Queer theorists question this strategy, posing a challenge to the systems of thought that maintain these categories and the power relations that they ultimately uphold.

**Historical Understandings of Same-Sex Relations and Gender Expression** Michel Foucault’s *L’histoire de la sexualité* (1976; *The History of Sexuality* [1978]), Volume 1, became a foundational text for American lesbian and gay studies in the 1980s and emerging queer theories in the 1990s. Foucault, a French philosopher and social theorist, argued that homosexuality as a concrete category of identity is a modern formation created through shifts in knowledge production around sexuality. Foucault notes that until the mid-to late nineteenth century, while certain sexual acts might be understood as immoral or aberrant, these acts were not understood to represent an individual’s psyche or point to the construction of a particular kind of subject (Sullivan 2003). Foucault’s work helped shape queer theory’s understanding of gender and sexuality as historically contingent rather than as an essential truth, and as constructed through discourses that perpetuate particular power relations (Barker and Scheele 2016).

However, Foucault’s historicization of the move from “acts” to “identities” also inspired debate among key queer theorists. In *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), Sedgwick argues that both Foucault and David Halperin, who followed Foucault’s lead, place too much emphasis on linear historical shifts, creating a “history [where] one model of same-sex relations is superseded by another, which may again be superseded by another” (47) and presuming a unified understanding of modern homosexual identity and practices. Instead, Sedgwick proposes an approach that privileges “plural, varied, and contradictory” historical understandings of same-sex relations and gender expression and acknowledges that multiple models and frameworks can coexist in a single historical moment. Halperin responded to critiques of the acts-to-identities framework by asserting that Foucault sought not “to convey what actually went on in the minds of different historical subjects when they had sex,” but to mark a contrast between the way “sodomy” and “homosexuality” were defined in European law, the Christian canon, and the writing of sexologists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (1998, 97).

In *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States* (1983), historian John D’Emilio engages with Foucault’s constructionist theories in order to study the emergence of LGBT movements in the twentieth-century American context. Focusing the economic and cultural shifts brought on by World War II and its aftermath, historian Lillian Faderman’s *Surpassing the Love of Men* (1981) takes a broader
view, tracing romantic, sexual, and affectionate relationships between women from the sixteenth century to modern times. Faderman argues that intense relationships between women were pervasive and met with social approval prior to the twentieth century's pathologization of homosexuality. Similarly, Terry Castle's *The Apparitional Lesbian* (1993) explores the "ghostly" traces of lesbian identity, sanitized and made invisible by mainstream culture, in a study that spans writings by women and literary representations of lesbians across three centuries. Further contextualization of the histories of gay and lesbian communities has been provided by Esther Newton (1993), whose study of the gay resort community in Cherry Grove, on Fire Island in New York, traces the formation of community space that provided queer people with a vital escape from both the dangers and the demands of heteronormative city life for more than sixty years.

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Poet, Essayist, and Activist Audre Lorde in 1983. Lorde addressed the erasure and silencing of black women and lesbians in much of her work, while also embracing a multiplicity of identity (black, lesbian, mother, poet, for instance).

**Lesbian Feminism, Women-of-Color Critique, and Intersectionality**

Queer theory owes much to the theoretical formulations of lesbian feminists, who challenged heteronormativity as an oppressive regulatory system and questioned its role in
shaping gendered behavior and identities. As the gay liberation and women's movements continued to take shape in the 1970s and 1980s, many lesbian women felt that their experiences were not being recognized by either movement (Jagose 1996). Adrienne Rich's 1980 essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” became a foundational text for queer theory for its analysis of heterosexuality as a coercive institutional fiction used to oppress women rather than a naturally dominant expression of desire. Describing heterosexuality as “compulsory,” Rich illustrates the extent to which women have been unable to explore alternative ways of living and being, such as lesbian sexuality and creating bonds with other women (Rich 1980, 648). Similarly, French materialist feminist Monique Wittig's 1980 essay “The Straight Mind” points to heterosexuality as a ubiquitous institution, arguing that the binary gender categories of “man” and “woman” must be destroyed, since their meanings perpetuate a heteronormative system (Sullivan 2003, 107). Controversially, Wittig states that “lesbians are not women,” since woman is a term that can only have significance within a heterosexual context (Wittig 1992, 32). In Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un (1977; This Sex Which Is Not One [1985]), fellow French feminist Luce Irigaray engages with psychoanalysis to describe a plural female sexuality, one that is not bound by a single sexual organ or “conceptualized on the basis of masculine parameters” (1985, 23). Lesbian feminism's critiques of heterosexuality as an institution that perpetuates gender oppression remain integral to queer theory and activism in the 1990s and in its current form (Jagose 1996).

Rich, Wittig, and other white lesbian feminists faced criticism because their work initially failed to account for differences among lesbians and among women more generally. In figuring lesbianism as a form of automatic resistance to heteropatriarchy, lesbian feminists erased the ways in which white women continued to benefit from white supremacy (Sullivan 2003). In response to the gaps in the civil rights and feminist movements, black feminists and women of color in the 1970s and 1980s created intersectional frameworks that accounted for intersecting identities and experiences of oppression. Poet, essayist, and activist Audre Lorde addressed the erasure and silencing of black women and lesbians in much of her work, including “The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House,” “The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism,” and “The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action,” which were collected in Sister Outsider (1984). Lorde’s work drew attention to the material conditions of racism while also embracing a multiplicity of identity, often expressed through lists (black, lesbian, mother, poet, for instance), that challenged notions of a stable and homogenous gay or lesbian subject.

Chicana theorist Gloria Anzaldúa similarly questioned the way “queer” could function as a “falsely unifying” concept that “homogenizes” and “erases” difference in ways that are politically damaging to people of color (1991, 250). Anzaldúa used the term queer several years before de Lauretis, though her early contributions to the field have been recognized less frequently (Sullivan 2003). Her earlier work, the semiautobiographical Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza (1987) and This Bridge Called My Back (1981), an anthology
coedited with fellow Chicana writer and activist Cherrie Moraga, centered the experiences of queer women of color and helped to develop a theoretical framework for examining race alongside gender and sexuality (Escoffier 1998). Kimberlé Crenshaw gave these critiques a name when she coined the term *intersectionality* in 1989, arguing for the necessity of moving beyond a single-axis approach in favor of analysis that examines "the interaction of race and gender" (1989, 140). Queer theory continues to grapple with the relationships among gender, sexuality, and race.

For instance, in queer diaspora studies, scholars like Gayatri Gopinath (2005) further developed intersectional approaches, studying gender and sexuality alongside legacies of colonialism and nationalism to pursue global questions of queer regionalism and diaspora.

Critiques from women of color productively upended the notion of a singular and unified gay identity, and throughout the 1980s and 1990s, more theorists continued to challenge categorization and form new intellectual frameworks for thinking about gender and sexual identity (Jagose 1996). In her 1984 essay “Thinking Sex,” anthropologist and cultural theorist Gayle Rubin outlined the ways that some queer people continued to be marginalized by the LGBT and feminist movements because of a hierarchy of sex acts that deems some more natural or good than others. For instance, in the sex hierarchy enforced by religion, the media, and the legal/medical systems, monogamy is more appropriate than nonmonogamy, and pornography and S&M (sadism and masochism) practices are considered immoral or undesirable. Rubin wrote during the infamous "sex wars" that divided the women’s movement in the 1980s, and her essay responded to the "sex negativity" espoused by antiporn feminists. Her work, alongside writing by Patrick Califia, provided an important framework for challenging preconceptions around sex in order to create space for greater “erotic creativity” (Rubin 1993, 35).

**Queering Sex and Gender in the American Academy**

Early queer theorists of the 1990s continued to question categorization around gender, sex, and sexuality. Literary critic Sedgwick, who became one of queer theory's most influential practitioners, suggests that focus on the gender of object choice is a limiting and arbitrary way of defining sexuality. In *Epistemology of the Closet* (1990), she outlines the many possible means of delineating sexual activity, such as enjoyment of particular acts, sensations, frequency, or physical type, in order to point to the constructedness of gender as the most significant indication of sexual identity or orientation. Like Rubin, Sedgwick notes the way normative homosexuality perpetuates conformity to acceptable gender presentation, and she advocates for disentangling gender and sexuality (Sedgwick 1990; Barker and Scheele 2016). Sedgwick's work to expand textual and theoretical possibilities for *queer* helped to develop new frameworks and methodologies for exploring queer resonances in literary texts. Alongside colleague Michael Moon, who was a pioneer in creating gay and lesbian studies courses, Sedgwick taught some of the earliest courses in
queer theory. As queer theory began to find its formal place in the academy, in 1993 Halperin and Carolyn Dinshaw cofounded the peer-reviewed academic journal *Gay and Lesbian Studies Quarterly* (*GLQ*), published by Duke University Press, which became a critical site of scholarly exchange for theorists in the field.

Along with Sedgwick, American feminist philosopher Judith Butler remains one of the most prominent thinkers associated with queer theory. Butler's landmark text *Gender Trouble* (*1990*), subtitled *Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, controversially challenged the notion of “woman” as a natural and unified category served by the feminist movement. Instead of arguing for the advancement of rights for “women” as a homogenous group, Butler questions the very construction of this category, asking us to consider whom it describes (*1990, 5*). Drawing on Foucault, Wittig, and others, Butler argues that gender is a regulatory fiction rather than a natural or essential truth, and that all people, not just queer people, perform gender. As she explains, “gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (33). Butler does not suggest that gender amounts to drag, though she notes that the performances of drag artists reveal the “imitative structure” of gender itself (137). This concept of gender as a repeated social performance, rather than a fixed inherent reality, has become one of queer theory’s most enduring legacies. Butler continued to refine this theory in subsequent work, including *Bodies That Matter* (*1993*), which introduces the concept of “citationality” to describe the way expressions of gender draw from circulating narratives and constructions of masculinity and femininity.
Theories of performativity continued to resonate in the field and beyond. Queer theorist José Esteban Muñoz draws on Butler and Sedgwick in the field of performance studies, in which he develops the concept of “disidentification” to describe the way minority subjects use cultural performance as a survival strategy to navigate a mainstream culture that erases or disciplines nonnormative behaviors and identities (1999, 4). Like Butler, gender theorist Jack (Judith) Halberstam aims to illustrate the constructedness of gender, disentangling it from notions of natural or biological characteristics. In Female Masculinity (1998), Halberstam provides the first full-length study of forms of masculine presentation and expression that exist outside of cisgender men, including tomboys, butches, inverts, transmasculine people, female-to-male transsexuals, and drag kings. Significantly, in untethering masculinity from biology, Halberstam notes that rather than being an “imitation of maleness” or a performance, female masculinity allows us to see the way masculinity becomes constructed as masculinity in the first place (1998, 1). Halberstam’s later work, such as In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives (2005), continues to foreground the experiences of trans and gender nonconforming people in theorizing queerness.
Queer Theory and Transgender Studies

The emergence of the field of transgender studies can also be traced to the 1990s, though its journey to full acceptance and integration into the academy is comparatively longer, only gaining a foothold in recent years. Many scholars trace transgender studies to the publication of Sandy Stone’s groundbreaking 1987 essay “The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto.” The process of gaining institutional support and resources for academic inquiry around trans lives and experiences is still underway. In 2016 the University of Victoria named Aaron Devor chair of transgender studies, creating the first position of its kind. As with GLQ, Duke University Press again appeared at the forefront of creating space for radical scholarship, publishing the first journal devoted to trans studies, Transgender Studies Quarterly (TSQ), in 2014, with editors Susan Stryker and Paisley Currah.

The fields of queer theory and trans studies remain intertwined, since many queer theorists originally viewed transgender and gender nonconforming people as key to theorizing gender as constructed rather than as an essential quality linked to biology. As trans theorist Jay Prosser notes in his study of transsexual autobiography, Second Skins (1998), queer theory helped make it possible to “articulate the transsexual as a theoretical subject” and thus transgender studies is “allied with queer” (60). Yet, trans writers and theorists also struggle to define their experiences of gender as real and valid in the face of constructionist theories that seem to suggest gender is a socially constructed performance. Prosser, whose work foregrounds the material body, critiques Butler and other queer theorists for engaging the trans body as a trope, used to stand in for gender rebellion. In Assuming a Body (2010), Gayle Salamon attempts to heal fractures between the social constructionist theories of Butler and trans theorists like Prosser and Vivian Namaste, who foreground embodied experiences. Salamon argues that “to claim that sex is a social construct is not to claim that it is irrelevant, or invariant, or incapable of being embodied or reworked” (2010, 76). For Salamon, neither the discursive structures used to describe bodily feeling nor the significance of embodied subjectivity can be dismissed in theorization of gender.

In the social sciences, anthropologist David Valentine’s Imagining Transgender (2007) further builds conceptual intersections between trans and queer theory via ethnographic research that explores the “origins, meanings, and consequences of the emergence and institutionalization of the category transgender in the United States since the early 1990s” (6). Valentine questions the way low-income trans people of color, who use different categories of identification not recognized in institutional discourse, might be excluded from the “imagined future of justice and freedom” associated with activism and social justice work (6). More recently, in Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity (2017), C. Riley Snorton takes a trans-temporal approach, engaging the fields of black
feminist thought, queer-of-color critique, and disability theory in order to examine the
intersections between the way categories of race and gender are constructed and
circulated across the nineteenth century to the present.

**Bioscience, Technology, and Ecology**

The work of queer theory has not been confined to the humanities; many theorists have
pursued interdisciplinary lines of inquiry in the sciences. In *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics
and the Construction of Sexuality* (2000), biologist Anne Fausto-Sterling explains that
determining the sex of a body is far more complex than a binary gender system will allow.
As she writes, “there is no either/or…. Rather, there are shades of difference” (2000, 3). In
this work and others, Fausto-Sterling argues that “labeling someone a man or a woman is a
social decision” (3), and she points to the way our social beliefs about gender have an
impact on the production of scientific knowledge about sex. Fausto-Sterling calls for
feminists and gender theorists to engage actively with the fields of biology and medicine
rather than to focus solely on social and cultural understandings of gender, which leaves
critics politically vulnerable to objections based on scientific analysis of biological
difference. In the field of neuroscience, Deboleena Roy takes up similar questions in her
research around sex difference in the brain. Critiquing feminist resistance to
neuroscientific studies around gender difference locatable in the brain, Roy suggests that
examining gender difference, “especially the ontological status of biological matter,” has the
potential to open new pathways for feminist and queer theorists (2016, 533).

Queer theory has also been enriched by studies of technology and histories of computing.
Donna Haraway laid the groundwork for much of the later work on gender, sexuality, race,
and technology. In her iconic 1985 essay “A Manifesto for Cyborgs,” later revised and
published in 1991 with the title “A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-
Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century,” she uses the figure of the cyborg, defined as “a
cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism,” to critique the gender
essentialism and white privilege of the feminist movement she encountered in the 1980s.
The cyborg, through her ability to break down binarisms like human/animal and
human/machine, “suggests a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained
our bodies and our tools to ourselves” (Haraway 2000, 316). In “Automating Gender”
(1991), Halberstam builds on Haraway’s ideas when he suggests that the “blurred
boundaries between mind and machine, body and machine, and human and nonhuman”
made possible by cybernetics further suggest that “gender and its representations are
technological productions” (439–440). In studying the work and life of Alan Turing (1912–
1954), a queer British mathematician whose calculations contributed to advancements in
computing technology, Halberstam and others have argued that “gender, ... like computing
intelligence, is learned, imitative behavior that can be processed so well that it comes to
look natural” (1991, 443). More recently, queer and trans artists, coders, and writers like
Zach Blas and Micha Cárdenas have engaged with the way computing intelligence can create space for “queer technological agency, interventions, and social formations” (2013, 561).

The breakdown of boundaries between animal/human attributed to Haraway’s work on cybernetics has also energized scholarship by queer theorists working in animal studies and at the intersections of queer theory and ecocriticism. In *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (2012), Mel Chen unites queer-of-color critique with the fields of disability studies, affect studies, ecocriticism, and animal studies in order to question the binary division of “animate” and “inanimate” (2). In conversation with the field of ecofeminism and ecology more broadly, in *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire* (2010), Catriona Mortimer-Sandilands and Bruce Erickson argue that the goal of queer ecology is to examine the way that nature and sex intersect in order to “develop a sexual politics that more clearly includes considerations of the natural world” alongside an “environmental politics that demonstrates an understanding of the ways in which sexual relations organize and influence both the material world of nature and our perceptions, experiences, and constitutions of that world” (5). Queer theorists working in the biological, technological, and environmental sciences continue to challenge the way we construct knowledge around gender and the material body, as well as our relationships with the world around us.

**Global Sexualities and Western Queer Hegemony**

Western queer theorists have been criticized for imposing a universal queer identity onto non-Western identities, embodiments, and expressions in a way that fails to account for the specificities of different historical, cultural, and geographical contexts. Michael Warner warns of this impulse, explaining that “Anglo-American queer theorists [need] to be more alert to the globalizing—and localizing—tendencies of our theoretical languages” (quoted in Altman 1997, 419). Australian theorist Dennis Altman examined the way the spread of Westernized gay identities to countries like Japan, Korea, and Taiwan reflects the impact of globalization, capitalism, and modernity; he notes that the co-option of “gay” in Latin America and Asia illustrates the investment of some subjects in “being Western” and affluent just as much as it indicates the claiming of a sexual identity or experience (1997, 420). In *Desiring Arabs* (2007), Joseph A. Massad critiques the way international gay rights organizations, steered by Western white gay activists, act out a missionary’s task of imposing a dominant culture’s ideology—in this case, binarisms between heterosexuality and homosexuality, and a set of Western gay identities—that erases the complex non-Western subjectivities present in other countries. As he writes, “the categories gay and lesbian are not universal ... and can only be universalized by the epistemic, ethical, and political violence unleashed on the rest of the world by the very international human rights advocates whose aim is to defend the very people their intervention is creating” (2007, 41).
Critical work on Asia, on Africa, and in diaspora studies continues to challenge the notion of the “global gay” movement. In *Global Divas* (2003), Martin Manalansan examines the way the concept of “globalization” has been used “to index or mark sophistication and cosmopolitanism in queer culture” (5) by those who advocate for global gay solidarity, while critics underscore its relationship to the violent expansion of Western capitalism and the reach of “queer cultural imperialism” (5). Through his ethnographic study of Filipino gay men in New York City, Manalansan works to “complicate the popular and hegemonic tableau of a world turning gay or of queerness going global” (4). Fran Martin further contributed to the historicization and analysis of Asian sexualities by arguing that contemporary representations of romantic and erotic relationships between women in Chinese mass culture are frequently structured by a memorial mode, one that hinges on a narrative logic of “memory” and “remembering” (2010, 6). In *A Coincidence of Desires: Anthropology, Queer Studies, Indonesia* (2007), Tom Boellstorff argues for the importance of new collaborations between queer theory and anthropologists, especially as a means of studying gender and sexuality in Indonesia. Neville Hoad (2007) similarly unites work from multiple disciplines, including anthropology and literary studies, in order to examine public discourse around homosexuality in Africa in relation to the legacies of colonialism, decolonization, transnationalism, and globalization. His work on desire and affect across multiple time-spaces and states of coloniality provides vital historicization of sexualities that exist beyond Euro-American conceptualization.

In 2000 a group of scholars in Australia formed the AsiaPacifiQueer (APQ) group in order to strengthen dialogue between academics researching gender, sexuality, and culture in Asia. APQ co-organized a conference titled “Sexualities, Genders, and Rights in Asia: The First International Conference of Asian Queer Studies,” which took place in Bangkok in 2005. In the introduction to *AsiaPacifiQueer: Rethinking Genders and Sexualities* (2008), a collection of essays that emerged from the conference, editors Fran Martin, Peter Jackson, Mark McLelland, and Audrey Yue identify the conference as a key moment in the development of queer approaches in Asian studies, particularly because the work accomplished in Bangkok was not “preoccupied with speaking ‘back’ to the presumptive center of queer studies in the English-speaking West but rather sought to articulate direct intraregional conversations among diverse locations in Asia” (1). At the University of London’s School of Oriental and African Studies, ‘Queer’ Asia—a collective of researchers, academics, and activists founded in 2016—furthers this work by organizing annual conferences and programming that underscores queer voices in Asia and contributes to the construction of “a global platform from which to challenge dominant ideas, forms, and representations of gender and sexuality.”

**Queer Critiques of Global Capitalism, Crippping Queer Theory, and Queer Time**
In a roundtable discussion titled “Queer Studies, Materialism, and Crisis” published in GLQ in 2012, Jordana Rosenberg and Amy Villarejo noted that queer theory has also formed vital intersections with Marxist theory, economics, globalization and capitalism, class struggle, the relationship between racism and capitalism, and histories of materialism. Lisa Rofel, a roundtable participant, argued that queer hermeneutics, applied to analysis of global capitalism, “allows us to see that the value-form lies not just in material objects but in bodies deemed differently worthy of a valuable life” (Rosenberg et al. 2012, 129). This intersection of economics and queer theory significantly opens paths for a “postcolonial, postnationalist queer studies [that] refuses ... inadvertent collusion with American empire” (129). Another participant, Dean Spade, pointed to the necessity of such analysis to combat the process by which mainstream and capitalist “LGBT” nonprofits reinforce white supremacy, actively undoing the efforts of queer grassroots movements. While theorists continue to develop new intersections between studies of materialism and queer theory, Heather Love argues that a focus on the “lived realities of class and race” has long been central to American queer life, writing by queers of color, and working-class and such rural queers as Audre Lorde, Dorothy Allison, Leslie Feinberg, and Cathy Cohen (130–131).

The focus on the way conditions of global capitalism create violent conditions that deem only certain lives worthy of survival has also guided work at the intersections of queer theory and disability studies, or, as some prefer to call it, “crip studies.” As Rosemarie Garland-Thomson explains, disability studies “conceptualizes disability as a representational system rather than a medical problem,” examining the disabled body as a “cultural artifact produced by material, discursive and aesthetic practices” (1997, 181). Eli Clare aligns the use of the term *crip* by people with disabilities to the reclaiming of the term *queer* in service of radical work, explaining that “Queer and Cripple are cousins: words to shock, words to infuse with pride and self-love, words to resist internalized hatred, words to help forge a politics” (1999, 70). Robert McRuer argued that able-bodiedness and heterosexuality are ideologically intertwined, with able-bodiedness masquerading, like heterosexuality, as a “nonidentity” or the “natural order of things” (2006, 79). Furthermore, Tobin Siebers pointed out that “thinking about disabled sexuality broadens the definition of sexual behavior” (2008, 136), since “the sexual activities of disabled people do not necessarily follow normative assumptions about what a sex life is” (138). Many queer theorists in disability studies have called for a “cripping” of queer studies, in order to avoid replicating able-bodied hegemony within queer theories and movements.

Queer and crip understandings of sexual and erotic possibilities often involve shifting understandings of temporality, which is another key line of theoretical inquiry in the past decade of queer theory. In *Time Binds* (2010), Elizabeth Freeman outlines the concept of “chrononormativity,” which she describes as the “use of time to organize individual human bodies toward maximum productivity” (3). Similarly, Halberstam theorizes the way a queer temporality poses challenges to heteronormative and cisnormative scripts, describing “queer time” as “the dark nightclub,” and “the perverse turn away from the narrative
coherence of adolescence—early adulthood—marriage—reproduction—child rearing—retirement—death, the embrace of late childhood in place of early adulthood or immaturity in place of responsibility” (Dinshaw et al. 2007, 182). Tan Hoang Nguyen (Dinshaw et al. 2007) noted that some of these same temporal normativities are replicated in the imposed organization of “homonormative” timelines that value finding a partner by a certain age, coming out while young, and leaving bar scenes behind as a scene of youth. Conversations about queer time, space, and place continue to animate the academy, changing the way we conceive of the project of historicizing and theorizing queer bodies and lives.

Though queer theory has undoubtedly become a fixture in the academy, its prominence has not come without challenge. Halperin suggested that there is an elitism to queer theory that has led to the dismissal of important, earlier work; since queer theory presents itself as an “advanced, postmodern identity” that has “superseded both feminism and lesbian/gay studies,” it unfairly suggests that all previous work in lesbian and gay studies is “undertheorized” or too mired in “identity politics” to be useful (2003, 340). He pointed to the relatively rapid adoption of queer theory coursework and syllabi into the university system as evidence that it is perhaps not as radical or threatening to hegemony as originally envisioned. Additionally, Annamarie Jagose noted that feminist critics remain concerned that a “generic masculinity” remains at the heart of the “ostensibly gender neutral” queer mode of analysis, and that female and lesbian experience will be erased by this broad umbrella term that seems to encompass anything nonnormative (1996, 3). Indeed, there has been much anxiety about the lack of specificity surrounding the term queer, a fact that raises questions for some about its political efficacy. Cathy J. Cohen argued that queer theory has failed to generate a radical or genuinely transformative political movement, suggesting that rather than “destabilizing assumed categories and binaries of sexual identity” (1997, 438), it has simply created a dichotomy between “heterosexual” and “queer,” which becomes just another homogenized identity. Students of queer theory continue to grapple with these questions today, which seems only appropriate for a discipline that asks its practitioners to continually interrogate discursive structures, power relations, and forms of knowledge production within a wide range of historical and geographical contexts.

SEE ALSO ACT UP; Daughters of Bilitis; Ecology and Environmental Issues and Activism; Feminism, African; Foucault, Influence of; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Mattachine Society; Queer Theory, African; Sexology in Asia

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Queer Theory, African

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The emerging field of study that encompasses an expanded understanding of LGBTI persons in Africa.

African queer theory deals with the pulling apart of the complex interaction between activism, citizenship, and identities. This version of queer theory extends its North American roots significantly. The Italian scholar Teresa de Lauretis is credited with coining the term queer theory in February 1990. At the time, queer theory was seen both as a subversive act to the notion of theory making and as a call to extend the field of gay and lesbian studies (Halperin 2003). This was met with some rejection. Stephen O. Murray, who had championed studies on homosexuality or same-sex sexuality in Africa and elsewhere, questioned the usefulness of this theory and the role it plays in changing society. Murray (2002) argued that rather than conceiving of “queer” next to “theory,” it should be seen more as a perspective. The practices and debates in North America on queer theory and queer studies have advanced with both the institutionalization of this field of scholarship and the “commodification of ‘queer’” (Watson 2005, 76). The same cannot be said for African contexts.

Emergence of Queer Theory in Africa

While queer theory has very strong Western origins, its emergence in African contexts extends its reach, applicability, and resonance. In many ways, the breadth of the continent, the unique political situations and histories in each country, and cultural diversities make a uniform queer theory impossible in Africa. This does not mean there is no space for queer theory. On the contrary, there is fertile ground for African queer theory to be developed and extended beyond Africa’s borders. Between 2013 and 2018 at least five collections containing the phrase “queer Africa”—or a variation thereof—were produced in the continent (Ekine and Abbas 2013; Martin and Xaba 2013; Matebeni 2014; Xaba and Martin 2017; Matebeni, Monro, and Reddy 2018). Yet, as of 2018, no academic institution in the continent had a dedicated queer studies program. A few gender studies departments in South Africa and a number of progressive academics in East African and southern African universities included elements of queer studies (or mostly same-sex sexualities) in their syllabi.
The term *queer* was introduced in Africa through activist groups in South Africa. At the time, South Africa was the only country with a visible gay and lesbian movement, having started in the city of Johannesburg and later in Cape Town. During the fight against apartheid, South African activists worked to eradicate all forms of injustices, including homophobia. In 1993 Cape Town lesbian and gay activists, under the banner ABIGALE (Association of Bisexuals, Gays and Lesbians) held that town’s first pride march, which was a highly political event on the eve of South Africa’s independence. ABIGALE was founded by Theresa Raizenberg and her then partner Taghmeda (Midi) Achmat, along with the latter’s brother Zackie Achmat, who later founded the Treatment Action Campaign. The 1993 pride march theme, “Forward to a Queer South Africa,” was spread across the large posters followed by the message “As long as bigotry, prejudice, and hatred remain, it will be necessary to assert Queer pride and demand equality” (*ABIGALE 1993*).

It is no surprise that the term *queer* entered the South African lexicon through activist groups. Gay and lesbian activists in South Africa were among the early champions of the fight against HIV/AIDS and maintained relations with groups such as ACT UP in the United States. Not only was ACT UP directly challenging homophobic laws of the US government, the group and its allies ensured that they “neutralised heterosexual spaces ... as legitimate queer spaces” (*Watson 2005, 73*). By using the term *queer* in asserting their political position in 1993 in South Africa, these activists were proclaiming a vision for an inclusive South Africa, one that would not segregate its citizens on the basis of sexuality, race, or gender. A queer South Africa, as the activists positioned, would be one that would challenge its own normative positions on who belongs to the country and on what basis. This position cut to the heart of questions of citizenship, many of which were robustly debated, as same-sex sexuality, gender diversity, and family diversity became protected under the new laws. The other position marked by the activists was the ongoing struggle toward a “queer nation.” This would be unending until all hatred, prejudice, and bigotry are eradicated. This activist position already suggested that queerness and a queer South Africa are persistent projects.

Since the early 1990s the term *queer* has undergone many changes in Africa. While it has gained traction in some countries, it has also been disavowed for its Westernizing influence. Some prominent scholars on African sexualities do not even mention the term *queer* in their scholarship (see *Tamale 2011*), while others make use of it to strategically critique systems of knowledge production (*Macharia 2015; Nyanzi 2014a; Matebeni 2014*). Not only has *queer* made its way to sit uncomfortably in the totalizing LGBTI initialism, it has simultaneously taken over these categories and presented itself as all-encompassing. Iterations of LGBTI/Q in each part of the continent vary considerably. South Africa, because of its progressive laws and an inclusive constitution since the early 1990s, may seem on the surface to have advanced LGBTI/Q rights on paper, but there remains a stark difference between those rights and lived realities (*Mkhize et al. 2010*). The emergence of the LGBTI/Q discourse in that country also took its time, with lesbian and gay agendas
taking prominence much earlier than those of either transgender or intersex individuals. As in other parts of the world, it is argued that bisexuality has been sidelined within queer studies or, more specifically, within lesbian and gay studies (Stobie 2007; Goldman 1996). The same could be said for transgender studies and, for the most part, intersex studies in Africa and beyond (Matebeni, Monro, and Reddy 2018; Stryker 2004).

In relation to what can be framed as African queer theory, Keguro Macharia offers an incisive point: “Intellectual production and activism meet at the archive” (2015, 141). This is no ordinary archive, as it is known that archives of colonial-era documents in Africa are less preoccupied with LGBTI persons. However, contemporary archives and archival practices offer new possibilities in relation to theory and practice (Reid 2002). Thus, the relationship between scholarship, or theory, and practice is key. Many African feminists working on sexuality and gender have argued and worked toward undoing the false distancing or binary between praxis/activism and theory/intellectual work (Mama 2007; Hames 2012; Bennett and Reddy 2007). In particular, Amina Mama positions “activist scholarship” (2007, 9) and “activist methodologies” (14) as crucial in considering the realities and political contexts that shape Africa. This is more pertinent in studies of sexuality and gender (identity) in Africa where same-sex relations and gender nonconformity is policed and where LGBTQI lives are criminalized and punished. Through the many studies and archival materials that have focused on sexuality and gender diversity in Africa, the following section unpacks African queer theory as it deals with the pulling apart of the complex interaction between activism, citizenship, and identities.

**Pulling Apart: Activism, Citizenship, and Identity**

*Queer* as an identity category is gaining significant traction in activist circles and among nongovernmental organizations in many African countries, particularly because of the limits of “LGBTI” and globalization. The term itself suggests a lack of boundaries and an extension beyond sex and gender conventions, while as an umbrella term including LGBTI, *queer* has been seen to hide racial, class, and ethnic differences (Johnson 2001). This version is not yet fully explored in African scholarship because *queer* is often used as shorthand for nonnormative identifications, thus encompassing all sexual and gendered identity categories outside the norm, regardless of their racial or class position. While there has been an increase in representation of queer figures in the arts and popular culture, the interrogation of *queer* itself, or “queering queer,” has been minimal.

In a provocative 2014 essay titled “Queering Queer Africa,” Stella Nyanzi insisted on a new reading and thinking of *queer* that goes beyond the straight/queer binary. She poignantly asked, “When firm boundaries are drawn between homosexuals and heterosexuals, isn’t this a simplistic restyling of essentialist schisms? Isn’t this another polarisation of binary oppositions—this time based on sexual orientation?” (2014a, 62). Nyanzi’s interrogations force her readers to really question the essence of *queer* in African contexts. It appears that
in most writing up to now *queer* has been deployed in the North American sense as what is at “odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant” (Halperin 2008, 200). Applying this definition of *queer* glides over processes of denormalizing that historically happened because of colonial conquests in Africa.

The urgency of queering the LGBTI discourse in Africa is pressing. This is evident in the popular pride events in the continent that resemble events in major cities around the world. Like the term *queer*, pride marches are gaining momentum in African cities as tools for coming out, claiming public space, and enhancing visibility. This is very different from the vision set out by early pride march activists as mentioned earlier. However, pride march tactics, which are largely borrowed from the West, are often not easily translatable. South Africa and Uganda have had the most popular pride events in the continent. In Uganda, these have been met with intense state intervention and a large military presence, with Ugandans facing possible arrests and detention for occupying streets as LGBTI persons (Nyanzi 2014b). This flies in the face of the global call to come out and be proud. Pride in South Africa, with its history that began in the early 1990s in the country’s major cities, has had to contend with racial injustice within the LGBTI community (Schutte 2012). Thus, pride in this country demonstrates the exclusionary nature and lack of intersectional politics of LGBTI discourse on visibility and claims to space.

South Africa’s prominence in the continent in terms of LGBTI issues is globally lauded. However, the gains that South Africa has made, compared to its neighbors, cannot easily be translated to the region and beyond. Bordering countries, including Swaziland, Zimbabwe, and Namibia, have some of the most stringent anti-LGBTI laws. Political leaders of these countries have openly spoken against same-sex sexuality, some likening gay and lesbian people to animals and calling them evil (Hoad 2007). Botswana and Mozambique, by contrast, are quickly making comparable advancements, particularly in advocating for LGBTI rights (Tabengwa and Nicol 2013). A number of transgender activists are forging new paths in terms of challenging the state to recognize their existence. In 2017 a trans man and a trans woman won legal battles through the Botswana High Court to be recognized as male and female, respectively (Graham 2017). The attorney general of Kenya ordered that transgender Kenyans be allowed a name change on their identity documents (Migiro 2014). Yet, in these same countries and many others where even same-sex sexual acts are still illegal, advocating for same-sex marriage or sex reassignment surgeries, which are accessible in South Africa, would be deemed politically naive and insensitive. Clearly, while there are many challenges faced in relation to same-sex issues, cleavages exist in relation to gender recognition. While transgender studies is sometimes seen to be in queer theory’s “shadow” (Stryker 2004, 214), it appears that in some African countries the former is quickly gaining momentum, although transgender is yet to be fully grappled with in Africa (Nyanzi 2014a).

Perhaps one area in which LGBTI people recognize their commonality is in relation to
movement across geographic borders. Many African LGBTI people are pushed out of their homes, communities, and countries because of their nonconformity in terms of gender identity and sexual orientation. In their countries of origin, LGBTI people are exposed and subjected to discrimination, persecution, exclusion, and violence, including murder and rape, at the hands of state and nonstate agents. They thus have no option but to flee. Only a few have the resources and networks to make it to the West (Massaquoi 2013); for many, the best option for refuge is South Africa, where there is the promise of freedom of movement. Yet, upon arrival in South Africa, many LGBTI people find a less appealing welcome, finding that they need to constantly navigate safety, access, and security issues. The realities faced by transgender asylum seekers and refugees are incomparable to the challenges faced by their cisgender (a term used for people whose gender identity matches the sex assigned at birth) lesbian, gay, and bisexual counterparts. As B Camminga notes, for many transgender asylum seekers, having to choose a gendered queue at the Department of Home Affairs in South Africa is predicated on “sex/gender as a category for classification for notions of citizenship, human rights, and viability of transgender lives” (2017, 62). This gender binary excludes the possibility of being transgender.

Emerging research in African scholarship attests to how local identities may conflict with Western categories of LGBTI, which are increasingly circulating and being adopted or reshaped by African activists through artistic interventions, the occupation of normative spaces, or the creation of new vocabularies that define existence (Matebeni 2014). In some cases, local terms are themselves contested; they can be both stigmatizing and/or empowering. In many African countries, the term MSM (men who have sex with men) has become popular in donor-driven research sites among many nongovernmental organizations working with sexual minorities. Thus, in such a context, even the category MSM is constantly shifting, being dependent on global health funding, agendas, and priorities. In other spaces, variations on English terms such as lesbian or gay take new localized meanings (Reid 2013). Zethu Matebeni and Thabo Msibi (2015) argue for vernacular terms and meanings that speak for queer African realities, including those used in Uganda and Kenya (kuchu), in southern Africa (ama[t]shikini, nongayindoda), or in Ghana (supi). These go beyond the sometimes-misunderstood LGBTI framing and offer new ways of engaging with language, power, and social relations.

Beyond southern Africa, a substantial body of African scholarly literature is emerging. This encompasses a number of fields, including queer representations in arts and cultural production, autobiography, citizenship studies, meanings of nation, access to health care, the fight against HIV/AIDS stigma regarding LGBTI communities, and the advancement of rights (Azuah 2016; Animashaun et al. 2016; Baderoon 2011; Ekine and Abbas 2013; Matebeni 2014; Nyeck and Epprecht 2013; Tamale 2011; Martin and Xaba 2013; Xaba and Martin 2017). These works also prioritize national and transnational networks, creating possibilities for a queer African reality. Given the levels of discrimination, heteronormativity, homophobia, and transphobic discourse (M’Baye 2013; Mukasa 2006),
new forms of visibility, which extend beyond national borders, are crucial. Visibility and invisibility can be seen as tactical strategies deployed by queer African people. The boom in queer African representations in social media and popular culture through blogs and websites (such as HOLAAfrica and Iranti) has ensured that trans and queer people represent themselves as fully and openly as they wish to be seen by the world. This kind of visibility is not possible in many parts of the continent, yet images of queer Africans abound. These media platforms perform an activist and interventionist role in advocating for queer people’s rights by emphasizing visibility.

Visibility and invisibility are both mediated by movements, shifts, political practices, and demands for (human) rights. The queer figure, given its complicated position in contemporary Africa as both despised and appreciated, depending on cultures and societies, is a figure constantly moving. “This movement includes moving between spaces, a being in-between, and hence points to one possible understanding of diaspora itself” (Gunkel, Matebeni, and Raissiguier 2015, 3). For LGBTI people, movement can also be between and within selves—through gender identification or sexual orientation. This is probably the most misunderstood transition in society and even within LGBTI spaces. A case brought by the Kenyan Audrey Mbugua (KTN Prime 2013) has challenged the courts in Kenya and public discourse about the relationship between transgender and sexual orientation. Mbugua (2013), who is part of the human rights organization Transgender Education and Advocacy, has been highly critical of transphobia among homosexuals. Many gay and lesbian people assume that transsexual, transgender, and intersex people are part of the fallacy created by the LGBTI categorization. However, the struggles that trans and intersex people face are not limited to sexual orientation to the extent that lesbian and gay people rarely address trans and intersex struggles in their own activism. This gap and division within activism has caused a lot of animosity and general lack of understanding of identities, implications for citizenship, and related activist struggles.

What Remains? The Space for African Queer Theory

If African queer theory deals with the pulling apart of the complex interaction between activism, citizenship, and identities, the question that follows would be, then what is left when the pulling subsides? Does it ever end? And what futures exist for trans and queer persons and African queer theory? The following story exposes the gap filled by African queer theory.

In 2008 Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) in Johannesburg put together a photographic exhibit titled Joburg Tracks: Sexuality in the City that captured the lives of eight LGBT persons as they navigate the city of Johannesburg (Archival Platform 2012). The exhibit illuminated narratives represented through a queer map of Johannesburg and its connections with other parts of the continent: “queer movements in urban space, crossing temporalities and national boundaries, and thick with memory” (Sizemore-Barber 2017).
One person, in particular, named Edgar Dlamini (a pseudonym), a seventy-three-year-old black African man, was among the subjects of the exhibit. Edgar was born in 1934 in Cato Manor, Durban, and grew up in rural KwaZulu and later moved with his family to the township of Soweto in Johannesburg. At age twenty-four, he was asked by his extended family to choose a wife. This was a year after he and his brother lost their parents. He conceded, even though a sexual and romantic life with a woman was not his priority. A year later, his wife gave birth to twins, who were followed by three other children. In the twins’ third year, in 1962, Edgar met Petrus at a neighbor’s house. They started a loving relationship that saw them renting a room since the 1970s in single-sex hostels for their “private time” together and to bring other lovers. Their relationship continued until the men reached their late seventies, when one of them lost his ability to walk and thus limited their opportunities to meet.

The only tangible memory of Edgar that exists today is a photograph taken of his left hand adorned with a wedding ring. This ring signaled something significant—a heteronormative identity that allowed him complete acceptance and to participate in society. It also permanently connected him to his wife and children, to whom he was completely devoted. At the same time, his thirty-year relationship with his male lover and friend, Petrus, had to find room in this arrangement. As complex as this was, it suggested already a different way of thinking and conceptualizing the ambiguity of what may be referred to as an African queer life. Materially, Edgar’s life was grounded in African contexts and imperatives of his black identity—the love for his family and community, while navigating class struggles, sexuality, and gendered relations. It appeared that his life was that of both compromise and promise. This was a complexity grossly misrepresented under gay and bisexual categories, as well as in the coming-out discourse that is prioritized by Western utopian ideals of queerness. In an interview with GALA in 2008, Edgar captured his dynamic in these words:

This life is wonderful, but at times it hurts. You live with your wife, but you are involved with someone else who you are devoted to. You would not even be able to sleep next to your wife because you are thinking of your lover. Your concentration becomes divided, so you need to keep room for disappointment....

I would have liked to live my life openly, but I’m unable to do that, and I accept my life as it is. I live a double life. My wife does not know anything about this, but even if she did, there’s very little she could do. Still, if my identity was ever known, I would just die. That would really kill me. (emphasis added)

This story illustrates the pulling apart that African queer theory interrogates in the interaction between identities, citizenship, and activism. Edgar’s complex and rich life as a
young African man faced with the decision to continue his lineage coexisted with his desire to fulfill his life as a man committed to both another man and his own wife and children. These two identities were sustained beyond the realization of full rights for gay people in a free and democratic South Africa. He chose to exist in both their complex arrangements. While rights to be “free” through same-sex progressive legislation were accessible, his choice not to associate with those given rights allowed him a life without the compromise of his full citizenship as father, husband, and community member. It is the possibility of being known as living a double life—a life of diversities—that posed a risk to his life. There are many Edgars in many parts of the world. Many are forced, through various ways, to choose the one end of the binary over the other—to choose one life over another. And yet, African realities already pose multiple forms of existence.

This is a call for an African queer theory that makes multiplicities possible, to extend the choice of the binary beyond its limits. Nyanzi agonizes on the “limited fixing” (2014a, 67) of queer and transgender subjects, asking for more spaces for articulating multiplicities in gender experiences and subjectivities within local contexts. Until that happens the future for queer activism and queer beings—those who exist and are always pushing against the binary walls in contemporary Africa—is bleak. Without these extensions what remains of queer theory in Africa are hidden figures holding back on the complexity and ambiguous narratives of African queer people. The space of ambiguity, often presenting unknowability, is fertile ground from which African queer theorizing emanates.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Archives in Africa; Feminism, African; Language in Africa; Queer in Latin America; Queer Theorists; Refugees and Asylum in Africa

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Rape, Corrective, in Africa

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The use of rape to “cure” women with nonnormative sexual identities in Africa.

Corrective rape is an act of violence committed against women with nonconforming sexual identities in order to “cure” them of their sexual orientation. Other women and girls who may not be lesbians but are associated with lesbian women may also be at risk for sexual violence based on a desire to punish the sexual transgression. Corrective rape is based on dominant heterosexual ideologies about gender roles. Heterosexuality assumes that men and women are biological opposites where sexual desire is based on women desiring men and vice versa. Corrective rape is used to “cure” what is assumed to be abnormal behavior and reinforce normative understandings of gender and sexuality.

Corrective rape tends to be associated with black African women who defy gender and sexual norms in violation of culture. In many traditional settings, families play a strong role in disciplining sexuality, and parents often arrange for daughters to be raped in confinement either to cure them of homosexuality or impregnate them (Morgan and Wieringa 2005). While it is true that black African women face particular challenges, the problem with the conflation of corrective rape with African women in low-economic township settings has led to the pathologization of African lesbian women as passive, powerless victims of men.
Lesbian Survivor of Assault, South Africa, 2012. Lindeka Stulo was assaulted on two different occasions by the same man, who was enraged by her lesbianism. Many African lesbians are victims of what has been called "corrective rape," which aims to turn lesbians heterosexual through violence.

However, this view of African lesbians as victims of corrective rape and discrimination is limited. Noting the specific problems related to the experience of gender, race, class, culture, and sexuality, African lesbian activists have challenged homophobic assaults on lesbian women. To do this, alliances have been formed with LGBT civil society organizations and human rights organizations. In South Africa, progressive state policy has not deterred the rape of lesbians and nonconforming transgendered and bisexual women. As a result there are increasing challenges to corrective rape from LGBT and related human rights groups.

The term corrective rape is mired in controversy. Some gender activists suggest that the term is unhelpful, as corrective rape is situated within a wider context of gender violence, heterosexual domination, and women’s marginalized role (Di Silvio 2011). A focus on corrective rape only splits the broader social movement against gender-based violence and hate crimes. In light of these controversies, the concept of corrective rape is seen as a "necessary evil" (Di Silvio 2011). Working with civil society and human rights organizations holds the promise of building alliances that address the problems of sexual violence against women more generally and corrective rape in particular. These alliances based on a human rights framework are also contingent on ending the homophobic rhetoric of political leaders and changing policies throughout the African continent to recognize equality on the basis of sexual orientation, which requires political will to eradicate discrimination against lesbian women.

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Feminism, African; Gendered Violence and Feminicide in Latin America

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Refugees and Asylum in Africa

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The unique challenges faced by African LGBTQI individuals forced to migrate in response to persecution in their countries of origin.

In their countries of origin, African LGBTQI refugees and asylum seekers are subjected to persecution and human rights abuses, including violence, harassment, threats, insults, hate speech, exploitation, rape, torture, murder, bullying, forced marriage, family ostracism, and economic and social discrimination. In fact, such persecutions are perpetrated by both state and nonstate actors. A 2017 research study conducted by the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association indicates that thirty-three out of fifty-five African countries continued to maintain antisodomy laws that are now being reinforced by further criminalization of same-sex sexual conduct between consenting adults (Carroll and Mendos 2017).

This hostile environment impels many LGBTQI individuals to actively change their circumstances by fleeing their country of origin and seeking asylum or international protection in countries that provide them with greater protections and freedom. International protection of LGBTQI individuals starts with securing their admission to a country of asylum and safeguarding their human rights as enshrined in international law. The end result for the refugee may be local integration, resettlement, or voluntary repatriation.

International Legal Instruments and Their Application

Because their country of origin has failed to protect them, LGBTQI refugees enter the displacement cycle and become persons of concern under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Essentially, there are four legal instruments in human rights law that regulate issues of LGBTQI refugees and asylum seekers in Africa: the United Nations (UN) Refugee Convention of 1951 and its 1967 protocol; the African Union’s Convention Governing Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (1969); the Arab Convention on Regulating Status of Refugees in the Arab Countries (1994); and the Yogyakarta Principles (2007). The common characteristic of these instruments is that they have provisions that recognize persecution on account of sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds to seek asylum and that qualify the
LGBTQI applicant for refugee status under the terms of “membership in a particular social group.” In reality, however, many of the signatories to these conventions often fail to offer asylum and assistance to LGBTQI refugees.

One of the obligations of every state party to the UN Refugee Convention of 1951 is to enact national legislation that offers international protection to refugees and asylum seekers that it hosts within its own territory. In doing so, it gives effect to its commitment to the international legal refugee instruments that it has signed and ratified. Such legislation determines eligibility criteria, rules, procedures, and organs in charge of adjudicating refugees’ claims. Most countries in Africa delegate this task to the UNHCR rather than the branch of their own government responsible for regulating domestic affairs, as is the case with South Africa and Western countries.

While lodging their application, LGBTQI asylum seekers must demonstrate both their membership in one of the five categories (race, religion, nationality, particular political opinion, and particular social group) and a nexus between that membership and the persecution they are facing or risk facing. In some countries, the outcome of such an application is determined exclusively by the immigration bureaucracies, immigration courts, and the national court, whereas in other countries it is determined in conjunction with the UNHCR. These decisions may need to be appealed or judicially reviewed before a final decision is reached to reject or approve the application.

It is important to note that, unlike gay and lesbian asylum seekers, transgender claims are based on gender identity rather than sexual orientation. Bisexuals can often legitimately claim imputed membership in a particular social group of lesbians or gay men. This gender identity, rather than the claimant’s male or female anatomical characteristics, is viewed by the adjudicator as immutable and fundamental to the person’s identity. Transgender individuals may also affiliate closely with one another, are driven by their common interest in assuming the gender identity of the opposite sex, are recognized as a segment of the population, and are often singled out for different treatment. Transgender claims may, in addition, be based on imputed membership in a particular social group of lesbians or gay men.

**The Flow of LGBTQI Refugees and Asylum Seekers**

While fleeing homophobic persecution, LGBTQI persons in Africa take different paths, depending on where they will feel safe. However, given the ongoing homophobic discrimination in many countries in Africa, LGBTQI individuals have few choices when deciding on a country of destination within the continent to seek asylum so that they can integrate in a new community and start to live a normal life.

**Seeking Asylum within Africa** LGBTQI refugees in Africa make up a very small percentage
of the overall refugee population fleeing conflict and violence. Their pathway to safety must use the same support systems, such as refugee camps, as other refugees, yet they must endure the hostility and homophobia of other refugees to gain access to help. As the African nation with the most progressive legislation in terms of upholding LGBTQI rights and the rights of refugees, South Africa is the most preferred destination of LGBTQI refugees and asylum seekers on the continent, primarily targeting the big cities of Cape Town, Johannesburg, and Durban for settlement. Most LGBTQI refugees and asylum seekers come from Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Malawi, Somalia, Ghana, Angola, Burundi, Mozambique, the Republic of the Congo, Cameroon, Tanzania, Kenya, Lesotho, and Senegal. Kenya has been the second-most-popular destination for LGBTQI refugees and asylum seekers after South Africa. With two refugee camps, Dadaab and Kakuma, Kenya is home to hundreds of LGBTQI individuals who fled from Uganda to Kenya following the passage in 2014 of Uganda’s draconian Anti-Homosexuality Act (Senzee 2014). Most LGBTQI refugees in Kenya come from different countries in Africa, including Somalia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and concentrate in Kenya’s urban areas or the refugee camp of Kakuma.

**Seeking Asylum outside Africa** Besides the flow of migration of LGBTQI refugees within the African continent, there is another flow of migration of LGBTQI refugees outside the African continent. This type of migration has three primary forms: the resettlement process, direct flight, or irregular migration, such as illegal smuggling operations. While no official statistics exist on the number of LGBTQI refugees who leave the continent versus the number who flee their country of origin but remain on the continent, activists in Africa believe that the number of refugees remaining in Africa is higher than those leaving Africa. This assumption is based on the difficulties in obtaining visas to Europe and North America for those hoping to resettle via legal channels and the dangers inherent in human smuggling for those who resort to illegal means.

In the resettlement process, LGBTQI refugees and asylum seekers are identified by the UNHCR in their countries of asylum and referred for resettlement. However, holding refugee status is the precondition to resettlement. Research by the UNHCR reveals that there are ten main countries that receive refugees in the resettlement process as a third country sharing the burden of hosting refugees: Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, the Scandinavian nations (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden), the United Kingdom, and the United States (UNHCR 2011). While the United States and Canada are primary destinations for resettlement, Germany is one of the countries that receives a significant number of LGBTQI refugees. In response to incidents of abuses against LGBTQI persons in refugee camps, Berlin opened its first LGBTQI refugee reception center in February 2016. The center has room for up to 120 LGBTQI refugees (“Berlin Opens” 2016).

LGBTQI refugees who choose to seek asylum via direct flight are generally those who can afford to pay their own travel expenses to escape persecution. They may do so on the invitation of siblings, friends, partners, or fellow LGBTQI activists who are already in the country of asylum. Such refugees enter the country of asylum legally by applying for a valid visa; they then claim asylum upon arrival to their destination.
The term *irregular migration* derives from the trafficking and smuggling protocols of the Palermo protocols, passed as supplements to the UN Convention on Transnational Organized Crime (2000). It occurs when LGBTQI individuals escaping persecution enter into a contract with smugglers to transport them to a foreign country illegally or use fraudulent documents in exchange for money. The contract ends when the refugees arrive at their destination. Those individuals leaving Africa by this mode generally do so by crossing the Mediterranean from northern Africa to reach southern Europe by boat. This mode of travel is extremely dangerous, as such refugees can easily be deceived by their smugglers and become victims of human trafficking, ending up in a cycle of exploitation and abuse. According to a 2013 article in *International Law News* by Omar Martinez and Guadalupe Kelle, “LGBT sex trafficking is commonly overlooked and rarely reported by local and national governments.”

**Challenges Faced by LGBTQI Refugees**

LGBTQI refugees face challenges at every stage of their journey, from the beginning in their home countries to their final destination. In his 2013 report “Invisible in the City,” Yiftach Millo of HIAS (formerly the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) outlined what he referred to as the “triple jeopardy” encountered by LGBTQI refugees in their migration cycle: jeopardy in their own country, jeopardy on their way to the asylum/host country, and jeopardy in the country of asylum.

**Jeopardy in Their Own Country** Prior to seeking asylum, hundreds of LGBTQI individuals face persecution because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. They face persecution and human rights abuses ranging from ostracization from their families and forced marriage, to evictions from their homes and local communities, loss of employment, involuntary outings by the media, and seizure of property; and from blackmail, illegal arrest and imprisonment, bullying at school, and murder of a partner, to torture, death threats, and beatings.

**Jeopardy on Their Way to the Asylum/Host Country** While fleeing persecution from their own countries of origin to a different country, LGBTQI asylum seekers still face unthinkable hardships on their way. Among those challenges are human trafficking, theft, extortion by truck drivers and fellow refugees, and physical violence including rape.

**Jeopardy in the Country of Asylum** Contrary to what most LGBTQI refugees expect, the country of asylum is not a “safe haven” for many LGBTQI refugees and asylum seekers. Most individuals do not have the resources to make it to the West, so South Africa or Kenya becomes the best option for refuge. Those refugees who remain in Africa often find their plight only marginally improved, as discrimination against LGBTQI individuals is strong even in countries known to have more liberal policies. LGBTQI refugees face continued discrimination, harassment, and exploitation in their new communities. LGBTQI individuals
face unique vulnerabilities. In many countries xenophobic and anti-immigrant sentiments are on the rise. When homophobia is compounded with xenophobia and outright racism (particularly in the West), it leaves many LGBTQI refugees in conditions similar to those in the countries that they left.

Economic instability is another crucial problem for LGBTQI refugees. With some African countries experiencing unemployment rates as high as 25 percent to 35 percent, finding a job in most countries is difficult enough as a foreigner. Finding a job as an openly homosexual or transgender foreigner is even more difficult. In the absence of support structures (either from their families at home, who have shunned them, or from the larger refugee community in the host country, as is the case in both South Africa and Kenya), this inability to secure consistent income leaves LGBTQI refugees at risk to unique forms of exploitation. Many are forced into prostitution, as the only way for them to earn money, but this exposes many LGBTQI asylum seekers to the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

In addition to the broad-based discrimination and exclusion they face, LGBTQI asylum seekers often experience difficulties in the documentation process in the country of asylum. As already suggested, although many countries officially grant asylum on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, flaws in the documentation process leave many individuals who have legitimate asylum claims without refugee status. The reasons for the failures of the asylum system are not always that blatant, however. For example, many LGBTQI asylum seekers are not comfortable openly admitting their sexuality or gender identity to immigration officials when they first meet.

Generally, one of the most difficult tasks in the refugee determination process is to establish the credibility of the applicant. It is even more difficult for LGBTQI asylum seekers to convince immigration officers of their need for asylum based on their sexual orientation, given the difficulty in providing evidence in support of their claims. Genuine LGBTQI asylum seekers have been traumatized by officials who expect them to prove their status beyond a reasonable doubt. Bona fide LGBTQI asylum seekers have been denied refugee status because they failed to prove that they were high-profile activists, or because they were not perceived as being “gay enough” or were unable to produce photos of their partners, for example.

**Controversies**

Immigration in general and forced migration in particular are among the most controversial issues in many countries, particularly in receiving countries. The large influx of refugees and asylum seekers of all kinds to Europe as the result of war and instability in the Middle East and North Africa starting in 2015 led many Europeans to call for reforms in migration policy to scale back the number of refugees allowed. Even beyond Europe, US
president Donald Trump, shortly after he took office in January 2017, sought to severely restrict immigration through executive orders, particularly from certain countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Such changes in migration policy directly affect LGBTQI refugees, leaving many in limbo in detention centers or without options in their countries of origin.

Controversies also continue to churn around the issue of whether an LGBTQI asylum seeker claimant can be asked about and/or be expected to conceal or be discreet about his or her sexual orientation and/or sexual practices so as to avoid persecution. As noted by Alice Edwards in her foreword to Refugee Status Claims Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: A Practitioners’ Guide (2016), such questioning based on stereotyped understandings of what it means to be LGBTQI has no place in interviews with refugees. A related issue is how to assess the credibility of a refugee’s sexual orientation and what kind of proof should be or can be required. It is difficult to determine what would be considered evidence in such a scenario, be it videos, pseudoscientific testing of sexual orientation, or medical evidence.

There is also controversy related to the concept of “membership in a particular social group.” This concept was not defined by the UN Refugee Convention of 1951, so it remains unclear how to define those covered by the term. The UNHCR holds a very conservative view in which it refuses to acknowledge that the existence of laws criminalizing same-sex relationships or conduct constitutes the basis for refugee status and the preconditions to it, including past persecution and fear of future persecution. This view is not shared by most LGBTQI individuals and human rights activists.

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Refugees and Immigration Policies

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The history and current policies regarding LGBT refugees and asylum seekers.

According to the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees, a refugee is anyone who has “a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion” (UNHCR 2010, 3). Certain countries, such as Canada, have been granting asylum to refugees on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity since the early 1990s (Lee and Brotman 2011). The category became a matter of international policy only in 2008, when the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) issued its UNHCR Guidance Note on Refugee Claims Relating to Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, which established that the phrase “particular social group” is applicable to “LGBT individuals.” According to the guidance note, it had been “well established that sexual orientation can be viewed as either an innate and unchangeable characteristic or as a characteristic that is so fundamental to human dignity that the person should not be compelled to forsake it” (UNHCR 2008, 15). The note also specified particular ways that transgender people might fear persecution and violence.

LGBT Rights as a Global Issue

In the early twenty-first century, an era of profound globalization, the movement of people across borders resulted in an explosion of ideas and new perspectives. LGBT rights had previously seemed to be a preoccupation in the liberal, democratic Western world but was now a global issue. In former British colonies that became countries of the commonwealth, high-profile campaigns were initiated to decriminalize homosexuality, as in India during the 2000s. In formerly repressive societies, embracing full citizenship rights for gender and sexual minorities was seen as a decisive break with the past; this was particularly true for South Africa and for such Latin American countries as Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia. At the same time, one aspect of the global prominence of LGBT rights has been its use in the West as a yardstick to measure the lack of human rights in certain regions or countries, such as China. The issue has generated debates about homonationalism, the universal applicability of human rights, and neocolonialism. It has also influenced immigration and refugee policies. Moreover, the digital revolution has had a crucial impact on LGBT rights in the global context, sparking profound changes to queer communities everywhere. All of these factors created the conditions for what became a major phenomenon of the early
twenty-first century: refugees seeking asylum on the basis of a fear of persecution because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

The UNHCR and the service organizations that worked with it first started using the collective concept of the LGBT refugee around 2005, when organizations in Turkey began noting a significant influx of male homosexual refugees from Iran fleeing imprisonment or forced medical procedures (such as sex-reassignment surgery). This particular cohort of refugees sought asylum on the basis of political opinion, but it became clear to those interviewing them that the primary reason for their flight was persecution (or the fear of it) due to sexual orientation or gender identity. Policy makers and advocates, thus, began advocating for the UNHCR to specify this as legitimate grounds for seeking asylum (ORAM 2011).

**National Advocacy for LGBT Refugees in the Western World**

In the early years of the twenty-first century, LGBT communities were developing and maturing in the liberal democracies of the West, as well as in South Africa and Latin America. Given the changing rights dispensation in these countries, their queer citizens began to feel that their countries might become havens for those in peril in other parts of the world; these citizens were becoming secure enough in their own rights to begin looking beyond their borders toward international solidarity. In 2008, in response to the UNHCR policy guidance note, an advocacy group called the Iranian Railroad for Queer Refugees was established in Canada to lobby for the country to receive resettled Iranian LGBT refugees from Turkey. In the same year, and also in response to the UNHCR, the Organization for Refugee, Asylum and Migration (ORAM) was founded in San Francisco specifically to address the issues of the LGBT refugee population; it has become the largest organization of its kind, globally.

Since 2008, fund-raising and providing reception for LGBT refugees has become a feature of queer communities or communal life particularly in North America and northern Europe, from Rainbow Refugee in Vancouver to the Centre for LGBT Refugees in Berlin. In South Africa, the refugee rights organization People Against Suffering, Oppression and Poverty (PASSOP) set up an LGBTI Refugees Network. In Mexico, there was a community-based shelter for transgender women in Mexico City; later, in 2017, a Franciscan friar set up a shelter near the Guatemalan border specifically for LGBTI (largely transgender) refugees from Central America.

In Canada, the Rainbow Railroad, which was founded in 2006, had helped over 200 people from fourteen different countries resettle by 2017. The organization came to the forefront for its response to the violent wave of repression against gay and bisexual men in Russia's Chechen Republic beginning in 2017. It began working with the Russian LGBT Network to
provide direct travel assistance to those in danger to get to safe houses within Russia and to resettle outside the country. It also lobbied the Canadian government for emergency visas. In June 2018 it joined forces with the US nongovernmental organization Human Rights Campaign for meetings with US authorities to call for an investigation into the alleged crimes against humanity committed in Chechnya and to lobby the United States to allow survivors into the country (Parshall 2018).

The history of the United Kingdom Lesbian and Gay Immigration Group (UKLGIG) perhaps best tells the story of LGBT rights advocacy and its relationship to broader political and social currents. It was created in 1993 as the Stonewall Immigration Group specifically to help same-sex couples that had one non-British partner stay together in the United Kingdom. By 1997 it had successfully lobbied for at least twenty applications for permanent residence; by 2000 the government had adopted a policy permitting the gay partner of a British citizen to stay in the country, and in 2004 the Civil Partnership Act legislated it. Having won this victory for queer Britons and their partners, the UKLGIG turned its attention to asylum seekers at almost exactly the time the notion of LGBT refugees entered the global human rights lexicon.

**International Human Rights Instruments**

Because of explicit nondiscrimination policies in countries such as the United Kingdom, Canada, and those of northern Europe, activists were increasingly appointed to intergovernmental policy-making bodies such as the United Nations, or to organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, while others became involved in setting up powerful global networks such as the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and the International Lesbian and Gay Human Rights Commission (now OutRight Action International). Such European countries as Sweden and the Netherlands—later to be followed by France, the United Kingdom, and the United States—made LGBT rights a foreign policy priority and began lobbying for them at the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN General Assembly’s Human Rights Council. A key priority of this new global network was to specify the way that international human rights instruments applied to people who were persecuted on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. To this end, the benchmark Yogyakarta Principles were adopted by a group of human rights organizations in 2006, setting out twenty-six principles for the equality of LGBT people within the international human rights system.

Principle 23 of the Yogyakarta document demanded that “a well-founded fear of persecution on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics” be accepted as grounds for the recognition of refugee status (Yogyakarta Principles 2007, 23). The 2008 UNHCR guidance note was a direct result of the Yogyakarta Principles, which also set out several other ways that LGBT refugees were to be protected. The value of the 2008 UNHCR guidance note was to set international best practice and to
enable resettlement to third countries. For example, a Ugandan refugee seeking asylum in Kenya could be resettled to Sweden from Kenya on the grounds that his fear of persecution was as great in Kenya—a country where homosexuality is illegal—as it was back home.

**LGBT Refugees**

Meanwhile, all over the world, queer people were coming out and forming their own organizations and networks, often under the umbrella of public health activism in the wake of the AIDS epidemic. This rendered them visible and vulnerable. In some societies this new visibility, combined with activists’ insistence on civil society mobilization and basic human rights, fomented state-sanctioned homophobic backlashes; the most notorious occurred in Zimbabwe, Uganda, and Russia. There have always been queer people migrating internally and across borders, away from the strictures (or even violence) of family and tribe, toward cities where they might lose and reinvent themselves. Particularly in war zones, refugees have always fled because of gender-based violence, a subset of which is violence on the basis of gender identity; this became particularly evident to the officers of the Refugee Law Project at Makerere University in Uganda when there was an influx of asylum seekers in that country from the Great Lakes conflicts of the early twenty-first century. As a consequence, and due to the UNHCR’s guidance note, the project facilitated the establishment in 2009 of an LGBTI affinity group called the Angels and began assisting its members to seek resettlement on the basis of feared persecution due to sexual orientation or gender identity.

In addition to these traditional queer refugees, there was, in the twenty-first century, a new generation of migrants—out of the closet, exposed, and politically conscious about their rights to personal autonomy—who found themselves “pushed” out of their home countries by explicitly homophobic and transphobic policies, and “pulled” to more tolerant societies by the promise (transmitted through digital media) of life in places where, they believed, they might be able to live in peace and dignity. The problem was that they often landed somewhere equally (or nearly) as inhospitable along the way.

**Third-Country Resettlement**

Third-country resettlement thus became a significant part of the LGBT refugee landscape; a major component of LGBT asylum work in countries such as Uganda, Kenya, and Turkey—countries that traditionally accept large numbers of refugees—was thus dedicated to assessing the situation of LGBT asylum seekers in these countries and recommending them for resettlement in countries where they would be welcome as LGBT people. This created a fundamental shift in the processing of refugees: before the advent of LGBT refugees, asylum seekers were recommended for resettlement on a case-by-case basis; now, however, there was a whole category of people who were, by virtue of these host countries’ own laws, unwelcome in the very country that had provided them refuge. The UNHCR itself was the
adjudicator of such decisions.

Particularly in Kenya, following the influx of Ugandan refugees after the passage of antihomosexuality legislation in 2015, it became a matter of course for the UNHCR to recommend this particular population for resettlement, not least because of the discrimination these new refugees experienced both in the agency's refugee camps and in the urban environment of Nairobi. The immediate crisis caused the UNHCR to fast-track LGBT refugee resettlement, with the assistance of the US government in particular. This created its own problems, however, including an unmanageable influx of new applicants, some of whom were considered suspect; when the UNHCR put the brakes on, a backlog was created, with attendant social problems that still had not been cleared by 2018 (Amuke 2015; Gevisser 2016).

South Africa presents a unique case in Africa. Given the country's constitutional protection of all citizens on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, LGBT refugees are welcome, in principle. One of the first asylum seekers granted refugee status on this basis was Tiwonge Chimbalanga in 2011. Chimbalanga was a transgender Malawian who had been sentenced to fourteen years hard labor after holding a public engagement ceremony with her fiancé; she had been pardoned after international intervention, including that of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (1944–), and asylum had been arranged in South Africa via Amnesty International and a local transgender advocacy organization (Gevisser 2014). But although several dozen asylum seekers from other parts of Africa have applied for asylum in the country since then, very few had been accepted by 2018; this was due to the country's unwieldy and unfriendly administrative process and a collapse in its appeals system, rather than to any specifically exclusionary policy. Nonetheless, several refugees in South Africa have been resettled elsewhere, due to transphobic and homophobic violence (such as the “corrective rape” of lesbians), as well as xenophobic violence (PASSOP 2012).

LGBT Asylum Statistics by Country

In 2015 the United Nations estimated that some 42 states had granted asylum to individuals on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity (United Nations General Assembly Human Rights Council 2015). The best available data are from the United Kingdom. Between July 2015 and March 2017, there were 3,535 claims to asylum on the basis of sexual orientation. Most were from Pakistan (1,000), Bangladesh (454), and Nigeria (362). There were 257 from Uganda: at 67 percent of the total claims, this was by far the highest proportion from any country. Only 55 percent of the Ugandan applicants and only 25 percent of the Pakistani applicants were granted asylum: the rest were deported (UK Home Office, 2017). These figures were dramatically higher than those from earlier in the century: in 2009, advocates estimated that there were between 1,200 and 1,800 applicants (Metropolitan Support Trust 2009), and in 2010 the UKLGIG reported that it gave support and assistance to more than 500 asylum seekers, of whom only 70 were
New Zealand granted asylum on the basis of sexuality or gender identity to 25 people between 2012 and 2017 (Radio New Zealand 2017). In Canada, 561 refugee claims were heard on the basis of sexual orientation between April 2009 and June 2011; only 58 of these were granted (Laviolette 2014). These numbers increased exponentially in the following years.

In continental Europe, Belgium was the first country to take a significant number of refugees. It recorded that 116 cases were handled in 2006, of which 33 were granted refugee status; in 2010 the number of cases had risen to 522, of which 156 received protection. In Norway, 11 people were granted asylum on the basis of sexual orientation in 2008 to 2009. In the same period, the Netherlands estimated that it received about 200 applications per year, and Sweden 300 per year. Italy received 54 between 2005 and 2008, of which 29 were granted refugee status. There is no indication in the statistics about the provenance of these refugees (Council of Europe 2011).

The United States has granted asylum, in principle, on the basis of sexual orientation since 1994, but the numbers grew substantially after President Barack Obama (1961–) made the assistance of LGBT refugees a foreign policy priority in 2011 (Obama 2011). This decision followed the landmark speech by Hillary Clinton (1947–) at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva in December 2011 in which she commented, specifically, that the human rights of LGBT people are violated when they are “forced to flee their nations and seek asylum in other lands to save their lives” (quoted in Capehart 2011). In 2015 the US Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power estimated that the country was resettling between 75 and 1,000 LGBT refugees annually (Mack, 2015); that year the United States also made it possible for LGBT refugees to bring their de facto spouses to the United States if the laws in their countries did not permit same-sex marriage (Ahmed 2015).

Ironically, US immigration policy had explicitly excluded homosexuals until as late as 1990, when the Immigration and Nationality Act was amended to drop “sexual deviation” as medical grounds for exclusion; these grounds had been on the books, in one way or another, since 1917. Moreover, from 1993 to 2010, being HIV-positive was grounds for inadmissibility or for denial of permanent residency. (As of 2018, HIV status could still be a reason to be refused asylum in the United States.) Although the administration of US president Donald Trump (1946–) had not, by 2018, specifically commented on LGBT refugees, advocates believed that its clampdown on asylum seekers in general, coupled with its pushback on LGBT rights, had had a chilling effect on the number of refugees in this sector seeking asylum in the United States (Human Rights First 2017).

In 2012 ORAM estimated that there were 175,000 “LGBTI persons ... in peril in their home countries worldwide,” and that of these, 7,500 managed to escape, 750 were able to access
the asylum system, and “only 350 are recognized as refugees” (ORAM 2012, 4). Even if the actual quantum is imprecise, the implication of ORAM’s inverted triangle is that only a tiny percentage of queer people “in peril” actually receive the protection of refugee status.

While such projections have played a key role in raising both consciousness about the situation of queer people worldwide and funds for their resettlement, they have drawn criticism from LGBT activists in the Global South over the “rescue narrative” that underpins some of the discourse. As the South African activist Melanie Judge wrote in the Guardian in 2014, “Promoting an ‘escape’ from Africa to ‘greener US pastures,’ without simultaneously addressing the underlying conditions that force this migration, is dangerous and opportunistic.” Such interventions, Judge said, were “at best palliative and patronizing [and] at worst they reinforce the victimhood of Africans and the savior status of Westerners. This is part of the logic that keeps the ‘homosexuality is unAfrican’ discourse in play.”

**Establishing Credibility**

If, indeed, there is so great a disparity between the number of queer people who need asylum and the number of them who actually receive it, what are the reasons for this? There has been significant investigation into this question, by ORAM and others (ORAM 2014; European Asylum Support Office 2015). Lack of access to financial resources and to information is primary, of course, but there also have been barriers put into place by the asylum system itself that make it even harder, in some respects, for LGBT refugees to gain asylum than for the broader refugee population. These include the burden of proof placed on the asylum seeker to prove that they are homosexual or transgender. The UKLGIG has documented specific LGBT asylum hurdles in the United Kingdom, from prurient questions about sexual activity to culturally inappropriate questioning (asking a Ugandan lesbian if she has read Oscar Wilde) to “disbelief that a person would engage in ‘risks’ (sexual) behavior” (UKLGIG 2013). The UKLGIG ascertained that in 2009, 73 percent of all LGBT asylum claims were rejected, and that between 2005 and 2009, 98 to 99 percent of such claims were rejected—which means that applicants, many of whom were already exposed as LGBT, were deported home (UKLGIG 2010). The year 2017 statistics from the home office showed a lower—but still substantial—percentage of rejected claims, as did figures from other parts of Europe (UK Home Office, 2017; Council of Europe, 2011).

The key issue, in the United Kingdom as elsewhere, was credibility: how does an assessment officer determine whether the applicant before him or her not only has a “well-founded fear of persecution,” but also is gay in the first place? Thus, credibility became a key cause for concern among potential host countries. Some countries, such as the Czech Republic, were accused of conducting invasive sexual arousal tests on asylum applicants (Jansen 2014). In others, such as Australia and the United Kingdom, there was spirited jurisprudence on whether the state could deport applicants on the grounds that they had
not exercised enough “discretion” about their sexual orientation back home (Millbank 2002; UKLGIG 2010).

In the United Kingdom, two applicants were denied refugee status on the basis that they could escape persecution in their home countries (Iran and Cameroon) if they returned home and concealed their identities. In 

HJ (Iran) and HT (Cameroon) v. Secretary of State for the Home Department, the men took the case on appeal, and in 2010 they won. In a passage from the Supreme Court judgment that has entered the queer canon, one of the judges, Lord Rodger, insisted that “just as male heterosexuals are free to enjoy themselves playing rugby, drinking beer, and talking about girls with their mates, so male homosexuals are to be free to enjoy themselves going to Kylie [Minogue] concerts, drinking exotically coloured cocktails, and talking about boys with their straight female mates” (quoted in Verkaik 2010).

Notwithstanding Lord Rodger’s stereotyping of gay men, the decision shifted the debate decisively and was incorporated in a second and far more comprehensive guidance note published by the UNHCR in 2012. This stated that although “an applicant may be able to avoid persecution by concealing or by being ‘discreet’ about his or her sexual orientation or gender identity” in the home country, this was “not a valid reason to deny refugee status.” Citing the British decision and others, the note continued that “a person cannot be denied refugee status based on a requirement that they change or conceal their identity, opinions or characteristics in order to avoid persecution. LGBTI people are as much entitled to freedom of expression and association as others” (UNHCR 2012, 9).

Still, the “credibility” issue continued to dog LGBT refugees, in Britain and elsewhere. In 2012 the Nigerian activist Aderonke Apata was denied refugee status in the United Kingdom because she was deemed to be lying about being in a lesbian relationship as “a cynical way of gaining status in the UK,” as the judge put it. She finally won her battle in a second appeal in 2017 (Taylor 2017).

Triple Jeopardy

Many other challenges remained, for both LGBT refugees and the service organizations set up to help them. These included what has been described as the “triple jeopardy” of being an LGBTI refugee: facing persecution not only in their home country but along the way and in their host country, too (Millo 2013). A key element of this jeopardy is the fact that the very homophobia or transphobia the refugees fled back home is likely to be a component in the expatriate community of compatriots that might otherwise receive and integrate them. Studies of LGBT refugees have, thus, found them to be singularly isolated (Millo 2013; PASSOP 2012).

Part of this triple jeopardy is the xenophobia, or racism, that LGBT refugees experience in
their host countries, along with the same homophobia or transphobia they experienced back home. As Congolese refugee Junior Mayema wrote in the South African media in 2013: "I am faced with all the frustrations and indignities and xenophobia that every African refugee has to deal with, but on top of that I have to deal with homophobia too: both within the asylum-seeking process and in the general society" (Mayema 2013). Mayema and several other LGBT refugees in South Africa were resettled on this basis.

The effects of this triple jeopardy were made manifest by a policy decision of the Israeli government in 2018 to deport African men who had applied for asylum on the basis of fear of persecution for being LGBT back home, along with all other adult male African asylum seekers (Yaron 2018). LGBT refugees in detention on Manus Island, attempting to get into Australia, were in a similar predicament in 2017; they were to be settled in Papua New Guinea, a country where homosexuality was illegal (Dawson 2017). In both these cases, the pro-LGBT policies of Israel and Australia were trumped by their anti-immigration ones. Similarly, Israel will not accept Palestinian LGBT refugees from the Occupied Territories despite the fact that Israel promotes itself as a haven of tolerance for homosexuals in the Middle East.

Unsurprisingly, the majority of LGBT refugees do not cite fear of persecution on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity as the reason for their flight; instead, they either use other refugee criteria, or become economic migrants or illegal immigrants. In 2013, for example, the Williams Institute at the University of California, Los Angeles, ascertained that there were at least 267,000 undocumented adult LGBTI migrants in the United States (Gates 2013).

In 2017 the high-profile exposé of gay “concentration camps” in the Russian territory of Chechnya led to a series of fast-tracked asylum applications for queer Chechen refugees to Western Europe and North America; these garnered much media attention (Shuster 2017; Kakissis 2018; Murphy 2017). But even as LGBT refugees became potent symbols—the embodiment of a new global iniquity between those countries that embrace sexual and gender diversity and those that have rejected it—the actual number of these people is minuscule, a fraction of the total number of queer people who continue to live in their home countries, or who travel across borders in other ways.

SEE ALSO Chechnya, Detention Camps in; Human Rights; Human Rights and Queer Arab Refugees; Migrant Queer Communities, US; Migration to Europe; Refugees and Asylum in Africa

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Whether posed as a historical or a theological challenge, any consideration of the role of same-sex acts in the Christian tradition must begin with the observation that such acts stand as signs for other issues. Same-sex acts have sometimes been interpreted as rebellion against the order of creation and at other times as oppression of fellow human beings. They have sometimes been understood as free choices and at other times as ingrained orientations. Some people argue that same-sex acts are a rejection of God, and others argue that these acts are potential unions with the Son of God. It is obviously difficult to find anyone who will accept all these interpretations. For some, the acceptance of same-sex acts seems like accommodation to the fallen world, rationalization of the flesh, or diabolical deception. For others, it seems the product of a secularizing modernity that frees individuals from the bonds of Christianity. Hence the meanings assigned to same-sex acts become themselves indicators of what it means to be Christian. As Heather R. White (2015b) argues, historical narratives of secularization are often difficult to distinguish from the liberal Protestant project of purifying and dematerializing religion. Christians who affirm sex acts as part of their Christian practice might be “queering” the boundaries between Christianity and the secular world—or they might simply be putting into practice the Gospel, which, they argue, was from its very beginning a “queer” message of liberation.

This entry provides a very brief account of same-sex acts in relation to the structures—household, church, and monastery—that historically have organized Christian communities. It also looks briefly at the dissemination of Christianity—and the sexual norms of European Christians—among the colonized peoples of South America and Africa. While this approach might point to where the evidence is richest, its limitations should be acknowledged at the outset. The relative scarcity (though by no means absence) of references to sex acts between Christian women might be partially attributed to the historical exclusion of women from ecclesial offices, at least before late modernity. In effect, the sources paid greater attention to where official power resided. At the same time, some of the oldest Christian communities are centered in the Middle East, East Africa, and India. Academic studies of the role of same-sex acts in these traditions, particularly for the precolonial period, are scant.
Household and Church

The earliest Christians formed loose networks of household assemblies (ekklēsiai) connected by itinerant teachers who were described as “envoys” or “apostles” (apostoloi). Of these the most influential was Paul. Addressing politically weak communities, Paul focused his moral teaching on the household, understood as a married couple living with children, widowed and unmarried kin, slaves, and dependent clients. Household organization anticipated the imminent Kingdom of God, and those excluded from the Kingdom were excluded from the Christian household. Among those excluded were malakoi and arsenokoitai (1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

The former is a common word meaning “soft” in both a physical and a moral sense. The latter, not attested before Paul and extant only in sources dependent on him, is composed of roots for male and bed. Among the explanations offered for these terms is the suggestion that they refer respectively to the “receptive” and “insertive” roles in sex acts between men. These were neither hardened identities nor irremovable obstacles to participation in the Kingdom; Paul asserts that among Corinthian believers were those who had been malakoi and arsenokoitai before baptism. Unclear is whether these behaviors carried with them their own motivations for conversion, or whether individuals experienced renunciation as a sacrifice necessary for the sake of the Kingdom.

This exclusion of sex acts between males shows that the household itself was often the site of that activity. Demands that masters not threaten slaves or treat them unjustly (Ephesians 5:22–6:9; Colossians 3:18–4:1) imply forgoing the common practice of using/abusing them sexually. This might provide context for the precept ou paidophthorēseis found in “church orders” and other texts claiming apostolic authority (Didache, Letter of Barnabas, and Apostolic Constitutions). Frequently translated as “you shall not corrupt boys,” the command has been understood as a renunciation of Greek traditions of courting free youths. Pais, however, can refer to children regardless of gender and was often applied even to adult slaves. Paidaria is what Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–c. 215) calls young boys exposed for sale in the marketplace, thus providing a context for his repeated citation of the precept. He expresses pity at the boys’ powerlessness to refuse the depilation and feminine adornments meant to arouse the sexual attentions of potential buyers, but pity turns to outrage at free males who undergo similar depilation. Free male bodies deliberately made smooth signified either a desire to gain entry to women’s quarters and/or an invitation to be penetrated by other males, both of which amount to abdications of the moral responsibilities of the Christian householder (Clement’s Instructor 3.3.18–21).

Relations among early Christian households were complicated by ethnic strains, most importantly between Jewish and Gentile believers. Rejection of same-sex acts plays a key role in Paul’s efforts to alleviate these tensions. According to Paul, “Greeks” failed to
recognize the truth about the Creator in his works, worshipping the latter instead of the former (Romans 1:20–23). This exchange of truth for falsehood led to further inversions, namely the exchange of the “natural” use (of sex) for the “unnatural” on the part of Gentile women. Later Christian exegetes would disagree as to whether this refers to “irregular” heterosexual acts or sex acts between women, and at least one commentator, the fourth-century Ambrosiaster, changed his mind on the question from one edition of his work to the next (Brooten 1996). Paul is more explicit in saying that Gentile men abandoned the “natural” use of women, “committing shameless acts with men and receiving in their own persons the due penalty for their error” (Romans 1:27). These “shameless” acts are thus interpreted as punishments in themselves for the graver sin of idolatry. Playing on preexisting ambivalence about “honor” in same-sex acts, Paul hollows out Gentile claims to moral superiority, even as he does the same with Jewish believers who failed to uphold the revealed law. A universal need for divine mercy thus becomes the basis for solidarity between the varied domestic nuclei of the Roman Christian community, at the cost of same-sex relations.

While the paterfamilias (male head of household) served as an ideal model for the potential episkopos (overseer) or diakonos (servant) in the earliest churches (1 Timothy 3:1–13), as ecclesial organization departed from the household model, clerical offices were increasingly reserved for celibate men on the grounds that priests needed to be in a state of “purity” to preside at ever more frequent liturgies and that the Christian priesthood should not simply be transmitted from father to son. By the late fourth century, Pope Siricius could express outrage at bishops and deacons who continued to cohabit and have intercourse with their wives (Letter 1), although his letter demonstrates that many clerics resisted demands for purity. No such defense was mounted for same-sex acts. In addition to “pollution” associated with sex in general, sex acts between men could introduce potentially disruptive questions of dominance and submission in ecclesiastical hierarchies. Proving accusations, however, was difficult and potentially disruptive. The events that led to the deposition of John Chrysostom from the see of Constantinople, often seen as a consequence of the anti-Origenist campaign of Theophilus, bishop of Alexandria, were sparked by accusations that Isidore, a monk and priest who had served as Theophilus’s spokesman, had committed “sodomitic” crimes with several young men (Palladius, Dialogue on the Life of St. John Chrysostom 6.82–96).

**Rise and Rejection of Celibacy**

Orderly heterosexual households were not the most ascetically demanding institution among early Christians. While insistence that Christians reject all sexual activity was eventually labeled heretical, married Christian house-holders coexisted, at times uneasily, with individuals who professed chaste celibacy as a higher Christian calling. In addition to the dangers of the opposite sex, the “Sayings of the Desert Fathers” (e.g., Ward 1975),
collections of anecdotes concerning the ascetics of fourth-century Egypt, express anxiety at the ways the sexual attractiveness of boys and youths could complicate recruitment and endanger relations among such ascetics. A story is told concerning Abba Carion, who was joined in the desert by Zachariah, the son he had left behind when he became a monk. When the boy’s presence drew comments from other monks, Carion moved with Zachariah to other ascetic communities, where they were not recognized as father and son, and the comments grew even worse. Zachariah eventually stopped the gossip by bathing in an alkaline lake, permanently disfiguring himself.

Perhaps to discourage disruptive preoccupation with the sexual sins of others, another story is told of an elderly monk who did not report a fellow monk for sinning with a boy, noting that God, who saw their sin, had not responded with heavenly fire. Analogous warnings about the dangers young women might pose to female ascetics seem to be absent from the sayings of the most famous desert mothers, Sarah, Theodora, and Syncletica. Theodora does say of one penitent that "she never looked upon even a woman's face," suggesting the risk was not completely ignored. Several early accounts of journeys to the afterlife, likely written in monastic settings, report that women who engage in sex with other women will be severely punished in hell (Brooten 1996).

Coenobitic monasticism (a form of community in which individuals worked, ate, and prayed together) derived from the practices of these Egyptian ascetics and became the dominant model of celibate life. As an alternative to heterosexually reproductive households, nothing surpassed these sexually segregated communities in stability and cultural influence. The most important monastic rules for the eastern and western churches—those of Basil of Caesarea (c. 329–379) and Benedict of Nursia (c. 480–547), respectively—do not directly address same-sex acts, although prohibitions of special friendships and rules concerning the arrangement of sleeping quarters have been interpreted as expressions of concern. Evidence for such activity comes instead from the early medieval poenitentiales, books detailing appropriate penances for sins. Some canons make careful distinctions regarding the age, clerical status, and specific physical acts committed by the penitent. Less common are canons dealing with sex between women, including one that commands seven years' penance for nuns who use a "device" (machina). The use of terms derived from the word Sodom in these books led to the development of "sodomy" as a broad category of nonprocreative sexual crimes, both heterosexual and homosexual, a category that gained prominence in Peter Damian's Book of Gomorrah. A hermit who was eventually named cardinal, Damian (1007–1072) complained that confessors absolved their partners in sin with light penances, and he insisted that those guilty of sodomy be deposed from their offices (Jordan 1997).

The coexistence of celibate clergy, monastic communities, and married laity, all protected by divinely ordained civil authority, was never entirely stable. Its ultimate disruption is exemplified in the writings of the German theologian Martin Luther (1483–1546), who
condemned organized celibacy as a rejection of God’s foundational decree to “increase and multiply,” leading to a host of “secret sins” (“A Sermon on the Estate of Marriage”). As part of the rejection of the prevailing structures of the “universal” church, these sins—including same-sex acts—were reinterpreted in nationalist terms. Germans, Luther claimed, had been innocent of such crimes until Carthusian monks imported them from Italian monasteries and Rome itself.

With the abolition of organized celibacy, attention returned to ordering the household. The sin of the biblical Sodomites, a diabolical rebellion against the “natural ardor and desire ... divinely implanted in nature,” was aggravated by the fact that the men besieging Lot’s home included citizens with wives and children, responsible for the protection and discipline of chaste households. The example they set could only spell moral disaster for the nation as a whole (Lectures on Genesis 19:2–5). Similar sentiments were echoed by other Protestant reformers. Catholic reformers responded with stricter policing of monasteries and convents. A notable example is the seventeenth-century abbess Benedetta Carlini, investigated because of her reported visions and ultimately imprisoned for engaging in sexual acts with another nun (Brown 1986). The Reformations, Protestant and Catholic alike, resulted in the establishment of numerous competing churches, with the rejection of same-sex acts a rare point of agreement among them. Even here, however, there is a crucial difference, insofar as the Catholic Church, by retaining institutionalized celibacy, offered what some people might consider an elaborate “closet” in which same-sex acts could be discreetly housed. By rejecting those institutions, Protestant churches created what some have called a demand of mandatory, married heterosexuality.

**Missionary Activity and the Colonization of Sexuality**

As the Reformation was creating new forms of Christian belief and practice in Europe, missionary activity began to spread these forms abroad. The relationship between Christian missionaries and the colonial projects of the European powers was no less complex and ambivalent in the colonized territories than it had been in Europe. Merchants and civil authorities often made no distinction between their political and commercial enterprises and the spreading of Christianity. Missionaries sometimes protested their policies on behalf of indigenous people, though more often they cooperated fully with colonization. Approaches to proselytizing depended on the missionaries’ perceptions of the cultures they encountered. At one extreme, the French Capuchin Yves d’Évreux (1570–1632/33) argued that the indigenous peoples of the Amazon could be “civilized” and taught to embrace European trades, sciences, and religion (Évreux 1864). In contrast, the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), acknowledging the sophistication of Chinese culture, advocated for the accommodation, even if only temporary, of many Chinese practices in the religious life of converts (a position that would start a prolonged argument in the Vatican).

Even where the will to accommodate existed, the indigenous systems of gender and sexual
behavior could confound and pose an existential threat to the Europeans who encountered them (Ochoa 2016). Where military and political will was present, European Christians often used violence to impose their own gender and sexual regimes on indigenous peoples. In what is now Panama, the Spanish conquistador Vasco Núñez de Balboa (1475–1519) massacred a group of men for dressing and behaving as women, while Évreux reports that a man named Tibira convicted of sodomy in northern Brazil was tied to the mouth of a cannon and blown apart as an example to others.

Suppression of indigenous genders and sexualities could expose and play on preexisting tensions and potential fault lines within indigenous societies. It has been noted, for example, that in the case of the Panamanian massacre, the local cacique (chief) handed the men, including his own brother, over to Balboa, suggesting that they were perceived as expendable (Goldberg 1991, 1992; Ochoa 2016). More complex is the case of Charles Lwanga and a group of young royal pages who had converted to Christianity and were executed by Mwanga II Mukasa (1866–1901), the Kabaka (king) of Buganda, in what is now Uganda, between 1885 and 1888. Mwanga’s execution orders were part of a broader policy of resistance to Christian missionary activity, which he saw as part of the European colonial infiltration. At the same time, the Roman Catholic Breviary commemorates the resistance of Lwanga and his companions to the sexual advances of the Kabaka, who was traditionally entitled to such privileges, suggesting that Christianity gave them a language and rationale for the refusal of a practice that was already resented. To add to the complexity, Mwanga, having been deposed by British forces, was received into the Anglican church not long before his death. Historical interpretation of the episode is still contested, as evident from controversies surrounding the visit of Pope Francis to the shrine of Lwanga and his companions at Namugongo, Uganda (Kabuye 2016).

**Same-Sex Acts as Christian Acts**

Despite this history, the acceptance of same-sex acts has been embraced by a substantial number of Christians, although obviously not without sharp opposition. The roots of this Christian reinterpretation of same-sex acts are arguably found in the “invention” (in both the sense of “discovery” and “social construction”) of the homosexual as an identity in nineteenth-century medical literature. Understood as a constitutive part of a human person, same-sex acts and the desires associated with them could no longer be dismissed as simple violations of natural order. Even when same-sex acts and desires were classified as a pathology, those who identified as “homosexual” could demand therapeutic and pastoral approaches beyond simple penitential discipline. Taken up, critiqued, and transformed into social, cultural, and political identities—lesbian, gay, and bisexual—“homosexuality” enabled Christians to engage the messages of egalitarianism and charity inherent in the Gospels and demand an account and a defense from those who insisted that same-sex acts were intrinsically disordered.
Coming from diverse ecclesiastical and theological backgrounds, LGBTQ Christians have taken a variety of approaches to scripture and sacred traditions. Nevertheless, certain common themes are worth noting, starting with the greatest weakness in the seemingly absolute Christian prohibition of same-sex acts: the absence of any such condemnation in the teachings attributed to Jesus in the canonical Gospels. Given the willingness attributed to him to critique Mosaic law (e.g., Mark 10:5, Matthew 19:8), Jesus cannot be assumed to have taken the Levitical prohibitions against such acts for granted, nor can Paul’s statements regarding same-sex acts be assumed to reflect unrecorded teachings of Jesus. Paul acknowledges that his letters contain his own thoughts, as well as material derived from his master’s teachings. His careful distinction between these two strains in 1 Corinthians 7:10–12 does not mean that his silence elsewhere indicates an unmodified transmission of Jesus’s thought. In particular, his descriptions of same-sex acts in Romans form part of a larger anti-Gentile polemic that has no obvious parallel in the sayings attributed to Jesus.

Hebrew scriptural texts associated with same-sex acts in the Christian tradition have also come under critical scrutiny. While attempts to deny any sexual element in the story of the destruction of Sodom (Genesis 18–19) are ultimately unconvincing, same-sex acts in that narrative are clearly intended as violent expressions of xenophobia and violations of hospitality, a far cry from their role in Christian LGBTQ cultures. Likewise, interpreted as parts of the Holiness Code that the Pauline mission refused to enforce on Gentile converts, the Levitical prohibition of “lying with a man as with a woman” (Leviticus 18:22, 20:13) loses its force for Christians. Efforts to interpret the relationship of Ruth and Naomi as “lesbian” and David and Jonathan as “gay” reverse the historical tendency to interpret same-sex acts as violence against the natural order and others by reading these stories of love and friendship as evidence of same-sex acts. While they falter for lack of explicit references to genital activity and objections to reading contemporary erotic identities back into the ancient Mediterranean, the reinterpretation of these narratives has provided models for relations between LGBTQ Christians.

Other models for contemporary same-sex relationships have been derived from later Christian traditions. John Boswell (1994) argued that rites for binding individuals in brotherhood/sisterhood (adelphopoiēsis), found in a number of Eastern churches, constituted blessings of same-sex unions comparable to marriages. While these rites would have been available to lay believers, monasteries would have provided settings for theological elaborations on same-sex love, exemplified by the treatise on spiritual friendship of Aelred of Rievaulx (1110–1167), a Cistercian abbot (Boswell 1980). As with the reinterpretation of figures from Hebrew scripture, these attempts to read references to friendship and spiritual kinship as signs of same-sex activity that is never explicitly mentioned tend to fail strict historical inquiry. Claudia Rapp (2016) discounts sexual interpretations of spiritual relationships, connecting them instead to strategies of extended kinship in medieval families, while Aelred explicitly condemns same-sex acts. Nevertheless,
models of friendship inspired by Aelred have come to play a role directly or indirectly in the work of lesbian and gay theologians (Stuart 1995; Bray 2003; Hunt 2015), while adelpheioiēsis rites have served as models for contemporary blessings of same-sex relationships/marriages.

Beyond valorizing same-sex acts, LGBTQ Christians have found resources for understanding their relationship with God in theologies that destabilize both the gendered image of God and the gender of the believer. This instability might have originated with Jesus himself, at least if sayings in the Gospel of Thomas that speak of the erasure of gender difference and of Mary Magdalene becoming male are authentic. While Thomas would be labeled a “Gnostic” text, examples of “virile” women such as Perpetua, who imagined herself a man when dreaming about her martyrdom (see Heffernan 2012), and the Egyptian ascetic Mother Sara—who told a group of monks, “It is I who am a man, you who are women” (Ward 1975, 230)—were accepted into orthodox traditions. Among the hagiographies (stories of the saints) are several that tell of young women who disguised themselves as monks and lived out lives of outstanding sanctity, their “true” gender being discovered only when their bodies were being prepared for burial (e.g., the lives of Euphrosyne and Marina in Vitae Patrum 1). In one of these stories, the saint was falsely accused of fathering a child and accepted responsibility for bringing it up without complaint. While such narratives are highly romanticized and historically dubious at best, their implicit message is that social expectations of femininity are clearly superseded by the call to the Christian ascetic life.

The same ascetic practices that encouraged women to embrace the spiritual “masculinity” of Christ could paradoxically lead men to embrace spiritual “femininity.” Preaching on the Song of Songs in the Bible, the Alexandrian theologian Origen (c. 185–c. 254) urged his listeners to adopt the role of the Shulamite Bride, representative of the soul embraced by Christ, the Bridegroom (Homilies on the Song of Songs 1). This theme was elaborated on for an exclusively male audience by Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), who effectively asked his monastic brethren to imagine themselves receiving the kiss of Jesus’s mouth as brides. The gender of Christ is itself unstable, because the Word (logos) made incarnate in Jesus, which is grammatically masculine, is often identified with the Wisdom (sophia) of God, which is personified as a woman in Hellenistic Judaism, thus opening the possibility of a female Christ accessible to believers of any gender.

Early members of the Moravian Brotherhood shocked Lutheran settlers in the American colonies with their image of Jesus’s wounded side transformed into a vagina (Fogleman 2007). In the indeterminate gender of Jesus, the theology of LGBTQ Christians intersects with that of heterosexuals for whom erotic and spiritual love are not inherently opposed. Against objections that the juxtapositions of these diverse approaches constitute “confusion” comes the response that their variety opens a number of paths to union with God, while the contradictions they seemingly present point to the inadequacy of gender
categories when speaking about the final home of Christian believers in the Resurrection, “where they shall not marry, nor shall they be given in marriage” (Mark 12:25; Matthew 22:30).

**Conflict**

The emergence of self-affirming LGBTQ Christians has taken a variety of forms. Some LGBTQ Christians have formed movements within individual churches (e.g., Dignity, among Catholics; Integrity, for LGBTQ Episcopalians and Anglicans; Affirmation, among Mormons, etc.). Others have joined churches conceived of and founded as ministering specifically to sexual minorities, the most prominent of which is the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, which was founded by Troy Perry in 1968. There are also interdenominational organizations, such as the Gay Christian Network, founded in 2001, that connect individuals from a variety of theological and denominational backgrounds.

Nevertheless, this flourishing of LGBTQ Christian communities needs to be considered alongside the fact that, in the United States and western Europe at least, queer people are less likely to identify as Christian than their heterosexual counterparts. A 2016 study by the Public Religion Research Institute found that nearly half of LGBTQ Americans were religiously unaffiliated, almost double the percentage of the population at large (Jones and Cox 2016 9, 34–35). In effect, the secularization of queer people is the flip side of the claims made by many of the faithful that active participation in same-sex acts and transgender lives is not compatible with Christianity. It has been argued that the rigorous demands regarding sexuality and gender made by Christian churches fuel a more general process of secularization, at least in Europe and North America (Woodhead 2007). Nevertheless there is a certain historical irony in the decline of Christianity among LGBTQ people because, as noted above, gay and lesbian rights groups found material support in liberal Protestant denominations, at least in the United States (White 2015b). But Christians have also been in the vanguard of opposition to acceptance and support of LGBTQ people. A great deal of that opposition has taken place in the political arena and is better discussed under that heading. Within churches themselves, the areas of conflict closely track the concerns for home, clerical authority, and the role of indigenous culture outlined previously.
Same-Sex Marriage and the Christian Household

As noted, early Christians saw the well-ordered household, in which sexual activity was restricted to a married couple, as a refuge against a hostile “pagan” social order that was destined to fall. By the twentieth century, many Christians had come to see their religion, and the “one man/one woman” model of marriage it had historically advocated, as foundational to a long-standing and stable social order. In the West, marriage, which in Roman times had been strictly a matter of private law, eventually become the purview of the church and then, after the Reformations, was increasingly regulated by the state. In predominantly Protestant societies such as the United States, the condemnation of same-sex acts and the absence of any formally recognized model of celibacy created huge pressures for individuals who were strongly or predominantly attracted to their own gender to take a spouse of the opposite one. As “homosexuality” became a psychological category, ministries began to emerge that combined psychotherapy and Protestant theology in an effort to “convert” homosexual men and lesbians into heterosexuals (Erzen 2006). The most prominent of these ministries, Exodus International, formally closed its operations in 2013, with a public admission that the ministry was largely ineffective in converting people to the heterosexual lifestyle. It has been argued, however, that the persistence of heterosexual marriages in which one or both admit to being primarily
attracted to the same gender has created its own “queerish” sexual orientation (Gerber 2015).

But a narrative in which Christians monolithically opposed secular advocates for same-sex and gender-neutral marriage is problematic on two counts. On the one hand, many lesbian, gay, and queer activists rejected marriage as heteronormative and oppressive, and a number of Christians interpreted this position as another indication of the moral degeneracy of LGBTQ people. On the other hand, as historians have documented, some same-sex couples sought and received blessings for their relationships in churches long before the movement to have them recognized in civil law. The language used to describe the earliest documented blessings in the United States, which took place in the 1970s, reflects debates about marriage in LGBTQ circles. Ironically, they also drew threats of legal prosecution from civil authorities and were ultimately defended as constitutionally protected expressions of religion (White 2015a). Parallels can be drawn with the history of same-sex marriages in the Netherlands, where some same-sex “friendships” had been discreetly (and not so discreetly) blessed in Reformed and Catholic churches decades before the first legal same-sex marriage in 2001 (Bos 2017). At the same time, the line between “religious” and “secular” opposition to same-sex marriage is not as easily drawn as it might at first appear. In Sweden, for example, opposition to “gender-neutral” marriages came predominantly not from the semiofficial Church of Sweden but from “free churches” (Roman Catholic, Pentecostal, etc.), which, despite accusations of imposing their religious beliefs on the country, framed their arguments without direct reference to scripture or other religious sources of authority (van den Berg 2017).

**Same-Sex Acts and Clerical Authority**

Clerical sexual misbehavior, and same-sex acts specifically, were historically an issue of discipline and grounds for degradation from office. In practice, however, public attention to such discipline risks undermining clerical authority, and the urge to conceal such behavior has been an institutional imperative in some churches. As with legalization of same-sex marriage, the scandals surrounding accusations of sexual abuse involving Roman Catholic priests that started in the 1980s and came to a crescendo in the early twenty-first century raise issues about the boundaries between ecclesiastical and secular jurisdiction (Sullivan 2012). There is little reliable information on the sexual orientation of Catholic priests, but at least some anecdotal evidence exists that the priesthood can seem a refuge for Catholic men who wish to conceal or sublimate sexual attractions to other males (see, e.g., Martin 2017, citing Colm Tóibín).

There is no obvious reason to think that sexual attraction to other males makes a priest more likely to commit sexual abuse. Nevertheless, as part of its response, the Vatican attempted to link the abuse of minors (many of whom were girls) and vulnerable adults to “active homosexuals” who had infiltrated the priesthood, and an instruction barring such
men from future ordination was released by the Congregation for Catholic Education (Grocholewski 2005). No less naive is the suggestion that sexual abuse could be curtailed by allowing Latin Rite priests to marry, implying that sexual misbehavior results from a lack of appropriate (heterosexual) outlets (see, e.g., Royal Commission 2017). In May 2015 the Methodist Church of Britain, which does allow married clergy, released a report on and apology for nearly 1,900 cases of abuse dating from 1950 to 2014, about half of which involved sexual abuse.

While sexual scandals erode clerical authority and contribute to a decline in active participation in churches, the ordination of openly gay and lesbian clergy, even those in committed monogamous relationships, has typically drawn resistance and led to schism in churches. Even in a relatively “smooth” case—involving the small, liberal, highly decentralized United Church of Christ, which is largely restricted to the United States and enjoys a certain cultural cohesiveness—the ordination of an openly gay pastor in 1972 eventually led to the formation of the Biblical Witness Fellowship in 1978, which opposed the move and was active as late as 2012 (Holmen 2013).

Far more fractious is the case of the Anglican Communion, a global body of churches that recognizes the archbishop of Canterbury, England, as its titular head. The issue of ordaining openly gay and lesbian individuals to the clergy was closely linked to the issue of ordaining women in the Episcopal Church, the branch of the Anglican Communion in the United States. (Perhaps not coincidentally, among the first women to be ordained, in 1974, was the prominent lesbian feminist theologian Carter Heyward.) In reaction against the ordination of women and openly gay and lesbian candidates, the mid-1980s saw the formation of the conservative Episcopalians United for Revelation, Renewal and Reformation. In 1997 a group of African and Asian bishops gathered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, released a statement that included “homosexuality” among the corrupt fruits of Western neocolonialism.
Bishop Senyonjo was crucial in the establishment of Integrity Uganda, a branch of the international organization for LGBTQ members of the Anglican Communion. He remains a controversial figure in Uganda, at once held up as a Christian witness for LGBTQ rights and as an instrument of Western special interests.

The crisis came to a head in 2003 and 2004 when the Anglican Church of Canada authorized the liturgical blessing of marriages between same-sex couples, and Gene Robinson was elected bishop of New Hampshire, the first openly gay man to be so elevated. The Episcopal Church refused to accede to the demands of a special commission that it apologize and discipline those involved in Robinson’s elevation. The leadership of the archbishop of Canterbury was also challenged by a group of African, Asian, and Australian bishops who met in Jerusalem in 2008 to form the Global Anglican Future Conference (GAFCON), which opposes what it sees as “moral compromise, doctrinal error and the collapse of biblical witness in parts of the Anglican communion,” as outlined on its website. GAFCON has partnered with conservative Episcopalians in forming the Anglican Church in North America, which aspires to be the representative of the Anglican Communion on that continent. This group is not recognized by the archbishop of Canterbury (Holmen 2013).

**Queer Decolonization**

The turmoil in the Anglican Communion is emblematic of the challenges posed by same-sex and transgender Christians to global churches and the universal claims of Christianity. As seen in the reports of the Kuala Lumpur conference and GAFCON, calls for LGBTQ rights are often represented as a new kind of Western cultural neocolonialism and a threat to indigenous cultures.

African identity is invoked both by queer activists and the Christian leaders who oppose them. After the arrest of thirty-two men on suspicion of homosexuality and the murder of a high school student who had purportedly flirted with his male killer, Victor Tonyé Bakot
(1947–), the then archbishop of Yaoundé, Cameroon, complained to a congregation gathered for a 2005 Christmas Mass that “the powers of money and the evil forces want to force you, the people of God, to endorse the practice of homosexuality.... Pseudo-modernity, in other words, liberalism, should not lead the African to repudiate his or her own opinion in favor of infamy” (quoted in Tiedjou et al. 2010, 11; for the original French text, see Bakot 2005). The phrase “powers of money” refers to financial support given to Cameroonian LGBTQ organizations, and Bakot’s words closely resemble the appeal to “positive African cultural values” made by Amadou Ali (1943–), then serving as Cameroon’s vice prime minister and minister of justice, in defense of the arrests (quoted in Tiedjou et al. 2010, 10; see also Bakot 2005).

In contrast, the Kenyan queer activist Gathoni Blessol (2013) denounces the intrusion of American evangelicals in Africa and rejects both Islam and Christianity as artifacts of European colonialism. Blessol’s anger can be understood in light of incidents such as the abuse of gays and lesbians by the priest presiding at the funeral of murdered Ugandan gay activist David Kato (1964–2011), an incident that she personally witnessed. Her complaint about colonialism takes on extra salience in light of the support given by American evangelicals to harsh anti-LGBTQ legislation in Uganda and elsewhere in Africa (Williams 2013). However, her claim that Christianity was brought to Africa by European colonialists overlooks the ancient churches of Egypt and Ethiopia. The complex layering of queer, Christian, and African identities is palpable in the words of a thirty-year-old Cameroonian female soccer player who has a boyfriend as a “cover” for her relationship with another woman. “My family thinks that if you are athletic and you don’t have a boyfriend then you are a lesbian. I cannot afford for them to think this about me. I am very Catholic, and in my church, they think this is sorcery” (quoted in Tiedjou et al. 2010, 48).

Reconciling self-identification as lesbian, Christian, and African can be understood as a kind of decolonization, although that process does not necessarily entail the rejection of Christianity. It has also attracted straight allies. Bishop Christopher Senyonjo (1931–), for example, was crucial in the establishment of Integrity Uganda, a branch of the international organization for LGBTQ members of the Anglican Communion. While his support for sexual minorities attracted the ire of his colleagues, it was his involvement in the consecration of a bishop for the Charismatic Church of Uganda that ultimately forced him out of his episcopal position in the Church of Uganda, part of the Anglican Communion. He remains a controversial figure in Uganda, at once held up as a Christian witness for LGBTQ rights and as an instrument of Western special interests (Conger 2014).

At times, efforts at queer decolonization of Christianity appropriate ecclesiastical forms and turn them on their heads, as in the movement to get the Catholic Church to “canonize” the aforementioned Tibira, the Brazilian executed in 1614 by cannon fire as a martyr (Talento 2014; Cherry 2017; Sextro 2017). While the campaign is headed by Luiz Mott, a historian and activist who identifies as a humanist, it has drawn the attention of LGBTQ Christians
and echoes the canonization of the French heroine Joan of Arc (1412–1431), who violated
gender norms and was burned as a heretic. In Asia, the China Rainbow Witness Fellowship,
found in Shanghai in 2009, serves as a community for queer Protestants and Catholics
outside the formal structures of the state-run Chinese Protestant and Catholic churches. In
the United States, Yvette Flunder (1955–), senior pastor of City of Refuge United Church of
Christ in Oakland, California, and presiding bishop of the Fellowship of Affirming
Ministries, writes about the need of same-gender–loving people of color in the United
States to be healed of “oppression sickness,” contracted in the process of enslavement and
conversion, by reclaiming the indigenous roots of what she calls the “Metho-Bapti-Costal”
tradition of African American Christianity (Flunder 2015).

SEE ALSO Christianity in Africa: Anglican; Christianity in Africa: LGBT Friendly; Christianity in
Africa: Pentecostal and Charismatic; Christianity in Africa: Roman Catholicism; Colonialism in
Africa South of the Sahara; Imperialism and Colonialism; Inquisition, Criminal Courts, and
Sexuality in Colonial Latin America; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Islam; Religion and
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Islam has a diverse historical cultural heritage that originated with Muhammad's claim of divine prophet-hood in seventh-century Arabia and subsequently spanned regions between Marrakech in northwestern Africa to Makassar in Southeast Asia. Historical evidence supports the view that Muslim societies were accommodating of same-sex behaviors and erotic desires, particularly during the premodern period (before 1900 CE in most of the Islamicate context). The ubiquitous presence of homoerotic poetry and writings on same-sex (including intergenerational or “pederastic”) love demonstrates a cultural milieu where such desires and relationships—both chaste same-sex desires and desires and behaviors of a more carnal nature—were considered acceptable, even if not universally approved in terms of religious law (fiqh). That same-sex sexual conduct flourished (based on details appearing in classical literature, poetry, biographies, and paintings) is certain, although actual explicit same-sex sexual behavior was not legally sanctioned but socially condoned.

The written record for the most part contains exclusive references to male homoerotic desire, including gender-nonconforming males (mukhannathin), with limited details regarding same-sex desires and acts among women, and these details coming, for the most part, from sources written by men. The practice of sexual rubbing (suhaq) among women was known to Muslims from the medieval era and was recorded (Habib 2007; Murray 1997). Women's homoerotic verse also appears in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the Urdu poetry that flourished at the court of the Nawabs in the northern Indian realm of Awadh (Vanita 2004). Another limitation of the written record is that it is very much a reflection of the urban centers—mostly the elite environment of courtly and aristocratic aesthetics, belles lettres, and scholasticism—of Islamic civilization, such as medieval Baghdad and al-Andalus, Mamluk Cairo, Safavid Iran, Mughal and pre-Mughal Muslim South Asia, and Ottoman cities including Istanbul (Wright and Rowson 1997; Vanita and Kidwai 2000; El-Rouayheb 2005; Andrews and Kalpakli 2005; Babayan and Najmabadi 2008).

Same-sex love in the premodern period (roughly between the twelfth century CE and the
late nineteenth century), in the historical context of primarily Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal lands (North Africa, the Middle East, the Near East, and South Asia) and their prior dynastic precursors from as early as the ninth century, manifested itself in various registers, and the context in which it was articulated or performed defined the response to it. There were the intergenerational affective relationships, which included but were not limited to or did not always necessarily involve same-sex acts, between mature men and younger men (youth or boys) bounded by the frameworks of patronage, education, mysticism, or just simple erotic desire. It was typical for men of power and/or learning (including Sufi shayks and mendicants) to take younger men under their wing—intellectually, spiritually, in environments of frolicking or servitude, and/or sexually (El-Rouayheb 2005; Kugle 2007). This configuration of same-sex relationships was considered normal although not universally approved, as demonstrated by the strident warnings furnished by some pious jurists on the temptations of beautiful boys. Then there was a type of same-sex desire that took the form of aesthetic appreciation, where men gazed on the handsome sight of beautiful youths, admiring their good looks and longing for a closer intimacy, either as part of a larger tradition of appreciating human beauty and/or contemplating God in the face of the beautiful beloved (El-Rouayheb 2005; Wafer 1997). These relations were sometimes chaste (or publicly proclaimed to be allegedly chaste) in that they were divested of sexual intent or conduct, but in other instances there was an erotic dimension to the relationships, sometimes resulting in one or more behaviors on the spectrum of intimate or sexual conduct, such as kissing, touching, or full sexual congress.

Given the common practice of gender segregation in premodern Muslim societies and unequal levels of power between men and women, the uniqueness of same-sex love and attractions were that these were relationships that were based on “mutual understanding”—meaning, important spiritual and intellectual sensibilities that had a “fluid shifting of dominance and submission, without reference to the overwhelming, culturally determined power disparity that existed between men and women” (Andrews and Kalpaklı 2005, 20). At the same time, in the Ottoman period and in premodern Iran, power relations between the men in sexual relationships with older and younger men were obvious, with the older man longing for the beardless, androgynous younger man or boy who in any sexual relationship is assumed to be the passive partner, similar to ancient Greek notions of same-sex love that extolled chaste love between older and younger men and discouraged, but tolerated, sexual relations between these men (Phillips and Reay 2011). The young, beardless youth occupied a transitory state on the cusp of full manhood that made him desirable erotically but also distinguished him from the category of being female (Najmabadi 2008). For an older man to desire to be anally penetrated was considered an anomaly (because no good reason was conceived of why a free, mature man in a phallocentric patriarchal society would want to be dominated and subjected to anal penetration), and an entire discourse pathologizing this tendency was constructed to diagnose and treat this psychological and physiological defect (El-Rouayheb 2005).
Nonetheless, same-sex sexual intimacy between men, irrespective of the ages of the parties, was apparent in Islamic literature and deemed typical, while practices were accommodated under conditions of “everything is done, very little is said,” or “do not ask and do not tell.” This idea of same-sex male love and homoerotic desire and behavior was evident in the cultural context of what the scholar of Islam Shahab Ahmed (2016) termed the Balkans-to-Bengal complex—a social, aesthetic, and literary landscape that was influenced by pre-Islamic practices, the Arabic and Persian discursive tradition and social mores, and the mobility of people across this geographical terrain. The cultural and aesthetic continuity between the geographic locations that fell under the political authority of the three great Muslim empires of the late medieval period—the Ottomans, the Safavids, and the Mughals—was evident in the overall consistent approach to sexuality and homoerotic love.

Muslim societies outside of this cultural context also had their own social and gender typologies relating to sexuality. In Southeast Asia, where the demarcation between two binary genders was less rigid, accommodations of same-sex sexual behavior were tolerated, and the fudging of masculine and feminine identities also opened up spaces for gender fluidity and gender nonbinary expressions, which continue today despite increasing opposition in the latter part of the twentieth century (Peletz 2011; Boellstorff 2007). Less documented is the historical reality of same-sex patterns in sub-Saharan Muslim Africa. Gender fluidity and same-sex relations historically existed and occupied visible space publicly in Hausa-speaking northern Nigeria, although such expressions have been curtailed since the advent of reformist Muslim movements and colonialism in the late nineteenth century, and further restricted with the adoption of Islamic law in the late 1990s (Gaudio 2009). Similar types of gender fluidity in terms of social roles and etiquette, as well as same-sex relations between men that followed the active-passive model of sexual acts, are documented along the eastern Swahili coast of Africa (Haberlandt 1998; Amory 1998). In this complex matrix, same-sex desire and love typically were lyrically celebrated, and same-sex acts were accommodated under the guise of not knowing, while these same acts were deemed sinful and unlawful, with sodomy constituting the most egregious crime.

Islam as Law and Religion

Beyond this cultural view of Islam, it is also appropriate to view it as a legal intellectual tradition that is composed of a theory of law (usul al-fiqh) that serves as an intellectual tool by which jurists are able to identify and understand the sources of the law with a view to articulating a substantive law (fiqh) that informs the community of believers (umma) on what God has rendered permissible, prohibited, obligatory, recommended, or reprehensible. The four sources of Islamic law are the Qur’an (the direct revelation of God’s word to the prophet Muhammad, representing sacrosanct knowledge about the human situation and its relationship to God and, more importantly for legal purposes, directives on how human beings should conduct themselves), the sunna (the precedent and practice of
the prophet Muhammad, and of the imams for Shi’a Muslims, which was recorded in hadith literature), *ijma‘* (juridical consensus within the legal schools on a rule of Islamic law), and *qiyas* (analogical reasoning whereby the rulings from the Qur’an and sunna are extrapolated and applied to new situations).

Historically there has been a consensus, by both Sunni and Shi’a jurists, that all same-sex sexual acts (between both males and females) are prohibited, as these acts constitute a breach of sexual modesty in that such acts do not occur within a legally sanctioned relationship, such as opposite-sex marriage or concubinage (sex between a male master and his legally owned female slaves). These are the only two legal avenues through which sexual relations are permitted. There is very little discussion in the legal literature about same-sex sexual acts between women, and where it is mentioned, the discussion revolves around what type of judicial discretionary punishment should be meted out (*Ali* 2016). Men caught in same-sex sexual acts short of anal sex are subject to discretionary chastisement. However, the discussion ordinarily revolves around penile penetration, specifically anal sex or sodomy (*liwat*), and it is principally through this act that the law views male same-sex sexual relations. There are two primary sources on which this prohibition is supported.

The first source relates to the story of the prophet Lut in the Qur’an (the biblical Lot). The people of Lut are described in the Qur’an as a transgressing community that commits murder and robbery and rejects God’s Prophet and message (29:28–29). The singular act in this story that has come to define the nature of the people of Lut is their indecency in coming “with desire unto men instead of women,” for it was an indecency that “none in the world had committed” before them (7:80–81). This coming of men toward other men with sexual desire (*shahwa*) was construed to be lewdness (*fahisha*)—specifically in the case of penile anal sex. The Qur’anic exegetical literature contains detailed accounts of the background and context of these sexual acts, including a view that male strangers were the object of violent sexual excess, but it was the fact that the Qur’an specified that these transgressing men approached other men with sexual desire (with or without consent did not matter much to jurists and exegetes), rather than women, that was the focal point of the moral tale. God sent angelic beings in the form of men to convey a message to Lut that he and his family (except his wife, who was considered to be a part of the transgressing community) should depart the town under cover of night so that they might be saved from God’s punishment the following day. When the angels arrived in the town, the townsfolk clamored at Lut’s abode requesting access to the men that he was sheltering. Lut responded saying, “These are my guests; so dishonor me not! Reverence God, and disgrace me not,” and then went on to make an offer by saying, “These are my daughters, if you must act” (15:68–71). The townsfolk responded by saying, “You know that we have no right to your daughters, and surely you know that which we desire” (11:79).

The second source is the hadith (a record of narrations primarily setting out the precedent
of the Prophet through details of what he said, did, or opined on) corpus, which contains narrations where the prophet Muhammad commands that people who are found to be doing the deed of the people of Lut should be killed (Brown 2017). Based on these sources, there was a historical consensus among jurists on the prohibition and criminal nature of male same-sex sexual intercourse, with sodomy singled out as the most egregious manifestation of such conduct. This view was shared among all five Sunni and Shiʿa schools of law, as the prohibition against same-sex sexual conduct was deemed to be recognized as necessarily forming an integral part of the faith of Islam. This view was categorically maintained by the jurists of the Islamic legal tradition and continues to be espoused by conservative and neotraditional Muslim scholars, who hold that same-sex sexual acts can never be legitimized within Islam.

The only difference of opinion that arose was in the punishment. One of the legal schools (Hanafi) categorized sodomy as a distinct sexual transgression from opposite-sex fornication or adultery (zina) and accordingly deemed a discretionary punishment by the presiding judge to be applicable where such punishment could not be more severe than the punishment outlined in legal sources (hadd) for zina (a hundred lashes for unmarried persons and stoning for married persons). The Shafiʿi and Hanbali legal schools viewed sodomy as a subset of zina and adopted the same ruling regarding punishment, but with minor modifications. The Maliki and Imami Shiʿa schools of law viewed sodomy in a more serious light and deemed death the only valid punishment (Brown 2017; El-Rouayheb 2005). These religious legal positions have held sway for the most part of Islamicate history since their crystallization in the formative period, when the methodology of Islamic law was developed. Despite these harsh punishments outlined in the substantive law, the requirements for a conviction were exacting. Today, in both Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority contexts, these positions are cited as evidence for the prohibition of same-sex sexual conduct. In the absence of a voluntary confession by the parties to the sexual act, four free male witnesses (two for the Hanbalis) who were upstanding and witnessed the actual act of penis-anus penetration are required to convict a person for illicit male same-sex sexual intercourse (El-Rouayheb 2005). In reality, such an evidentiary burden was extremely difficult, if not impossible, to meet, and this at times led to the imposition of less harsh punishments in Ottoman territories for sexual crimes where people were convicted on less substantial evidence (Ze’evi 2006). For example, in rare instances where punishment was meted out, fines levied according to the level of a person’s income and banishment from a neighborhood quarter replaced capital punishment for sexual crimes. However, a wider ambit was cast to include sexual indiscretions outside of penetrative sex, such as the intention to commit a sexual crime (including consensual same-sex sexual intercourse) or punishments meted out to fathers of boys who were abducted and sexually assaulted, for failing to prevent the assaults, which attracted a lesser burden of proof for conviction (Semerdjian 2008).

Two other things are important to note. The first involves the “legal-lyrical” contradiction
which has been outlined above with respect to the celebration and practice of same-sex love and behavior in verse, prose, and real life and the severe prohibition of such behavior in terms of the law. Same-sex love, whether sexual or platonic, seems to have been widespread and socially condoned, if not legally licit, and its explicit celebration in verse was considered socially acceptable and for the most part not legally proscribed, even if it may have been deemed improper by some. At the same time, however, the law was strict and severe in how it viewed same-sex sexual acts, particularly sodomy. People also vacillated between these different registers; for example, the same person could have written homoerotic poetry, or been a patron or friend of such a poet, or harbored same-sex sexual desires, and at the same time as a scholar may have confirmed the legal criminal and/or prohibited status of same-sex sexual behavior. The second is that the notion of an inalienable sexual orientation and sexual identity such as “homosexuality” did not exist in the premodern Muslim world. Accordingly, the historical discussion of same-sex behaviors in Islam did not operate with an understanding of “homosexuality” and “heterosexuality” as inalienable sexual orientations and identities, but it did recognize the nature of same-sex sexual desires and behaviors. This is clear from the legal discussion that was concerned only with a taxonomy of sexual acts and not desires or dispositions. In addition, the principle of consent as the necessary and sufficient requirement for lawful sexual conduct, and the inability of pubescent people below a certain age to furnish that consent, were not part of how sexual relations were understood. These continuities and discontinuities between the past and the present further complicate and enrich how the historical record is analyzed and understood today.

Islam and LGBTQ Issues in the Modern Period

There have been significant changes to the family unit and Muslims’ understandings of gender and sexuality in the modern period. The most influential impetus that directly and/or indirectly affected how Muslims customarily viewed gender and sexuality was the rupture that occurred with colonialism and European dominance. The breakdown in Muslim political power, technological stagnation, and traditional understandings of family, gender, and sexuality resulted in debates at the time and thereafter on these issues. The fluidity of sexual desires and the nonchalant attitude that characterized premodern Islamic attitudes toward same-sex love and homoerotic verse changed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with modern Muslims viewing this part of their cultural and literary history with discomfort and embarrassment, sometimes amending the same-sex references in poetry to opposite-sex ones. These developments took place at the same time that European notions of sexual morality and the unnaturalness of same-sex desires and sexual acts were gaining a wider and more universal following both inside Europe and outside, through colonization and foreign European imperialism resulting in cultural exchange between Muslim-majority societies and their European overlords, which included ideas about sexual propriety (Ze’evi 2006; El-Rouayheb 2005; Kugle 2002). A good
example is the travelogue written by the Egyptian scholar Rifa’ah al-Tahtawi (1801–1873) regarding his visit and stay in France. In his writings al-Tahtawi compares the habits of the French with those of the Arabs. He praises the French men for not having penchants for youthful men and not writing homoerotic poetry, as well as eschewing same-sex sexual desire and conduct as immoral (as these things were common in al-Tahtawi’s Egyptian context).

Another factor at this time was the emergence of Muslim reformist movements that advocated for a literal reading of primary scriptural sources and a return to an imagined prophetic past free of the accretions of Muslim cultural and scholastic developments over the centuries. These include Wahhabi and Salafi groups in the Middle East and North Africa, the development of Usuli Shi’ism, the Sokoto caliphate in West Africa, Deobandi seminaries in South Asia, and, subsequently, socially conservative and politically active organizations such as the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the broader Middle East and the Jama’at-e Islami in Pakistan. These modern reformist and/or political movements also extricated Islamic law from its dynamic premodern Islamicate sociopolitical context and posited it as the exclusive and fundamental locus of Muslim identity and being during both the colonial and postcolonial periods, thus further entrenching the legal proscription against same-sex sexual activity in Muslim societies that continues to have a bearing on many Muslim societies today.

Contemporary neotraditionalist and conservative Muslim scholars have maintained and continue to maintain the position that any erotic behavior between people of the same sex is strictly prohibited. Furthermore, some Muslim clerics also support the position that same-sex sexual desire is fundamentally unnatural and against God’s direction for humanity. In the aftermath of the Cold War, LGBTQ activism in the West began emerging as a significant force within the public sphere and liberal discourse culminating in many victories in the most recent past. At approximately the same time, contemporary queer Muslims found in the vestiges of their past a way to reclaim a place in Islam’s history and to use it as a tool in crafting a place for themselves in contemporary Islam.

The attempt by queer Muslims today to argue for a place within Muslim societies where their lives as LGBTQ-identified persons are accepted by the community and their sexual relationships legitimized by Islamic law is unprecedented. There are numerous organizations, the most apparent of which are located outside Muslim-majority countries, in the United States (Muslim Alliance for Sexual and Gender Diversity), South Africa (Al-Fitrah Foundation / The Inner Circle), Canada (Salaam Canada and El-Tawhid Juma Circle), the United Kingdom (Imaan), and the Netherlands (Maruf), among others. Some organizations in Muslim-majority countries include Naz Foundation (Pakistan), Helem (Lebanon), Seksualiti Merdeka (Malaysia), and Arus Pelangi and GAYa Nusantara (Indonesia). These organizations aim to provide a support infrastructure for queer Muslims, to advocate for the equal treatment and inclusion of queer Muslims in the
community, and to provide a forum for the discussion and development of an ethical and religious position that is sensitive to the experiences of queer Muslims. In Muslim-majority countries, either the LGBTQ issue is deeply underground, or, at best, there is some visibility and debates on (and support by nongovernmental organizations for) legal protections and social accommodation of persons to depart from heterosexual social norms. In Muslim-minority contexts where there exist legal protections and equal rights for LGBTQ people, the debates revolve around some of these factors, but there is a much more direct effort at and confidence in taking advantage of the favorable laws in these countries, such as freedom of expression, antidiscrimination laws, same-sex marriage or civil unions, and the freedom to exhibit one’s sexuality more visibly and vocally.

Diaspora has also complicated the picture. Widespread population movements since World War II (1939–1945) have brought about an exchange of media, ideas, and people within and between Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority locations. There is necessarily also unevenness within these Muslim-majority and Muslim-minority environments. For example, many queer male Muslims and others who work, sometimes under precarious employment conditions, in certain parts of the Persian Gulf find that they have access to more sexual opportunities, albeit discreet ones, in those contexts where they are not tethered to any “home” community with its attendant family and community pressures and observances. Inconspicuous spaces where same-sex sexual contact transpires or LGBTQ people socialize and organize, under the shadow of legal and social censure, also exist in many Muslim societies in the Middle East, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, among other areas.

On the scholarly side, there have been comprehensive arguments made by Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle, Junaid Jahangir, Hussein Abdullatif, and Hassan El Menyawi for the Islamic legitimization of queer forms of relationships and sex by reinterpreting the Islamic legal sources from the perspective of essentialist assumptions of inherent sexual dispositions, for confirmation of the positive nature of diversity, and for the urgent need to revive the Islamic tradition in light of contemporary understandings of sexuality and human rights. These readings have supplied alternative representations of the Lut story by rendering the wider context of the story as one that is focused on a community of men who, despite or irrespective of their sexual attraction to women or their female spouses, proceeded to use sex as a tool of violence toward and subjugation of other men. The moral of the story is thus dislodged from its traditional understanding of simply relating to the sinful and criminal nature of men having sex with men and changed to men who ordinarily have no desire for men, but who rape other men as a form of violent subjugation. The essential issue, according to this reading, is violence and coercion in sex, which its supporters argue is absent in consensual and loving same-sex relationships. Furthermore, the hadith literature is critiqued through the traditional method of both assessing the chain of narrators to a narration and the content of the narration with a view to discounting the soundness of the relevant narrations proscribing gender fluidity and prescribing death for those involved in
sodomy. These arguments also go further and venture a space for Muslim same-sex unions in Islamic law that will provide the necessary legal recognition for lawful same-sex sexual activity on the basis that contemporary understandings of same-sex relationships rest on the existence of queer Muslims who are constitutionally orientated toward members of the same sex, do not suffer from any congenital defects or psychological disorders in relation to their sexuality, and enter into romantic relationships that are based on consent, equality, and compassion (Kugle 2010; Jahangir and Abdullatif 2016; and El Menyawi 2012). The two main principles governing this novel understanding of romantic relationships are that the ethics of such relationships must be in accordance with one’s inherent sexual disposition and gender identity and/or that sex and gender identity should be irrelevant to such an ethical relationship (Kugle 2010; Ali 2016).

The arguments above are generally rejected by more conservative and neotraditional Muslim scholars. Jonathan Brown and Mobeen Vaid have published academic responses to the above arguments challenging the validity of these readings of Islamic sources and law and defending the neotraditional and conservative position on same-sex sexuality. The prohibition of same-sex sexual behaviors is deemed to be a part of those things that are commonly acknowledged as matters of the religion known by rational necessity (al-maʿlum min al-din bi al-darura), and accordingly it is not possible to depart from this established position. Furthermore, the privileging of modern conceptions of inherent sexual orientations and related identities is also challenged, the reinterpretation of the Lut story (which is pejoratively termed “revisionist”) is critiqued for its inadequacy in aligning with the historical scholarly consensus, and the critique of the hadith literature is found to be lacking in rigor and, therefore, not persuasive (Brown 2017; Vaid 2017).

There is a general unwillingness among the normative representatives of the Islamic discursive tradition and the wider Muslim community, both in Muslim-majority countries and in minority contexts, to open up a dignified space for queer Muslims within the wider Muslim community and its institutions, even though some Muslim scholars and laypeople in liberal democratic countries may support a civic space that provides equal recognition to queer people and attends to their needs. As for Muslim-majority countries, criminal sanctions for same-sex behavior, particularly sodomy, continue to be a part of the penal code in most countries—sometimes a relic of colonial rule. (Same-sex sexual activity is legal in a minority of countries, such as Turkey, Kosovo, and Indonesia except the province of Aceh, but this legal structure does not necessarily reflect local political and social attitudes.) Equality and protection from discrimination for sexual minorities have not been fully achieved. In some countries, there is no law against same-sex sexual conduct, but other laws—such as laws banning “unnatural” sex or public morality and decency laws—are sometimes used to clamp down on LGBTQ populations, and, in some instances, the legal status is ignored. These countries include Jordan, Lebanon, Bahrain, Iraq, Azerbaijan, and Kyrgyzstan. There is no clear divide between Sunni and Shiʿa. Historically in South Asia and the Middle East, Sunnis and Shiʿas have had the same social and legal attitudes regarding
same-sex sexual conduct and people who have exhibited same-sex desires, or who have experienced gender dysphoria.

Southeast Asia and South Asia have long traditions of people who have traversed beyond the neat gender binary, and these people, who in current parlance may be termed “trans,” embody and act out gender in ways that are both continuous with an established heritage and being molded by the experiences of modern Asian societies that consistently place such bodies on the margins. Nonetheless, these societies (such as Pakistan, India, Indonesia, and Iran) continue to provide some minimum social accommodation or legal protections for gender-fluid or trans individuals, including social or legal recognition of either a third gender, or of gender-reassignment medical procedures. In 2018 Pakistan’s parliament passed a law guaranteeing the right of trans persons to legally self-identify as male, female, or both, and prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity. Another example is Iran, where there is some social and legal accommodation of trans identities, including state-sanctioned or legally recognized medical procedures to change a person’s sex. The contemporary attitude toward trans identities in Iran has its origins in Islamic jurisprudence (both classical and more recent iterations of Islamic law), as well as in understandings of sex and sexuality that came about during the twentieth century as a result of the intersection of various national and transnational discursive, intellectual, ideological, and social trajectories, such as the lived realities of people, activism, assumptions of family life, psychology, and criminology (Najmabadi 2014). In some ways, this accommodation in Iran cuts both ways. It is both a recognition and accommodation of trans bodies and identities, and, at the same time, it can also be construed as an effort to “heteronormativize” people who have same-sex desires or participate in same-sex practices (but who do not necessarily identify as trans) in a country that officially and vehemently rejects homosexuality and metes out strict sanction for those who are convicted of same-sex sexual activity, particularly male anal penetrative sex.

The historical record and contemporary reality suggest that although it is convenient to talk of Islam and homosexuality in stark terms, the case lends itself to more nuance and complexity, depending on how the question is framed and what constitutes the realm of Islamic authenticity. Sexuality and Islam are constructed and reconstructed at the intersection of various epistemological, political, and social trajectories. Nationalism, religious polarization and politicization, postcolonial and anti-imperialist discourses, cultural specificities, social class, and views on gender all influence the way in which the Islamic tradition can be said to either accommodating or oppositional toward same-sex sexuality and gender-bending. The execution of harsh corporal sanctions relating to alleged sexual crimes under self-declared Islamic regimes such as the Taliban and the Islamic State constitutes an example of performances that manifest Islam as an autocratic legal and political ideology in opposition to secular and liberal forms of governance, including illiberal wars fought and occupations undertaken by Western liberal governments. In other contexts, the retention and, at times, enactment of laws against men
who have sex with men (for example, in Indonesian Aceh, Iran, Pakistan, Malaysia, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia) and fierce debates in minority Muslim contexts on the subject demonstrate a larger struggle among Muslims for what Islam is, which frequently takes place on the plane of sexuality and gender.

SEE ALSO Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; Homosexual Acts in Shariʿa; ISIS Gay Trials; Islam in Africa South of the Sahara; Maghreb: Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors; Christianity; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Judaism; Shifting Sexual Norms in Nineteenth-Century Iran; Transgender Muslims; Transgendered Subjectivities in Contemporary Iran

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Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Judaism

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Perspectives on homosexual behavior and gender variance in Jewish traditions.

Judaism as a religious system centers on acts, not beliefs. Jewish law, or halacha, focuses more on what people do than what they think. Judaism proscribes behavior, not feelings, especially public behaviors that might threaten the social system. Jewish sexual regulation is thus focused on specific acts.

Historical Context

Judaism was one of the first major religions to codify prohibitions on same-sex sexual relations. Early Jewish restrictions were narrowly focused on anal sex between men, referenced by the Hebrew phrase mishkav zachar, or “the ‘lying’ of a male.” Although other forms of male-male sex were not permitted, they were not explicitly restricted beyond more general prohibitions on nonprocreative sexual acts. Sex between women is not mentioned in the Torah and rarely surfaced as a concern among the early Rabbinic commentators on Judaism’s sacred texts.

This ban on anal sex between men may have helped the emerging Jewish people distinguish themselves from neighboring cultures of the ancient Mediterranean and Near East. Many of the cultures against which Judaism defined itself tacitly approved of or actively celebrated and ritualized same-sex erotic interactions, including anal sex, between men or between men and adolescent boys. Same-sex interactions were central to the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome, but there is also evidence of same-sex eroticism in ancient Mesopotamia, particularly among the Babylonians, Assyrians, and Sumerians, and in ancient Canaan, although the details vary considerably across these cultures. These ancient sexual systems generally focused not on the sex of the participants but on power relations defined by the age differences between partners, relative social positions, and the specific sexual acts involved. The Jewish ban, even after it was later explicitly extended beyond mishkav zachar, similarly centers on specific sexual acts. Even in the contemporary world, Judaism does not prohibit “homosexuality.” Halacha does not concern itself with a person’s sexual orientation or identity.

By the first few centuries of the common era, the Jewish ban on anal sex between men had
become so routinized and such a part of Jewish practice that the rabbis who wrote the great corpus of Rabbinic literature—the Talmud and the Mishnah—noted that Jews need not take extra precautions to prevent social intimacy between men that might lead to sex because “Jews are not suspected of mishkav zachar” (Babylonian Talmud, Kiddushin 82a), unlike the men of Rome and other cultures with which the rabbis were familiar. Beyond some minor discussions of male-male sex acts in Rabbinic literature, there is very little historical evidence of same-sex acts among Jews prior to the late 1800s, outside of areas under Islamic rule.

In medieval Spain (the Iberian Peninsula had been conquered by Islamic forces in the eighth century CE), such noted Jewish writers as Samuel ha-Nagid (993–1055 or 1056), Moses ibn Ezra (c. 1060–c. 1139), Judah haLevi (c. 1075–1141), and Solomon ibn Gabirol (c. 1022–c. 1070) produced poems with stylized and veiled homoerotic references to young men and adolescent boys, often referred to as fawns or gazelles—sevi in Hebrew (Roth 1982). Whether these poems reflected the lived reality of Jewish sexual activity in medieval Spain or were instead exercises in poetic mimicry of Arabic tropes and poetic devices remains contested. Unlike some of the Arabic Muslim poets that these Hebrew poets may have been imitating, the erotic elements are subtle enough to have been largely ignored or played down until recent decades, when scholars brought renewed interest to the homoerotic aspects of this body of work.

There is more available evidence of the lived reality of same-sex sexuality among Jews from the Ottoman Empire as early as the sixteenth century. Same-sex intimacy between men, although strongly denounced under Islamic law, as under halacha, was quietly tolerated within certain limited contexts for much of the period of Ottoman rule. As with the sexual systems of ancient Greece and Rome, such sexual expressions were governed by hierarchies of age and power that saw the penetrative, or “active,” partner as virile, whether the sexual partner was a woman, an adolescent boy, or an adult male. In Jewish records from the period, such acts are noted as deviant, but no more so than any other sexual misconduct, such as incest, rape, or adultery, and were no more concerning than many other acts prohibited by halacha.

Given the relative tolerance for such sexual expression in the Ottoman world up until the nineteenth century, Ottoman Jews saw no reason to presume such behavior was particularly abnormal, even if it violated Jewish law. But because it violated Jewish law, the Ottoman-based scholar Joseph Karo (1488–1575), author of the Shulchan Aruch, an authoritative compendium of Jewish law, revised the earlier Talmudic leniency that had been based on the presumption of a limited Jewish tendency toward mishkav zachar. Karo cautioned against male-male social intimacy (such as two single men sharing a bed) for fear that it might lead to male-male sex acts. While readily adopting the Shulchan Aruch, Ashkenazi, or eastern European rabbis, generally rejected Karo’s argument for such stringencies, suggesting they were perhaps necessary only for Sephardic Jews living under
Islamic rule where such acts were thought to be more common.

Jewish discussions of male-male sex acts became more frequent in central Europe (particularly in Germany and Austria) in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with the rise of sexology and psychology, both of which contributed to the creation and solidification of the homosexual/heterosexual binary that defines the modern sexual regime. Secular Jewish scientists, medical professionals, and intellectuals, such as the Austrian neurologist and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and the German physician and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935)—the latter being the cofounder in 1897 of the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee), the world’s first organization advocating on behalf of the civil rights of homosexuals, and founder in 1919 of Berlin’s Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Science)—were leaders in sexology and psychology and helped define the modern sexual regime. How their ideas spread into Judaism and halacha at the time is up for debate.

But their ideas and those of others sparked the creation of public identities around same-sex desires, which by the decades after World War II (1939–1945) threatened the long-standing heteronormative social order that Judaism aimed to preserve. Only at that point did Jewish leaders begin to speak about “homosexuality” as an identity—as opposed to same-sex sex acts—as a particularly pernicious threat to Jewish family and community. The vehemence of some Jewish critics of “homosexuality” rose in direct response to the increasing public visibility of Jews self-defining as gay and lesbian in the 1970s and 1980s. In this era, Rabbi Norman Lamm, then president of Yeshiva University, a prominent Modern Orthodox institution in the United States, called homosexuality “prima facie disgusting” (1974, 198). Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1976), an Orthodox scholar and one of the twentieth century’s leading authorities on halacha, said it was “repugnant … despicable and uncivilized.” Jewish leaders of earlier eras were certainly not tolerant of same-sex sexuality, but neither did they direct any special attention to the topic. Jewish religious leaders began their vocal religious condemnations of gay and lesbian people only after gays and lesbians began organizing and advocating for public visibility and for social and religious acceptance. By the 1970s, Orthodox rabbinic leaders in the United States and Europe, particularly from the ultra-Orthodox world, were publicly denouncing so-called gay rights bills (nondiscrimination legislation at the local, state, or national level), with some Hasidic leaders calling for herem, or banishment from the Jewish community, of vocal gay and lesbian civil rights activists. Some Orthodox families would disown their own children if they came out as gay publicly, even sitting shivah (a Jewish mourning ritual) in some cases. But in the more liberal branches of the Jewish world, engagement with homosexuality and with LGBT civil rights moved rapidly in the opposite direction, with tepid expressions of tolerance for gay Jews voiced by Reform Jewish leaders in the United States and western Europe in the early 1970s, giving way by the late 1980s and early 1990s to a general acceptance of gay Jews as part of a diverse community, and then shifting once again to the explicit welcoming of LGBT people into the liberal Jewish world by the first years of the
Although Christian traditions have long based concerns over homosexuality largely on their interpretations of the biblical story from Genesis of Sodom and Gomorrah, from which comes the word sodomy, within Judaism the focus has been primarily on the relevant verses in the third book of the Hebrew Bible, Leviticus, and on restrictions over “spilling seed.” The Jewish interpretive tradition has rarely linked the Sodom story to sexual license generally, or to same-sex sexual relations specifically. Instead, the tradition has long seen this story as primarily about inhospitality, greed, arrogance, and injustice.

In Judaism, sex between men has generally been understood as prohibited by two verses in Leviticus (18:22 and 20:13) that both reference mishkav zchar as an “abomination”—the common translation of the Hebrew toevah—and attach a punishment of death (a punishment never carried out in practice). Most contemporary Orthodox leaders consider these Levitical verses as banning all sexual activity between men. Academic scholars of Jewish texts and many non-Orthodox rabbis offer alternative interpretations. Most understand these verses as referencing only anal sex between men, whereas others suggest that the ancient cultural context of the Bible implies that the verses reference male-male rape or cultic prostitution (prohibited in Deuteronomy 23:18) and therefore should not be understood as a ban on consensual sex between adults (including consensual anal sex). For these scholars, the broadening of the ban to other male-male sexual acts was a later rabbinic innovation.

Sex between women is not prohibited in the Torah. It has long been seen, however, as a violation of Jewish law based on interpretations of other biblical verses. One example is the halachic discussion of women prohibited from marrying into Judaism’s priestly class. Based on Leviticus 21:7, a prostitute (zonah in Hebrew) was unable to marry a priest. Rabbis later debated if women who “rub against each other” (a rabbinic euphemism for female-female sexual acts) were also rendered unfit to marry priests. The mainstream halachic authorities decided they were not unfit, although such acts were indecent. Another example is the rabbinic discussion of Leviticus 18:3–4 about not following the practices of the lands of Egypt and Canaan. The rabbis suggested that one such practice was marriage between two women and marriage between two men. The great philosopher and Jewish legal scholar Maimonides (1135–1204) later added that women who “rub against each other” should also be punished for following a practice of Egypt (but he held that it does not prevent such a woman from marrying a priest). In general, the lack of a direct textual prohibition on same-sex acts between women (as well as the rabbis’ phallocentric presumptions about what defines sex) has resulted in less discussion and debate on the matter within traditional Jewish communities.
Beginning in the 1970s, as self-identified lesbian and gay Jews sought to find a place in Judaism for themselves, some of them began seeing evidence of same-sex sex acts in the biblical canon, albeit not in the Torah, the central corpus of the Hebrew Bible. They see the stories of King David and Jonathan and of Ruth and Naomi as offering models for same-sex love that can help lesbian and gay people see reflections of themselves in biblical texts. In addition, when considering the textual prohibitions on same-sex acts within the Jewish tradition, many gay and lesbian Jews argue that the distance between biblical understandings of same-sex sexuality and contemporary understandings of sexual identities is so vast that it is not clear that the biblical restrictions are even applicable to a modern sexual regime entirely alien to the biblical worldview.

Transgender People

On the question of how to respond to transgender people, Jewish tradition cites biblical verses prohibiting cross-dressing and bodily mutilation, with specific references to castration, thus seeming to ban sex reassignment surgery (SRS) and body modifications more generally. But as with the sexual prohibitions noted above, the exact meaning or applicability of these Jewish legal limits to modern contexts is debated. Scholars offer variant interpretations of the meaning and intent of the ban on cross-dressing, noting loopholes contained within traditional texts. Likewise, Jewish law contains mechanisms for creating exceptions to legal parameters when human life is at stake—the principle in halacha of pikuach nefesh, rooted in the verse in Leviticus 18:5 that proclaims “You shall keep My laws and My rules, by the pursuit of which man shall live.” Psychiatrists and advocates for transgender inclusion note that cross-dressing or SRS may be essential for the health and well-being of transgender individuals and that, thus, these legal exceptions must be invoked.

Contemporary Perspectives

Judaism has no central body universally recognized as an authority over Jewish beliefs, practices, or structures. Some Jewish communities ordain openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender rabbis and celebrate sexual and gender diversity, whereas in other communities, Jewish leaders actively denounce homosexuality and demand clear boundaries and distinctive roles for women and men.

The branches of Judaism labeled “Orthodox,” “ultra-Orthodox,” “Hasidic,” or “traditional” understand themselves to be strictly following halacha and therefore generally have a negative relationship to public displays of same-sex sexuality. Most Sephardic Jews (descended from the Jews of medieval Spain) and Mizrahi Jews (who trace their ancestry to such Middle Eastern countries as Yemen, Iran, and Iraq) are part of the Orthodox or traditional Jewish worlds. Those labeled “progressive” or “liberal” maintain a more flexible or adaptive relationship to halacha and religious traditions. These branches of Judaism
include the Reform movement, Progressive Judaism (as Reform Judaism is generally called outside North America), Liberal Judaism (in the United Kingdom), the Reconstructionist movement, Renewal Judaism, and Secular Humanism. The Conservative movement (called Masorti Judaism outside the United States) straddles this Orthodox/Progressive divide by framing itself as bound by halacha, but a halacha responsive to the human condition as currently understood.

Beyond this very general division between Orthodox and Progressive Judaism, because of Judaism’s decentralized structure, Jewish communal attitudes toward LGBT people often reflect national, regional, and local norms among non-Jews in their home communities. Thus, Jewish communities in cities or regions known for large LGBT populations or strong support for LGBT civil rights tend to be more liberal on LGBT issues than their counterparts, regardless of denomination, in places with weaker support for LGBT civil rights.

**Orthodox/Traditional Judaism** Starting in the first decade of the twenty-first century, some Orthodox rabbis and communal leaders began speaking publicly in support of civil rights for LGBT people and for treating LGBT Jews with dignity and respect. Other Orthodox leaders reject such calls for inclusion, arguing that because halacha prohibits same-sex sexual activity and strictly regulates male and female gender roles, the affirmation of LGBT people threatens traditional Jewish practice. Some ultra-Orthodox leaders encourage therapy to change same-sex attraction (an approach rejected by most leading mental health experts), a hotly contested topic within Orthodox circles.

Steven Greenberg became the first openly gay Orthodox rabbi after coming out in 1999. In 2004 he published *Wrestling with God and Men: Homosexuality in the Jewish Tradition*, exploring the textual basis for Orthodox Judaism’s relationship to gay and lesbian people. In 2001 the filmmaker Sandi Simcha DuBowski released the documentary *Trembling before G-d*, which featured the stories of nine gay and lesbian Orthodox Jews, including Rabbi Greenberg, along with interviews with key Orthodox rabbis and communal leaders. The film sparked worldwide conversations on homosexuality within Orthodox communities and contributed to shifting the perspectives of many Orthodox leaders toward more compassion for the difficulties Orthodox gay and lesbian Jews face when trying to maintain their commitment to Judaism.

On the inclusion of transgender Jews, most Orthodox communities take a case-by-case basis approach. Orthodox leaders generally prohibit SRS before such surgery has taken place, but in cases where it has already taken place, Orthodox leaders sometimes allow transgender Jews who have had SRS to participate in communal life, with some referencing a minority legal opinion from the 1970s by Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg (1915–2006), a widely respected Israeli authority on medical issues and Jewish law, in which he argued that “the external genitalia that are visible are the ones that determine gender for [Jewish
"law]" (quoted in Rabinowitz 2003). When transgender Jews participate in Orthodox communities with the support of rabbinic leaders, it is generally understood that they should do so discreetly, conforming to communal norms for gendered dress and behavior.

**Conservative Judaism** Conservative/Masorti Judaism integrates traditional observance of Jewish law with modern ethical and moral sensibilities, scientific inquiry, and engagement with critical scholarship of sacred texts. Conservative Jews make up the second-largest group of affiliated Jews in the United States. The movement’s leadership in the United States has encouraged Conservative synagogues to welcome LGBT Jews as members since the 1980s. But on the question of religious practice and Jewish law, Conservative communities have long maintained a more restrictive stance on same-sex sexual acts, ordination of LGBT rabbis, and same-sex unions. Official statements on LGBT issues have come from the Committee on Jewish Law and Standards (CJLS) of the movement’s Rabbinical Assembly. In 1992 the CJLS consensus was to prohibit both the ordination of LGBT people as rabbis and cantors, and the officiating of Conservative clergy at same-sex unions.

In 2006 the CJLS affirmed two separate legal papers with an equal number of votes. One urged the movement to maintain the 1992 status quo. The other reversed the 1992 positions and paved the way for Conservative rabbinical schools to ordain openly gay and lesbian rabbis, and to allow clergy to officiate at same-sex unions. The movement’s two US rabbinical seminaries quickly changed their policies to allow gay and lesbian rabbinical students. (Admission for openly bisexual and transgender students came a number of years later.) The Masorti seminary in Israel shifted its policy to allow gay and lesbian rabbinical students in 2012.

In 2003 the CJLS approved a paper on the status of transsexuals, concluding that individuals who have undergone SRS, and whose sex reassignment has been recognized by civil authorities, are considered to have changed their sex status according to Jewish law (Rabinowitz 2003). In 2017 the CJLS revisited that 2003 paper and approved an updated paper on transgender Jews and halacha that greatly expanded Conservative understanding of and respect for transgender people, including a commitment to recognizing the gender identity and pronouns preferred by transgender individuals, regardless of medical or legal intervention (Sharzer 2017).

**Reform Judaism** Since the 1990s, Reform Judaism has been the largest Jewish movement in the United States and is characterized by a strong emphasis on social justice, individual autonomy in the interpretation of the Torah, and gender equality. The majority of Reform congregations worldwide are in the United States, and most Reform institutions embrace LGBT people. In 1965 the movement’s National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (founded in 1913 and once the largest Jewish women’s organization in the United States) passed a resolution deploring the harassment of homosexuals and calling for “revisions in the
criminal code as it relates to homosexuality.” This was the first resolution by a national American Jewish organization (indeed, the first in the world) to speak in favor of the rights of homosexuals—a major step by any religious organization on the subject.

In 1977 the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) passed a resolution calling for the decriminalization of homosexual acts between consenting adults and an end to discrimination against gays and lesbians. Since then, the US arm of the movement has continually supported the rights of LGBT people, both in civil and Jewish society. Leaders of Liberal Judaism in the United Kingdom have also been very vocal in favor of LGBT inclusion. Public support for LGBT people among Reform/Progressive leaders in other countries is also generally strong, although it is more tepid in socially conservative countries and largely absent in the Jewish communities of Russia and the former Soviet Union.

Leo Baeck College, the Progressive seminary in the United Kingdom, admitted its first openly gay students in 1984. In 1990 the CCAR endorsed admitting gay and lesbian Jews into Hebrew Union College (HUC; the movement's seminary) and the rabbinate, although a number of gay and lesbian rabbis received ordination prior to this 1990 decision, or came out as gay or lesbian after ordination. Germany’s Abraham Geiger College also admits gay and lesbian students. In 2003 HUC admitted its first openly transgender rabbinical student.

**Regional Differences** The United States and Israel are home to roughly 6 million Jews each, representing approximately 80 percent of world Jewry. The next-largest Jewish population, at just about 500,000, is in France, followed, in order of decreasing population, by Canada, the United Kingdom, Russia, Argentina, Germany, Australia, and Brazil. All other countries have fewer than 100,000 Jews each. Contemporary support for LGBT inclusion within the Jewish world is generally strongest and most developed in those countries where Orthodox Judaism accounts for a smaller percentage of the national Jewish population. (In the United States it is roughly 10%.) In those countries where Orthodox Judaism represents a larger share of the Jewish population—often the majority— LGBT inclusion is more controversial, as it is in those countries and communities that are more culturally conservative on LGBT civil rights in general, such as the Jewish communities of eastern Europe and Russia.

The conservative social contexts in Russia and eastern Europe discourage any movement toward tolerance for homosexuality within even Reform Jewish communities. Since Vladimir Putin's ascendance to the Russian presidency in 2000, the Russian state has encouraged a broad antigay movement within Russian society. Homophobia in Russia, commonly associated with the Russian Orthodox Church and right-wing nationalist political movements, has also been supported by the official leadership of the Jewish community in Russia, which has sparked similar responses by Jewish leaders in Belarus and Ukraine. The two competing chief rabbis of Russia, Berel Lazar (1964–) of the ultra-
Orthodox Hasidic movement, Chabad, and the Modern Orthodox Adolf Shayevich (1937–) have both publicly made strongly antigay statements. Lazar (who is strongly supported by Putin) has described efforts to hold gay pride parades in Moscow as blows to morality, indirectly giving license to the violent assaults against gay rights activists that have become common in Russia. Shayevich expressed approval of the hanging of homosexuals in Islamic countries during a 2015 interview with a popular Russian journalist. Even within the Reform movement in Russia, efforts to include gay and lesbian Jews—such as debates over officiating at weddings for gay couples—have been met with nearly uniform disapproval. In 2006 the chair of the Reform movement's national organization in Russia resigned in protest after a Reform rabbi in Moscow officiated at a union ceremony for a lesbian couple.

The perspective on LGBT rights is somewhat more open in the Jewish communities in countries in eastern Europe that are now part of the European Union, such as Hungary. With nearly 50,000 Jews (roughly the same as Mexico), Hungary has the largest Jewish community in eastern Europe beyond the borders of the former Soviet Union. A Jewish cultural center in Budapest, for example, houses a small Masorti congregation and the offices of a local gay rights group and other community organizations focused on civil rights.

Israel

Israel accounts for roughly 40 percent of the world's Jews but has a mixed record on LGBT inclusion. Civil protections for LGBT people under Israeli law are very advanced, with most civil rights protections enacted from the early 1990s forward. But support for religious inclusion of LGBT people in Judaism is relatively low compared to the United States and some other Western countries. The vast majority of Israeli Jews identify either as secular or as Orthodox/traditional; the presence of the progressive Jewish movements in Israel is small but growing. The Orthodox in Israel, like their counterparts globally, are generally negatively inclined toward public LGBT inclusion in Jewish religious life.

Secular Israelis may support Israel's pro-LGBT civil laws but often have little interest in debates over LGBT inclusion in Judaism. This split is reflected in Israel's LGBT advocacy organizations, which either are focused primarily on secular civil rights (such as the Agudah, the main national LGBT advocacy group) or are dedicated to expanding space for LGBT Jews within Orthodox Judaism. Of special note is the founding in 1997 of the Jerusalem Open House, an organization dedicated to supporting both LGBT Jews and Palestinians.

Starting in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the Israeli government began promoting its positive record on LGBT civil rights and has also created tourism marketing campaigns targeting LGBT communities. These efforts have been critiqued by activists as a form of public relations spin they have labeled “pinkwashing.” The idea behind pinkwashing is that the Israeli government cynically highlights its relatively strong record on LGBT civil rights to present itself as a cosmopolitan nation dedicated to human rights,
while playing down or sidestepping Israeli treatment of Palestinians, both within its own borders and within the occupied territories.

**LGBT Jewish Institutions**

Since the founding of the first Jewish LGBT organization in 1970, such institutions have proliferated around the world. The first LGBT synagogue, Beth Chayim Chadashim, was founded in Los Angeles in 1972 (at first defining itself as a “gay synagogue” and only later shifting to “LGBT”) and quickly affiliated with Reform Judaism (an earlier attempt to found a gay synagogue in 1970 in Brooklyn was unsuccessful). Perhaps most surprising is that the Reform Jewish establishment, which oversees applications for membership, accepted this gay synagogue’s application for membership so readily. In that same year, Chutzpah (the Yiddish word for “audacity”), a social group for gay Jews in San Francisco (later renamed Achvah, a Hebrew word for “declaration”) was founded, as well as the Jewish Gay Group in London. Although LGBT Jewish organizations can be found globally, LGBT synagogues (versus LGBT Jewish social or cultural groups) are largely limited to the United States, where over two dozen once existed in the 1990s. A few small LGBT synagogues existed briefly in Canada and Europe.

In 1975 a conference of gay Jewish organizations brought together representatives from Jewish gay groups as a gay Jewish response to the 1975 vote of the United Nations equating Zionism with racism. This informal umbrella grouping eventually became the World Congress of GLBT Jews, acting as an information- and resource-sharing network for Jewish LGBT organizations worldwide; still later, it changed its name to the World Congress (Keshet Ga’avah). Jewish organizations that focus on education, advocacy, and organizing toward the inclusion of LGBT Jews in Jewish life can be found throughout the Jewish world, with the bulk in the United States. Keshet, founded in Boston in 1996, became the largest such organization worldwide following its 2010 merger with Jewish Mosaic (founded in 2003 as the first national organization in the US dedicated to changing Jewish policy on LGBT Jews).

**LGBT Jewish Culture**

Any list of prominent figures in the arts, culture, and politics in the United States and Europe would include countless LGBT Jews, among them Marcel Proust, Gertrude Stein, Leonard Bernstein, Susan Sontag, Maurice Sendak, Allen Ginsberg, Jacob Israel de Haan, Claude Cahun (née Lucy Schwob), Emma Goldman, Harvey Milk, and Stephen Fry among many, many others. Most of these figures, though, rarely specifically addressed the intersections of Judaism and LGBT identities in their art or work.

One of the earliest cultural products dealing with a modern gay theme within a Jewish context was the Yiddish play *God of Vengeance*, written by the Polish novelist and dramatist
Sholem Asch (1880–1957) in 1907. Taking the world of Yiddish theater by storm, the play told the story of a Jewish brothel owner and his daughter, Rivkele, who falls in love with Manke, a young prostitute working in her father’s basement. A popular and critical success in Europe, the play was translated and performed in Russian, German, Polish, Italian, Czech, and Norwegian. When an English-language version premiered on Broadway in New York City in 1923, the cast was arrested and prosecuted on obscenity charges.

In 1923 the Czech poet and essayist Jiří Mordechai Langer (1894–1943) published *Die Erotik der Kabbala* (The eroticism of Kabbalah), an exploration of the erotic, and homoerotic, potential at the heart of Jewish mysticism and within Judaism. Langer went on to produce a body of often overlooked Hebrew poetry with homosexual themes.

The first novel to include Jewish and homosexual main characters was *Singermann* by the prolific American writer Myron Brinig (1896–1991). Published in 1929 and widely lauded by critics at the time, the novel, and its sequel, *This Man Is My Brother* (1932), focused on a Jewish immigrant family in Montana (a stand-in for Brinig’s own family of Romanian Jewish immigrants who settled in Butte, Montana) and included one character who was explicitly homosexual and another who was sexually ambiguous. Brinig’s works were widely circulated in England and Germany, in addition to the United States.

After Brinig’s novels and Asch’s play, LGBT Jewish themes appeared sporadically in artistic and literary products throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century. Most such works, such as the novel *Wasteland* (1946) by Jo Sinclair (1913–1995) or the poem *Howl*...
(1956) by Allen Ginsberg (1926–1997), were created by artists who themselves identified as LGBT. In other cases, artists lived heterosexual lives but wrote with empathy about LGBT characters, such as the Nobel Prize–winning author Isaac Bashevis Singer, who wrote short stories with lesbian characters, as well as “Yentl the Yeshiva Boy,” dealing with transvestism (the inspiration for the 1983 Barbra Streisand film Yentl).

In addition, Jewish and non-Jewish sex researchers and psychologists have published studies of LGBT people that often include Jews. These works include George Henry’s study on “sex variants” from 1941, Alfred Kinsey’s study of sexuality in the human male from 1948, and Israel Gerber’s account of rabbinic counseling of a homosexual in Man on a Pendulum from 1955.

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Ultra-Orthodox Jews Protest a Gay Pride Parade in Jerusalem, 2008. The ultra-Orthodox branch of Judaism is particularly vocal in its objection to gay rights, publicly demonstrating against nondiscrimination legislation and calling for herem (banishment from the Jewish community) of gay and lesbian activists.

Within the world of film, The Boys in the Band (the 1970 adaptation of the 1968 play by the same name) introduced American audiences to the character of Harold, the self-described “thirty-two-year-old, ugly, pock-marked Jew fairy” played by Leonard Frey. Torch Song Trilogy (1988), written by and starring Harvey Fierstein (1954–), based on Fierstein’s 1982 Tony Award–winning play of the same name, brought a gay Jewish drag queen to movie screens worldwide. In the 1990s and first decade of the twenty-first century, multiple other independent and documentary films— such as Aimee and Jaguar (1999), Paragraph 175
(2000), Kissing Jessica Stein (2001), and Eyes Wide Open (2009)— included LGBT Jewish characters.

Multiple Israeli films developed story lines focused on LGBT Jewish characters; one example is the awardwinning Yossi & Jagger, a 2002 drama from the acclaimed director Eytan Fox (1964–) about a love affair between two Israeli soldiers serving along the Israel-Lebanon border. That film was a darling of art house cinemas worldwide and of the international Jewish film festival circuit, sparking conversations on LGBT and Israeli identities in Jewish communities globally. Fox, often working with his romantic and creative partner, Gal Uchovsky, has continued to produce films and television series focused on gay characters that have won critical acclaim in Israel and worldwide, including Walk on Water (2004), The Bubble (2006), Tamid oto chalom (retitled Mary Lou when released in the United States and the United Kingdom in 2011), Yossi (a 2012 follow-up to Yossi & Jagger), and Bananot (2013).

Transgender Jewish characters were less visible until the 2014 launch of the awardwinning Amazon series Transparent, centered on the transgender journey of the show’s main character, Maura Pfefferman (portrayed by Jeffrey Tambor). Jewish gay, lesbian, and queer characters have become increasingly common in mainstream films and television, but until Transparent, transgender bodies had been nearly invisible in Jewish culture, Jewish-themed media, and Jewish texts. Transparent has been called the most Jewish series in contemporary media, but it is also among the queerest.

SEE ALSO Anti-Semitism and Zionism; Anti-Semitism in Europe; The Bubble (2006; Eytan Fox); Einayim Pkuhot (2009; Haim Tabakman); Pinkwashing; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Christianity; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Islam

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Sònia Rescalvo was born in Cuenca, Spain, in 1946. At the age of sixteen, she ran away from her family so she could live her gender identity as a transsexual woman. Around the 1970s she arrived in Barcelona, where she worked as a cabaret dancer in the theaters on Avenida Parallel. By 1991 she was homeless and working as a prostitute, with no contact with her family.

In the early AM hours of 6 October 1991, Rescalvo and her friend Doris Romero, also a
transsexual, were sleeping in the bandstand of Ciutadella Park in Barcelona. Around 3:00 AM, six neo-Nazis happened on them and, after seeing that they were transsexuals, beat them up. Rescalvo died from a barrage of kicks to the head and a blow to the chest with a stick. Romero was badly injured but survived.

In 1992 the Mossos d’Esquadra (the police corps of Catalonia) detained the six men who murdered Rescalvo, all of whom were sixteen or seventeen years of age. They were accused of the crimes of premeditated murder, attempted murder, and grievous bodily harm. In 1994 the trial was held in the Provincial Court of Barcelona. The detainees were sentenced, collectively, to 310 years in prison. Subsequently, in 1997, Spain’s Supreme Court reduced the sentences by half and changed the offense from murder to manslaughter.

The brutal murder of Rescalvo and the police repression of sex workers in the context of the urban reforms prior to the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona led to the creation of the Col·lectiu de Transsexuals de Catalunya (Catalan Group of Transsexuals), after eleven years without any association of transsexual people in Barcelona. For Bea Espejo, founder of the association, Rescalvo’s murder and the police repression marked a “turning point” because “although they are two very different events, they highlighted how the ailment of prejudice affected or could affect our lives” (2008, 53; translation by author). The police investigation was a turning point for the treatment of hate crimes and discrimination in Catalonia, leading to the creation of a public prosecutor’s office that specialized in LGBTphobia, the setting up of an antidiscrimination office in the framework of LGBT activism, and a greater awareness about this topic among the media. (It was the first case of LGBT-phobia with a real media impact in Catalonia.) As a consequence, the number of reports of LGBT-phobic crimes increased from that point on.

In 1993 LGBT activists erected a commemorative plaque in the bandstand where Rescalvo was killed. In 2013, under pressure from activists, the Barcelona City Council renamed the bandstand “Glorieta de la Transsexual Sonia” (Bandstand Dedicated to the Transsexual Sonia), positioning a new and more visible plaque. Among other transphobic aggressions and murders that remain invisible, the memory of Rescalvo's murder is still vivid because of the persistent efforts of LGBT activists. Once a year people gather to honor her memory in the bandstand named after her, one of the few public monuments in the world devoted to the memory of a victim of transphobia.

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The development and culture of various resorts around the world that cater particularly to an LGBTQ+ clientele.

LGBTQ+ resorts are bounded geographical areas that are predominantly occupied and visited by LGBTQ+ persons. They vary in size, density (relative to their general, “straight” counterparts), and services offered. Such areas often contain concentrations of bars, dance clubs, saunas, cinemas, LGBTQ+-only accommodations, beauty salons, and beaches catering to an LGBTQ+ clientele. LGBTQ+ resorts provide a point of community where like-minded people come together and share a feeling of fellowship and common interests, as well as a sense of belonging and solidarity (Vorobjovas-Pinta 2018). Furthermore, LGBTQ+ resorts provide a space where LGBTQ+ people can feel safe from discrimination, bullying, and animosity (Vorobjovas-Pinta and Hardy 2016). Lastly, LGBTQ+ resorts attract people who are interested in romantic relationships and sexual encounters (Melián-González et al. 2011). Historically, many such resorts were known to have spots for outdoor cruising and “recreational sex” opportunities (e.g., the Dunes at Fire Island) (Hughes 2006; Newton 1993).

Gay travel has a long history. For many generations privileged gay men, or men who desire sex with men, have traveled across the globe seeking sex and excitement; early examples were northern European men’s grand tours seeking sex in Mediterranean countries and North Africa (Aldrich 1993; Boone 1995; Hildebrand 2013; Holcomb and Luongo 1996; Hughes 2006; Vorobjovas-Pinta and Hardy 2016). Homosexuality has long been associated with itinerant men, and due to societal censure, law enforcement, and a fluid population, historically, gay venues and beats likewise did not remain rooted for long (Hildebrand 2013).

Gordon Waitt and Kevin Markwell (2006) have observed that resort towns for gay men, such as Fire Island Pines and Cherry Grove developed in symbiosis with large nearby cities—in this case, New York City. Other world-famous gay resorts have emerged in the seaside areas close to big metropolitan cities, including Brighton near London, Sitges near Barcelona, Itararé-São Vicente near São Paulo, Provincetown near Boston, Russian River near San Francisco, and Palm Springs near Los Angeles. In other cases, they have arisen within or adjacent to seaside metropolitan areas themselves, blurring the boundaries
between resort and "gayborhood." These include Miami Beach in Miami, North Bondi Beach in Sydney, and Clifton in Cape Town.

Inland places such as the Rainbow Mountain Resort in Pennsylvania and Guerneville and Palm Springs in California extend the LGBTQ+ resort beyond the seaside to the mountains and deserts. In addition to year-round LGBTQ+ resorts, numerous ski resorts host "gay ski weeks" to cater to an overlapping clientele; Queenstown in New Zealand, Aspen in Colorado, and Arosa in Switzerland are notable examples. Often, gay ski weeks coincide with local pride events, where LGBTQ+ locals and travelers enjoy winter sports and the après snow culture in an inclusive environment (Pitts 1997; Thorpe 2012).

Gay cruises also could be considered a form of LGBTQ+ resort. They traverse destinations that might not welcome a fixed LGBTQ+ resort, and this has led to tensions in the Cayman Islands and Jamaica, for example (Waitt and Markwell 2006).

LGBTQ+ resorts are strongly associated with male travelers, but there are resorts and travel destinations that specifically cater to lesbian guests. Examples include Olivia’s all-lesbian resort weeks and cruises, Springhill Farm in Ohio, Pagoda on the Beach in Florida, Bambu Lesbian Resort in Spain, Lesvos island in Greece, Asheville in North Carolina, and Northampton in Massachusetts.

**Prominent LGBTQ+ Resort Towns**

The dynamics that shaped American LGBTQ+ resort towns—Provincetown, Massachusetts; Fire Island Pines and Cherry Grove in New York; and Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, among others—were very similar to those that shaped such more famous urban LGBTQ+ enclaves as the Castro neighborhood in San Francisco (Krahulik 2006). These places offered an alternative to heteronormative everyday life for the performance of sexualities on weekends and summer breaks. First an artist’s colony, Fire Island gained its reputation as a gay men’s destination in the 1940s and built momentum (and a commercialized gay infrastructure) in the postwar decades, eventually abetted by the reach of gay media across the country in the 1960s (Waitt and Markwell 2006). The island’s township of Cherry Grove is of especial interest to queer studies because of the writings of Esther Newton, whose 1993 work *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America’s First Gay and Lesbian Town* sketched the community as a libertine lesbian and gay utopia, a home in an unwelcoming world. Newton’s book portrays the evolution of the Grove from an isolated gay and lesbian summer community with a few cabins to a flourishing, commercial, and highly visible LGBTQ+ town with Mafia-run discos, police raids, and endless parties.

Provincetown, along with Fire Island Pines and Cherry Grove, is one of America’s oldest LGBTQ+ resort towns. Karen Christel Krahulik (2006) outlines the racial dynamics and socioeconomic displacements that shaped and transformed the place, charting its
emergence in an unexpected exchange and alliance between Portuguese American women, then constructed as foreign, and gay men and lesbians. She traces this development to the 1930s and 1940s, and to Provincetown’s identity as an artists’ colony in earlier decades, when visitors coded as “confirmed bachelors” and “maiden ladies” from the northeastern United States, Canada, and Europe stayed in boardinghouses run out of homes in the local Portuguese community. In some cases, the relationships that formed, cultivated over years of repeat visits, became familial (Krahulik 2006). Provincetown’s emergence as an LGBTQ+ resort town was in no way incompatible with, or alien to, its other touristic identities. As Krahulik notes, “By the mid-1940s Provincetown was fast on its way to becoming a gay resort mecca—a reputation coexisting with its other incarnations as an ‘exotic’ Portuguese seaport, eclectic art colony, and quaint ‘colonial’ village” (2006, 194). Krahulik recounts the administrative and community ambivalence—even in the mid-twentieth century—with some people repulsed by the LGBTQ+ culture and others wanting to profit from it.

**HOUSEBOYS AT RESORTS**

The term *houseboy* arises out of colonial history, where colonized peoples worked in household roles in places such as Australia (Martínez and Lowrie 2009). In the United States this term was applied to the enslaved African men and former slaves who worked as domestic servants. In the gay community, a houseboy is typically a young, submissive male domestic worker who cleans, cooks, does washing, and performs other housework duties for financial compensation or their own pleasure. Erotic and/or sexual acts normally are part of the service, and often they are the primary reason for the houseboy’s employment. From the 1960s, houseboys were a traditional part of gay male culture in US resorts such as Fire Island and Provincetown, where they worked either in gay households or bed and breakfasts. College students often held these positions over the summer season. Memorializing Fire Island Pines in the 1960s, Midge Decter wrote of the “young men who had recently arrived in the East from their hometowns in the Midwest and were living temporarily under the protection of an older, or anyway more established, ‘friend’” (1980, 36).

Houseboys in these gay resorts also have been immortalized in LGBTQ+ literature and film. The 1995 film *Lie Down with Dogs*, directed by Wally White, centers on Tommie, a young man who leaves Manhattan for Provincetown, where he seeks work as a houseboy for the summer. In 2015 Dominic Ford launched a series of gay porn films, Fire Island: House Boy. Edmund White’s novel *Our Young Man* (2016) and Matthew Lopez’s two-play cycle *The Inheritance* (2018) also explore this phenomenon.

Popular gay media suggests that sometimes houseboys work for no financial reward; they are entrenched in BDSM subculture in the role of a sex slave (McKeown 2016). As illustrated in a *Gay Times* advertisement from 1996, houseboys usually are employed by older gay men who seek control in the relationship and can provide a high degree of
solvency in exchange for companionship and sexual/erotic encounters: “Strict, but caring uncle type, 46, seeks compliant nephew/houseboy type. If you're 18–30, straight acting, slim/medium build, and looking for a permanent, secure relationship, write with photo” (quoted in Thorne and Coupland 1998). Often the successful candidate can move in and live with his “employer” full time—even if just for a season—or is expected to come serve the employer on a regular basis. Houseboys have also been depicted as party promoters and entertainers in popular gay resorts such as Cherry Grove (Sunderland 2015).

This type of work is seen as temporary as well as pleasurable, as it affords the opportunity to engage in sexual encounters.

A body of research characterizes houseboys in a globalized context as predominantly from nonwhite backgrounds—mainly Asia (Eguchi 2011; Han 2005; Kong 2002). Richard Fung (2005) and Hoang Tan Nguyen (2014) have explored the long-standing paradigm of the Asian/Asian American “passive houseboy/bottom” in American cinema and pornographic film. Travis Kong (2002) and Martin Manalansan (2003) explain that the role of a houseboy is often depicted in terms of an encounter or a relationship between an older Caucasian and a younger Asian man. Such a relationship often develops during the Caucasian man’s holiday in Phuket, Bali, the Philippines, or another Asian destination (Law 2013), and it is often associated with an opportunity for the younger Asian man to gain legal access to a Western country. This suggests that the compensation for being a houseboy is not always a direct financial transaction.

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These insights provide essential context to the development of the LGBTQ+ resort town, which is in part economic. In later decades, more mainstream beach destinations tried to profit from LGBTQ+ tourism, with LGBTQ+ travel media from the 1970s charting an emerging Florida LGBT+ tourist economy. Advertisements for gay resorts and clubs in magazines of the period lured gay men to Fort Lauderdale and Key West with the promise of sun and sex (Hildebrand 2013). Briavel Holcomb and Michael Luongo (1996) note that in its more modern incarnations, LGBTQ+ travel as a sector has become especially “recession-proof.” Krahulik’s (2006) analysis foregrounds LGBTQ+ resort placemaking—that is, the repositioning and reconstruction of places around an LGBTQ+ clientele and market—which even in its earliest incarnations could cause harm and displacement in its socioeconomic effects. This reveals a tension between lines of sexuality, gender, race, and class that are still manifested in gay resorts, even as they are imagined in often utopian terms.

In the broader context of social change and progress, these resorts have been memorialized as places of historical significance by LGBTQ+ communities, although until recently, few have gained official recognition as such. The Cherry Grove Community House and Theatre,
for instance, is one of only a handful of queer sites added to the US National Register of Historic Places. In its citation of the site, the register describes the venue as part of “one of the first and, for many years, the only gay and lesbian influenced geography in the United States.” Its importance is situated in the “turbulent social and political upheavals [during] our nation’s response to the pre- and early days of the homosexual liberation movement” (National Register of Historic Places 2013).

Islands as LGBTQ+ Havens

The homosexual history of Mykonos dates to ancient Greece. Perhaps because of the idealized Hellenic past and stories portraying the island as an inclusive, open-minded, and free-spirited place, Mykonos became a gay mecca in the 1950s and 1960s, attracting travelers from northern and western Europe. By the 1970s Mykonos had a worldwide reputation for nightlife, drug culture, and sex. Pola Bousiou observes, “Mykonos became the island of freedom and of illegal substances and, as a place which mainly attracted the haute bourgeoisie, it remained for a while free of special attention from the ‘forces of law and order’” (2008, 42). Mykonos became a must-visit destination for homosexual men (Bousiou 2008; Waitt and Markwell 2006). The success of Mykonos as a gay resort is strongly associated with the arrival of Italian artist Pierro Aversa and the launch of his gay bar, Pierro’s, which offered an escape to an alternative artistic and gay culture free of prejudice, animosity, and dayto-day heteronormative realities.

Today Mykonos is known as a gay “sun, sand, and sex” destination. It offers a large variety of beaches, two of which—Super Paradise and Elia—are exclusively gay. Waitt and Markwell (2006) call Mykonos a European “clubopolis,” a gay utopia with gay club culture is at its core. Themed circuit parties are often frequented by (semi)naked gay porn stars and are infused with a cosmopolitan, loose, fun, and safe vibe. Gay pornography is linked with the reconstruction of Mykonos as a gay space that offers the possibility of having a sexual encounter with readily available, young, white, fit men: “The heteronormative is displaced through the erotic imagery of homosocial gatherings of young white men sunbathing who then participate in outdoor same-sex activities” (Waitt and Markwell 2006, 118).

Phuket is an island destination in the Andaman Sea in southern Thailand. Unlike Cherry Grove, Provincetown, and Mykonos, Phuket is not a predominantly gay resort, but it contains pockets of gay areas, including Paradise Complex in Patong. Historically, Patong is known for its nightlife, gay sex workers, and ladyboy cabaret shows. A famous Phuket gay festival takes place every April.

The majority of research on gay tourism in Phuket explores the intersection of gay tourism and the HIV/AIDS pandemic (Gallagher 2005; Khawcharoenporn et al. 2017). Phuket is indeed severely affected by HIV, where 17 to 31 percent of men who have sex with men are
infected with the virus (Khawcharoenporn et al. 2017). Phuket is perceived as a sex tourism destination where Western gay men seek casual sexual encounters with young Thai men; in the same manner, it is also viewed as a heterosexual sex tourism hotspot. Chris Beyrer elucidates the difference between the homosexual and heterosexual commercial sex scenes in Phuket, and in Thailand in general: “The [male] workers are not trafficked and not, by and large, debt-bonded. The sex is considerably more expensive, the pay better for workers. Even in the flesh trade, it’s a man’s world” (1998, 170).

A more sophisticated and Western-oriented gay scene in Phuket started to emerge in the late 1970s and early 1980s, evidenced by the proliferation of commercial gay bars, gay saunas, and discos. Peter A. Jackson and Gilbert H. Herdt note that this brought a degree of cultural clash, as Western patrons sometimes misunderstood “the willingness of barboys to please and ‘take care’ of their customers as indicating a similar degree of liberality in the world outside the gay bar” (1995, 13). Like Mykonos, Phuket today is marketed as a sun, sand and sex destination, but there are no gay or nude beaches because public nudity is not socially accepted or even legal in Thailand (Gay Patong 2017). Sex is usually offered for money. The gay destination website Gay Patong suggests,

> Please remember that most of the Thai-men you will meet in the bars of Paradise Complex are working men and your satisfaction and happiness is their income. If you talk with a man for a while in the bar, buy him a drink, leave him a tip, or both. Because of the lack of an institutionalized pension system in Thailand young working generations usually have the burden to provide support for their old parents and sometimes extended families. (GAY PATONG 2017)

Phuket is also known for its ladyboy culture (Jackson 1995; Kang 2012). The term ladyboy refers to trans women and is primarily used in Southeast Asia (Kang 2012). It is often taken to be an English translation of the Thai term kathoey, which is not a term commonly used by trans Thais themselves. Ladyboys are associated with cabaret performances, beauty pageants, bar-based sex work, and tourism. In the past, the assumption was that gay tourism consumers in Phuket were farangs (white people), but there is an increasing amount of research exploring intra-Asian gay travel and cultural exchange. For example, Dredge Byung'chu Kang’s research explores the impact of a significant intra-Asian gay travel market, locating Bangkok as the “heart of gay Asia”; Kang situates Thailand “as a zone of interaction between South East and East Asia” (2017, 197, 203).

SEE ALSO Gay European Tourism Association; Sex Tourism in Asia; Sex Tourism in Latin
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Rituals and Same-Sex and Trans Experience

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The complex concept of “ritual” and its expressions in various LGBTQ+ communities globally.

Ritual is, as Elizabeth A. Povinelli has provocatively suggested, “arguably the heart of culture and cosmology in the classical anthropological imaginary as well as in mass media accounts of cultural difference” (2006, 122). As an object that has continually sustained scholarly attention, ritual and its theorization have fostered both the development of and fruitful cross-fertilization between several academic disciplines—namely, sociocultural anthropology, religious studies, and the relatively budding field of performance studies. One of the most influential arguments about ritual—that it proceeds through phases that correspond to shifts in an individual’s life stage, first termed “rites of passage” by Arnold van Gennep ([1909] 1960)—became a mainstay within classical anthropological theory. Anthropologists interested in symbolism, perhaps most famously the British sociocultural anthropologists Mary Douglas (1975) and Victor Turner (1969), later drew on van Gennep’s work. Armed with structural-functionalist theories that addressed the complex ways in which social institutions, including ritual practices, uphold social structures and norms, and theories of symbolism that attempted to uncover the deeper meaning behind said rituals, anthropologists have contended that, like language, ritual is both universal and unique to the human experience. This entry first provides a cursory genealogical examination of how ritual has been understood in relation to same-sex desire/behavior and gender nonconformity, both as ritual participants and officiants, and in its alliance with the ongoing articulation of an anthropology of gender and sexuality. Thereafter, the entry considers what role ritual practice plays in sustaining and transforming contemporary North American LGBTQ+ publics, countering the fixed ethnocartographic gaze placed on the non-West in older literature (Weston 1993).

“Ritualized Homosexuality” in Melanesia and Its Critics

Ethnographic accounts of “ritualized homosexuality” composed one branch of early literature in the then fledgling subdiscipline of the “anthropology of homosexuality” in the 1980s (Blackwood 1986). Scholarship on Melanesian male initiation rites in Papua New Guinea became a particularly powerful reminder to the West that same-sex sexual behaviors needed to be disentangled from identity categories, the argument famously
articulated by Michel Foucault (1978) in his charting of the creation of the modern “homosexual” type. The most celebrated work on “ritualized homosexuality,” a category that described the process through which semen was transferred orally or anally (depending on the culture) by unmarried men to their young male initiates, was undoubtedly Gilbert H. Herdt’s seminal Guardians of the Flutes (1981). Herdt’s work became a paradigmatic case study in how gender and sexuality were conceptualized differently outside of the West, and it was regularly taught in university courses on the anthropology of gender and sexuality. That work was followed by Herdt’s edited volume Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia (1984). In its introduction, Herdt scrupulously depicts how ritualized homosexuality fit within the gendered symbolic worlds of the Sambia (pseudonym) people of Papua New Guinea with whom he had conducted ethnographic fieldwork. Herdt further explains his decision to use the term ritualized homosexuality “despite its ambiguous and exotic connotations” in order to denote that these encounters are often connected to male initiation rites, maintain “religious overtones,” and often involve “age-ranked, asymmetrical status relationships” (1984, 6–7).

While ritualized same-sex semen transfer between men in Melanesia has since largely ended, partly as a result of missionization and Westernization, the debates surrounding the canonization of an anthropological literature in ritualized homosexuality persisted long after. Among the most often cited scholars who contested the “ritualized homosexuality” framework, Deborah A. Elliston argued that it assumes a Western notion of both the “erotic” and the “sexual,” treating both as “pancultural or precultural universals” (1995, 861). Erotic acts that may be deemed “sexual” and, thus, “homosexual” by the anthropologist, Elliston contended, may not be conceived in such a way by their interlocutors. Elliston pushed Herdt’s (1984) social-constructivist critique of “homosexuality” to include deconstruction of the very category of “sexuality” itself. Melanesian “semen practices” thus reveal more about the resedimentation of age- and gender-based hierarchies through the ritual exchange of bodily substances than the “sexual” or the “erotic” necessarily. Therefore, while Herdt (1984) recognized that what he termed “ritual homosexuality” could not, and indeed should not, be mapped onto contemporary Western constructs of homosexuality, critical interventions on the part of Elliston (1995), Bruce M. Knauf (2003), and others effectively showed how, by rhetorically framing these exchanges as “ritualized homosexuality,” Western anthropologists reinstated their own assumptions about male same-sex desire—namely, that semen practices should be seen as “erotic” simply “on the basis of their resemblance to the Western domain of the ‘sexual’” (Elliston 1995, 862).

Two-Spirit, Hijra, and Other Figures

Alongside ritualized male same-sex bodily encounters in Melanesia, two “queer” subject positions regularly described in terms of their ritual practice and expertise—the hijra
identity category of South Asia and the two-spirit people of Native North America—have since become anthropological figures in their own right. In the late 1980s and early 1990s a wave of important revisionist literature emerged around two-spirit precolonial histories, many of which celebrated their roles as shamans or ritual officiants, at the same time that a nascent “gay/lesbian anthropology” was developing (Williams 1986). Scholars drew on historical records and archives, but also earlier anthropological scholarship that acknowledged how two-spirit persons were warmly accepted in their respective societies, and how they were understood in relation to ritual and religious life (Kroeber 1940; Devereux 1937). As with literature on “ritualized homosexualities,” this research on two-spirit identities was later criticized, perhaps most poignantly by Evan B. Towle and Lynn M. Morgan (2002), who argued that revisionist scholarship romanticized the experiences of two-spirit persons and other “third-gender” categories and, furthermore, falsely imagined them as residing wholly outside of societal constructs of the gender binary. Scott Lauria Morgensen also challenged this earlier academic work, which was largely produced by white gay/lesbian scholars (mostly anthropologists). Morgensen questioned the ways in which the two-spirit figure and its authenticating ritual expertise became an “anthropological object” through which “white settler descendants” in North America could achieve a sense of national “belonging” on otherwise indigenous land (2011, 63).

The idea that gender-variant and same-sex–desiring natives were celebrated for their difference and that this difference provided them with unique connections to religious and ritual life (whether valid or not) was and continues to be a compelling source of inspiration for North American queer settler descendants, perhaps most provocatively illustrated in the Radical Faerie movement. Harry Hay (1979, 1980) and other early homophile activists originally organized Radical Faerie communities as a way to affirm and celebrate their same-sex desires and male effeminacy. During healing retreats, usually held on rural land outside of big cities where these homophile movements and their members were based, Radical Faeries (predominantly white gay men) drew on and appropriated Native American rituals and spiritual practices. Their ritual retreats continue to draw crowds in the present (Morgensen 2011; Povinelli 2006). Radical Faerie communities have expanded to settler colonial contexts outside North America, including Australia, where they adopt indigenous ritual knowledge and practice in order to celebrate queer male subjectivities in ways that are complicated at best and implicitly violent at worst. Work by queer indigenous scholars in the twenty-first century has shifted discussions of two-spirit identity away from the relatively apolitical accounts of their ritual roles in early anthropological literature to overtly political acknowledgments of the points of contention and solidarity between queer of color communities/scholarship and queer indigenous experience (Driskill 2010).

Like the two-spirit figure, hijra in South Asia have played a dominant role in anthropological interpretations of the relationship between nonconforming genders and sexualities and religious practice. Earlier literature often reinstated the romanticized vision of hijra as transhistorical, “third-gender” ritual specialists (Nanda 1986). Newer
ethnographic work on hijra provides a more realistic, ethnographically grounded, and holistic representation of the complexity of their experience. In her nuanced ethnography of a hijra community in Hyderabad, India, Gayatri Reddy (2005), for instance, charts hijra’s search for izzat (respect) and movingly and hauntingly describes the AIDS-related deaths of several interlocutors and the consequential disbandment of their small encampment. Far from reducing the complexity of hijra lives to viral load or to an agendered, liminal status as “neither man nor woman,” Reddy urgently illuminates how earlier work on hijra subjectivity ignored some of the more troubling aspects of their lives, including stigma and gendered forms of violence.

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A Group of Radical Faeries Perform an Equinox Ritual at the Green Park Tree Circle in London. Harry Hay and other early homophile activists originally organized Radical Faerie communities as a way to affirm and celebrate their same-sex desires and male effeminacy. During healing retreats, usually held on rural land outside of big cities where these homophile movements and their members were based, Radical Faeries (predominantly white gay men) drew upon and appropriated Native American and other non-Western rituals and spiritual practices.

The list of ritualized gender-variant and same-sex-desiring identities and experiences that have captured academic and popular Western imagination also extends to those (illegal) transgenerational relationships that form between an older male patron and a young “beardless” boy known as bacha baazi in northwestern Pakistan and Afghanistan. A deeply historical practice, like Melanesian forms of “ritualized homosexuality,” bacha baazi is an expression of male same-sex desire based on age hierarchies (de Lind van Wijngaarden and Rani 2011).
In its contemporary manifestation, poor boys are purchased to entertain older male patrons through ritual forms of dance, as well as sex; the institution gained renewed global attention during the US-led war in Afghanistan when media reports of this form of sexual exploitation/abuse/slavery garnered international headlines. Given that the ritual institution of “dancing boys” is deeply rooted in disturbing power differentials between the entertainer and the entertained, it now figures into current debates over moral and cultural relativism.

Alongside “ritualized homosexuality” and the two-spirit, hijra, and bacha baazi figures, one lesser-acknowledged thread in the global genealogy of ritual and its attachment to queerness in the anthropological archive resides in the literature on spirit mediumship and shamanism. Much of this early twentieth-century ethnographic scholarship is problematically described in the coded language of “transvestism” or “passive homosexuality” and attempted to illustrate how “transvestites” or “homosexuals” were accepted in their respective societies. The literature has largely concentrated on the Afro-Atlantic world, and Brazil in particular (Allen 2012; Fry 1985; Landes 1940; Lescot and Magloire 2002; van de Port 2005; Wekker 2006). Ethnographic accounts of sex/gender alterity and spirit possession span across the globe, however, to other locales as diverse as Southeast Asia (Ho 2009; Merrison 2001; Peletz 2011; Sinnott 2004), East Africa (Giles 2015; Larsen 2008), and beyond. Depending on the cultural context, the form of spirit mediumship usually assumes a disconnect between medium and possessing spirit; through ritual acts, human hosts often lose consciousness when under possession of a spirit being. Depending on one’s perspective and the local articulation, mediums (albeit temporarily) effectively embody a gender, sex, age, ethnicity, or other identity marker that they otherwise cannot. Thus, spirit mediumship is a fascinating and notable site from which ethnographers and area studies specialists have attempted to understand local sex/gender systems. Surprisingly, few scholars have brought this literature into conversation with work in queer anthropology or literature in transnational/global sexualities (cf. Wekker 2006). While most of this scholarship privileges male-bodied mediums, several feminist scholars have begun the critical work of breaking down the androcentric bias that permeates the field by showcasing how female same-sex sexualities are negotiated through mediumship as well (Allen 2012; Sinnott 2004; Wekker 2006). In her work, Gloria Wekker (2006) describes working-class Afro-Surinamese women who engage in the social institution known as mati work (composed of both female same-sex erotic partnerships and spirit possession practice). These women do not conceive of their same-sex desire as a form of identity but, rather, as a kind of work that has incorporated spiritual labor into its fold. Those women “who dress and act like men [are understood to] have a strong male Apuku” spirit, for instance (Wekker 2006, 116).

**North America**
Ethnohistorical fascination with ritual practice in same-sex-desiring and gender-variant communities was, and continues to be, largely fixated on either indigenous North America or faraway places in relation to the North American or European academy. This setup, of course, does not reflect the reality of the situation, for while the language of “ritual” is more likely to be mapped onto non-Western spaces, ritualized performances and ceremonies are no less integral to contemporary North American queer communities. In part this misrepresentation is based on the epistemological assumption on the part of Westerners (invested as they are in the language of secularism) that ritual is a wholly “religious” object.

Scholarship in religious studies and the anthropology of religion has now long shown that the category of religion is itself a Western construct, one largely born out of an Abrahamic, and especially Christian, framework rooted in the concept of “belief” (Asad 1993; Lambek 2013). Like the category of “religion,” scholars typically consider ritual to be a religious object, yet like religion, ritual bleeds into all realms of human experience, evading definite categorization as religious. Such ritual practices as pilgrimage and marriage, explored below, extend well beyond the boundaries of religious studies proper, into the topics of tourism and mobility, citizenship and rights, and capital and identity. Stated differently, while ritual is popularly understood to occur within sacred realms of human experience, rituals are, as Michael Lambek points out, “equally a part of the ordinary realization and reproduction of social life, the way that life in human worlds unfolds” (2013, 20). The reproduction metaphor notwithstanding, this aptly applies to same-sex–desiring and gender-variant publics, whose participants have integrated ritual practices into their own worldings and life-sustaining endeavors or whose gender/sexual alterity automatically positioned them in the role of ritual officiant.

The best contemporary scholarship on ritual at the intersection of religious studies and trans/queer studies resists the romanticization of “third-gender” figures and their ritual roles, as once again poignantly discussed by Towle and Morgan (2002), but likewise resists what Jasbir K. Puar (2007) has termed the “queer secularism” that pervades much Eurocentric, white LGBT agendas. In its aversion to the religious, queer secularism implicitly smugles a white, liberal, avowedly secular LGBT subject at the center of its analysis, thereby “leaving to the side the women of color and transnational feminisms whose relationships to religion have historically been far more complex and variegated” (Pellegrini 2009, 208; see also Seitz 2017). Even emerging religious studies scholarship on Christianity—the religious tradition that resides at the very heart of Western institutions—has illuminated how its ritual practices and historical trajectories are tethered to gender nonconformance and same-sex sexualities in both the past and in contemporary reconfigurations (Wilcox 2003, 2018).

More capacious definitions of ritual may allow for a fuller appreciation of how North Americans adopting LGBTQ+ monikers are consistently compelled by ritual’s call. The most paradigmatic of all such rituals for LGBTQ + communities in North America has been the
performative gesture of “coming out” to one’s kin. Its becoming a salient form of personal ritual was possible only after the “homosexual” became a recognizable form of personhood and identity category rather than simply a set of sex acts (Foucault 1978). As documented by Kath Weston, the process of coming out among gays and lesbians in the San Francisco Bay Area in the 1980s allowed them to gain a “sense of wholeness by establishing congruence between interior experience and external presentation, moving the inner into the outer” (1991, 50). Coming out is always articulated as an intersectional experience in which gender and sexuality are articulated in relationship to one’s class, racial, and ethnic background. It is an experience that, as Martin F. Manalansan (2003) has noted, does not seamlessly translate to other cultural contexts, as is the case with the queer Filipino immigrants in New York that he listened to. Nevertheless, “coming out” has become a global phenomenon, and one that has radically shifted now that the ritual may be performed on social media sites, such as YouTube, especially for LGBTQ+ persons residing in rural geographies (Gray 2009).

Ritual-as-performance is another vibrant cultural elaboration developed within North American LGBTQ+ communities. The staged, patterned performances of drag kings and queens, for instance, have been described as a kind of ritual for both performers and audiences alike (Newton 1972). Similarly, the ball events that form the centerpiece of ballroom culture (flourishing primarily in Latino and black queer male communities in the urban United States) are not necessarily ritual proper, yet as Marlon M. Bailey (2013) attests, much of their repetitive “performative labor” is ritualized. Balls are always organized in a T-shaped layout that separates the audience, judges, and the performative space. All balls feature a call-and-response format between the commentator and audience, and are characterized by the participatory role of audience members. Both drag performances and balls could be described as a kind of theater, a form that Esther Newton (2000) describes in relation to the early gay and lesbian community on Fire Island. While Newton does not describe the place of theater in gay and lesbian lives in terms of “ritual,” their continual return to this performative art form and its ability to produce a liminal space-time apart from reality for the audience can easily be interpreted in this way. Newton’s (2000) provocative description of theater for gays and lesbians as an “anti-church,” while understandable given evangelical demonization of same-sex relationships in the United States, is a misnomer given the parallel collective affinities and affective pulls that both theater and church—and performance, generally—may elicit in participants. Other adaptations to religious rituals have been made by faith communities hoping to erase the LGBTQ+ subject from their ranks after their coming out, such as the Orthodox Jewish practice of sitting shivah or the Mormon or Jehovah’s Witnesses practice of being disfellowshipped from a congregation (Itzhaky and Kissil 2015).

The language of ritual is also used by ethnographers to describe nonconforming sexual communities in North America, such as leather or BDSM (bondage, discipline, sadism, masochism) communities, which may include but are not necessarily reduced to same-sex
erotics. Deploying the language of ritual is a way to legitimize such communities as distinct cultures worthy of recognition, as when Tim Dean asserts that “like any culture, this one [barebacking culture] has its own language, rituals, etiquette, institutions, iconography, and so on” (2009, x). For instance, the Catacombs, which was a critical site for gay men’s S/M fisting (anal penetration with one’s appendage) in San Francisco from the mid-1970s to the onset of the AIDS crisis, was described by Gayle S. Rubin as a place where “twentieth-century sexual heretics could practice their own rites and rituals in a situation that was insulated, as much as possible, from the curious and the hostile” (2011a, 224). In her broader discussion of the development of BDSM communities in San Francisco, Rubin contends that “sadomasochism is not a form of violence, but is rather a type of ritual” (2011b, 258), following her observation that the secrecy of gay sex parties, such as those at the Catacombs, provided a liminal space outside of the public sphere for practitioners to fulfill their individual fantasies through connection and belonging to a larger public. The same applies to barebacking culture, in which gay men embrace, not avoid, the risk of contracting HIV from a sexual partner. As Dean notes, barebacking culture is centrally organized around the “breeding ritual,” a sexual encounter in which HIV is purposefully transmitted to another or, at least, that risk is left open. Because HIV transmission is understood in generational terms, “these rituals provide a structure that enables transmission of the culture (or subculture) from one generation to the next” (2009, 130). Here, sexual ritual, which bridges across generational divides, connects the individual to a broader, even transhistorical community. Along these lines, Dean asks the following: “What would it mean for a young gay man today to be able to trace his virus back to, say, Michel Foucault?” (2009, 89). The development and increasingly popular use of preexposure prophylaxis (PrEP) drugs, which prevent the spread of HIV, will likely continue to change the dynamics of this ritual exchange. Like the fisting parties at the Catacombs, as well as their secret, liminal space and the activities that occurred there, breeding rituals may seem bizarre or even terrifying to outsiders, as rituals often do in the eyes of noncommunity members. Rubin provides a reminder that, like decontextualized descriptions of “ritualized homosexuality” deployed as a pedagogy of stupefaction or bewilderment rather than as a cautious pedagogy of cultural relativism, “torn out of context, S/M material is upsetting to unprepared audiences and this shock value has been mercilessly exploited” (2011b, 258). Aside from the rite of passage into nonconforming sexual communities signified in attending one’s first sex party, for instance, the purchase of sex toys has also been described as a ritualized practice that signals such an entrance (Weiss 2011). As Margot Weiss (2011) explains, however, social anxiety over the loss of group authenticity emerges when rituals can simply be purchased by wealthy practitioners. Here as elsewhere, the anthropological insight that ritual can both solidify the social structure while also potentially enacting cultural change is upheld.

Literature in ritual studies is rife with work on pilgrimage, a form that plays a critical role in both instilling belonging and revealing disbelonging within LGBTQ+ communities.
Pilgrimage to San Francisco has been depicted as playing a role in the subject formation of LGBTQ+ Americans, who may queerly find “home” not in their place of regular residence but at the pilgrimage site (Howe 2001). Likewise, queer tourists could also be said to engage in the ritual of pilgrimage during other LGBTQ+ events, such as regional, national, and international pride parades, in all their (homonational) complexity. As annual events forged from a shared ideology celebrating, even idealizing, individual expression and (exhaustively tyrannical) positive affect, pride marches are ritual practices in their own right.

Finally, as one of the most recognizable rituals, marriage is a ceremonial practice that is integrated into not just the (Judeo-Christian) religious fabric of society, but also into the political and economic structures that organize private property and its transference. In the case of the American nation-state, marriage signals normative moral codes about “family values” and productivity, as embedded in both the Protestant work ethic and hetero(re)productivity. Since the right to marriage was extended to same-sex couples throughout the United States, many queers and their spokespersons in the academy, including Michael Warner (1999), Lisa Duggan (2008), and others, have rightly questioned marriage’s servitude to capitalism and cis(hetero)patriarchy (privileges historically only afforded to cisgender, heterosexual men). Others, however, have embraced commitment ceremonies, then marriage, as a ritual that they had previously been unjustly deprived of (Lewin 1998). The ritual of marriage is not the only way that same-sex–desiring and gender-variant persons have forged kin bonds, however. Ballroom communities in the United States are organized into “houses,” which individuals enter into and with each house effectively functioning as its own kinship system (Bailey 2013; Butler 1993). Like hijra communities described by Reddy, which prioritize the ritual act of “putting a rit” (2005, 58) by entering a particular hijra “house,” in both instances individuals who live outside of heteronormative structures have found a way to, as Kath Weston (1991) once put it, create “families we choose” beyond traditional marriage, both within and outside North America.

Transgender communities continue to invent their own novel ceremonial rites of passage and to reconfigure existing ones, as in transgender naming rituals that provide a ritualized transition into one’s desired gender. Mass-mediated accounts of transition, such as those displayed on social media platforms, also provide transgender identities with the ability to agentively define and curate their experience for a broader audience (Horak 2014). “Transitioning,” the rite of passage so intimately tied to the transgender identity category, is reconfigured through acts of self-representation provided by digital media platforms or those made necessary by medicolegal structures, as cogently described by Afsaneh Najmabadi (2014) in the case of Iran.

More capacious considerations of ritual—in terms of ritualized labor, performance, and play—may allow for a reinvigoration of ritual studies in scholarship on LGBTQ+ communities and provide a basis for rethinking ritual’s power to renegotiate belonging
between the self and its relations. The increasingly popular (and deeply problematic) terminology of “secular ritual” is but one way to describe those rituals developed within LGBTQ+ communities. Although some of these practices may not be perceived as ritual in the traditional anthropological or religious studies sense of the term, those symbolic experiences that embody a shared set of values and a sense of communitas ought to be considered to reside at the heart of this ever-dynamic and deeply relevant cultural phenomenon.

SEE ALSO BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Domination and Submission, Sadism and Masochism); Hijras; Pacific Island and Pacific Island Diaspora Identities; Pride Parades and Marches; Two-Spirit; Witchcraft/Occult in Africa

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Roopbaan

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Bangladesh's first gay magazine in Bengali, published in 2014.

Roopbaan became the first gay magazine published in Bengali in Bangladesh when its first issue appeared in 2014. The term Roopbaan literally denotes a handsome man and also refers to a popular Bengali folk character. Roopbaan became publicly linked to same-sex sexuality and LGBT rights after one of its cofounding editors, Xulhaz Mannan, along with his colleague Mahbub Rabbi Tonoy, were brutally murdered on 25 April 2016 at Mannan's residence in Dhaka (the capital of Bangladesh). A local Islamist outfit with links to al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the killing. The killing of these two activists brought homosexuality into the mainstream public view in Bangladesh for the first time in history, as the media reported the death with explicit reference to same-sex sexual activism and LGBT rights. Previously unintelligible to the mainstream populace, the initialism LGBT is now often transliterated in Bengali media reporting. Although the murder of these two gay rights activists may be seen as part of a series of killings by various Islamist outfits that have targeted atheists, secular social media bloggers, and religious minorities, there is also a distinct context of gender- and sexuality-focused activism, in which Roopbaan emerged as a platform for advocacy for gay rights.

Roopbaan, according to an editorial in its first issue, was intended to establish and assert the existence of somopremi, which literally means "same-sex loving" in Bengali. The choice of somopremi—an expression that emphasizes affect in same-sex relations rather than sex (the latter often captured in the Bengali expression somokami)—was a strategic move that considered love as a culturally more appropriate framework to advocate for same-sex sexuality. The espousal and appropriation of Roopbaan as a moniker to denote same-sex attracted or gay men itself can be read as an attempt to indigenize same-sex sexualities that are otherwise popularly construed as Western and, therefore, nonlocal in origin. While same-sex sexuality exists in various forms in Bangladeshi society, including in the public health discourse as MSM (men who have sex with men), what was different in the case of Roopbaan was its explicit aim of casting same-sex sexuality through an identity-based rights approach. Valobashte dao more (Let me love) was the message on the cover page of the first issue of the magazine alongside the picture of a tied-down man symbolizing the
struggle of gay men in Bangladeshi society.

**HIJRS IN BANGLADESH**

_Hijra_ is a publicly institutionalized subculture of working-class feminine-identified people who are often assigned a male gender at birth. Popularly conceptualized as a third gender or a third sex both in South Asia and in international media, hijras are part of the mainstream Bangladeshi public culture. People in Bangladesh typically consider the hijra to have been born with missing or ambiguous genitals. Hijras also reinforce such a view in their encounters with the mainstream public. In reality, however, there are both hijras with a penis and hijras who ritually remove their penises (Hossain 2013). Both of these groups are indispensable to the smooth conduct of _hijragiri_, the ritual occupations of the hijra (Hossain 2012).

In 2013 the government of Bangladesh legally recognized this long-standing cultural category as the legal category “third gender.” The legal recognition has paradoxically necessitated a concurrent mobilization of a discourse of disability in the construction of the hijra. In this new official framework, a hijra is a person born with missing or ambiguous genitals. Under this fixed definition, hijras are often required to undergo a medical examination to prove their hijra status before being able to access certain government benefits. Thus, what was previously a trope of disfigurement based on putative genital status has now been transformed into a mainstream discourse of disability in official discourse—an unprecedented development that further disenfranchises the hijra in Bangladesh (Hossain 2017). Under this new regime of recognition, self-identified hijras are not allowed to be hijras anymore. A focus on the hijras in Bangladesh not only challenges the spatio-intellectual hegemony of India in studies of hijras in South Asia but also allows researchers to complicate the existing conceptualization of the hijra from the slant of the overlooked location of Bangladesh (Hossain 2018).

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Ironically, the adoption of either an affect-based approach or even of indigenous folk figures did very little to counter the popular public perception of Roopbaan as Western propaganda devised to corrupt the social fabric of Bangladesh. Mannan’s affiliation with the US Agency for International Development and his former employment with the US embassy did not help his efforts to de-Westernize homosexuality in Bangladesh, at least in public perception. The use of LGBT—a foreign initialism in popular Bangladeshi media at least since his death—ironically further reinforces the preexisting trope of same-sex sexuality being foreign in Bangladesh.

Although same-sex sexuality is a criminal offense in Bangladesh under the penal code of 1860, a British colonial legacy, the law has rarely been used in the history of Bangladesh. MSM-focused nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) started work in the late 1990s to address the sexual health needs, especially HIV/AIDS prevention, of the working-class male population engaged in same-sex sexual activity. Gay groups emerged in Bangladesh at the start of the twenty-first century mainly using online platforms to cater to English-speaking, middle-class, urban, same-sex-loving and attracted men. Roopbaan built on these existing resources at least since 2011 and sought to establish an offline and physical presence for gay men. Roopbaan also organized rights-themed workshops outside Dhaka to reach out to nonmetropolitan members of the LGBT community.

A significant event under the banner of Roopbaan was the launching of a rainbow rally in 2014 as part of the Bengali New Year celebration. The idea of the rally was not to send any explicit message to the wider society about the presence of the LGBT community. Instead, it was intended to be part of the wider celebration of the new year, an annual event held to mark the Bengali New Year. Yet the rally brought Roopbaan into mainstream view after an online news outlet reported the event as a “gay parade,” giving rise to vitriolic public reactions and death threats to many associated with Roopbaan and the rainbow rally. Significantly, the rally drew not only gay-identified men, but also members of other nonnormative groups, including some NGO-affiliated hijra (transgender) people. The rainbow rally took place again the following year but had to be canceled in 2016, as the
police refused to grant permission to the organizers on account of the former’s inability to provide security in the face of credible extremist threats. On the morning of the Bengali New Year on 14 April, despite the police directive to cancel the event, a group of men gathered at designated area to form the rainbow rally but were later arrested by the police. Both Mannan and Tonoy visited the police station and actively worked to obtain the release of their detained colleagues, exposing themselves to further risks. Eleven days later, Mannan and Tonoy were killed.

The printing company that published the first issue of *Roopbaan* refused to publish the second issue because of putative threats from Islamist groups, bringing the magazine to a halt. The murder of these two gay rights activists sent shockwaves through the wider LGBT community and significantly dampened gender, sexuality, and LGBT-focused rights work and activism. Several activists, practitioners, and academics were forced to leave Bangladesh and seek asylum abroad, while those remaining in Bangladesh continued to live in hiding. Remarkably, there was very little protest against the murders of these two gay rights activists from either the wider society or the civil societies concerned with alternative gender, sexualities, or rights work. That no feminist organizations or even pro-LGBT NGOs or civil society protested against the murders brings into view the general reluctance of people and organizations in Bangladesh to be publicly associated with same-sex sexuality or “LGBT” rights.

SEE ALSO *Hijras*

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In the early 1900s, Anna Rüling (1880–1953) became one of the first German women to speak out publicly on behalf of gay and lesbian rights and to do so from a position of self-identification. She also wrote short stories featuring lesbian lovers who did not die at the end of the tale, a rare outcome for early twentieth-century gay and lesbian novellas. Yet Rüling was not immune to broader historical forces: she took a nationalist turn during World War I (1914–1918) and, unlike many of her early contemporaries in the German gay rights movements, continued living and working under Nazi rule.

“Anna Rüling” was actually a pseudonym for the Hamburg-born journalist “Theo” Anna Sprüngli, born in 1880. In the first decade of the twentieth century, Rüling was significantly involved in writing and activism for gay and lesbian rights. In 1911 she became one of only four female “chairmen” of the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee), an organization founded in 1897 to fight for the decriminalization of sex acts between men and to advocate for gay rights more broadly. Before becoming a “chairman,” Rüling delivered a now famous speech to a meeting of the committee on 9 October 1904, titled “Welches Interesse hat die Frauenbewegung an der Lösung des homosexuellen Problems?” (What interest does the women’s movement have in solving the homosexual problem?). In this speech (later published in 1905), Rüling centered on the figure of the Urninde, a same-sex-attracted and gender-nonconforming individual whom she marked out as deserving special rights. Drawing on contemporary sexological concepts such as “sexual inversion” and the “third sex,” Rüling outlined a unique subjectivity for the Urninde that many believe formed the basis for modern understandings for lesbianism; her definition of the Urninde was in fact later taken up by sexologists such as Albert Moll (1862–1939). Defiantly describing the Urninde as “both noble and fine” (Rüling 1997, 148), Rüling characterized this subject as more suited for public life and occupations typically held by men because of her greater masculinity. In the process of the speech, Rüling subtly “outed” herself as belonging to the group for whom she advocated.

Rüling’s speech is notable for offering a positive representation of a queer female subject and for vociferously demanding greater public rights and status on her behalf. It also
demonstrated the ways in which politically active women such as Rüling made significant contributions to sexological thinking by redefining sexual subjectivity from an “insider’s” perspective. Yet Rüling’s advocacy for the Urninde came at the expense of heterosexual women. She suggested that most “normal” women would be satisfied with their supposedly natural roles as wives and mothers. She also drew on contemporary eugenic arguments to assert that the Urninde should be liberated from these very roles because her children tended to be “defective.” While Rüling’s arguments may have been strategic and pragmatic, they did nothing to dispel the existing connection between homosexuality and pathology. Moreover, in her strong insistence on the Urninde’s greater masculinity, Rüling’s conceptualization of queer female subjectivity elided femme or maternal iterations of this identity. To her credit, Rüling in her other work refused to accept the dominant cultural narrative that same-sex love was doomed to end in failure. Her 1906 short story collection *Welcher unter euch ohne Sünde ist* (Which among you is without sin?) featured love stories between women with happy endings.

Rüling’s legacy becomes further complicated by the fact that, over the course of World War I, she became an ardent German nationalist and conservative, ultimately joining the Düsseldorf branch of the Flottenbund deutscher Frauen (Naval Association of German Women) and the right-leaning Reichsverband deutscher Hausfrauenvereine (National Federation of German Housewives Associations). In so doing, she seemingly disavowed her earlier political activism. Rüling, in fact, continued working as a journalist during the Third Reich and World War II (1939–1945), although it does not appear that she was a member of the Nazi Party. In 1953 she died in Delmenhorst as one of Germany’s oldest female journalists.

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Rural Queer Communities, US

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The experience of LGBTQ individuals in rural US communities, both historically and in modern times.

Until recently, scholars habitually neglected queerness in the rural United States. Judith (now Jack) Halberstam (2005) identified this thinking as metronormativity—the constructed dichotomy where urban signifies progressive and modern places tolerant of queerness, and rural signifies backward and traditional places intolerant of and antithetical to queerness. This produces the impression that “real” queers can visibly live and build communities only in urban spaces, making rural queer lives depressingly isolated or closeted. The long history and proud present of rural queerness—meaning any form of gender nonconformity or nonheterosexual desire—debunks this assessment.

Debunking Metronormativity

The economic and spatial realities of rural space created queer expressions, identities, and communities different from, but not inferior to, those in urban spaces. Rural queers’ lives and histories challenge the perceived lack of queer acceptance in rural places leading to rural-to-urban migration and the liberation narrative of oppressed minority “coming out” and organizing visible, political communities centered on an identity politics of queerness. Some found communities that tolerated their queerness as an open secret or accepted their public queer identity. Examples of this ranged from migratory male labor communities, such as loggers, farmworkers, miners, or hobos, to permanent queer residents (Shah 2011, E. Johnson 2012). Others, such as truck drivers or middle-class businesspeople, kept queer desires a closely guarded secret, acted on them only when traveling away from home, and/or never wanted to maintain a connection with a queer community or identity.
Gay Couple on Their Ranch in the Rural Florida Panhandle, 2014. LGBTQ individuals have existed throughout the history of American rural spaces despite the stereotype that equates “rural” with patriarchy, heterosexuality, and white nuclear families.

Many rural queers stress positive connections to their rural lives and communities, proclaiming themselves as “one of them,” not an “outside menace.” They do not reject their queerness but participate in actions Scott Herring (2010) calls “queer anti-urbanism” by not seeing urban queer culture as a model to aspire to nor wanting to relocate to urban spaces and orient their lives and relationships primarily around queerness. To emphasize being “one of them,” and because of limited resources and smaller concentrations of queer people, rural queers “queer” everyday spaces through sharing space with nonqueers, whether in bars or churches, or by, for example, putting on impromptu drag performances at Walmart, a corporation whose marketing stresses its “rural values” (Gray 2009). They might choose to connect with queer communities by traveling to queer events in rural or urban spaces, such as Pensacola Pride on the Gulf Coast’s “Redneck Riviera” or the Michigan Womyn's Music Festival, a women-only celebration held in a rural area from 1976 to 2015. Rural spaces have drawn individuals from urban spaces, too. This has included lesbian-separatist, also known as landdyke, land movements, especially in Oregon and Northern California, and the Radical Faeries, a movement for man-loving men emphasizing spirituality, the natural world, and rejection of competitive and nonemotional masculinity. Each, beginning in the 1970s, saw freedom in rural space to create queer communities separate from and challenging American capitalist, patriarchal, individualist, and materialist culture.

Rural queers can experience isolation, depression, and physical violence because of the lack of queer communities in rural spaces, but it was not until the 1970s and 1980s that they
faced more targeted oppression in reaction to the sexual revolution, an ascendant neoliberal and robotics-based economy, the civil rights movement, and the visibility of the LGBT movement. Queerness went from tolerated oddity to threat imported from urban spaces, as the sociologist Arlene Stein (2001) documented in a small Oregon town’s debate over nondiscrimination laws during the 1990s. In response, queer-specific political, social, and health organizations in rural spaces increased in number. Rural queers have also overcome physical distance via online chat rooms and social networking apps that allow networking—though still possibly secretive—between those with queer desires. Television and other media have also provided positive knowledge of livable queer possibilities.

The Historical Context

Rural queerness existed long before the modern heterosexual/homosexual binary, even if persons’ sexual behaviors or identities were not fully understood or discussed. Some Native American cultures, particularly in the Great Plains and Southwest, allowed for individuals in a third-gender or two-spirit (berdache) category—typically men who performed female roles, might have sex with men, and held a special place in indigenous religions. Early nineteenth-century Vermont was home to Charity and Sylvia, two respected white women who lived in a community-recognized, marriage-like relationship (Cleves 2014). Augustus Baldwin Longstreet’s 1835 short story “A Sage Conversation” included a household headed by two males as a nonchalant, if humorous, possibility in antebellum Georgia. While one partner in these couplings took on the roles, but not the appearance, of the other sex, others included one partner who more consistently cross-dressed, such as Nellie Pickett who became a lover of Billy the Kid and a notorious outlaw in the Southwest (Boag 2011).

Some rural individuals solely queered gender norms. This is particularly evident for rural women whose labor, both economic and reproductive, strained their bodies and their abilities to maintain the appearances that fit urban feminine beauty norms. These “hard women,” memorably captured in Great Depression-era photography or more recently on “redneck” reality television, rarely challenged heteronormativity (C. Johnson 2013). Women who remained unmarried, cross-dressed for economic opportunity or mobility, and/or took traditionally male jobs also challenged domestic, subservient, wifely norms of femininity. Gender nonconformity could be more fleeting, such as the entertainment of men donning women’s clothing in school and community theatrical performances (Thompson 2010).

Other scholars trace conscious efforts to around the beginning of the twentieth century to erase queerness from rural spaces. Teaching reproductive heterosexuality, eugenics, feminine beauty, and domesticity via livestock breeding science, 4-H fairs, and mass consumerism all helped produce heteronormativity in rural spaces (C. Johnson 2013). Queerness was also “darkened” as it became defined as a “premodern” condition that
would disappear as the “frontier closed” and civilization arrived, along with the increased policing of nonwhite and immigrant individuals (Boag 2011; Shah 2011).

Diversity of Rural Queer Experiences

The fluidity of sexual desire, gender, and identity has meant that rural queer experiences are incredibly diverse, or, as John Howard (1999) characterized it, there are “men like that,” men “who liked that,” and others in-between. Differentiations in class, gender, and race influenced access to space, materials for performing queerness, and the economic capital needed to circulate to locate other queers, to find safer spaces to perform queerness, or to migrate out of rural space—all producing diverse rural queer lives. For example, African Americans, whether men in Mississippi or women in Asheville, North Carolina, found limited access to white queer spaces because of white privilege and racism, remaining closely tied to African American, not queer, communities (Howard 1999; Gray, Johnson, and Gilley 2016).

*Rural* is just as expansive a descriptor as *queer*. Rural space varies from forested mountains to cornfields to “main street” towns. Dominated by agricultural or extractive economies, rural areas are also home to factories and transportation nexuses. Scholars also masquerade “rural” under regional labels, such as the South or West, collapsing those regions’ variety of rural and urban spaces, or not always interrogating how space affects people's opportunities and actions. These definitions of queer and rural, the circulation of individuals, and the fact that public queer communities are few in number or dispersed all make finding rural queerness challenging. Microhistories, oral histories, biographies, and “naturalistic” fictional literature are common methods of telling rural queer stories, with one example standing in for larger, frequently undocumented rural queer histories and possibilities.

Laws and vocal critics strongly condemning queerness have existed in rural areas, but the vastness of rural space and a disconnect between prescription and practice allowed individuals throughout history not only to perform queer behaviors and adopt queer appearances in a fleeting manner but also to live in queer relationships and take on queer identities in a more permanent way. Rural spaces were never devoid of queerness, and they were not bastions of patriarchy, heterosexuality, and (white) nuclear families, as conservative pundits have imagined in a type of historical amnesia.

SEE ALSO Rural Queerness; Urban Queerness

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Rural Queerness

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Scholarly debate regarding the state of queer individuals in rural spaces globally, including depictions in movies and literature.

Studies of queer identities and queer spaces have had somewhat of an urban bias. Ethnographic works on queer lives in the West by scholars such as Sharif Mowlabocus (2010), as well as new works on queer lives in the Global South, such as Elisabeth Engebretsen's *Queer Women in Urban China* (2015) and Naisargi Dave's *Queer Activism in India* (2012), provide fascinating accounts of queer lives in the city but overlook queer experience in rural areas. In one of the early studies of rural lesbian and gay lives, David Bell and Gill Valentine (1995) argue that studies on American ruralism, while encompassing issues of gender, class, and ethnicity, neglect sexuality. In fact, when rural queers are discussed, their experiences are problematized through the lens of repression that needs to be left behind for the purposes of queer emancipation. But as Bell and Valentine note in their article, lesbians and gay men do live in the countryside, and they also visit to make use of the various resources those spaces have to offer. The rural offers an important lens for addressing issues of queerness and sexuality that have not been fully explored. It should also be noted that there are men having sex with men and women having sex with women who do not necessarily see themselves as queer and for whom, consequently, queer emancipation might not be an issue. Thus theorizing and interrogating rurality and sexuality requires a different set of tools and conceptual frameworks. This entry engages with a range of interdisciplinary scholarship and visual/literary texts on the rural queer from a global perspective to analyze how queerness and rurality are imagined, experienced, and lived.

**Rural Queer Lives**

Geographical identity clearly shapes the lived experiences of LGBTQ individuals, leading to migration, dislocation, and “sexual exiles.” Colin Johnson, Brian Gilley, and Mary Gray (2016) have argued that rural does not necessarily mean isolated. In fact, they cite the American countryside to demonstrate that new communication technologies and transportation have radically transformed these spaces. Alexis Annes and Meredith Redlin in their study of masculinity and gay men in rural France and the United States (2012) also argue that the lack of role models and the low visibility of homosexuality was a major factor
in many rural gay men turning to digital media. Popular culture artifacts such as television shows and movies became a source of information about queerness for many of these men but also caused confusion because they did not recognize themselves in these discourses.

Rurality in the context of queer lives might be better understood not just as material space but also as symbolic imaginaries (Gorman-Murray et al. 2012). Scholars such as David Shuttleton (2000) have invoked the concept of the “gay pastoral” to draw attention to the rural as a site of belonging. Shuttleton argues that it is in the nonmetropolitan areas that sexual politics can go further, where it could critically transform not only sexuality rights but also, more fundamentally, sexuality. The rural in this context is not the repressed closet but rather escape and retreat from the consumerist, hypersexualized urban gay male culture. Shuttleton invokes Raymond Williams's classic work *The Country and the City* (1973), in which Williams argues that the British literary imagination depicts the city as a site of capitalist production and labor, with a loss of romanticism; by contrast, the countryside is viewed as natural, unadulterated, and romantic. Williams rejects such a dualistic explanation and mythologization of the city and countryside, arguing that both are inextricably linked to cultural and romantic imaginaries. Moving to contemporary Britain, Kath Browne and Nick McGlynn, in their study of the equalities landscape in rural Sussex (2012), illustrate the complexities of implementing LGBT equality legislation in the countryside. They question the narrative of a progressive agenda enacted only by “liberal urban communities” and show how communities in “hostile” rural areas can do the same. They argue that although much of the earlier literature on rural sexualities tended to focus on the recurring issues of availability of services for sexual minorities, more recent scholarship such as theirs has challenged the narrative of the “intolerant” rural space.

Queer lifeworlds are often represented through a rural to urban migration. As Kath Weston (1995) argues, city life is contrasted with rural queer existence in a binary where the urban space is represented as a “beacon of tolerance.” Gray's 2010 study of rural lives in America suggests that discovering one’s queer self requires three things: privacy, a visible social community, and a safe space. Another factor identified by Bernadette Barton in her 2012 study of the largely rural Republican-majority US states was the role of the church around which communities have grown. Barton argues that because most of these churches construct homosexuality as sinful, lesbians and gay men must choose between staying in what she calls the “toxic closet” (5) or risking rejection and ostracism from the people who supposedly care for them the most: their families, friends, and neighbors. This leads to problems with self-esteem, according to Barton. Not only must gay individuals hide their sexuality, they also must endure sermons branding them sinners and, in extreme cases, calling for their deaths. There is also a racialized dimension in this, where the countryside is perceived as a “white landscape.” Barton notes that for many respondents, this life of being “othered” gives them a unique position that they described as “the view from the margins”; thus, she argues, rural queers foster stronger friendships and kinship ties, leading to “enduring friendships and increased happiness” (237).
There are many complicated issues related to rural queer lives and the ethics of doing such research. The global push toward a visibility politics that demands recognition and political currency related to being “out and proud” comes with its own set of problems. As Bell and Valentine (1995) so eloquently ask in their essay, whom does this kind of research benefit, and whom might it harm?

John Howard’s 2007 essay “Homosexuals in Unexpected Places” offers a strong critique of doing gender and sexuality research beyond the metropolis. Howard argues that while it is important to ensure that private spaces such as malls and superstores in small towns respect freedom of speech, it is also imperative to pay attention to the ways in which gay men and lesbians are reappropriating the most conservative and unaccommodating spaces to assert their identity. Howard’s critique situates itself within the scholarship on non-Western sites, which argues that the rural needs to be reimagined as something other than just a space of isolation and repression and that it is important to recognize the many gay men and lesbians who are carving out different ways of living, survival, and celebration within that place.

**Rural Queer Spaces**

One of the consistent characteristics of these studies involves questioning the narrow definition of queer visibility/invisibility. What most of these studies demonstrate is that there are varying levels of visibility exhibited by rural queer men and women and an expectation to be “functionally invisible” (Gray 2010, 96). The tensions around family expectations, religion, and community shape public visibility in rural settings. Katherine Schweighofer (2016) argues that the rural closet depends not only on identifying as gay but also on gayness being a major factor of one’s identity. It could be argued that visibility politics and queer urban liberalism have also led to feelings of incompatibility for many rural queers who centralize other parts of their identity, such as parenthood or professional roles. Weston’s 1995 study found that a large number of queer men and women from the countryside often returned to rural living as a result of feeling incompatible with urban queer cultures.

Andrew Gorman-Murray, Barbara Pini, and Lia Bryant (2012) observe that there is another flow of queer migration, in which city-born queer people move to rural areas for personal and political reasons. The best-known are lesbian separatist groups in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, who have formed lesbian communes around feminist and ecofeminist politics. The rural space offers an alternative to the consumerist capitalist society of the cities, and in these instances also signifies a rejection of heteropatriarchal powers. Gorman-Murray, Pini, and Bryant, citing David Bell’s earlier work, also note that semiseparatist communities of gay men called Radical Faeries have also established rural lives in a rejection of the heteropatriarchal capitalism of the city.
Studies of rural/semiurban queer spaces in India have presented some interesting examples too. Maya Sharma’s 2007 work on working-class lesbians in rural India, for example, presents portraits of women who navigate their subjectivity around compulsory marriage with little access to the metropolitan gay rights movements that are popular in contemporary India. Other important work has focused on the Launda community in India. Launda dancers are groups of poor trans women who migrate during the wedding season in spring and summer to perform in the rural belt of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in India. Sexual exploitation is rife among Launda dancers, with many of the boys forced into prostitution. At the same time, ethnographic research in this community has yielded interesting observations about kinship and friendship arrangements. Most of the young dancers have found village life isolating and at times violent, but they also have formed intimate bonds with each other and with sympathetic individuals; in fact, many dancers have claimed that they prefer the strong friendship bonds they develop during these brief periods in rural India with other laundas over the daily anonymity they face in the city. A study by Paul Boyce and Rohit K. Dasgupta of small towns in India describes them as places with “room to breathe” (2017, 220). Several gay men who were interviewed found the queer culture in the city “excessive,” with the constant media intrusion described as a panopticon placing them under continual surveillance. For many of these individuals, the small towns of India offered greater anonymity and safety than cities.

Studies of rural southeastern China have also challenged the narrative of rural spaces as sexually repressive. In her study on Huian, Sara L. Friedman (2000) argues that premarital socializing and even sexual activity are not completely unknown. Friedman’s research shows that there has been a liberating shift from the dominant discourse of identifying sexuality primarily with reproduction and marriage to recognizing a more diverse range of sexual pleasures and identity.

Rural Queer Narratives

Fictional and narrative representations of queer identities have associated the urban with being “out and proud,” while the rural is seen as closeted and homophobic. Through the framing of rural as incompatible with queer lifestyles, a binary division is created where queer visibility is thought to be impossible outside the city.

Radclyffe Hall’s The Well of Loneliness (1928) traces the progress of its protagonist, Stephen Gordon, from isolation on her country estate to finding love in the urban queer community of Paris. The novel maps a pattern re-created in most queer fiction throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that the construction of lesbian and gay identities requires the abandonment of the rural/country home to find a community in the city or abroad. In the case of Stephen, she was forced to leave not just her country home but the entire country to find happiness abroad, which is later described as a queer revelation. Stephen and her partner Mary revel in the anonymity of the diverse global city—a far cry
from the claustrophobic existence of their rural backgrounds—and befriend queer couples from the Scottish Highlands and the rural United States who have also made their way to Paris to experience freedom. In the English countryside, Stephen had thought she was the only one of her own kind, but after her migration to the city she realizes there are many more queer people like her who are all looking for community and kinship.

In sharp contrast to Hall’s novel is *Farm Boys*, Will Fellows’s 1996 collection of first-person accounts of gay men living and working on US farms. Fellows’s ethnographic study of the lives of gay men growing up on farms during the twentieth century offers a different perspective to urbancentric gay narratives. Fellows argues that within the plainspoken narratives of these men one can find illuminating candor, insight, and a sense of humor. As he rightly points out, popular culture in the United States, as elsewhere, has expanded to include more varied perspectives and representations of gay men and lesbians, but these still neglect the rural queers who are made to believe that their country roots are irrelevant and embarrassing. A similar book is Michael Riordon’s *Out Our Way* (1996), which is based on interviews with over 300 gay men and lesbians in rural Canada. The sixty narratives depict individuals’ struggles to fit into small communities, to deal with the harshness of isolated existence, and to come to terms with a life that has often been imposed on them.

Of the various films and visual narratives about queer lives in the country, Ang Lee’s neo-Western drama *Brokeback Mountain* (2005), based on Annie Proulx’s 1997 short story, is perhaps the best known. It is a groundbreaking tale set in the rural idyll of Wyoming, where two cowboys find romance and sexual satisfaction with each other, only to be parted by societal heteronorms and internalized homophobia. The film, though controversial, was a huge critical success and prompted open discussions of sexuality, homophobia, and hate crimes in rural America. The book *Beyond Brokeback: The Impact of a Film* (2007) collected deeply moving stories, sparked by the film, of the fears, aspirations, and resilience of the rural queer community. Christopher Pullen in his 2009 study of web forums set up after the film’s release tells us that although most of the discussions centered on the film and the book, eventually discussion of the film died down and participants’ personal stories came to the forefront. He noted that the audience’s need for an outlet for their responses to the film was evidenced by the 50,000 to 100,000 users who visited the forums every month. These users were not only reading the contributions but also engaging with them and using the film to explore their own issues of living as queer people in rural America.

Outside the United States, representations of the rural in queer narratives remain scarce. Many of the celebrated queer films from the United Kingdom—including *Weekend* (2011), *My Beautiful Laundrette* (1985), and *My Brother the Devil* (2012)—have mostly dealt with queer politics, romance, and coming out in the inner-city estates of London or other big cities such as Manchester and Nottingham. A detour was taken in Stephen Beresford’s historical drama *Pride* (2014), which tells the true story of lesbian and gay activists from London who organized to raise money for families affected by the 1984–1985 UK miners’
strike. The organizers (who were later called Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners [LGSM]) and the residents of a small mining village, Onllwyn, strike up an unlikely friendship. The film depicts the villagers’ anxiety over the lesbian and gay activists coming into their midst, but despite some early hostilities, the miners come to realize that the activists genuinely care about building solidarity between the two groups, both under attack from Margaret Thatcher’s government and the police. This was a politically significant moment, as the 1985 pride march in London honored this alliance with the miners leading the march, and the National Union of Miners pressured the opposition Labour Party to incorporate queer rights into their party platform. The film dispels the notion of the countryside as inherently homophobic or even heteronormative and demonstrates that commitment to queer social justice transcends the urban/rural divide.

More recently, Francis Lee’s *God’s Own Country* (2017), set in rural Yorkshire, tells the love story of a young sheep farmer and Romanian migrant worker. An emotional narrative of queer kinship and love on a farm, it is one of the first British queer films set entirely in a rural location. The year 2018 saw the revival of the play *The York Realist*, first performed in 2001, which tells the story of a love affair between a rural farm laborer, George, and a production assistant director, John. While viewed as a classic tale of the intersection of class and sexuality, it is also rooted in the tension between metropolitan London and rural Yorkshire.

There are also some interesting rural queer narratives from non-Western countries. Zanele Muholi, a South African visual artist and activist, has used photography to document the lives of black queer people from South Africa and neighboring countries. In *Faces and Phases* (2006–2014), she celebrates the lives of black LGBT people and confronts the politics of racism, homophobia, and exclusion. Her subjects are positioned in suburban or rural settings, reclaiming and visualizing queer spaces of belonging. According to Muholi, the portraits encourage individuals to occupy public spaces and defy negative portrayals. Similarly, Zandile Nkabinde’s (2008) autobiography describes her life as a lesbian sangoma (healer) in rural townships of South Africa. She describes how her Zulu culture helped her explore her sexuality because of her relationship to male and female ancestors. Nkabinde describes traditional African healing practices and rituals and offers personal accounts of the hardships faced by queer people in South Africa. In Asia, Apichatpong Weerasethakul’s film *Tropical Malady* (2004) tells the story of a soldier and a country boy who pay regular visits to a Thai jungle. In this surreal story, the countryside and the jungle are framed as a queer space that protects their “secret” sexuality and allows their romance to blossom. Another interesting film is Yudho Aditya’s *Pria* (2016), which portrays the complexity of being a queer male and Muslim in rural Indonesia. The film underlines the remoteness of rural isolation as the teenager wrestles with his Islamic duty to marry and his nonconformist sexual identity.

The Filipino comedy-drama *Bwakaw* (2012), directed by Jun Lana, is a simple story about celebrating life, set in a small town. It tells the story of Rene, an older gay man in his
seventies, and his friendship with a dying dog. The film explores how the concepts of love and belonging are understood through a form of “queer” interspecies kinship arrangement. The rural setting, which helps Rene discover love and queer belonging, is also a place of refuge in the Argentine film *XXY* (2007), which follows Alex, an intersex person who moves from the city to a small village in Uruguay to avoid societal discrimination and gender expectations. The film shows how rurality inflects and challenges hegemonic and urban-centric constructions of queer subjectivity and transformation in a space of queer refuge and welcome.

India has also seen an increase in queer films in the twenty-first century, though almost all of them are set in the city. An exception is Sridhar Rangayan’s *Yours Emotionally* (2007), which begins in a village in India where Ravi, a young Indian man from England, heads to an all-night gay party. The film has a nonlinear story line with surreal sequences. The village seems to exist outside conventional Indian sociocultural norms; with magical realism, it is framed as a queer utopia, with exalted scenes of defying tradition while embracing acceptance and compassion.

A review of the available literature on rural sexualities shows a remarkable shift over the years, from exploring the troubled and closeted lives of rural gay men and lesbians to focusing on how the rural itself has been fundamental in the development of gay and lesbian identities. The narratives of isolation and concerns about safety and tolerance are giving way to newer research that points to positive experiences of sexual minorities in rural spaces. While queer visibility plays an important role in political activism, the strategic representational politics of queer people living in the countryside offers new ways of imagining how to make social and political progress.

**SEE ALSO** *Brokeback Mountain; Lesbian Lands, Women’s Lands, and Separatist Communes; Rural Queer Communities, US; Urban Queerness*

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Russian Gay Propaganda Law

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Law passed in 2013 that makes it illegal to promote nontraditional sexual relations among minors in the Russian Federation.

Article 6.21 of the Code of the Russian Federation on Administrative Offenses (i.e., noncriminal offenses against public order) punishes so-called propaganda for nontraditional sexual relations (hereafter, “gay propaganda”) directed at minors. It was adopted on 30 June 2013. The debate over this law in early 2013 was Russia’s first national conversation in the media and online about the status of LGBTQ citizens, and it revealed a society deeply uneasy with homosexuality and gender variation. Such a reaction after a quarter century of postsocialist “sexual revolution” against a backdrop of painful economic decline and capitalist redevelopment was hardly surprising. Yet it also compelled many Russians to discuss queer sex and gender with unprecedented frankness, and it forced LGBTQ Russians to speak more assertively about their rights. The debate and adoption of this law had a significant impact internationally, positioning Russia as a promoter of conservative “traditional” values against a supposed Western revision of values contrary to nature and religious teaching. The Russian government has used the law not only to cultivate domestic political appeal but also as a theme in its anti-Western geopolitics, whether aimed at the republics of the former Soviet Union or targeting more distant allies in Europe and the Muslim world.

History of the Gay Propaganda Law in Russia

The law targeting gay propaganda had both long-term and immediate causes, and it emerged almost exactly twenty years after Russia’s decriminalization of male homosexual activity in April 1993 (Healey 2017). In the late 1980s, under the policies of glasnost (openness) and democratization adopted by the last leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev (1931–), the official taboo on media discussion of sexual matters dissolved. Once the Soviet Union and Communist Party rule ended in late 1991, unrestrained freedom of speech prevailed in the media and society. Soviet citizens had had little exposure to any sex-related media content; Russians now experienced a presumed sexual revolution in public speech. For a brief time in the 1990s, sex overwhelmed media and cultural life with its power to make content appear fresh, democratic, and non-Soviet (Borenstein 2008). Old
boundaries were destroyed, with little thought given to what new boundaries, if any, society needed.

At the same time, this sexual revolution enabled the emergence of vibrant, self-confident Russian LGBTQ voices after a long gestation in underground urban subcultures in the old Soviet Union. Russia’s LGBTQ voices of the 1990s and first years of the twenty-first century did not download the scripts of Western activists. Their voices were “made in the USSR” ([Healey 2017, 109]), and their publications were distinctively Russian, fusing traditions of highbrow literary culture with effusive dashes of erotica in poetry, fiction, and the visual arts ([Baer 2009; Moss 2013]). After decades of silence, a renaissance of Russian queer print media bloomed in the so-called democratic interval of the late 1980s and 1990s ([Healey 2017]).

For the average heterosexual, the new presence of LGBTQ voices was just another feature of this sexual revolution. The Russian economy was in transition from relatively self-contained state socialism to private market relations and global capitalism. The transition was profoundly unequal, with a few oligarchs seizing ownership of the national economy. Public faith in democracy was undermined by the economic unfairness and political instability of the transition to capitalism. For some conservative and nationalist politicians—beneficiaries of the capitalist transition—the shocking sexualization of the public sphere became a useful theme for attracting voter attention and support. Demographic decline, family poverty, and the unboundedness of global online media were new worries that could be tied to an emerging politics of traditional values.

Thus, between 2002 and 2009 conservative politicians spontaneously made several failed bids to enact a law banning gay propaganda. They were emboldened by the arrival into power of Vladimir Putin (1952–) as president in 2000; his vocal concern for the demographic crisis ([Rivkin-Fish 2006]) and his “hypermasculinity” and gendered theatrics ([Wood 2016]) appealed to a public longing for national stability and assertiveness ([Sperling 2015]). Russian conservatives were also apparently influenced by similar laws concocted by the religious right in the United States, as well as Britain’s Section 28 amendment, which banned the promotion of homosexuality in local services. The early Russian propaganda laws failed on technical grounds: the draft laws sought to put a total ban on the promotion of homosexuality in the criminal code, and legal authorities dismissed them as contravening judicial and human rights standards.

Conservative politicians sought more sophisticated legal instruments in regional government. One test bed was the province of Ryazan, where in 2006 a local ordinance punishing “propaganda for homosexuality among minors” was passed ([Healey 2017, 2]). Gay and lesbian activists launched a legal challenge after being arrested for carrying pro-LGBTQ signs outside a school and a children’s library. In 2010, however, the nation’s Constitutional Court ruled that the authorities had not infringed on the activists’ rights. The
court's approving analysis of the law used the tendentious terms “traditional [versus] nontraditional marital relations” and embedded them in Russian jurisprudence (Muravyeva 2014). In 2011 and 2012 several other regions adopted similar bans on gay propaganda, possibly with central coordination.

The relaunch of Putin’s presidency in 2011 and 2012 was the immediate trigger for the 2013 national gay propaganda law. Putin’s return to the top job was not popular with the educated urban middle class, who were suffering from the economic crisis. Their street demonstrations for democratic reform destabilized Putin’s authoritarian system in late 2011 and early 2012. To restore order, the Kremlin divided the democratic opposition (Sharafutdinova 2014). One soft target was Pussy Riot, feminist punk rockers who protested in the country’s main Orthodox cathedral in February 2012. State-owned media presented the trial and prison sentences of Pussy Riot members for “hooliganism” as a fight against Western feminism: a threat to Russia’s traditional values as symbolized by the Orthodox Church (Wilkinson 2014). By giving the green light in late 2012 to a Siberian proposal for a nationwide ban on gay propaganda, the Kremlin kept controversial democratic and Western gender politics in the public eye. With a fierce debate about LGBTQ speech rights, Putin’s administration tapped deep fears of difference in the broad public beyond globalized metropolitan Russia.
In January 2013 the proposed national law was originally tabled as a ban on “propaganda for homosexualism” among minors (Healey 2017, 12). Its chief sponsor was Yelena Mizulina (1954–), a member of parliament known for traditional values campaigning. She duplicitously presented the bill in the parliament and to the media as an anti-pedophile measure when, in fact, the bill said nothing about pedophilia. Such misrepresentations pressured LGBTQ activists and their allies in the democratic opposition to explain why they were apparently defending child abusers. The child abuse spin fueled months of vicious homophobic attacks in the media; meanwhile, physical attacks on LGBTQ citizens, or those perceived as LGBTQ, jumped and remain high (Kondakov 2017). The murder of Vladislav Tornovoi in May 2013 on homophobic motives was a turning point: after fierce denials from Mizulina that her rhetoric was responsible for the tragedy, the law was discreetly redrafted and returned to the parliament as a ban on so-called propaganda for nontraditional sexual relations among minors. Adopted in June 2013, it punishes infractions with fines for Russian citizens from 4,000 to 100,000 rubles ($70 to $1,750). Foreigners can be punished with similar fines, plus a jail term of up to fifteen days’ administrative detention, followed by deportation.

**Impact of the Law**

In contrast to Britain’s Section 28, which was never used (and was eventually repealed), Russia’s gay propaganda ban was deployed almost immediately. The law has reportedly been used hundreds of times against private individuals; against individuals running websites, such as Deti-404, a site devoted to supporting LGBTQ children and teenagers; and against journalists and teachers (Kondakov 2017). Young Dutch human rights workers were arrested and deported in July 2013, among the first targets of the new law. More alarming is the spike in homophobic violence following the launch of the public debate on the law in January 2013. LGBTQ citizens in Russia have no protection from hate crimes. Aleksandr Kondakov (2017) demonstrates from keyword searches of state-court sentencing records that cases of violence against LGBTQ victims tripled between 2010 and 2015, with the years 2011 to 2013 showing steep rises as local and then national debates over gay propaganda took off. Since 2013, murders of LGBTQ victims for their orientation have been 2.5 times more frequent per capita in Russia than in the United States: Kondakov concludes that this must be a result of the 2013 debate and the media persecution of queer Russians.

**Traditional Values in Putin’s Political Ideology**

So-called traditional values are part of Putin’s conservative populism in domestic politics and international relations. After the collapse of Soviet atheism in the 1980s, ever-closer ties between the state and the Orthodox Church, stressing Russia’s exceptionalism, have
provided Kremlin strategists with an alternative national ideology. In his speeches, Putin has contextualized the gay propaganda ban as part of Russia's assertion of its own tradition against "Euro-Atlantic countries [which] are actually rejecting their roots, including the Christian values that constitute the basis for Western civilization" (quoted in Healey 2017, 16). He has also promoted traditional values among Russia's Muslim nationalities (Bedford and Souleimanov 2016); murders and violence against gay men in Chechnya followed in 2016 and 2017. In the struggle between the European Union and Russia over Ukraine, russophone media and activists have promoted traditional values against the European Union “imposition” of LGBTQ rights. Similar soft-power political disputes over LGBTQ rights between parties oriented toward either Europe or Russia occur in other former Soviet republics. Russia has supported conservatives in eastern and western Europe opposed to equal marriage and LGBTQ equality (Kuhar and Paternotte 2017), and in the Middle East and Africa, Putin's allies and trading partners share similar antihomosexuality agendas (Thoreson 2015). Russia led a campaign to get the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to recognize traditional values as the fundamental basis for human rights, against the existing principle of the universality of rights, with support from these allies (Wilkinson 2014). The traditional values agenda offers Putin’s government a soft-power basis for leadership in the international community of countries that resist LGBTQ rights as Western inventions, rather than universal human rights.

SEE ALSO Anti-gender Movement in Europe; Chechnya, Detention Camps in; Nationalism and Sexuality in Europe

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Sacred Band of Thebes

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An ancient Greek battalion supposedly consisting of pairs of male lovers and their beloveds.

Of all the positive models of same-sex desire from the ancient Greek world, the tradition of a military band at Thebes composed of 150 pairs of lovers and their younger boyfriends has proven particularly attractive, for it suggests that same-sex desire is not inconsistent, at least for the Greeks, with virility and virtue. But behind this idealized tradition is a reality that is more complex.

The Tradition

The Sacred Band (Hieros Lochos in Greek) was formed in the early 370s BCE. Its members originally fought at the front lines of the Theban army, but the Theban general Pelopidas later reorganized them as a separate elite battalion. (A different tradition credits the band’s formation to the general Epaminondas.) The band won victories over larger Spartan armies at Tegyra in 375 and, most famously, Leuctra in 371, ushering in a period of Theban hegemony over the ancient Greek world. There is almost nothing more about the battalion until its final defeat a generation later, at Chaeronea in 338 BCE, at the hands of the Macedonian king Philip II and his son Alexander the Great. The remains of the lion monument that ancient sources say was erected over the burial site of “the Theban dead” there was rediscovered in 1818, and archaeologists later found 254 skeletons buried beneath. Many scholars have assumed that this was the burial site of the 300 members of the Sacred Band of Thebes (and not that of other Thebans who also fought that day), but this cannot be confirmed.

One strand of the ancient tradition about the Sacred Band attributes to it an erotic composition. The Greek biographer Plutarch (c. 46–after 119 CE), writing more than 400 years after the battalion’s demise, notes that “some say that this band was composed of lovers and beloveds” (1917, 383), the founders apparently believing that both lover and beloved would fight more bravely in the other’s presence. After the Sacred Band was cut down at Chaeronea, Philip II, “on learning that this was the band of lovers and beloveds, burst into tears and said ‘Perish miserably they who think that these men did or suffered anything disgraceful!’” (Plutarch 1917, 387; translation slightly adapted by David D.
Leitao).

The tradition of an erotic Sacred Band was a natural fit for Thebes’s well-known reputation for the love of boys. The mythical Theban king Laius, father of Oedipus, was said to be an “inventor” of Greek pederasty (*paederastia*, literally meaning “love of boys”). And the Theban hero Iolaus was said by some to have fought by Heracles’s side as his beloved, and they point to a tradition at Thebes of lovers and beloveds pledging their commitment to each other at Iolaus’s tomb.

**Band of Lovers?**

But what does it mean that the Sacred Band of Thebes, as some Greek sources suggest, was composed of lovers and beloveds? Were these fighting pairs involved in an ongoing sexual relationship? Or were they at a later stage in the relationship, after the sexual element had ceased? The Greeks, confusingly for modern scholars, frequently used the words *lover* and *beloved* to describe such pairs even at this later, postsexual phase.

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*The Lion of Chaeronea, Funerary Monument to the Theban Dead.* Archaeologists found 254 skeletons buried beneath this monument to the Thebans killed at the Battle of Chaeronea. While ancient sources noted that the monument honored “the Theban dead” generally, many modern scholars have assumed this to be the burial site of the Sacred Band of Thebes specifically.
Most scholars assume that the Theban pairs were still sexually involved, but this does entail some challenging chronological assumptions. Ancient Greek pederasty was age structured: it typically paired a young man (the “lover”), perhaps in his twenties or early thirties, and an adolescent male (the “beloved”), usually in his late teens. Such a relationship ended, normatively, when the adolescent grew a full adult beard, around the age of twenty; as an adult, the young man would eventually marry and could, if so inclined, court boys in his own right. It was also around the age of twenty that a young man became eligible to serve in the army, so that being a beloved and being a member of the army ought generally to be mutually exclusive (Leitao 2014; Ogden 1996). If the Sacred Band was composed of pairs engaged in an ongoing sexual relationship, its members would be eligible for a rather brief time (unless Thebes was unusual in allowing adolescents to serve), and one wonders how effective an army with so transitory a membership could have been.

The possibility that the Theban fighters were pairs of young men whose relationship had ceased to be sexual is no less attractive. This is certainly the case of the Greek philosopher Socrates and the Athenian general Alcibiades, one of the most famous same-sex couples of antiquity: Plato makes it clear that this lover and beloved served together in battle (at Delium and Potidæa) after the sexual phase of their relationship had ended (and Plato insists, perhaps implausibly, that only Alcibiades, the beloved, felt sexual desire and that the relationship was never consummated). A postsexual phase of the relationship may also be the context in which to understand the mythical figures Achilles and Patroclus, fellow soldiers during the Trojan War, whose friendship in Homer was later reinterpreted as an explicitly pederastic relationship (Leitao 2014). Young warriors bound by love (if no longer by sex) would be no less motivated to fight bravely in the presence of each other.

**Same-Sex Desire and Greek Armies**

While the age protocols of Greek armies and of pederastic courtship mean that active sexual relationships would have been unusual, if not nonexistent, same-sex desire was nevertheless frequently felt in military life. There are stories of soldiers who kept young male captives (not necessarily soldiers themselves) for sexual pleasure, and of one Episthenes, who once assembled a battalion of young men distinguished for their beauty (Leitao 2014). This does not mean that Episthenes was involved sexually with any of these youths (even in the past); it points instead to the inevitability, in a society where pederastic relationships were tolerated and even valorized, that some boyish new recruits (ones still lacking a full beard) may have been attractive to other men in the unit.

Sometimes feelings of desire in military contexts were extended into utopian fantasy. In Plato’s Symposium, the character Phaedrus wonders “if we could somehow contrive to have a city or an army composed of lovers and their beloveds” (1967, 103; translation slightly adapted by David D. Leitao). And in the Republic, Socrates advocates that, in his ideal state,
boys and adolescents would accompany the army to war and that soldiers who distinguish themselves in battle would be rewarded with the chance to kiss or be kissed by the young man of their choice \textit{(Plato 2013)}.

**Controversies, Ancient and Modern**

Phaedrus’s fantasy of an army or city of lovers in Plato’s \textit{Symposium} provokes an interesting response by Xenophon. The character Socrates in Xenophon’s own \textit{Symposium} alleges that Plato’s Pausanias (it was in fact Plato’s Phaedrus),

\begin{quote}
in defense of those who wallow in lasciviousness, has said that the most valiant army would be one recruited of lovers and their beloveds.... He adduced as evidence in support of his position both the Thebans and Eleans, alleging that this was their policy. He said that though sharing common beds they nevertheless assigned to their beloveds places alongside themselves in the battle-line. But this is a false analogy: for such practices, though normal among them, with us are banned by the severest reprobation. My own view is that those who assign these posts in battle suggest thereby that they are suspicious that the objects of their love, if left by themselves, will not perform the duties of brave men.
\end{quote}

\textit{(1968, 627; TRANSLATION SLIGHTLY ADAPTED BY DAVID D. LEITAO)}

Xenophon’s Socrates is much more skeptical of the moral value of pederastic relationships, in the military and elsewhere, than Plato or his Socrates are. It is often forgotten that the institution of pederasty was not universally embraced in ancient Greece: it was often mocked, especially in democratic Athens, as an indulgence of the aristocracy (\textit{Hubbard 1998}), and even some members of the elite, including Xenophon, were uncomfortable with carnal expressions of same-sex desire. This debate over the social utility of same-sex desire, including in military contexts, is implicit in Philip II’s defensive praise, as reported by Plutarch (\textit{1917, 387}), of the fallen members of the Sacred Band at Chaeronea and his rebuke of those “who think that these men did or suffered anything disgraceful.”

To many scholars, the passages from the symposia of Plato and Xenophon are important in providing contemporary evidence for the existence of an erotically constituted Sacred Band of Thebes. It is curious that Plato does not locate Phaedrus’s fantasy in Thebes and that neither author refers to the Theban force by name. But this objection is not decisive: the dramatic date of both works was the late fifth-century BCE, while Socrates was still alive, and thus before the Sacred Band was even created, so it is possible that both authors
wished to allude to an erotically constituted Sacred Band without committing the anachronism of mentioning it by name.

Perhaps more troubling is that apart from these two fourth-century texts, which present a fantasy of an army or city of lovers (Plato) and a criticism of this fantasy and the Theban evidence allegedly used to support it (Xenophon), the earliest explicit references to a Sacred Band composed of lovers and their beloveds are found in Plutarch’s biography of Pelopidas, written more than 400 years after the band was wiped out at Chaeronea; a handful of other sources for an erotic band are even later. All these texts are from what might be called “moralizing” genres of literature; the more properly historiographical texts that describe the exploits of the Sacred Band, some dating from as early as the fourth century BCE, say nothing of any erotic composition.

One is left with two interpretive options. The first is to embrace an impressionistic picture of an erotically constituted Sacred Band, even though this requires relying on texts of widely divergent periods and quality (Ogden 1996; Davidson 2007). The alternative is to suppose that an erotic Sacred Band was more of a fantasy, built on a combination of some kernels of truth (e.g., the existence of a nonerotic band of this name at Thebes, certain erotic traditions at Thebes) and the utopian philosophizing on the part of Plato and others within the Socratic circle, who sought to defend their aristocratic pederastic practices at a time when the democratic mob was more hostile to the pursuit of boys (Leitao 2002). Whatever one chooses to believe about the reality of the fourth century BCE, the later tradition of an erotic Sacred Band, from at least the first century CE on, was very real.

Reception

The practices, myths, and traditions from ancient Greek pederasty have been enormously influential on modern homophile and gay liberation movements from the later nineteenth century to the present, and the tradition of the Sacred Band of Thebes certainly played its role. In Victorian England, the erotic elements of the tradition were rediscovered, aided by the work of classical scholars, and the Sacred Band came to be taken up by homophile activists as historical evidence for the salutary effect of male erotic bonding on the social fabric. The criminologist and sexologist George Cecil Ives (1867–1950), in the 1890s, created the Order of Chaeronea, a homophile secret society inspired by the setting of the last stand of the Sacred Band in 338 BCE (Cook 2003). The socialist Edward Carpenter (1844–1929) featured the Sacred Band prominently in his Iolaus: An Anthology of Friendship (1902), whose title invokes the famous Theban beloved of Heracles. These British homophile activists may have been anticipated, in part, by the American poet Walt Whitman’s (1819–1892) “love of comrades,” which itself may owe inspiration to new awareness of the erotic tradition of the Sacred Band. In “When I Peruse the Conquer’d Fame,” one of the Calamus poems originally published in 1860, Whitman describes how unmoved he is by the “victories of mighty generals,” but that “when I hear of the
brotherhood of lovers, ... I am ... fill’d with the bitterest envy." Given the martial context of this poem, it is difficult not to see an allusion to the Sacred Band of Thebes, which is in fact how the English critic John Addington Symonds (1840–1893), one of Whitman’s earliest commentators, interpreted this and other Whitman poems (Cook 2003). A similar embrace of the Sacred Band existed among homophile activists in Germany, beginning with the sexologist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895) in the late nineteenth century.

Only in the later twentieth century did the Sacred Band of Thebes play a role specifically in debates about integrating gays and lesbians in modern military forces and, more recently still, in debates about the rights of transgender people to serve. Modern reception of the ancient Sacred Band accurately captures one key element of the ancient tradition: its idealization. There is no awareness of the skepticism of some, such as Xenophon’s Socrates, about the value of carnal couples fighting together in battle, not to mention any concern about the nature of the existing historical sources for an erotic band. It preserves only the utopian vision of Plato and the later panegyric tradition of an erotic band of lovers and beloveds at Thebes.

SEE ALSO Classical Studies; The Order of Chaeronea; Sappho, Nineteenth-Century Rediscovery of

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Samoan Faʻafafine

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Samoans who are biologically male but whose gendered behaviors are significantly more feminine than is normative for men in Samoan culture.

The Samoan word faʻafafine literally translates as “in the manner of” or “like” (fa’a) a woman (fafine; plural fāfine). Faʻafafine are Samoans who are biologically male but whose gendered behaviors are significantly more feminine than is usual for normatively gendered men in Samoa. Faʻafafine have been a constant presence within Samoan cultural history, and in contemporary times they exist in both American Samoa and the Independent State of Samoa, although the different histories and cultural contexts of each locale have led to some variances; this entry focuses on the Independent State of Samoa.

There are similar “feminine male” identities across the Pacific; while not a homogenous group, these identities have marked similarities, especially in comparison to trans populations in various non-Pacific cultures. Some analyses of transgender identities see them as a means of repositioning homosexuality within a more “heterosexual” framework by rendering men who are sexually attracted to other men “feminine.” However, faʻafafine femininity is not the result of preexistent “homosexuality” but develops in much the same way as normative femininity. In the traditional Samoan context, gender-specific labor is adopted by boys and girls at around the age of ten (Besnier 1993; Poasa 1992; Schmidt 2010). In line with the collective ideals of the culture, this marker of gender is about contributing labor for the good of the group (usually the extended family or village), rather than being based on individual attributes such as embodiment. Faʻafafine children generally evidence a preference for feminine labor at a similarly young age, and this is usually the first indication that they are not “boys.” Faʻafafine also have a feminine demeanor and tend to prefer the company of young women over young men (Hansen-Reid 2011; Schoeffel 2014). In Samoa unmarried adolescents are socially segregated on the basis of gender, but faʻafafine are accepted as appropriate companions for young unmarried women because they are not understood as “men.” The fact that, in traditional Samoan contexts, faʻafafine are not generally marked in terms of their appearance (but rather their behavior) may explain their relative invisibility in early accounts of Western contacts with Samoa (Feuʻu 2017).

Although faʻafafine’s femininity is not the result of a specific sexual orientation, it does have
implications relating to sexuality in that faʻafafine are potential sexual partners for normatively masculine men (Schmidt 2017). Within traditional understandings of sexuality in Samoan culture, the notion of “homosexual” as either a category of person or a specific practice does not exist. Consequently, sexual relations between faʻafafine and masculine men have no impact on the identities of either party. Young, unmarried, masculine men often engage in sexual acts with each other, and these experiences similarly have no consequences for their identities (Bartlett and Vasey 2006; Keene 1978; Mageo 1992). Within Samoan culture, however, reproduction is highly valued and a marker of maturity, meaning that masculine Samoan men are unlikely to remain in relationships with faʻafafine, but that they eventually marry women and father children (Schmidt 2010). The prioritizing of family within Samoan culture has meant that, historically, it seems that some faʻafafine also married women and had children (Dolgoy 2000).

Globalization has meant that Western understandings of the relationship between gender and sexuality have become more common in Samoa and in diasporic Samoan communities. This has led to changes in the ways in which gender is enacted, especially by younger Samoans (Schmidt 2010). Normative femininity and masculinity are no longer understood as being primarily related to the contribution to the collective good, but have become more focused on the individual body and linked to sexuality (Schmidt 2010). For young Samoans, this has resulted in expressing gender in ways that are more sexualized, and this is also the case among faʻafafine, many of whom draw on Western beauty and/or erotic ideals to mark themselves as definitively “feminine.” This may be exacerbated by drawing on Western models of transgender, such as drag, especially among younger faʻafafine, although this is not universal and is often limited to contexts such as public performances or socializing in bars and clubs.

However, Samoans of older generations frown upon these sexualized expressions that focus attention on the individual. Concepts of homosexuality have also entered the Samoan cultural lexicon, bound up with a strong cultural affiliation with Christian religions that, for the most part, have eschewed same-sex sexual relations (Schmidt 2010). As there are no obviously “gay men” within traditional Samoan culture, faʻafafine have become targets of the homophobia that has accompanied the widespread adoption of various forms of Christianity, with some churches being more marked in this aspect than others. Many churches simultaneously accept the service of faʻafafine that is based on their feminine work and reject any overtly sexualized expressions of faʻafafine identity that they associate with “homosexuality.” Westernization and globalization have thus had some outcomes that faʻafafine experience as beneficial, but there is also an increased level of marginalization. In both contemporary Samoa and the diasporic context, this has resulted in faʻafafine developing a more political voice through such organizations as the Samoa Faʻafafine Association. This association engages in local events—such as beauty pageants that raise funds for the local rest home, reflecting the Samoan ideal of caring for the elderly—while also agitating for faʻafafine rights at a political level and thus echoing LGBTQIA+ politics.
from overseas contexts (Dolgoy 2000; Schmidt 2010). Fa’afafine identities continue to shift in response to changes in their social environment but remain embedded in the foundation of Samoan culture.

SEE ALSO Pacific Island and Pacific Island Diaspora Identities

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The association of the ancient Greek poet with lesbian desire in the nineteenth century, with a particular focus on the Sappho-inspired work Long Ago by Michael Field.

The figure of Sappho signified multiple meanings to a nineteenth-century audience. For many, she was the greatest lyric poet and the ultimate embodiment of the “poetess”: a Romantic, lyre-strumming figure, immortalized in Madame de Staël’s influential novel *Corinne* (1807). Other “fictions of Sappho” (DeJean 1989) include the myth of Sappho’s suicide, derived from Ovid’s “Sappho to Phaon” in which Sappho takes the Leucadian leap as a result of unrequited love for the fisherman Phaon. This inspired many nineteenth-century women poets to compose their own “last songs,” with the implication that love and learning were, at least for women, mutually exclusive (Reynolds 2003). This story was also frequently represented in nineteenth-century visual culture, with painters such as Théodore Chassériau (Sappho Leaping into the Sea from the Leucadian Promontory [1840]) and Charles Mengin (Sappho [1877]) depicting Sappho poised despairingly on a cliff edge with her lyre in hand.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century Sappho became increasingly associated with female homoerotic desire. This is partly a result of her works becoming available in a faithful English translation that left the female addressees of her love lyrics intact: Henry Thornton Wharton’s *Sappho: Memoir, Text, Selected Renderings, and a Literal Translation* (1885). Wharton followed the German scholar Theodor Bergk (in his Latin translation *Anthologia Lyrica* [1854]) by reproducing the female pronouns of Sappho’s love poems. Prior to Wharton’s volume, only poets with strong classical abilities such as Charles Baudelaire and Algernon Charles Swinburne envisioned Sappho as a homoerotic figure, translating these visions into scandalizing poems such as “Lesbos” (*Les Fleurs du mal*, 1857) and “Anactoria” (*Poems and Ballads*, 1866). These erotic visions of Sappho also manifested in visual culture; for example, the Pre-Raphaelite artist (and friend of Swinburne) Simeon Solomon depicts *Sappho and Erinna in a Garden at Mytilene* (1864), while the lasting influence of Baudelaire on Félicien Rops is exhibited in his *Sapho* (c. 1890), an engraving of women engaged in cunnilingus. By the fin de siècle, the terms *Sapphism* and *lesbianism*, the latter derived from the name of the Greek island of Lesbos where Sappho lived, came to designate erotic love between women, gradually replacing the
term *tribadism*, used during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (*Wahl 1999*). These new terms appeared in the sexological works of the period; for example, in *Psychopathia sexualis* (first published in German in 1886), Richard von Krafft-Ebing wrote of "the mysteries of Lesbian love" (*1900, 417*), while *The National Medical Dictionary* in 1890 defined "Sapph'ism" as "the Lesbian love; the sensual desire of women for persons of their own sex" (491).

Lesbian Sappho was also an effect of the broader cultural climate of the fin de siècle, including factors such as female educational reform and Victorian Hellenism. During the 1870s and 1880s, women gained access to Greek and Latin texts at the new women’s colleges such as Girton and Newnham Hall at Cambridge and Bedford College in London. This formidable language of philosophy, law, science, and sex had long been a privileged male preserve (*Hurst 2006*). Reading such languages allowed women direct access to classical texts that openly discussed same-sex relations. This environment also provided a female-centered space that resembled Sappho’s supposed school for girls (*Parker 1996*), echoing the pedagogical model of male homoerotic relations propounded by Victorian scholars of ancient Greek culture such as John Addington Symonds (*A Problem in Greek Ethics, 1883*). Symonds himself translated Sappho’s “Hymn to Aphrodite,” which was published as an appendix to his *Studies of the Greek Poets* (1877). His translations of sixteen fragments from Sappho were also included in Wharton’s pivotal volume, along with other “selected renderings.”

Wharton’s volume had a huge influence on one poet in particular. Katharine Bradley was among the first women to study at Newnham College, Cambridge. She later formed a lifelong collaborative and romantic partnership with her niece Edith Cooper, writing together under the pseudonym “Michael Field.” The publication of Michael Field’s volume of lyrics inspired by Sappho, titled *Long Ago* (1889), marks a key moment in Sappho’s reception. *Long Ago* opens with a preface explaining the “audacious” idea behind its genesis: “When, more than a year ago, I wrote to a literary friend of my attempt to express in English verse the passionate pleasure Dr. Wharton’s book had brought to me, he replied: ‘That is a delightfully audacious thought—the extension of Sappho’s fragments into lyrics’” (*Field 1889, n.p.*).
By the latter half of the nineteenth century, Sappho became increasingly associated with female homoerotic desire.

Long Ago is a complex, influential response to Wharton’s volume. Michael Field insert their lyrical poems into the “gaps” in Wharton's text. Far from lamenting the incompleteness of the fragments of Sappho’s poetry offered by Wharton, Bradley and Cooper imagine the possibilities of what is left unsaid. Wharton’s presentation of the fragments, with the Greek text juxtaposed with the English translation, followed by selected “renderings” from other poets, creates a space for Bradley and Cooper to inscribe their own version of Sappho. Yopie Prins refers to this space of possibility and inspiration as a metaphorical “field” that enables their collaboration to take place (1999).

The sixty-eight poems in Long Ago (not counting the unnumbered first and last poems) portray Sappho as a complex, multifaceted figure. Poem 1 introduces the idyllic world of Sappho and her maidens, plaiting garlands and learning “Love's golden mysteries / Of young Apollo” (Field 1889, n.p.). The volume is structured around Sappho’s shifting, ambisexual desires: for her maidens Erinna, Mnasdica, Gorgo, Dica, Atthis, Anactoria (all named in the original fragments); for mortal men Phaon and Alcaeus; and for deities such as Apollo, Aphrodite, and Eros. Michael Field use the natural spaces of Sappho’s island home to forge their own sensuous aesthetic, incorporating imagery of flowers, plants, fertile grottoes, and the seashore to reflect the harmonious pleasures of Sappho and her maidens. Virginity recurs as a central theme throughout, with Sappho praising the self-sufficiency that enables her creativity to flourish.
The diversity of Long Ago’s range of subjects, its desires mingling the hetero- and homoerotic, is echoed in its complex multivocality. In an act of ventriloquism, several of the poems are “spoken” by Sappho in the first person, while others are narrated by a distant yet intimate speaker who repeats Sappho’s words. In several poems, there is slippage between the voice of the speaker and the voice of Sappho, as the two merge—recalling Sappho’s own famous “Ode to Aphrodite” in which the goddess addresses the speaker in the final stanza, asking “Who, O Sappho, is wronging you?” (Sappho 2003, 3). This intermingling of voices echoes Bradley and Cooper’s own collaboration, which they would continue to develop in their later volumes, publishing well into the twentieth century.

Though Michael Field conclude their volume with Sappho’s desperate leap, their version of Sappho’s sexuality radically revises the heterosexual narrative that cast her as the tragic lover of Phaon. Their poems proved inspiring to the next generation of women poets who sought to create their own visions of Sappho, including the decadent poet Renée Vivien and the American imagists H. D. and Amy Lowell.

SEE ALSO Aestheticism and Decadence, Nineteenth-Century; Boston Marriage and Women’s Romantic Friendships; Classical Studies; The Order of Chaeronea

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Scandals in Europe

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Major scandals involving same-sex relationships within European government in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Alleged homosexual behavior has long been used as an excuse for political retribution, accompanied by the shocking implication that homosexuals always engaged in the most abominable of sins: anal intercourse. In England, the Buggery Act of 1533 required proof of actual penetration for a conviction on the grounds of homosexual activity, which was not easy. However, as the unsettling issue of homosexual identity was emerging toward the end of the nineteenth century, the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 permitted prosecution for the much vaguer term of "gross indecency." It was under this law that the famous Irish writer Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) was convicted in 1895. Widely reported in the popular press, this represented the most significant sexual scandal of the Victorian age. The seduction of supposedly innocent and naive young men played a central role in the homophobic typecasting of the homosexual (Foldy 1997).

Same-sex relationships were neither uncommon nor taboo among the upper-class elites of Europe, but any perceived influence on a person in government by a homosexual paramour was viewed with suspicion and resentment. Thus, it was not so much the barely concealed crush of King Charles I of Württemberg (1823–1891) for the American Charles Woodcock (1850–1923) in 1883 that caused offense, but the way in which the latter began to exercise a decisive influence over matters of state. The prime minister forced Woodcock's removal, and the king found a new boyfriend in the court theater (Dvorek 1988). Interference in state affairs was also what prompted the German journalist Maximilian Harden (1861–1927) to pursue his relentless campaign against the homosexual coterie around Wilhelm II (1859–1941), the German kaiser. Harden was not homophobic, and his magazine, Die Zukunft, published articles favoring the decriminalization of homosexual offenses (under Paragraph 175 of the German penal code). Yet he was the main protagonist in a series of sensational libel trials between 1907 and 1909, in which witnesses were found who claimed to have been seduced into having sex with Philipp, Prince of Eulenburg (1847–1921), the closest friend and adviser of the kaiser. Other members of this inner circle were tarnished as well, and Eulenburg, though never found guilty, was a broken man, wheeled into court on a stretcher. The picture drawn in the press of the privileged, wealthy elite taking advantage of poor young men strengthened the image of the homosexual as
relentless seducer (Winzen 2010).

The Homosexual as Predator or Pansy

The German leader Adolf Hitler (1889–1945) chose to suppress his distaste about the private life of the talented chief of his Nazi storm troopers, Ernst Röhm (1887–1934). But the latter’s proclivities became embarrassingly public when political opponents published letters, written a few years earlier from Bolivia, in which Röhm pined for the gay bathhouses in Berlin and requested nude photographs of men. He was too effective a leader of the Nazi paramilitary wing to be dismissed during the bitter election campaigns of the Weimar Republic. In June 1934, however, Hitler succumbed to pressure from the army to remove his loyal associate. He used the Night of the Long Knives to have some 200 other alleged enemies murdered, along with Röhm. This was a purely political move on his part, but for the public Hitler stamped Röhm with the well-tried trope of a sexual predator, claiming that it was necessary to make the Hitler Youth a safe place for mothers to send their sons. The bloodbath reverberated throughout the world's press, but in Britain Hitler won praise for cleaning up his party and removing the thugs, with less attention paid to Röhm’s sexuality (Gritschneder 1993; Evans 2005).
homosexual assaults on young men. Though never found guilty, he was so broken by the scandal that he had to be wheeled into the court on a stretcher. The affair made headline news worldwide, from this French newspaper to the New York Times.

The swashbuckling Röhm, his face disfigured with battle scars from World War I (1914–1918), could never be accused of effeminacy. But Britain in the 1930s saw a number of what the press called “pansy cases.” A 1932 police raid on a Holland Park ballroom in London netted some sixty people, mostly men in drag. The Daily Mail stoked prejudices by referring to the “revolting, foul and foetid particulars” and describing the defendants' hysterical demeanor in court, weeping and fainting just like women (Houlbrook 2002, 32).

An 1898 scandal in Cádiz, Spain, centered on male prostitutes catering to other men. Homosexual relations were not explicitly banned in Spain but were sometimes prosecuted under indecency laws. There were fears that the Cádiz brothel might reflect badly on Spain's international reputation, but the focus of reporting in the press lay less on sexual perversion than on the effeminacy of these male sex workers (Cleminson, Fernández, and Vázquez García 2014).

Despite a certain pragmatic tolerance for same-sex activity among the military, there was a growing perception of actual homosexuals as cowards. Immediately after the evacuation of British soldiers from Dunkirk in 1940 during World War II (1939–1945), a British newspaper published an article titled “Pacifists and Pansies” implying that homosexuals were pacifists and vice versa, and that they were not only unpatriotic but damaging to the war effort (Vickers 2013). The homosocial isolation of frontline duty caused senior officers everywhere to turn a blind eye to a certain amount of stress-relieving homoerotic and even sexual activity in the ranks. German and British military records reveal that most court-martial cases involving homosexual offenses focused on an abuse of rank, where a noncommissioned officer had assaulted a private soldier (Giles 2005; Vickers 2013).

Blackmail and Treason

Pulling rank in terms of class was a major issue in scandals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But the real problem, according to the Berlin police chief, was blackmail. His main target, therefore, was not the otherwise respected men who had engaged in same-sex flings but the young male prostitutes who were fleecing them, and not infrequently driving them to suicide (Tresckow 1922). As long as homosexual acts remained illegal, blackmail was a concern in diplomatic circles. The fear that homosexually inclined men with access to sensitive state papers could be pressured to reveal them to other countries seemed to be confirmed in 1913 when the Austrian colonel Alfred Redl (1864–1913) was found to be passing military secrets to the Russians (Spector 2007). During World War II and into the early 1950s, the graduates of Cambridge University known as the Cambridge Five, who passed top-secret information to the Soviets and recruited other spies, reinforced a perception that homosexuals were untrustworthy (Hamrick 2004). In the case of Jeremy Thorpe (1929–2014), the Liberal Party leader in
Britain, his downfall in the 1970s was caused not so much by the affairs he had engaged in with other men as the allegation that he had tried to have one partner murdered in order to save his reputation. In the public’s view, here was another example of the depths to which a homosexual would apparently stoop (Preston 2016).

The sensational conviction of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu (1926–2015) and two friends for sexual offenses in 1954 quickly led to a parliamentary inquiry into the justification of the law, as a result of which the Wolfenden Report recommended the legalization of homosexual acts between consenting adults (Montagu 2000; Lewis 2016). The decriminalization of homosexual offenses in most European countries has led to fewer scandals, but the homophobia fueled by these tropes lives on.

### Lesbian Scandals

There are two reasons for the relative absence of scandals involving lesbians: their exclusion from mainstream public affairs posed a lesser threat to the stability of society; and the more open and physical expression of affection by women made it difficult to identify actual lesbians. No one seems to have raised an eyebrow when, upon the death of the archbishop of Canterbury in 1896, his widow, Mary “Minnie” Benson (c. 1841–1918), promptly invited into her bed every night for the next two decades the daughter of the previous archbishop of Canterbury (Goldhill 2016). Lesbian couples were certainly active in the campaigns for women’s emancipation that began around the end of the nineteenth century, but it was their politics more than their sexuality that made them targets. In Germany in 1905, the activist Anna Rühling (1880–1953) was the only woman to publicly describe herself as a lesbian. Otherwise, even current scholars admit that “we can only speculate about the nature of these relationships” (Pieper 1984, 117; translated by Geoffrey J. Giles). Even the exchange of passionate-sounding letters is inconclusive, given the florid conventions of the times. A famous pioneer of women’s rights, Marie Stopes (1880–1958), remained adamant that lesbian “aberrations” were no substitute for heterosexual relations (Dijkstra 1996). The best-known scandal came about through the dogged insistence of a British journalist, James Douglas, in 1928 to bring charges against Radclyffe Hall (1880–1943) for publishing an obscene novel, The Well of Loneliness. Although the book was compassionate rather than sexually explicit, the courts ruled in two trials that all copies should be withdrawn. The involvement and support of many prominent intellectuals gave the case notoriety, and Hall the status of a heroine in lesbian circles that has endured to the present day (Dellamora 2011).

**SEE ALSO**  
Blackmail; Rühling, Anna (1880–1953); Treason and Queerness; The Well of Loneliness (1928; Radclyffe Hall); Wilde Trials, International Significance of

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Since its inception in the early twentieth century, Scouting has exhibited two conflicting impulses. The first is inclusive, committed to spreading Scouting to all youth; the second is exclusive, vigilant in policing the boundaries separating virtuous members from a morally suspect society. In *Scouting for Boys*, the movement’s foundational treatise, first published in 1908, Robert Baden-Powell (1857–1941) envisioned a movement that would include all of Britain’s youth, particularly the lower classes who were in danger of becoming “hooligans” and “wasters” (*Baden-Powell 2004, 299*). The aim of the Boy Scouts, Baden-Powell explained, was to “pass as many boys through our character factory as we possibly can” (quoted in *Rosenthal 1986, 6*) so as to produce the self-disciplined and robust men needed to sustain a proud empire. Initially, Scouting was aimed at boys between the ages of eleven and fifteen, but Baden-Powell rapidly expanded the movement’s scope to include younger boys (*Cubbing began in 1916*), as well as girls (the Girl Guides date from 1910). And he delighted in Scouting’s remarkable diffusion across the globe, including to the United States, where the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) was incorporated in 1910. Today, Scouting counts around 30 million members in some 200 countries.

Inclusivity did not mean an embrace of diversity. Baden-Powell’s aspiration to spread Scouting to “the whole of our youth” (*2004, 299*) stemmed from his profound unease with difference and an insistence on social control and obedience. “We are very like bricks in a wall,” he wrote in the 1912 *Handbook for Girl Guides* (quoted in *Rosenthal 1986, 285*), and the purpose of Scouting’s character factory was to prevent “rotten bricks” (10) from bringing down the wall. Baden-Powell’s profound confidence in Scouting’s capacity to manufacture sturdy, reliable bricks out of disparate materials coexisted with a deep anxiety about the rotten bricks, the “indifferent citizens,” the Socialist “faddists,” and the thousands of “pale, narrow-chested, hunched-up, miserable specimens” who did not measure up to his masculine ideal (*2004, 297–298*).

Baden-Powell’s aspiration may have been to make Scouting “a mass movement with no barriers to membership” (quoted in *Rosenthal 1986, 6*), but inherent in Scouting’s strongly
prescriptive code of conduct was a warrant to exclude those who were unable or unwilling to live by Scouting's precepts or who threatened the group's identity. Atheists, for instance, have often been excluded from Scouting because they cannot promise to "do my duty to God," as required by the Scout Oath, penned by Baden-Powell. Scouting has been particularly unwelcoming to nonbelievers in the United States, where since 1911 the BSA Scout Law has included the requirement that a Scout be “reverent toward God” and “faithful in his religious duties.” Even in the less religious United Kingdom, it was not until 2014 that the Scout Association provided nonreligious boys the option of an alternative Scout Promise “to uphold our Scout values”; the year before, the Girl Guides had gone much further in dropping the promise “to love my God” in favor of having all girls pledge “to be true to myself and develop my beliefs.” Scouting also has a complex history of racial exclusion and segregation, particularly in British colonies, where Scouting was initially restricted to whites through a British nationality requirement (see, e.g., Kua 2011), but also in the United States, especially in the South (Macleod 1983).

The most controversial exclusion in contemporary Scouting has involved LGBTQ youth and adult leaders in the BSA, which after more than three decades of legal battles and cultural contestation finally lifted its ban on gay youth in 2013 and on gay Scout leaders in 2015, almost two decades after the UK-based Scout Association first announced, in 1997, that it would accept gay Scout leaders. During the first sixty years of its existence, the BSA, like other Scouting organizations across the globe, had no official policy about sexual orientation. The lack of such a policy did not mean that the BSA (or Scouting in other parts of the world) was accepting of homosexuality. Instead, it signified that the powerful social stigma against homosexuality backed by the criminalization of same-sex relations enabled the national organization to avoid having to address the question of whether to exclude gay and bisexual youth and adults. Only as individual Scouts became open about their sexuality, backed by the prospect of lawsuits and adverse media publicity, did the BSA feel compelled to formulate an explicit policy about homosexuality.

The earliest known documents in which the BSA expressed a view on the incompatibility of homosexuality and Scouting were written in 1978 in response to an incident in which two Scouts, aged seventeen and sixteen, were kicked out of a Scouting group because of their homosexuality. The first notable legal challenge to the Scouts' policy of excluding “avowed or known homosexuals” (Ellis 2014, 41) was lodged by Eagle Scout Tim Curran, whose application to be an assistant scoutmaster in a local council was rejected in 1980 when the BSA learned of a recent news story showing the eighteen-year-old Curran holding hands with a male high school prom date. The resulting court case, which did not go to trial until 1990, hinged on the question of whether applying California's civil rights laws to the Boy Scouts violated the Scouts' constitutional rights of expressive association. Pressed to defend their discriminatory policy in court, the BSA insisted that the Boy Scout Oath, specifically the promise to be “morally straight,” as well as the Scout Law's commandment to keep “his body and mind fit and clean,” demonstrated that homosexuality was
incompatible with Scouting’s core identity (Ellis 2014, 42).

There is scant evidence that either “clean” or “morally straight” had ever been understood as referring to homosexuality. The many editions of the BSA’s handbook never explained the term morally straight in terms of sexuality. Instead, the BSA taught that it meant being a person of strong character who is “honest and open” about his relationships and who respects and defends “the rights of all people” (BSA 1990, 551). The directive to be “clean” derived from language (“clean in thought, word and deed”) that Baden-Powell added to the Scout Law in 1911, but while Baden-Powell clearly had sexuality in mind, he had in mind not homosexuality but the temptations of masturbation and “dirty” women (Jeal 1989). “Decent Scouts,” he explained, “look down upon silly youths who talk dirt, and they do not let themselves give way to temptation, either to talk it or to do anything dirty” (Baden-Powell 2004, 351–352). Moreover, whatever Baden-Powell’s original understanding of the term clean, the BSA could point to nothing in its own voluminous literature that linked cleanliness to homosexuality.

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Former Eagle Scout James Dale outside the US Supreme Court, 2000. The Boy Scouts dismissed Dale as a scoutmaster after learning he was gay, claiming that his homosexuality was inconsistent with the values they were trying to instill in young people. The US Supreme Court upheld their right to dismiss Dale in Boy Scouts of America vs. James Dale (2000).
Ultimately, though, courts in the United States were hesitant to second-guess the BSA leadership’s interpretations of its precepts. In the landmark case of *Boy Scouts of America v. James Dale* (2000), which stemmed from the dismissal of a nineteen-year-old assistant scoutmaster, the US Supreme Court settled the constitutional question, ruling that the First Amendment gave the BSA a fundamental constitutional right to exclude on the basis of sexual orientation because being compelled to include “avowed homosexuals” would undermine its moral teachings.

The BSA’s efforts to justify its discriminatory policy in courts across the nation had pushed its leadership, beginning in the 1990s, to define itself publicly—and become defined in the public mind—not as an inclusive organization open to all boys but as an organization dedicated to serving particular kinds of families who believed in “traditional family values” (Ellis 2014, 48). At the very historical moment that Scouting organizations in much of the rest of the world, as well the Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA)—which as early as 1991 issued a statement that explicitly rejected “sexual preference” as a membership criterion—were taking constructive steps to include gay and lesbian youth, the BSA became ever more deeply entwined in the “culture wars” that Republican social conservatives were waging against gay rights. A marker of the growing divergence between the BSA and most of the rest of the Scouting world was that in 1999, while the BSA honed its legal case to exclude individuals based on their sexual orientation, Scouts Canada welcomed the formation of the first entirely gay and lesbian Scout troop.

Although the US Supreme Court’s ruling in Dale vindicated the BSA’s constitutional right to exclude, it brought the BSA no respite from controversy over its exclusionary policy. Nonprofits, granting agencies, and private businesses came under mounting pressure from advocacy groups to withdraw funding from an organization that unapologetically discriminated on the basis of sexual orientation. Public entities, including schools, cities, and the military, which had long sponsored Scouting units or provided free (or virtually free) access to public property, began severing their long-standing ties to Scouting. The result was to make the BSA ever more reliant on conservative religious institutions, especially the Mormon Church. At the time that James Dale was kicked out of Scouting in 1990, about half of Scout troops were chartered by religious organizations, but two decades later seven in ten Scout troops were chartered by religious organizations, and the Mormon Church alone sponsored one-third of all Cub Scout packs and Boy Scout troops. In contrast, in the United Kingdom, for instance, only about one in ten Scout troops are sponsored by religious organizations. Between 2000 and 2012, while the BSA experienced a more than 20 percent drop in membership, membership in Mormon-sponsored packs and troops remained robust, largely because every Mormon boy, at the age of eight, was enrolled in the Cub Scouts, and every Mormon congregation (or ward) had its own Cub Scout pack and Boy Scout troop. The BSA’s reliance on socially conservative religious groups, especially the Mormon Church, the BSA’s single most important stakeholder, explained much of the divergence between the BSA and Scouting in the rest of the
developed world.

After *Dale*, the BSA's national executives found themselves in an increasingly untenable position, caught between the socially conservative attitudes of much of its membership and leadership and the rapidly evolving attitudes about homosexuality. Public pressure on the BSA intensified in the summer of 2012 after the formation of Scouts for Equality (SFE) and the decision of GLAAD (formerly the Gay and Lesbian Alliance against Defamation) to enlist its public relations professionals in the battle to end the BSA's discriminatory policy. SFE focused on persuading corporate donors to withdraw support from the BSA, a campaign that was stunningly successful, in part because SFE found a receptive audience in the many corporate boardrooms that had come to pride themselves on their inclusivity toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender employees.

The loss of financial support from major donors such as Intel Corporation and the prospect of more corporations and foundations following suit alarmed the BSA national office and strengthened the hand of those within the organization who were pressing for change. In May 2013, less than a year after having publicly reaffirmed its ban on “open or avowed homosexuals” as “absolutely the best policy” (quoted in *Ellis 2014*, 233), the BSA reversed course, lifting the ban on gay youth. The change was hailed by gay rights groups, but the new policy also earned the grudging support of the Mormon Church because the language of the new policy drew a clear distinction between sexual conduct and sexual orientation that dovetailed with the church’s teaching that “the attraction itself is not a sin, but acting on it is.” While the new BSA policy affirmed that no youth could be denied membership “on the basis of sexual orientation or preference alone,” it also stated that “any sexual conduct, whether homosexual or heterosexual, by youth of Scouting age is contrary to the virtues of Scouting” (quoted in *Ellis 2014*, 252–253). Thus, homosexual conduct remained grounds for terminating Scouting youth. And, crucially, the new policy left in place the ban on homosexual adult Scout leaders.

The compromise was enough to secure a majority vote by the BSA National Council, but it was not a sustainable policy. The tipping point had been reached, and in July 2015 the BSA finally lifted its ban on homosexual adult leaders. Eighteen months later, in January 2017, the BSA announced that it would allow transgender youth to enroll in the Boy Scouts, following a trail the Girl Scouts had blazed in 2011 when they welcomed a seven-year-old transgender child, Bobby Montoya, into a Colorado Girl Scout troop. Some LGBTQ advocates criticized the BSA policy changes for not going far enough, first because they permit local Scouting units to select adult leaders without regard to sexual orientation but do not prohibit a troop from proscribing an individual on the basis of sexual orientation and, second, because they allow religiously chartered Scout programs to opt out based on their religious beliefs.

Notwithstanding these religious exemptions and the generous space provided for local
autonomy, these policy changes alienated many religious conservatives, who argued that by sending a message of inclusion toward LGBTQ populations the BSA’s national office had taken sides in “a gender-theory culture war” and thereby undermined the organization’s heteronormative purpose (Smith 2017). Similarly, the Girl Scouts’ inclusion of transgender youth “on a case-by-case basis” drew sharp criticism from Christian conservative groups such as the American Family Association, which called on the Girl Scouts to stop “using young boys as pawns in the culture war” (quoted in Bolton 2015). Some religious conservatives responded by withdrawing from Scouting and gravitating toward faith-based quasi-Scouting organizations. The GSUSA’s greater inclusivity spurred the creation and growth of American Heritage Girls (AHG), which promotes what it considers to be a more “traditional” Scouting movement that “embraces Christian values.” Likewise, the BSA’s 2013 decision to open its doors to gay youth prompted the creation of Trail Life USA (TLUSA), an “unapologetically Christian” alternative to the BSA that vowed not to admit boys “who are open or avowed about their homosexuality” or “who wish to dress and act like girls” (quoted in Payne 2013). The membership of these faith-based Scouting groups remains tiny: the number of girls in AHG is about 2 percent of the 1.8 million girls in GSUSA, and the number of boys in the TLUSA is only about 1 percent of the number of boys in the BSA. Of much greater significance was the Mormon Church’s decision, announced in 2018, to entirely sever its relationship with Scouting.

The BSA’s decisions between 2013 and 2017 to accept gay and transgender youth—followed by its decision in 2018 to admit girls (and to change the name of its flagship program from the Boy Scouts to Scouts BSA)—contributed to a belated convergence between Scouting in the United States and in other advanced industrial societies. But just as the BSA national office struggled for decades to accommodate and reconcile the sharply divergent views among the roughly 270 local councils in different regions of the United States, especially the very different ideas about LGBTQ rights among Scouting councils in more conservative southern states and those in more liberal states in the Northeast and on the West Coast, so the World Organization of the Scout Movement (WOSM) has struggled to legislate a position on LGBTQ inclusion that is acceptable to, let alone binding on, the many countries that are part of the diverse global Scouting movement, particularly those Scouting units that operate in one of the almost seventy-five countries in which LGBTQ relations are still illegal. So long as Scouting aspires to shape the minds and bodies of young people, Scouting will remain a key locus of contestation about social relations and cultural biases.

The inclusive cast of contemporary Scouting in North America and Europe—so well reflected in the “Scouting without barriers” campaign launched in 2016 by the European Scout Region of the WOSM—faithfully embodies Baden-Powell’s original aspiration to include “the whole of our youth” in Scouting. However, the strong dissents from LGBTQ-inclusive policies in the United States and other parts of the world, as well as the proliferation of alternative, faith-based Scouting organizations and the steady decline in
Scouting membership over the last several decades, suggest that fully realizing that inclusive aspiration is as challenging for Scouting today as it was for Baden-Powell more than a century ago.

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The history of, and efforts to overturn, British colonial penal codes against same-sex sexual activity in both Britain and its former colonial holdings.

Throughout the nineteenth century, England established antisodomy statutes throughout its colonial holdings around the world. Same-sex sexual activity was criminalized under two main provisions of British colonial law: carnal intercourse and gross indecency. Carnal intercourse pertained to anal penetration and oral sex but did not specifically target same-sex relations. It included heterosexual relations and bestiality but did not cover sexual activity between women. Gross indecency, by contrast, specifically targeted same-sex sexual activity between men.

The legacy of British colonial laws criminalizing same-sex sexual activity continues to have global consequences in the present day. Despite a global trend since the 1960s to decriminalize same-sex activity, and long after it was largely decriminalized in England with the Sexual Offences Act of 1967, antisodomy prohibitions remain intact in the majority of the former British colonies, even after independence.

Historical Background

Though a part of ecclesiastical law for centuries, the criminalization of same-sex sexual relations was codified into English secular law with the Buggery Act of 1533, as part of King Henry VIII’s (r. 1509–1547) break with the Roman Catholic Church. Under that law, the “abominable vice of buggery” applied to all forms of anal penetration with woman, man, or beast and was punishable by death (25 Hen. 8, c. 6 [1533]). Though briefly repealed in 1547 and restored to Roman Catholic ecclesiastical jurisdiction during the reign of Mary I (r. 1553–1558), the antisodomy law was reenacted in 1562 during the reign of Elizabeth I (r. 1558–1603). The law in this form became the foundation of the colonial laws prohibiting same-sex sexual relations. In England, the Buggery Act was replaced by the Offences Against the Person Act of 1828, which still criminalized sodomy as an offense punishable by death. It remained a capital offense until the enactment of the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861, which reduced sodomy to an offense punishable by imprisonment.
Carnal Intercourse and Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code

British colonial authorities drafted legislation with the intention of protecting the European Christian morality of the colonizer population from presumed sexual corruption from the colonized populations, as well as exercising colonial control over the sexual behavior of the colonized populations. As miscegenation with natives became a growing concern in the colonies during the nineteenth century, authorities and the media demonized the colonized populations as threats to the health and virtue of white settler families. Thus, the British colonial government imported Victorian norms regarding sexuality into the colonies. The settler population needed to be protected from contamination by foreign cultures both racially and morally, which became the justification for colonial regulation and control. In this respect, British regulation of the colonized populations’ sexuality advanced the enterprise of empire, where conquest and domination was rationalized as bringing British enlightenment to those the British deemed to be savage populations (Whitehead 1995; Levine 2007).

For example, the Cantonment Act of 1864 and the Contagious Diseases Act of 1868 criminalized prostitution in order to protect British soldiers stationed in the colonies from venereal disease. Under these laws, though it was often British troops and personnel of the colonial administration who frequented brothels, they never became the object of scrutiny and regulation. Instead, it was the native prostitute who remained subject to surveillance and discipline, just as similar laws disciplined the bodies of prostitutes in garrison towns back in Britain.

The British colonial government also deployed antisodomy statutes to regulate the native population. The first antisodomy law used in the colonies was designed by Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779–1859) in 1827 as part of his governance of Bombay (Asal and Sommer 2016). Later, Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859) and the Law Commission of India were tasked with drafting a penal code for India as the first comprehensive criminal code designed for mass implementation in the colonies. The resulting Indian Penal Code of 1860 incorporated and adapted the British Buggery Act as Section 377, which read:

*Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman, or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall be liable to fine.*

*Explanation—Penetration is sufficient to constitute the carnal intercourse necessary to the offence described in this section.*
“Carnal intercourse against the order of nature” originally meant anal intercourse but was expanded through judicial decisions to include oral sex, attempts, conspiracies, and solicitation (Khanu v. Emperor, AIR 1925 High Court of Sind 286). However, Section 377 was deemed to require penetrative, nonvaginal sex. On its face, Section 377 did not differentiate between the gender of the perpetrators. Thus, the law could be applied to same-sex sexual activity between men or opposite-sex nonvaginal sexual activity between men and women. Because Section 377 required penetration, however, same-sex sexual relations between women could not be prosecuted because women lacked penises. Families who disapproved of lesbian relationships, however, would make criminal kidnapping reports to prevent their daughters from entering into relationships. With respect to same-sex male offenders, Section 377 equated same-sex sexual activity to violent sexual offenses, which applied regardless of consent or the age of the participants. Even if a victim claimed to have consented to the action, the act was regarded as a crime against public safety and welfare.

English colonies that inherited a form of Section 377 include Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Botswana, Brunei, Fiji, the Gambia, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Kenya, Kiribati, Lesotho, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Marshall Islands, Mauritius, Myanmar (Burma), Nauru, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Tonga, Tuvalu, Uganda, Western Samoa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. Although parts of South Africa fell under British colonial control as early as 1806, it retained an antisodomy statute inherited from Dutch rule, even though English common law also increasingly applied. Other parts of the British Empire, including the Caribbean and the Americas, directly imported versions of the Buggery Act of 1533 or the Offences Against the Person Act of 1861, which was enacted in England a year after the Indian Penal Code.

**Gross Indecency and Expansions of Colonial Antisodomy Laws**

In 1885 Henry Labouchère (1831–1912), a member of the British Parliament, introduced legislation to expand the antisodomy law to include the charge of gross indecency, largely to prosecute cases where there was no witness to the sexual act. The Labouchère Amendment provided the following:

> Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or is a party to the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty
of a misdemeanour, and being convicted thereof shall be liable at the discretion of the court to be imprisoned for any term not exceeding two years, with or without hard labour.

(CRIMINAL LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1885, 48 & 49 VICT., C. 69, SEC. 11)

The Labouchère Amendment expanded the law so that both individuals caught in the act of sodomy, including the “passive” partner, were guilty of the crime. The amendment also extended the scope of enforcement to make it easier to prosecute private actions, including those that did not involve penetration. The amendment introduced the new term gross indecency to describe relations short of penetration and was dubbed the “blackmailer’s charter” because a conviction could be obtained based on testimony alone. The Irish writer Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) is perhaps the most famous figure prosecuted under the Labouchère Amendment.

The Labouchère Amendment was also expanded into the colonies. It was integrated into Sudan’s version of Section 377 in 1899 and was introduced as an amendment to the existing Section 377 provisions in Malaysia and Singapore in 1938. Also in 1938, Section 377 of the Singapore Penal Code was bifurcated into Section 377, which pertained to heterosexual sexual activity, and Section 377A, which specifically pertained to same-sex sexual activity. Section 377A read as follows:

Any male person who, in public or private, commits, or abets the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of, any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years.

The Labouchère Amendment also became the basis of a more expansive provision included in the Queensland Penal Code of 1901, which was drafted by Samuel Walker Griffith (1845–1920) for Australia in 1899 and became another model code during the British colonial expansion. The antisodomy provision of the Queensland Penal Code was contained in Section 208, which provided as follows:

Any person who—

1. Has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature; or
2. Has carnal knowledge of an animal; or
Consistent with the Labouchère Amendment, the Queensland Penal Code punished both the active and passive partners in the act of sodomy. It also criminalized attempts, which broadened the scope of behaviors and sexual contact that could be prosecuted under the law. The Queensland Penal Code was adopted in Papua New Guinea and Nigeria and subsequently was used as a model to replace the Indian Penal Code in Kenya, Uganda, and Tanzania. Other African nations that retain characteristics copied from the Queensland Penal Code include Botswana, the Gambia, Malawi, Seychelles, and Zambia.

**Decriminalization**

In 1954 David Maxwell Fyfe (1900–1967), the British home secretary, commissioned the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution to reevaluate the continued existence of the sodomy statute. In 1957 the committee published the Wolfenden Report, which concluded that the criminalization of homosexual behavior in private between consenting adults was an infringement on civil liberty and “should no longer be a criminal offence” ([Home Office and Scottish Home Department 1957, 24](#)). At the time, however, the cabinet opposed implementation of these recommendations. A decade later, the Sexual Offences Act of 1967 decriminalized sexual conduct in private between consenting male adults above the age of twenty-one. This change applied first to England and Wales, followed by Scotland in 1980 and Northern Ireland in 1982. However, by the time homosexuality was decriminalized in England, many of the former colonies had gained independence, often with the colonial sodomy laws still intact. Most former colonies that had adopted a version of Section 377 and the Labouchère Amendment have retained their antisodomy statutes. Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong, and Fiji had removed antisodomy provisions from their criminal statutes as of 2017.

**Australia** Decriminalization of same-sex sexual relations in Australia began in 1975 with the removal of the sodomy provisions from the Crimes Act of 1900. The reform first applied to South Australia in 1976. Reform of the law in the Australian Capital Territory followed in 1984. One at a time, the other states of Australia amended their criminal laws by parliamentary action to remove “unnatural offences” as a crime. Among the last to make the change were Western Australia ([1989](#)) and Queensland ([1990](#)). Tasmania was the very last Australian jurisdiction to decriminalize. A United Nations Human Rights Committee decision, *Toonen v. Australia* ([1994](#)), which found sexual orientation to be a protected status under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, led to the Parliament
of Australia enacting laws to overturn Tasmania’s sodomy law, thereby eliminating antisodomy laws from Australia entirely.

**New Zealand** In New Zealand, the Homosexual Law Reform Act of 1986 removed the sodomy provisions from the Crimes Act of 1961 and decriminalized consensual sexual relations between men over the age of sixteen.

**Hong Kong** While still under British rule, the Hong Kong government, through the Crimes (Amendment) Bill in 1991, decriminalized male homosexual conduct in private between two consenting adults who were at least twenty-one years old. The law, however, still prohibited anal intercourse where one of the parties was under twenty-one, “gross indecency” with a man under the age of twenty-one, and sexual activities between men of any age when more than two parties are present. These last provisions were struck down in *Leung T. C. William Roy v. Secretary for Justice* (2006), after the handover to China.

**Fiji** The antisodomy statutes of Fiji were struck down in *Dhirendra Nadan and Another v. State* (2005). Subsequently, in February 2010, Fiji became the first Pacific island country with colonial-era sodomy laws to formally decriminalize sex between men, when it passed the Fiji National Crimes Decree, which removed all clauses about “sodomy” and “unnatural acts” and uses gender-neutral language in the remainder of the sexual offenses section.

**Recent Reform Attempts**

There have been a few challenges to Sections 377 and 377A in former British colonies in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

**Zimbabwe** In 1997 Canaan Banana (1936–2003), who had served as president of Zimbabwe from 1980 to 1987, was arrested on charges of sodomy, indecent assault, common assault, and committing an unnatural offense in relation to sexual advances he had made on male subordinates during his time in office. He was convicted in 1998 and appealed based on a constitutional challenge to the antisodomy statute. In *Banana v. State* (2000), the Supreme Court of Zimbabwe ruled that the law criminalizing consensual sodomy between male adults in private was not discriminatory. The court reasoned that the protected classifications of “sex” and “gender” under the Constitution of Zimbabwe were not applicable to discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation. The court also emphasized the role of public opinion in upholding the law, remarking that Zimbabwe was conservative in matters of sexual behavior and that change should come from the legislature.

**Botswana** In 1994 a gay man, Utjiwa Kanane, was arrested and charged with committing an unnatural offense and committing indecent practices between males. Kanane challenged the constitutionality of the antisodomy laws. In 1995 Botswana’s High Court ruled against
Kanane and upheld his conviction. In Kanane v. State (2003), Botswana’s Court of Appeal affirmed the High Court decision. Citing Banana v. State, the majority decision similarly reasoned that the court could not upend public opinion and that societal attitudes on homosexuality in Botswana had not changed as to demand decriminalization.

India In 2001 the Naz Foundation, a nongovernmental agency that promotes HIV/AIDS awareness in India, challenged the constitutionality of Section 377 on the grounds of violating equal protection, free speech and expression, protection of life and personal liberty, and freedom from sex discrimination. In Naz Foundation v. Government of NCT of Delhi (2009), the Delhi High Court limited Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code to make it constitutional, effectively decriminalizing consensual sexual acts between adults in private. The court ruled that the Constitution of India supports a fundamental right to privacy and to dignity and that these rights protect private, consensual sex acts between adults. The court also found that Section 377 discriminated against gay individuals and violated their constitutional right to express this core aspect of their identities. Although it recognized that Section 377 might reflect public morality, the court ruled that public morality alone is not a compelling state interest that can allow the restriction of a fundamental right.
after an appeal by various religious groups on behalf of public morality.

Following the decision, the government elected not to appeal. Instead, an appeal was brought by Suresh Kumar Koushal and various religious groups who maintained that they had standing to challenge the decision because of harm to their religious sentiment and on behalf of public morality. In *Suresh Kumar Koushal v. Naz Foundation* (2013), the Supreme Court of India upheld Section 377 as constitutional and suggested that it was the role of the Parliament of India to amend or eliminate the law as it deemed fit.

In August 2017 the Supreme Court of India ruled in *Justice K. S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* that all Indians have a fundamental right to privacy. In the decision, the court noted, “Sexual orientation is an essential attribute of privacy. Discrimination against an individual on the basis of sexual orientation is deeply offensive to the dignity and self-worth of the individual.” This decision paved the way for the Supreme Court to rule that Section 377 cannot be used to prosecute consensual gay sex on 6 September 2018.

**Singapore** As mentioned above, Section 377 of the Singapore Penal Code was bifurcated into Section 377, which pertained to heterosexual sex, and Section 377A, which pertained to same-sex sexual relations. In his justification for creating a separate code section with 377A, Charles Gough Howell (1894–1942), the attorney general of Singapore at the time, argued that stricter laws were necessary to protect the settler population against a perceived epidemic of licentious sexuality among the colonized population that was invading private spaces. Although private action was what Howell brought up to justify the importation of 377A, the statute historically has not been used to prosecute private, consensual sex acts. In 1955, however, following the decolonization of Singapore, both Sections 377 and 377A were legislated into the Singapore Penal Code by the Legislative Council. Even in postcolonial era of Singapore, enforcement of Sections 377 and 377A was usually reserved for cases involving force, coercion, or public indecency and very scarcely applied to cases of private, consensual sex.

In 2007 the Singapore Parliament moved to repeal Section 377 of the Penal Code, with the reasoning that societal values had changed regarding consensual oral and anal sex between heterosexual adults (*Singapore Parliament Debates 2007*). Subsequently, there was a concurrent movement to also repeal Section 377A. After lengthy debate, the Singapore Parliament removed Section 377 from the Penal Code but retained Section 377A. Advocates for the repeal of 377A had suggested that Singapore, as a postcolonial nation, no longer be bound by an old colonial law (*Singapore Parliament Debates 2007*). Lee Hsien Loong (1952–), the nation’s prime minister, affirmed that Singapore was a conservative society with traditional views on family, different from the West (*Singapore Parliament Debates 2007*). He also noted that although other parts of the world were becoming increasingly accepting of same-sex relationships, Singapore was different. Lee suggested an informal compromise where Section 377A would continue to remain the law but that the
Singaporean government would not be proactive in enforcement against private, same-sex sexual conduct.

Because the culturally conservative majority was cited as the reason for retaining the law, gay rights advocates in Singapore adopted an incrementalist approach of increasing positive visibility of the LGBTQ population in hope of securing greater acceptance from the majority population. They adopted a strategy that the legal scholar Lynette J. Chua (2014) describes as “pragmatic resistance,” characterized by embracing Singaporean cultural tenets of nonconfrontation, social stability, and abiding by the laws. The public relations campaign culminated in the creation of Pink Dot, a rally held in Hong Lim Park that has occurred annually since its inception in 2009 to promote cultural inclusiveness of same-sex relationships.

This approach, however, has been coupled with constitutional challenges in the courts. In March 2010 a gay man, Tan Eng Hong, was arrested for having oral sex with another man in a shopping mall restroom stall and charged under Section 377A. Tan subsequently challenged the constitutionality of Section 377A. The gay community reacted with mixed feelings, with many viewing Tan’s challenge as possibly subverting the advances made during the interim years. For many gay activists in Singapore who wanted to challenge the stereotypes of gays as sexual deviants with campaigns such as Pink Dot that sought to normalize gay relationships in society, Tan represented the image of stereotyped sexual deviance they were seeking to avoid. Rather than rally behind Tan’s constitutional challenge, gay activists presented a more publicly sympathetic test case through Gary Lim Meng Suang and Kenneth Chee, a committed gay couple of over fifteen years who became the positive face of gay rights in Singapore. Lim and Chee brought a separate action challenging the constitutionality of 377A as a matter of equal protection. In April 2013 the High Court of Singapore issued a decision in the Lim case upholding Section 377A as not violating equal protection, and in October 2013 they issued a similar opinion upholding Section 377A in the Tan case. In October 2014 the Court of Appeal upheld both decisions on consolidated appeal, stating that overturning Section 377A would be more appropriately done by the legislature rather than the judiciary.

Malaysia Malaysia also retains Section 377. There are also parallel state-level Islamic laws that prohibit same-sex sexual relations. The leader of the Pakatan Rakyat opposition party, Anwar Ibrahim (1947–), was convicted on charges related to Section 377 in two separate cases, in 1999 and 2014, after he was accused of committing sodomy with his wife’s driver and a party aide, respectively. Prior to the accusations, Anwar had been considered a strong candidate to contend for the position of prime minister against the ruling United Malays National Organization, leading some to conjecture that the accusations were politically motivated (Ives 2016). Anwar’s appeal efforts in both cases focused on due process and the political motivations of the prosecution rather than the constitutionality of the law.
SEE ALSO Australia and New Zealand; Botswana; Dissidence in Singapore; Homonationalism in Africa; Human Rights; Malaysia; MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia; Naz Foundation International; Section 377 in South Asia; Wilde Trials, International Significance of; The Wolfenden Report; Zimbabwe

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Section 377 in South Asia

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The impact of this British colonial code used to prosecute same-sex sexual practices specifically in South Asia.

Section 377, part of the criminal code most closely associated with antisodomy laws and the persecution of LGBT populations in postcolonial contexts, has complex and varied genealogies that date back to its colonial codification in the nineteenth century. In the South Asian context (which includes Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Bhutan), the Indian nation-state dominates conversations around Section 377 not only because of visibility around contemporary decriminalization efforts but also because of its first introduction through the Indian Penal Code by the British colonial state in 1860, which became the basis for its subsequent application in various Asian and African countries.

Drafted by Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800–1859), the chair of the first Law Commission of India, Section 377 was part of the broader colonial mission to systematize and codify a set of laws without dissent, unimpeded by the contingencies of public opinion by colonial subjects.

Colonial Context

The formation of the Indian Penal Code and the codification of Section 377 foregrounds how the preservation of colonial power was dependent on discourses around sexuality and its putative transgressions. The supposed sexual abundance and irrepressible libido of colonized subjects became grounds for the importance of laws and jurisprudence that would function as a regulative and appropriate antidote. The unbridled sexuality of the colonial subject came to stand in for the unruliness of legal governance prior to colonial intervention. Macaulay offered the justification for the uniform penal code by referring to the “chaos with which the legal system was afflicted in India,” which could only be attended to via the process of codification (Report of the Indian Law Commission on the Penal Code [1837], quoted in Puri 2016, 55). Macaulay attributed this chaotic legal system in part to the lack of uniformity in governance prior to the consistent rationality of British codification—that is, the legal systems “introduced by conquerors differing in race, manners, language, and religion” (quoted in Puri 2016, 54). Criminal law of “the Hindoos” and “Mahomedans” thus had to be superseded via a kind of objective and modern
secularization that was ostensibly lacking in local branches of law.

Even while Macaulay's own words on codification foreground the centrality of the penal code's civilizing mission, various historical accounts have suggested that such modernization imperatives could be overdetermined and, in fact, obscure how the colonies served as testing grounds to overhaul the criminal system back in Britain. David Skuy's history of British law prior to the codification of the Indian Penal Code contends that Macaulay's emphasis on juridical uniformity and certainty betrays drastic periods of upheaval and overhaul in the English criminal justice system from 1820 to 1860. Skuy thus suggests that the consolidation of the Indian Penal Code should not be simply framed as an attempt to reform its colonial subjects, but as a way for Britain "to modernize its own primitive criminal justice system" (1998, 517).

Definitions/Descriptions

In 1837, prior to its codification, Macaulay introduced clauses 361 and 362—drafts of what would eventually become Section 377. Exemplifying the inextricability of speech/silence binaries, Macaulay articulated in elaborate detail why "as little as possible should be said" about this "odious class of offences ... either in text or in the notes." Referring simply to the sexual acts covered by the clauses as a "revolting subject," he warned against any "public discussion" around the matter that ostensibly could not be named since it resulted in "injury" to "the morals of the community" (Report of the Indian Law Commission on the Penal Code [1837]; see Puri 2016, 57).

But despite the apparent proscriptions against discourse on sexual behavior, Macaulay's clauses eventually laid the foundations for Section 377, the final version of which appeared in the Indian Penal Code of 1860 under a section on "Unnatural Offences." It read:

Section 377: Unnatural Offences—Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend 10 years, and shall be liable to fine.

Explanation: Penetration is sufficient to constitute the carnal intercourse necessary to the offence described in this section.

(INDIAN PENAL CODE OF 1860; SEE PURI 2016, 52)

Despite his wariness in offering detailed descriptions of "unnatural offences" due to concerns over community morality, Macaulay still expanded on the specificity of what acts
would come under the purview of Section 377. To illustrate the scope of the law, he wrote in the “general comments” portion of Section 377: “This section is intended to punish the offence of sodomy, buggery, and bestiality. The offence consists in a carnal knowledge committed against the order of nature by a person with a man, or in the same unnatural manner with a woman, or by a man or woman in any manner with an animal” (Indian Penal Code of 1860; see Puri 2016, 52–53).

**Historical Usage and Illustrations**

Even though, in contemporary contexts, the repeal of Section 377 has acquired political currency as a way to challenge “sodomy laws” centered around LGBT disenfranchisement, its history reveals prosecution for a variety of sexual offenses, most often around cases that involve the sexual assault of children by adult men. For example, in one of the earliest recorded cases, *Government v. Bapoji Bhatt* (1884), a higher court in Mysore overruled a conviction handed down by a sessions judge due to lack of evidence, specifically around the unreliable corroboration of events from a minor. Additionally, even while the appellant, who was charged with having oral sex with the minor, was tried under Section 377, the court dismissed the case on grounds that the “unnatural act” under consideration did not include the violation of sodomy.

This tethering of Section 377 to sodomy, however, did not hold up in the later case of *Khanu v. Emperor* (1925), which broadened the purview of the law to include the criminal offense of oral sex. Tried in Sindh (in present-day Pakistan but pre-partition British India), the case involved the coercion of oral sex between an older man and a minor. The case is also significant in that it explicitly contradicted Macaulay's purported secular motivations, revealing its Judeo-Christian investment in the insistence on procreation. The ruling stated that “the natural object of carnal intercourse is that there should be the possibility of conception of human beings, which in the case of coitus per os is impossible.” In placing “coitus per os” (oral sex) in the same criminalized vicinity as “coitus per anum” (anal sex), the court concluded that “the sin of Gomorrah is no less carnal intercourse than the sin of Sodom” (*Khanu v. Emperor 1925*).

Perhaps the most oft-cited illustration of Section 377’s mobilization in colonial India was the Allahabad case of *Queen-Empress v. Khairati* (1884). The case is particularly noteworthy for the ways in which it symbolically linked act to identity, setting the stage for Section 377’s subsequent association with what Michel Foucault (1926–1984) called a form of “personage” or the “specification of individuals” (1978, 42–43). Khairati, a “eunuch” who had been under surveillance by the police, was accused of the offense of sodomy and identified in the case as being apprehended while “singing in women's clothes.” The case offers a detailed medicalized description of Khairati’s unhealthy body in attempting to suture criminality to disease and flawed physicality. Khairati thus is described as a having “the characteristic mark of a habitual catamite—the distortion of the orifice of the anus into
a shape of a trumpet—and also to be affected with syphilis in the same region in a manner which distinctly points to unnatural intercourse within the last few months” (*Queen-Empress v. Khairati* 1884, ILR 6 ALL 204).

The presence of this corporeal marker links the stigma of the “habitual catamite” (i.e., a young boy in a sexual relationship with an older man) to the stain of criminality played out decades later in Sindh in the case of *Noshirwan v. Emperor* (1935), in which a neighbor spying on the accused witnessed an act of attempted sodomy. Even while the case was dismissed on grounds that the about-to-take-place criminal act was interrupted and therefore technically did not actually occur, the judge castigated one of the accused as being a “despicable” character who had indulged in the “vice of a catamite” (quoted in *Arondekar 2009, 68*).

These early instantiations of Section 377—with all their conflations, elisions, and contradictions—became the rhetorical and ideological models through which the law was mobilized in a number of British colonies across the globe, with the Indian Penal Code serving as the original blueprint. In the context of South Asia, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan inherited Section 377 as a legacy of the postcolonial condition, even as England decriminalized homosexual behavior in 1967. In many instances, Section 377 became the broader framework that functioned as the basis to indigenize laws and taboos around sexual behaviors considered “unnatural.”

**Postcolonial Adaptations**

In Pakistan, the Islamification of law was institutionalized through the Offence of Zina Ordinance (1979)—part of the Hadood Ordinance initiated by General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq (1924–1988) as a way to connect existing law to the dictates of the Qur’an. The Zina Ordinance (zina referring to the Islamic legal term for illegal sexual intercourse) purported to punish persons who indulged in “unnatural lust.” More specifically, it was framed as an offense if a man and a woman “willfully have sexual intercourse without being married to each other. Explanation: Penetration is sufficient to constitute the sexual intercourse necessary to the offence of Zina” (Offence of Zina [Enforcement of Hudood] Ordinance, Ordinance No. VII of 1979). The rhetoric of “unnatural lust” clearly draws on the language and underlying logic of Section 377, as does the qualifying explanation of penetration as central to the offense of zina, which lifts its language directly from Section 377.

The Offence of Zina Ordinance was mobilized in the case of Muhammad Din, in which two men were charged when they were caught sexually assaulting another man at a railway station in Lahore. The court rejected the claim on grounds that the victim revealed physical characteristics of a subject who had already been habituated to sodomy. The language used by the court—that the victim’s anus was “moderately funnel shaped and [that] he appeared to be a habitual passive agent” clearly echoes the medicalized “evidence” of the *Khairati*
case almost a century earlier. Significantly, when the offense of zina was dismissed, the case was retried under Section 377 in *Muhammad Din v. the State* (1981, *All Pakistan Law Decisions, Federal Supreme Court, 191*).

The legacy of the *Khairati* case, which consolidated the association of “deviant” sex with a particular kind of body through “empirical” logics of medical examinations, reverberates even in twenty-first-century contexts. In 2006 a judge in Faisalabad, Pakistan, issued an arrest warrant for Shumail Raj and Shahzina Tariq, a married couple whose relationship was legally and medically scrutinized because Raj was a transgender man. When the couple was forced to appear before a high court in Lahore, Judge Khawaja Muhammad Sharif arranged for a court-mandated forensics team to ascertain the “true” nature of Raj's sex to determine the legality of the marriage. While Tariq’s father initially approached the police, invoking Section 377 with its potential sentence of seven years or life in prison, the judge ultimately decided not to try the couple through its legal parameters, given the framing of Raj and Tariq as a lesbian couple, and the perception that penetration, which was supposedly absent in their sexual relationship, might preclude it from the purview of Section 377. After forcing the couple to apologize to the court, the judge sentenced them to a three-year prison term.

As in the case described above, the impact of Section 377 can often shuttle back and forth between material and symbolic consequences. Thus, even while actual convictions of LGBT people in contemporary contexts based on Section 377 might be relatively rare, the symbolic force it wields against sexual- and gender-nonconforming subjects has often made it a focal point as a site of social injury and disenfranchisement. In many instances, a wide variety of other laws that operate within the performative vicinity of Section 377 exacerbate its symbolic force, even if it is not the actual judicial procedure through which “unnatural” sexual behaviors and gender expressions are policed and criminalized. In the context of Bangladesh, for example, more than Section 377, other laws, such as Section 54 of the Criminal Procedure Code or Section 86 of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Ordinance, are wielded as state-sanctioned ways to police loitering of gender-variant subjects or to legally detain those who appear “suspicious.” Such laws disproportionately target *hijras* (the vernacular term for colonial “eunuchs” or India’s “third sex”) and sex workers.

Similarly, Section 399 of Sri Lanka’s penal code, which prohibits “cheating by personation,” also illustrates the postcolonial endurance and expansion of Section 377 (or the anomalously numbered Section 365A in the context of Sri Lanka) into a variety of different decrees around sexual governance and gender politics. While ostensibly intended to punish those guilty of forgery, the law has been used to detain and harass butch lesbians, as well as transgender men and women, for acts of gender “deception.” Amendments to Sri Lanka’s Section 365A have also aimed to expand the scope and degree of punishment. In 1995 the maximum duration of punishment for “carnal intercourse” and “gross indecency” was expanded from ten to twenty years. Furthermore, the language of Section 365A was
changed from the offending sexual acts between “male persons” to the more genderneutral “any person,” effectively broadening the scope of the law to criminalize “unnatural” sexual behavior between women.

Efforts to Repeal/Decriminalize

While both colonial legacies and postcolonial mobilizations of Section 377 foreground historical and material realities of oppression, the law has also become the locus of repeal and resistance since the mid-1980s. The earliest attempts to repeal Section 377 were instigated in 1994 by the AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA), a nongovernmental organization (NGO) based in New Delhi, India. Even while the ABVA was responding to concern over increasing rates of HIV transmission and the lack of condom distribution in public or state-governed contexts like jails, the attempt to repeal Section 377 was framed in one of the organization’s publications as the need to “recognize the right to privacy as a fundamental part of the citizen’s right to life and liberty, including the right to his/her sexual orientation” (ABVA 1991). The ABVA challenged Section 377, arguing that it violated Articles 21 (the right to privacy) and 14 (the right to equality) of the Indian constitution. The ABVA also, as Naisargi Dave has pointed out, drew on problematic “shaming strategies” in suggesting that India would be in the “backward company of Pakistan” in its refusal to repeal the antisodomy statute (2012, 173).

While the ABVA’s petition languished in Delhi’s High Court for several years, the next significant challenge to Section 377 came in the form of a public interest litigation filed by the Naz Foundation (another NGO that worked on sexual health) in 2001. Like the ABVA’s petition, the Naz petition argued that “no aspect of one’s life may be said to be more private or intimate than that of sexual relations” (Naz Foundation v. Government of NCT of Delhi and Others). In attempting to limit rather than repeal Section 377, the Naz petition focused on decriminalizing consensual sexual activity between adults, since the law’s existence had been justified by the need to prosecute child-abuse offenders. The Delhi High Court dismissed the petition on purely technical grounds, claiming that since Naz did not represent an individual petitioner, it was not a matter of public interest, and therefore Naz had no locus standi in the case.

After various legal struggles and the filing of a special leave petition, India’s Supreme Court ordered the Delhi High Court to revisit the Naz petition, culminating in the landmark 2009 case Naz v. Government, which effectively entailed the decriminalizing of homosexuality. The legal victory was not simply a consequence of progressive shifts informing Indian jurisprudence; it was informed by emerging LGBT activism engaging the state. Groups like Voices against Section 377 and the Lawyers Collective were active in setting the stage for Naz’s efforts. A writ submitted by Voices against Section 377 to the High Court supporting the Naz petition stated: “In the social climate fostered by Section 377 it becomes difficult, if not impossible, to publicly own and express one’s sexuality, thereby silencing a core aspect
of one’s personhood” (quoted in Puri 2016, 130).

The challenge to Section 377 as the central site of LGBT activism has also been complicated by activists and scholars who have warned against the unintended regulatory effects of collapsing social justice with a narrowly conceived understanding of jurisprudence. South Asian feminist critiques of the state, for example, have pointed to the long history of how the demand for protective legislation has only ended up working against the best interests of women, given the long history of gendered state violence. In a similar vein, LGBT activists have also drawn attention to the limits of an investment in legal reform prior to the wider mobilization of social movements—what Arvind Narrain has called the “over-juridification of social struggle” (2007, 255). Finally, the emphasis on the right to “private” consensual sex meant that decriminalization would only impact those whose sexualities were cordoned off from this privileged zone of intimacy, leaving sex workers, kothis (a vernacular term for effeminate men who have sex with or desire other men), and gay men harassed for having public sex still vulnerable to state criminalization and pathologization.

The risks of an overdetermined faith in jurisprudence were materially manifested in the 2013 case of Koushal v. Naz Foundation when the Supreme Court of India overturned the Delhi High Court case, effectively reinstating Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. In 2017 the upholding of the right to privacy by India’s Supreme Court under Article 21 of the Indian constitution renewed hope for LGBT activists attempting to challenge Section 377. The Supreme Court ruling explicitly foregrounded the place of sexual politics within the realm of privacy rights by stating, “Sexual orientation is an essential attribute of privacy. Discrimination against an individual on the basis of sexual orientation is deeply offensive to the dignity and self-worth of the individual” (Justice K. S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India). The right-to-privacy judgment led to the Supreme Court’s landmark ruling on 6 September 2018 that Section 377 could no longer be used to prosecute same-sex sexual activity.

SEE ALSO Family Law in Asia; Naz Foundation International; Offences Against the Person Act (1861); Section 377 and Section 377A

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Situated along the Atlantic coast of western Africa, Senegal borders Mauritania to the north, Mali to the east, and Guinea and Guinea-Bissau to the south. It also completely surrounds the Gambia. Historically part of the Senegambia zone, Senegal has always been a point of contact between diverse cultures. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to explore the African coast. After their arrival in the fifteenth century, the region became an important trading center in West Africa. During the nineteenth century, Senegal was a French colony. It became an independent republic in 1960. Although it has a Muslim-majority population (more than 90 percent), Senegal has developed a strong tradition of secularism. The country's official language is French, but Wolof is more broadly spoken. In Senegal, legal repression of same-sex sexuality is predicated on article 319 of the Penal Code, according to which those found guilty of such acts can be imprisoned for up to five years and fined up to 1,500,000 CFA francs (approximately $2,500–$3,000).

**Traditional Senegalese Cultures and Homoerotic Relationships**

Cross-dressing was traditionally accepted in Senegal. Menwomen (in Wolof, *goorjigeen*), who dressed in women's clothes and filled female-gendered roles, were integrated into the political, cultural, and social lives of Senegalese society. *Goorjigeen* helped rich and influential women (*dryanké*) to organize ceremonies such as baptisms, weddings, and circumcisions. Cheikh Niang (2010) asserts that during the 1960 election campaign of Léopold Sédar Senghor (1906–2001), the first president of Senegal, *goorjigeen* accompanied him to Saint-Louis, a town located along the Senegal River in the northwest of the country that was the capital of Senegal until the beginning of the twentieth century. Ndèye Ndiagna Gning (2013) also reports on the *goorjigeen's* significant social position, which was similar to that of the *geewel* or griot (transmitters of tradition and collective memory), since both figures were in charge of organizing important ceremonies.

*Goorjigeen* also play a major role in selected spiritual ceremonies. Among the Lebu, a fishing community situated in the Yoff district of Dakar, the men in charge of restoring the physical, social, and ecological harmony of the group during a *ndēp* ceremony wear female
outfits and mime feminine gestures. Niang (2010) argues that many of these male leaders have had sexual intercourse with other men. Therefore, goorjigeen could be perceived as male transvestites. They embody a sort of “male femininity” (Boellstorff 2007, 82) and show the complexity of same-sex practices within the African continent, which cannot always be labeled homosexual. Today, the term goorjigeen has become derogatory because of the social stigma against homosexuality, and it is nowadays understood as a form of homosexuality.

**Homoerotic Relationships during the Colonial Period**

Western authors have written several narratives about homoeroticism in Senegal. However, rather than providing a clear picture of same-sex intimacy in Senegal, these accounts rely mostly on exotic representations of “African” or “black” people. The expansion of colonization in the nineteenth century brought to the region a wide range of disciplines, practices, and discourses that contributed to categorizing and establishing a hierarchy of race within a frame of developing racial theories. Western texts mentioning homosexuality in Senegal are contradictory (M’Baye 2013), since some recognize the existence of same-sex practices in the country while others deny their existence.

The writings of Doctor Jacobus X— a pseudonym adopted by several writers in France and England, including the French writer Louis Jacolliot (1837–1890), who was famous for his popular science books— illustrate how Western scholars have argued that same-sex practices in Senegal, and more generally in Africa, did not exist. Jacobus X relied in his 1893 *L’amour aux colonies* (Love in the colonies) on observations he had made among several ethnic groups in Senegal, including the Wolof, and stated that neither black man nor black woman could be a homosexual or lesbian. Jacobus X pointed out that he had encountered only one case of homosexual practices during his stay in Senegal. He identified two Senegalese riflemen (*tirailleurs sénégalais*) whose same-sex practices were caused by a lack of women. Jacobus X’s perspective on same-sex sexuality in Senegal echoed his own theory on sexuality, according to which sexual intercourse was only possible between people of the same “race,” and an analysis of sexual practices was a way to evaluate the so-called inferiority or superiority of a cultural group. Therefore, according to Jacobus X, the lack of same-sex practices among Senegalese people attested to their proximity to nature; sex for Africans was intended only for procreation.

At the same time, Armand Corre (1841–1908), a doctor working in the French navy, mentioned having met men dressed as women in the company of a Senegalese prince and several griots in Saint-Louis (Corre 1894). However, Corre argues in the same text that homosexuality was a new phenomenon in Senegal, brought by foreigners. Similar narratives date to later in the twentieth century. Geoffrey Gorer (1905–1985) and Michael Crowder (1934–1988) both mentioned the existence of the *goorjigeen*. However, they argued that the presence of the *goorjigeen* shows the emergence of a process of
Westernization in Senegalese society.

Legal Prohibition of Same-Sex Sexuality

The Senegalese Penal Code and article 319 came into force in 1965, when President Senghor undertook reform of the Senegalese legal system after independence. Despite this process of transformation, Senegalese laws have remained in line with French judiciary legislation. The decision to maintain and nationalize the judiciary legislation of the former colonial power was intended to provide a stable basis of rules upon which a “modern” legal system could be built. In addition, following a Western judiciary system prevented the government from having to choose one local cultural interpretation over another or one religion over another. The enactment of article 319, proscribing “an improper or unnatural act with a person of same sex,” followed the French prohibition of same-sex sexuality. It is important to remember that homosexuality only became legal in France in 1982.

From 1965 to 2008, article 319 was rarely enforced. Fatou Kiné Camara (1964–) mentions one case in 1992 in which a Senegalese driver tried to extort money from a French hitchhiker on the road. After a fight, the two men were brought to the police station and the Senegalese man revealed that they had had sexual intercourse. The hitchhiker received a two-month prison sentence and was banished from Senegal. However, in 2008 there was a shift in Senegalese legal discourse. In February 2008 Icône, a Senegalese tabloid, published about twenty photos of a gay marriage and identified suspected or alleged homosexuals. Directly after this publication, the Division of Criminal Investigation arrested about ten people who had attended the wedding. In December 2008 nine members of an HIV/AIDS outreach association accused of having engaged in homosexual acts were taken into custody and ultimately sentenced to eight years in prison. Although the men were finally released after the United Nations and other international bodies objected to their treatment, the initial sentence had great significance in that it reflected a new social discourse and the rise of homophobic violence in Senegal.

Social Condemnation of Same-Sex Relationships

Many religious groups, in particular, discussed these incidents at the time. Imam Massamba Diop, who was responsible for the religious affairs of the Djamra (Jamra), an Islamic nongovernmental organization (NGO), denounced the United Nations’ intervention calling for the release of the nine prisoners. Imam Mbaye Niang, president of the Mouvement de la Réforme pour le Développement Social (Reform Movement for Social Development), an Islamist and reformist party, organized a Collective of Islamic Associations in Senegal (of approximately fifteen Muslim organizations) to “fight against homosexuality.” These reformist groups have been particularly visible since the beginning of the 1980s. Some run their own newspapers and television channels, through which they call for a return to scriptural sources and earlier practices of Islam. They also often criticize the
Westernization of Senegalese society, which they believe has led to drug use, prostitution, and homosexuality.

**LGBTQ Struggles and Recognition**

The Senegalese legal prohibition of homosexuality inevitably makes it difficult to publicly address political claims. However, since the beginning of the twenty-first century, LGBTQ people have been increasingly organizing for the purpose of HIV/AIDS prevention. These groups have been working with doctors, as well as with such national and international NGOs as Enda Santé (Enda Health) and the National Alliance against AIDS. Within the scope of their activities, gay men involved in these associations use the term *MSM* (men who have sex with men), although they do not identify with this term among themselves (Niang 2010). Through Senegalese LGBTQ associations, LGBTQ leaders may gain a voice within Senegalese society; one such association has already been legally recognized.

However, HIV/AIDS prevention efforts in Senegal tend to ignore lesbians, despite the fact that several local LGBTQ associations include both male and female members. Furthermore, the wave of homophobia that swept Senegal in the last half of the first decade of the twenty-first century, as well as the creation of MSM associations, has contributed to a change in status for the *goorjigeen* within the society. Although some men still act as “traditional” *goorjigeen*, especially by contributing to the organization of social ceremonies, they publicly position themselves as MSM and prefer to stand with MSM associations when it comes to addressing political claims. Therefore, trans activism is not yet recognized as a social phenomenon in Senegal, since MSM organizations are not publicly tackling social issues related to transgenderism.

SEE ALSO Benga, François "Féral" (1906–1957); Cinema, African (Francophone); Literature, African (Francophone)

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Isidore Lisieux, 1893.
Sex reassignment surgery (SRS) is usually undertaken by those who identify themselves as transgender or the third sex. On occasions, however, intersex people also undergo SRS when they feel that the gender they were assigned initially does not match their gender identity. There is also the issue of “regret,” in which someone who has previously identified themselves as transgender or as the other gender and has undergone SRS regrets the decision after the surgery; in such a case, such individuals often disown their transgender or cross-gender identity. If a broader concept of SRS (detailed below) is adopted, cisgender people such as eunuchs could be said to have undergone SRS within its historical context.

Unlike gender reassignment surgery, which includes both genital and nongenital surgical procedures (e.g., facial feminization surgery and breast augmentation for male-to-female individuals, mastectomy for female-to-male individuals), SRS refers to genital procedures that reshape one’s genitals from one gender to another. Examples include penile-scrotal reconstruction, metoidioplasty, and vaginectomy for female-to-male individuals and vaginoplasty, clitorolabio-plasty, penectomy, and orchidectomy for male-to-female individuals (Selvaggi and Bellringer 2011; Selvaggi et al. 2012). Thus, SRS is often considered a kind of genital surgery (Monstrey, De Cuypere, and Ettner 2007). Other terms that refer to similar procedures include gender realignment surgery and gender-confirming surgery, and they are often used interchangeably with the term SRS. However, the terms realignment or confirming, according to Gennaro Selvaggi and Simona Giordano (2014), imply that there is a “real” gender, which is innate to one, and that one can realign one’s body to it. Although the criteria for all breast/chest and genital surgeries set by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health do not presuppose an innate gender that is misaligned to one’s body, qualified mental health professionals are required to document the persistent gender dysphoria (a conflict between one’s own gender identity and one’s assigned gender, which causes significant distress due to the discomfort derived from one’s body and/or the expected roles of one’s assigned gender) the patients have experienced.

The earliest case of SRS, in the modern sense of the procedure, was reportedly performed in 1931 in Germany (Pauly 1968). The first country to conduct SRS in Asia was probably
the Republic of China (Taiwan) as the news of an intersexed soldier, Jianshun Xie, made headlines in 1953. Xie had successfully been converted from male to female by native doctors and was considered to be the “first” Chinese transsexual (Chiang 2017). Nevertheless, perhaps because of a lack of awareness of Xie's news in other Asian countries or perhaps as a marketing ploy, when Singapore conducted its first SRS in 1971, it was also reported as the first case of SRS in Asia (Tsui, Kok, and Long 1977; Yue 2017). Through the leadership of the surgeon, S. S. Ratnam, who performed this first SRS, Singapore became the center for SRS in Asia (before Bangkok took its place for medical tourism), and about half of the 500 SRSs conducted were performed on foreigners (Yue 2017). Shortly after Singapore’s success in performing its first SRS, Thailand reported its first case, in 1972 (Grossman 2009), and Hong Kong’s first came much later, in 1981 (Ng et al. 1989).

**Broader Concept of SRS**

All these “first cases” were reported based on the description of SRS outlined earlier, but this does not mean that genital procedures prompted by one’s gender identity were not performed at earlier times. Hijras in India, for example, are “an alternative gender, neither men or women” (Nanda 1990, 13), and they have been mentioned in ancient texts such as the *Kama Sutra* (Chakrapani 2010). Many hijras undergo the ritual of emasculation (to remove the penis and testicles but without the construction of a vagina) in order to join the hijra community (Nanda 1990). Most of them, however, could not afford to pay for the kind of SRS understood by modern medicine and must resort to unqualified medical practitioners for such risky procedures (Chakrapani 2010; Winter 2009).

The hijra example brings out several points worth noting. First, if one defines SRS more broadly, as procedures to reshape one’s genitalia in order to identify oneself (or to be identified) as the “reassigned gender,” which may or may not be within the framework of the binary gender, then SRS, in the broader sense of the term, dates back thousands of years in Asia, given that the presence of the hijra in India and the eunuch in imperial China have thousands of years of recorded history (Chiang 2012). Second, the reassigned gender may be that of male, female, or gender identifications other than male/female. Whether in the West or in Asia, it is quite common for those who have suffered from gender dysphoria and have undergone SRS to identify themselves as male or female of the reassigned gender as opposed to a gender category other than male/female. However, as noted with the case of hijras, which “are an institutionalized third gender role that has its roots in ancient India” (Nanda 1990, 144), the ritual of emasculation can render those who have undergone it into the gender category of hijra.

Indeed, the notion of a “third sex” or gender identifications other than male/female is not uncommon in other parts of Asia, and similar to hijra, some are being ritualized, institutionalized, and/or culturally recognized. In Thailand, for example, *kathoey* is known as a third sex (nowadays, the term often refers to those who are trans women). According
to Peter A. Jackson (2004), in premodern Thailand, kathoey is an intermediate category of phet (a Thai term meaning “sex,” “gender,” or “sexuality”). The first two types of phet are normatively feminine women and normatively masculine men, whereas the fourth type of phet are Buddhist monks who were thought to be asexual. Similarly, among the Bugis ethnic group in Sulawesi, Indonesia, in addition to cisgender males and females, they also have the bissu (someone who fuses all aspects of genders and has a ritual role in their culture), calabai (someone who is biologically male but lives as a woman), and calalai (someone who is biologically female but lives as a man) (Idrus 2016; Wieringa 2013). Unlike their Bugis counterparts, quite a number of kathoeys and hijras opt for SRS or the emasculation ritual in order to become “full kathoeys” and “full hijras,” respectively (Totman 2003). This phenomenon also raises other issues (addressed below): the popularity and availability of SRS among transgender people in Asia, the differences in legal status in different Asian countries and regions for those who do or do not opt for SRS, and the ramifications of such legal differences for those individuals.

**JIANSHUN XIE: THE “FIRST” CHINESE TRANSSEXUAL**

In 1953 news of the successful surgical transformation of a man into a woman by native doctors made headlines in Taiwan. The story first came to public attention on 14 August, when major newspapers surprised the public by announcing the discovery of an intersex soldier, Jianshun Xie, in Tainan, a city on Taiwan's southwestern coast. Within a week, the characterization of Xie in the Taiwanese press changed from that of an average citizen whose ambiguous sex provoked uncertainty and anxiety to that of being considered the “first” Chinese transsexual.

A native of Chaozhou, Guangdong, the 36-year-old Xie had joined the army when he was 16, lost his father at the age of 17, and lost his mother at 18. He came to Taiwan with the Nationalist Army in 1949. “At the age of 20,” a Lianhebao (United daily news) article from 1953 explained, “his breasts developed like a girl, but he had hidden this secret as a member of the military force rather successfully. It was finally discovered on the 6th of [August], upon his visit to the Tainan 518 Hospital for a physical examination due to regular abdominal pains and cramps, by the chair of external medicine Dr. Lin” (translation by author). Treating Xie first in Tainan and then in Taipei, doctors performed a series of “sex change” operations. By the end of the 1950s, according to media reports, Xie had been visited by Soong Mei-ling (the First Lady of the Republic of China), famous celebrities, and innumerable supporters; had assumed, after nine surgeries, a female persona; and had begun working at the Ta Tung Relief Institute for Women and Children under the new name Shun Xie.

Xie was frequently dubbed the “Chinese Christine.” This allusion to the contemporaneous American ex-GI transsexual icon Christine Jorgensen (1926–1989) reflected the growing influence of American culture on the Republic of China at the
peak of the Cold War. As was the case with Jorgensen in the United States, extensive popular press coverage in Taiwan of Xie’s transition shifted common understandings of sexuality and gender, introduced the concept of transsexuality as something distinct from intersex conditions, and amplified the roles of both medical science and mass media in the construction of modern identity.

Of significance in both national and transpacific contexts, Xie’s experience made bianxingren (transsexual) a household term in Sinophone (Chinese-speaking) cultures of the 1950s. She served as a focal point for numerous news stories that broached the topics of changing sex, human intersexuality, and other atypical conditions of the body. People who wrote about her debated whether she qualified as a woman, whether medical technology could transform sex, and whether the two “Christines” were more similar or different. These persistent comparisons of Taiwan with the United States, through the comparisons of two versions of transsexuality, became an important arena for articulating a sense of Sinophone difference from Anglophone culture, as well as of Taiwanese nationalism. Xie’s story highlighted issues that pervaded postwar Sinophone society in Taiwan: the censorship of public culture by the state, the unique social status of men serving in the armed forces, the limit of individualism, the promise and pitfalls of science, the relationship between military virility and national sovereignty, the normative behaviors of men and women, and the boundaries of acceptable sexual expression. Xie’s saga, and that of other reported cases of sex change that followed in her wake, attest to the emergence of transsexuality as a modern form of sexual embodiment in Sinophone society.

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**Popularity and Availability of SRS in Asia**

According to Sam Winter (2009), compared to the number of transgender people in the West who approach medical professionals for a gender identity disorder or a gender
dysphoria diagnosis and subsequent SRS, their Asian counterparts who approach medical professionals constitute only a small minority of transgender individuals. Indeed, in Asia, large numbers of transgender people do not undertake SRS, nor do they show a desire for it.

Thailand, for example, has a large population of kathoeys, and it is probably the most popular “medical tourism” destination for this kind of procedure. Its capital, Bangkok, has been dubbed the “mecca” for SRS (especially for male-to-female procedures) (Aizura 2009, 2010). Nevertheless, despite SRS being more readily available and affordable in Thailand, only 28 percent of Winter’s sample of Thai trans women had undergone SRS, and 12 percent indicated no desire to do so (Winter 2006). The ratio is greater in other Asian countries. For example, in Winter’s Laos sample, only 1 out of 214 trans women surveyed had undergone SRS; similarly, in his Philippines sample, only 1 out of 147 had gone through the procedure, while 29 percent had no desire for SRS (Winter 2009).

One of the possible reasons for the lower rate of transgender people opting for SRS is the lack of free or affordable SRS in many Asian countries. As noted earlier, most hijras cannot afford to pay private plastic surgeons for SRS, and the Indian government does not provide free SRS (although the state of Tamil Nadu does). Thus, the majority of hijras are deprived of access to free or affordable SRS. For those who have recourse to unqualified medical practitioners, many suffer from postoperative complications, such as urological problems, as a result of faulty surgical procedures (Chakrapani 2010).

Compared to other Asian countries, Malaysia is perhaps the most hostile country toward transgender people. There, according to Yik Koon Teh (2002), SRS is forbidden for transgender people and surgeons who are Muslim. An anonymous transgender source from Malaysia informed the author that no one (regardless of religion or ethnicity) is allowed to have SRS there, and for Malaysian Muslims who have SRS outside Malaysia, they may be prosecuted by a shari’a court (a court based on Islamic law) upon their return; yet, some transgender people manage to do it under the table by getting surgeons to operate on them under the guise that they are intersex, which is permitted there.

The situation in Malaysia is in sharp contrast to that in Hong Kong, where SRS and relevant nongenital procedures are paid for by the government. After the shutdown of Hong Kong’s first gender identity team at Queen Mary Hospital (which is a government hospital) in 2005, many transgender patients found the service provided by regional hospitals inconsistent, as many health-care professionals lacked experience in treating gender dysphoria (Cheung 2010). In 2016, however, a new Gender Identity Disorder Clinic was established at Prince of Wales Hospital (another government hospital) to serve individuals who have gender dysphoria. The clinic includes a multidisciplinary team that offers integrated services ranging from psychiatric assessments to the administration of hormones to SRS and other relevant nongenital surgeries (Leung 2017).
Legal Status

While the popularity of SRS in a country is somewhat dependent on its availability and affordability, the ways in which the law and policy operate in each country may also affect the desire for SRS. In countries such as Thailand and the Philippines, post-SRS individuals are not allowed to change the gender markers on their legal documents, and this undermines their chances of employment as they have to present such documents when applying for a job (Winter 2009). In countries where individuals are required to undergo SRS before they can change the gender marker on legal documents, this may be one of the factors transgender people consider when deciding to opt for SRS. For example, anonymous sources who have undergone SRS in Hong Kong have noted being partly swayed by this consideration as they, especially trans women, found it extremely difficult to find work or to stay in a job when their gender expression is of one gender whereas the gender marker on their legal documents is of another gender. Yet, none of them expressed regret about having the procedure (Cheung 2011).

Similarly, in the People's Republic of China, one has to undergo SRS in order to change one's gender marker on one's hukou (household register) document; unlike in Hong Kong, there is no legal battle being fought for the rights of transgender people in the People's Republic of China, and it is merely a bureaucratic procedure to make such a change of gender marker on one's legal document (Guo 2014). According to a trans activist, however, in the People's Republic of China one cannot change one's name and gender marker on one's academic certificates after SRS; this leaves postoperative trans individuals in the predicament of either finding employment without the support of their academic certificates obtained before SRS or revealing their gender history when showing their academic certificates.

The requirement of SRS as a prerequisite for changing the gender marker on one's legal document makes one wonder whether it is humane to pressure transgender people to undergo SRS in order to make such a change, or whether it amounts to torture, as it is an indirect way to coerce people to undergo surgical procedures that the patients may not feel are entirely necessary even though they are living and identifying themselves in a gender that is different from their birthassigned gender. In countries such as Taiwan and Korea, SRS is not a prerequisite for changing the gender marker, which is a move other countries may consider in order to provide a trans-friendly space for transgender people whether or not they feel SRS is what they really want.

SEE ALSO Conversion Therapy in China; Sex Reassignment Surgery in Iran; W v. Registrar of Marriages (2013)

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Sex Reassignment Surgery in Iran

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The religious rationale that allows Iranians to undergo sex-change operations in a country where same-sex sexual behavior is illegal.

Behind only Thailand, Iran has the second-highest number of sex-change operations per capita, according to data from 2008 (Barford 2008). This statistic may seem strange given that nonnormative sexual expressions are punished severely in Iran in accordance with shari’a (Islamic law); men convicted of homosexual intercourse can receive the death penalty, and women may be flogged for same-sex sexual acts (Bearak and Cameron 2016). Yet, Iran’s position on sex-change operations is rooted in the religious belief that such surgery might be necessary in order to rectify the discord between the gender of one’s soul and one’s physical body. Therefore, Iranian religious leaders freely condemn homosexuals for trespassing sexual boundaries in engaging in same-sex sexual practices but give license to those who attempt to function within those boundaries by aligning their gender with their sexuality through surgery.

Background on Sex and Its Nuances in Iran

The time line and variations involved in the progress and eventual acceptance of sex changes for transsexuals have encompassed a labyrinth of issues within the rigorous and stern cultural and religious circumstances regarding sexuality that have existed in Iran for centuries. The beginnings of the crux of the poetics of this matter, in terms of social cognizance and tolerance, can be traced to an opaque understanding of sexuality as conveyed in a tradition that spans around a thousand years of literature and a cultural canon that revolves almost solely around a complex and nuanced relationship between a lover and a beloved whose sex has been disguised by the poet’s figurative language. Consequently, the opaque social standing and cognizance of a lover and a beloved have greatly influenced sex and sexuality to this day in Iran.

The opaque and nuanced parameters of sexuality, scrutinized within the vertical axis of Persian poetics (poetry), have always presented an enigma that has yielded a complex set of tools in its hermeneutics—for example, are they boys or are they girls with mustaches? It is mainly the social understanding of homosexuality that has in turn affected the contemporary understanding of transsexuals—almost always blurring the lines between
being a homosexual and a transsexual. It should be understood that sexual neutrality (khwājagī) has been part of Iranian folktales and history, and this nuance (of neutrality) has been at times exploited to no end. The literature of Iran has always been vague about the sexuality of a beloved, and the intricate figurative language of the poetry of Iran has further complicated the matter. In fact, love in Persian literature is really homoerotic love, and this is especially true post-twelfth century with the strong influence of theosophical treatises on both literature and the society that was its audience. Epic romances such as Laylī va Majnūn, Farhad va Shirin, Yusuf va Zulaykha, and Vamiq va ʿAdhra are truly rarities in a monumental corpus of love lyrics. Even prior to this, the image of the softer sex was molded into the figure of a Turkish beloved who was white and tall and had a soft, barely sprouted mustache.

With the establishment of Shiʻism in fifteenth-century Iran, discussion of sex and sexual encounters became taboo; however, the image of what is beautiful became even more opaque. In fact, the concept of a mustache was one of the major factors in deeming a woman beautiful beginning with, and even prior to the period of the Qajar dynasty (1794–1925). Furthermore, as the historian Afsaneh Najmabadi has stressed, many of the old vagaries of love lingered into social parameters that highlighted sex and sexuality for many Iranians: “Qajar Iran began with a concept of love embedded in Sufi allegorical associations. Love and desire in this discourse were intimately linked with beauty and could be generated in a man at least as easily by a beautiful young man as by a young female. In early Qajar art, for instance, beauty was not distinguished by gender” (2013, 4). Najmabadi further observes that it was only at the end of the nineteenth century that “a highly gender-differentiated portrayal of beauty emerged, along with a concept of love that assumed heterosexuality as natural” (4). That said, sex obscurity is something that Iranian culture can relate to and has been able to relate to for centuries. However, transferring the figurative unto the realm of the real is another matter.

**Religious Rulings**

The role of sex and sexuality in the Persian-speaking world and then eventually in what was to become Iran has been extraordinarily nuanced, first in terms of cultural-historical dogma and later on by the Shiʻatization of Iran. “The earliest non-intersex sex change surgery reported in the Iranian press dates back to 1973, and by the early 1970s, at least one hospital in Tehran and one in Shiraz were carrying out such procedures. But in a 1976 decision, the Medical Association of Iran ruled that sex change operations, except in intersex cases, were ethically unacceptable” (Terman 2014). The greatest impact on the legality of sex-change operations in Iran came about through a fatwa (religious decree) by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–1989). The first of these fatwas (1964) yielded no change in terms of the medical and legal status of the operation until Khomeini came to power in the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Khomeini’s fatwa deemed being a male and
having female tendencies, or vice versa, a medical condition; this ruling removed, on paper, the taboo of having a morality disorder, which in Shi‘ite Iran can yield cruel rulings against an individual, especially under the auspices of an Islamic state modus vivendi. When he reissued this fatwa in 1985, it was canonized.

Regardless, there are no gray lines that one can speak of with regard to differences between homosexuality and transsexuality in Iran to this day, and the moral questioning of the individual endures. Nonetheless, the laws that now allow and even fund sex-change operations see transsexuality as a psychological disorder, and homosexuality a moral deviance punishable, often, by death. In Iran, the options between a homosexual existence and a transsexual existence offer little real choice, as many in the homosexual community have opted for sex changes to facilitate their state of being within that society. There is an irony with regard to the legality of sex change in Iran. The syllogism that legitimizes sex change in accord with shariʿa contains a considerable flaw, and to better understand this irony in Iran, it is best to first consider its jurisprudential parameters, as this will also give a clear understanding of the reasons behind the legal acceptance.

There are acute and nuanced differences between change in sexuality (taghir dar jinsiyyat) and sex change (taghir-i jinsiyyat). These two “general” categories function under the rubric of four different types of desire by the individual in accordance with the Islamic canon of Iran. Under the auspices of Islamic jurisprudence, the caveat for sex change is complicated and socially and philosophically compartmentalized as follows:

1. those who are not “sick” and yet want to change their sex;
2. those faced with emotional and physical confusion, are considered “sick,” and are striving psychologically to pinpoint their sexuality for a more satisfactory modus vivendi;
3. those who are intersex with distinguishable features, whence making the change would bring about the dominant identity;
4. those who are intersex (neuter) with nondistinguishable features, making the determination dubious at best.

The first is not permissible as there are no diagnoses deeming the person “ill,” and so the person’s intent to exercise this right in the form of an experimentation to lead them to a better lifestyle is considered an error in judgment and, hence, is a nonstarter. Those individuals’ desire, according to Islamic law, is to perform a “sex change,” which is haram (forbidden) as it implies questioning God’s providence. The second change in sexuality is allowed, however, because it is not considered a sex change but rather a change from a complete sex (jins-i kāmil) to an incomplete and nondistinct one (jins-i nāqis), as it is firmly believed such changes are at best superficial. The third is considered prudent, as the discrepancy in the identity hinges on body parts that are dominant yet not complete. The fourth is one of obscurity, as Islamic jurisprudence asks for caution in making decisions...
with regard to it. These are situations where a definitive determination cannot be made about the dominant sex (dominant body parts) in an intersex individual.

In the first scenario, the Islamic law of Iran alludes to Qur’anic verses that deem any change to God’s intended creation an act of sin that yields another sin—and that which is burdened by a further sin of hurting oneself to achieve it and implies an inclination to neutrality rather than having a distinct sexual identity. There are legitimate chains of hadith (sayings of the prophet Muhammad) that behoove pondering into the technicalities interwoven into the fabric of modern-day interpretations in this regard: “God cursed men who resemble women, and women who resemble men” (Rāżī 1969b, 550; translation by Alireza Korangy). The act of dressing as the opposite sex implies—in accordance with Islamic logic (man?iq)—that God made a mistake in his creation, simply an unacceptable position. This understanding persists today, but there is an exception that has spurred the extraordinary number of sex-change operations in Iran, and which was likely considered by Khomeini in his fatwa: namely, that under the auspices of a religious amendment, when there is danger of injury to self in following a certain religious decree, exceptions can be made. The Qur’an, in Surat al-Ḥajj, alludes to a concept that has been adopted into the legal philosophy of Islam. *Iḍṭirār wa ṭaraj*, once applied to the sex-change operations, translates into a linguistic rhetorical coordination that implies that no one should be forced into a state of despair in performing his or her religious duties. The first part of a verse in that sura (chapter) clearly states, “And strive for Allah with the endeavor which is his right. He hath chosen you and hath not laid upon you in religion any hardship” (Surat al-Ḥajj, 22:78; translation by Alireza Korangy).

**Maryam Khatoon Molkara**

The first person to bring worldwide attention to the issue of sex-change operations in Iran was Maryam Khatoon Molkara (1950–2012), who was instrumental in Khomeini’s fatwa decreeing these operations as necessary. At a time when transsexuals and homosexuals were experiencing the same trials for acceptance, she secured a meeting in 1970 with Ayatollah Behbahani, who was considered a complete religious authority (*vilāyat-i faqīh*). In a protocol religious act, *istikhāra* (seeking prudence), the ayatollah apparently opened up the Qur’an at this fortuitous meeting and the book opened to the Surat Maryam (Sura 19), which refers to the Virgin Mary. This implied for the Ayatollah that Molkara would have struggles similar to those of Mary, and, therefore, it was ordained that he (at the time named Fereydoon) should change his sex to better face what was deemed for him from above—that is, God. It was also decided, however, that he should consult Khomeini, who was at that time in banishment in Iraq. Khomeini deemed it necessary for Molkara to undergo a sex-change operation because, as a religious individual, it was essential for him to have, once and for all, ascertained his identity in order to better perform his religious duties. It must be noted that Molkara, because of his struggles with his sex, had turned to
religion most devotedly. This seems to be one of the main reasons why he was granted a hearing with both Ayatollah Behbahani and Ayatollah Khomeini.

**Society and Sex Change Today**

Psychologically, it is still quite difficult to live in Iran as a transsexual, as acceptance is rare at best. The social taboo surrounding the lifestyle underscores the severely stagnating social conditions for these individuals regardless of the religious allowances outlined above. Most of these cases of discrimination essentially start at a very basic family level where, for example, some who have had the psychological recommendation and have already been approved for an operation, deeming them otherwise suicidal, have faced physical abuse and even death at home at the hands of their fathers, who abide by a paternal code of machismo. And in a society where machismo stems from very strong cultural and religious dogmas, legality does not supersede social norms that have been doggedly embedded within the minds of Iranians for centuries.

On a more positive note, another interesting trajectory is included in Najmabadi's 2014 book *Professing Selves: Transsexuality and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran*. Najmabadi argues that the trans movement in Iran has been quite distinguishable from, say, the feminist movement, as the former is no longer a quest for rights per se. Transsexuals' battles on the field of social justice fall under the rubric of the pragmatic and not the philosophical or the religious—although the religious can, of course, influence some of those issues as well. Transsexuals focus their efforts on such matters as “negotiation and lobbying for needs” (211)—for example, entitlement to health coverage by insurance companies or state hospitals. Their major concerns were long addressed within the paradigm of Khomeini’s fatwa. Because they have won the sympathy of the clergy, transsexuals’ vulnerability in their dogmatic society is of a different kind from that of women. With the success of such organizations as the Iranian Society for Supporting Individuals with Gender Identity Disorder, the first legally registered trans advocacy group, this becomes ever more clear.

**SEE ALSO** *Sex Reassignment Surgery in Asia; Shifting Sexual Norms in Nineteenth-Century Iran; Transgender Identity in Iranian Cinema; Transgendered Subjectivities in Contemporary Iran*

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Sex Tourism in Asia

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The status and impact of LGBT tourism to Asia.

Asia is the world’s largest and most populous continent, with regions that are diverse not only in their respective cultures and traditions but also in their histories of political and economic evolution. Colonialism and its aftermath continue to have a crucial impact on the emergence of sexuality, both as a discourse and practice, through its influences on religions, social norms, and legal provisions (especially through criminalization of homosexuality), making the contemporary lived realities of sexual subjects extremely heteronormative. Heteronormativity and dominant patriarchal structures of societies pave the way for discrimination and oppression of any identities or practices that are outside the boundaries of heterosexuality. Sexuality continues to be a highly politicized and divisive issue across the continent, especially when it comes to questions of sexual diversity and rights.

There are two broad challenges to achieving an understanding of sexuality in Asia, especially in the context of sex tourism and its impact on LGBTQ issues. First, the definition of Asia, as commonly used or understood, is increasingly the subject of political and academic critiques: is Asia a geopolitical concoction, a cultural notion, or a fictitious idea generated from the colonial past—a creation of Western forces, Asian elites, and/or imperialists within Asia? So, Asia as a term is highly political and not very innocent (Wilson 2006). Second, discussing sexuality, especially queer discourses in Asia, also remains highly problematic because of the fluidity of the location/s but also because, in general, in the Global South there is increasing critical analysis of sexuality that challenges the long-established Western hegemony and belief that queer subjectivities are solely Western exports that mimic the West. In reality, it is the result of regional inter-Asian influences and exchanges of economy, flows of people, and complex cultural interactions that are shaping sexual subjectivities and reinterpreting the various circuits, sites, and processes of informing sexuality (Kang 2017; Wilson 2006). For example, Thailand is a zone of interaction between Southeast and East Asia, and Southeast Asian regionalism and the growing impact of East Asian capital, media, and tourists are paramount to understanding Thai gender and sexuality (Kang 2014).

Sex tourism is tourism for commercial sex purposes, which is most commonly understood
and interpreted as tourists from developed and/or Western countries traveling to
developing countries to obtain sexual pleasure. As mentioned above, the role and influence
of intra-Asian or regional sex tourism have expanded since the latter decades of the
twentieth century. Critics point out that according to intersectional analysis of sex tourism,
and often from the perspective of host nations, the process is more complex than simply
procuring sexual gratification through commercial encounters, because it brings together
political economy and culture, material relations and representations (Kang 2017; Wilson
2006; Truong 1983; Oppermann 1999; Pettman 1997; Pritchard and Morgan 2000; Chow-
White 2006; Grewal and Kaplan 2001). Sex tourism in Asia is a product of a development
process involving multiple factors: changes in international air travel, tourism, and the
hospitality sector; feminized migrant labor; and the sexual vulnerability of poor women
and children in particular. The struggling poorer nation-states, often newly decolonized
and independent, chose to promote tourism as a development strategy, seeking foreign
exchange in the face of growing indebtedness, trade liberalization, and pressure from
international financial institutions to open up their economies (Truong 1983; Pettman
1997; Mason 1999). Western Europe, the United States, Japan, and Australia were noted for
sending sex tourists to countries such as Thailand and the Philippines beginning in the
1960s, as these were significant sites for prostitution that catered to military bases—for
example, the US air bases in Thailand and Vietnam (Truong 1983; Pettman 1997). Sex
tourist destinations in these Asian locations were promoted and represented as exotic and
erotic, creating the classic colonial image of the “Other” through feminization and
sexualization of former colonies and their people (Truong 1983; Pritchard and Morgan
2000).

Nina Rao (1999) analyzed the complex dynamics Asian countries faced at the turn of the
twenty-first century when countries had to make uneasy and difficult choices between
economic vulnerability and globalized markets. Tourism is a symbol of liberalization, and
consumption of sexual pleasure is seen as a privileged class experience. In the context of
globalization this privilege is understood as a selective and ideological process that exploits
and abuses the poor and the vulnerable—both individuals and countries at the receiving
end of the free market. As developing countries, such as those in South Asia, for example,
come under pressure to modernize and globalize, the market forces are seen as
maintaining a conspiracy of silence regarding issues of sex tourism (Rao 1999). Sex tourism
is predicated on differences in gender, class, and nation. Sex tourism in Asia has survived
on a sustained construction and maintenance of performative identities in gender roles and
sexuality that privilege dominant masculinity (of the consumer tourists, who are
predominantly males of certain classes and nationalities) over the docile subjugated
femininity of women, children, and gay/transgender bodies.

Sex tourism has had profound effects on the discourses of gender and sexuality, mostly
through reproducing heteronormativity in host regions (Leheny 1995). The long history of
sex tourism in different Asian countries has impacted sex and sexuality mostly in a negative
way. The trafficking of women, sex slavery, child prostitution, and the spread of HIV/AIDS are commonly seen as direct outcomes of sex tourism. Child sex tourism is a significant part of sex tourism in Asia, especially in poorer countries that are also new entrants in the sex tourism industry, such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, and Vietnam, which are increasingly becoming a hub for international pedophile networks (Rao 1999; Bauer and McKercher 2003; Hodgson 1994; Cotter 2009).

With the rapid socioeconomic growth in Asia, robust attitudes toward nationalism, a renewed focus on preserving what are perceived as traditions and cultures, and the increasing influence of religious politics, many countries are becoming more conservative and radically heteronormative. Therefore, it is not surprising that a country such as Thailand that once used sex tourism as its flagship economic opportunity to earn foreign exchange is beginning to develop national strategies and policies for rebranding to shed the sexualized image of the state, its culture, and its people. In contrast, countries such as China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore are adopting different strategies of combining their robust economies, modernization, and indulgent and inclusive aspects of sexualities in offering services and facilities more often associated with general tourism than with sex tourism specifically. The influence of sex tourism in Asia is perhaps more evident in regard to issues of sexual diversity and LGBT cultures, activism, and rights.

**LGBT Sex Tourism**

The majority of Asian countries have traditional societies and are heteropatriarchal in their normative practices and laws, which means homophobia, criminalization of same-sex practices and unions, and discrimination based on gender and sexual identities are common. Two reports from the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA), “Sexual Orientation Laws in the World—Overview” (ILGA 2017) and *State-Sponsored Homophobia: A World Survey of Sexual Orientation Laws: Criminalisation, Protection, and Recognition* (Carroll and Mendos 2017), show that twenty-three Asian countries have made same-sex sexual activities illegal, while five countries have legalized same-sex sexual activity. In addition, thirteen countries prohibit the establishment or registration of sexual orientation–related organizations such as nongovernmental organizations. In two Asian countries (Pakistan and Afghanistan), the death penalty is codified in law but not implemented for same-sex sexual activities specifically. On a positive note, there are countries that have constitutional prohibitions on discrimination based on gender and/or sexual orientation, including Nepal, or prohibitions on discrimination in employment (South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand).

Sex tourism and its impact on sexuality, especially in the areas of “gay friendliness,” rights, and activism, need to be understood in these socio-legal contexts. Perspectives from South, East, and Southeast Asia show that across the regions there was a period of dramatic and rapid transformation in the last decades of the twentieth century and the beginning of the
twenty-first century in relation to new gender/sex categories and sexual and erotic cultures. This was a result of multiple influences, including economic, social, and technological transformations in the context of globalizing market capitalism; hybridization of local and global culture and discourses; and increased rates of human movement through tourism, which contributed to the expansion of a human rights agenda on gender and sexuality rights (Jackson 2001).

Circuit parties (annual events that take place on the same weekend in the same location, attended almost exclusively by gay men) are gay spaces that have become increasingly popular in Asia. Moving away from their origin in the West, circuit parties emerged in East Asian gay-friendly cities (e.g., Bangkok, Seoul, Hong Kong) in the early twenty-first century (Westhaver 2005). Circuit parties are a subject of debate because, on the one hand, they provide a space that allows gay communities to openly express their sexual orientations and sexualities and can serve as a platform for asserting their sexual rights from sociopolitical positionality. On the other hand, research has shown that circuit parties may play a role in the rise in HIV among men who have sex with men (MSM) in Asia.

International travel and sex tourism facilitated the spread of HIV and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) across the globe, and Asian host countries are therefore vulnerable to HIV/STD epidemics among MSM residing in and traveling to these destinations (Cheung, Lim, and Guadamuz 2015).

LGBT tourism is a multibillion-dollar industry, and the tourism industry has been quick to embrace the “pink” travel economy that caters to LGBT travelers. Critics point out that even though many Asian countries remain anti-LGBT in their legal frameworks and have been trying to avoid LGBT identity–based rights issues, countries such as Singapore, Taiwan, and South Korea have embraced some form of “pinkwashing” or homonationalism for economic gain, especially from the early twenty-first century onward. Approximately 35 million overnight visitors who traveled to international destinations around the world in 2015 were part of the LGBT community, and more than 8 million of them traveled to Asia and the Pacific, accounting for $12.5 billion in tourism receipts (Henry-Biabaud 2016). These travelers tend to be white, affluent, educated, and bourgeois. Selling a gay-friendly tourist market destination endorses the (homo)sexualization of the nation and the city, as well as the gendering and sexualization of the tourist body that are embedded in particular politics, economies, and subjectivities. But the asymmetrical transnational power relations between the Western homonormative gay tourist consumers and the tourism workers in the host countries also include possibilities for new sexual identities, expressions, and networking that contribute to battling homophobia and other social taboos (Waitt, Markwell, and Gorman-Murray 2008; UNWTO 2012).

Dredge Kang (2014) discusses the transnational element in Thailand’s ever-changing and evolving “genderscapes,” or the terrain of gender and sexuality. The traditional categories are grounded via the repetition and ritualization of routine practices in everyday life, but at
the same time they remain fluid in their intentions and interpretations, especially in their performances—and these are the result of historical transformations and the localization of foreign influences. What is more fascinating is that the local gender variations, rather than being usurped by modern Western forms, continue to expand in Asia. Dana Collins (2009) argues that in the Philippines, for example, although the common perception is that Western LGBT tourists and expats influence Asian queer identities along the lines of a more Western global discourse, especially through identity politics, it is also undeniable that the interactions between gay hosts and international (mostly Western) guests allow for the development of new strategies of hybrid and emergent sexualities, activism, and discourses, which result not just from commodified sexual relations with Westerners. Moreover, the employment of working-class gay men in LGBT tourism, sexual or otherwise, enables them to achieve middle-class status, satisfying their need for social mobility and visibility, as well as to formulate a resistance to class polarization and heteronormativity. 

Collins's research in Asian contexts (2009) shows how gender and sexuality are both transformed and troubled through transnational relations of mobility. The author offers a theorization of homonormative mobility to explain discourses of normative gender, race, nation, and desire in gay travel. Specifically, she says that expatriates describe their mobility as an escape from the heteronormative controls they face at home, allowing them to acquire masculine access to freeing places in “foreign” playgrounds and to have a desirable experience that builds their own self-confidence.

Gay tourism often depicts travel destinations as spaces of global gay consumerism, both materially and erotically. At the same time, it depicts Western gay tourists as representing freedom of sexual identities and rights, which produces strong beliefs about a supposedly universal (and the only acceptable) model of gay identity and practices, which all cultures and contexts should deliver. Often these travels are attempts to escape from heteronormative controls and regulations at home. Tourists and expats embark on their journeys in the belief that foreign destinations can serve as playgrounds for establishing masculinity by creating homo-Orientalist desire for the men in Far Eastern destinations, and by doing so, they reproduce homonormativity and normalize masculinities through sexual adventures, racialization of the host men, and naturalization of Western gay identity abroad (Puar 2001; Collins 2009). The Global Report on LGBT Tourism (UNWTO 2012) observes that many consumers of LGBT tourism are becoming highly receptive to the ethical side of tourism, which promotes products and services that are socially and environmentally responsible. The consumer can become an actor in social change by either contributing money or participating in actions in host countries.

**Lesbians and Sex Tourism**

Research on female consumers of sex tourism is less prolific and principally focuses on heterosexual and mostly white female tourists from Europe and North America. Female sex
tourists, like their male counterparts, also employ fantasies of Otherness and class and race privilege. Studies of female sex tourism show that although they acknowledge some economic elements and material transactions, including exchanges of money, female sex tourists prefer to refer to their encounters as “romance tourism” (Jeffreys 2003). Information on female sex tourism in general, and lesbians’ “pink tourism” in particular, is very limited. Julia O’Connell Davidson (1998) notes that although heterosexual female sex tourism is a far rarer phenomenon in terms of numbers compared to male sex tourism, it is not uncommon for Western lesbians to engage in sex tourism (see also Jeffreys 2003). One of the reasons cited for the limited knowledge on the subject is the markets’ own prejudices and lack of interest in lesbians as consumers compared to gay men (Hughes 2006). Some studies have found that lesbians tend to be low-maintenance travelers and more likely to be interested in adventures rather than services. The stereotype of lesbians as low-budget and frugal tourists contributes to lesbian invisibility in LGBT tourism landscapes because they are not seen as lucrative consumer target groups, though studies show that lesbian women are actually frequent travelers and have as much disposable income as gay men (UNWTO 2012).

It is not only lesbian tourists who are invisible, according to Alexander, who points out what is essentially problematic about Western gay tourism discourse: it is deeply colonial and depicted as white and male, and it denies women, bisexuals, and native queers. In other words, white gay capital follows the path of white heterosexual capital, excluding queer women, queers of color, and postcolonial lesbian and gays implicated in the process (1997, 1998). Jasbir Puar (2002) links the dearth of lesbian tourist accounts and research to differences in gendered relations to globalization and tourism. Though there is not much focused work on lesbian sex tourism in Asia, Annette Pritchard and colleagues’ 2000 article “Sexuality and Holiday Choices: Conversations with Gay and Lesbian Tourists” analyzed the distinct differences between gay men and lesbian women as tourists. They found that gay vacations are defined (by both gays and lesbians) in relation to sex, while lesbian holidays lacked the strong associations with sex and the body. Also, lesbians preferred to be more cautious in terms of their visibility for safety reasons and to avoid attention from the mainstream heterosexual population (Pritchard et al. 2000b).

**Influence of Sex Tourism on LGBT Subcultures, Visibilities, and Activism**

Critical scholarship has pointed out the ways that LGBT tourism can influence the local cultures of diverse sexualities. Transgender communities across Asia and the Pacific are more visible than LGB communities, and though there are varied degrees of social acceptance and tolerance of transgender people in most Asian societies, nevertheless they still face marginalization and discrimination that often result in very limited access to resources, amenities, and basic civil rights such as education, employment, and housing.
From legal perspectives, it is still a mixed bag for transgender rights; for example, Malaysia prosecutes people whose gender identity differs from the sex assigned to them at birth. Legal recognition is somewhat possible elsewhere in Asia, including in Bangladesh, India, and Nepal. In Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and China, legal recognition of one’s preferred gender is possible but often requires irreversible and invasive procedures. Sometimes, legal processes involve discriminatory and humiliating diagnoses of mental illness. Interestingly, Thailand is the first country in Asia to pass a nondiscrimination law to protect gender expression, and it and has become the regional hub for sex-reassignment surgeries, although it does not have a legal gender recognition policy (Health Policy Project et al. 2015). Marginalization of transgender people (both socially and economically) is nevertheless common, and they are often the most visible segment of a sex industry. Researchers like Witchayanee Ocha and Barbara Earth (2013) show, for example, that sex tourism and related sex industries in Thailand facilitate the emergence of new third-gender identities (among sex workers). Ocha and Earth indicate that the sex industry helps transgender/transsexual sex workers to finance procedures that align their physical bodies with their preferred gender identities.

One of the major criticisms of LGBT sex tourism has to do with its tendency to reproduce colonial hierarchies, Otherness, and homonormativity (Alexander 2005; Puar 2002). The making of gay-friendly tourist markets contributes to the constructions of global and local sexualities, as these spaces create communities through encounters between hosts and guests. On a broader scale, the pink economy operates through the workings of governance and capitalism, and the outcome of this can be contradictory: the government can maintain heteronormativity at the national level by denying rights or recognition to certain gender and sexual identities/practices, but at the same time it can normalize gayness within the neoliberal market economy of the state by promoting gay-friendly destinations at the local level (Puar 2002).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) issued its Global Report on LGBT Tourism in 2012, highlighting new destination countries that are starting to compete with more established countries by promoting their gay friendliness in terms of tolerance or their large resident LGBT communities. Many countries have begun to realize that human rights considerations have positive effects on their economies and to actively promote LGBT tourism as a result. Tourism companies and boards in Asian countries such as South Korea promote their countries as the new destinations for LGBT travelers by showcasing emerging LGBT civil rights movements and cultural events, including pride festivals, LGBT film festivals, and similar gay-friendly events. In the UNWTO report, Ryan Choi, the International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association ambassador to South Korea, touts LGBT tourism to South Korea as an opportunity for travelers to serve as “goodwill LGBT ambassadors” who can “leave a positive impression on South Korea to inspire change” (2012, 26). Similarly, the Indian ambassador, Abhinav Goel, invites LGBT tourists to become a part of a “rare opportunity to experience this historic birth and transformation
among the LGBT community” in India (2012, 27).

Promoting gay-friendly spaces by marking areas within cities as sexualized and eroticized as well as “safe” or “tolerant” (e.g., neighborhoods with gay bars, clubs, cruising areas, and restaurants that make up the “gay scene”) actually creates a stricter heterosexual/homosexual dualism, thus naturalizing heteronormativity beyond the borders of these spaces (Jackson 2001). Studies on Singapore note the emergence of creative and often contradictory ways of making these boundaries less confrontational or operating through binaries of nonrecognition and acknowledgment of queer existence (Yue and Leung 2017; Yue 2007; Lim 2005). Audrey Yue and Helen Hok-Sze Leung (2017) analyze how Singapore invented itself as a queer city attracting global gay tourism in the context of events elsewhere in East and Southeast Asia, such as the commerce-led boom of queer Bangkok, the rise of middle-class gay consumer cultures in Manila and Hong Kong, and thriving underground LGBT scenes in Shanghai and Beijing. In the case of Singapore, where same-sex sexual practices are still illegal, it has created spaces for representations of homosexuality through a creative economy built on cultural institutions (film, theater, nightlife), allowing new sexual subjects and expressions to thrive. Queer mobility and sexual recognition without addressing sexual rights in Singapore is an outcome of three factors: migration, gay tourism, and sexual assimilation. Gay tourism is materialized through urban and home affairs policies at the state level, as well as on the ground through activism that ensures planning and management of spaces such as parks and neighborhoods that are known for activities that center on or cater to LGBT interests. In the process, homonormative activities such as pride parades become indicators of gay friendliness as well as assertions of visibility for LGBT communities at the local level.

These visibilities, outcomes of glocalization (the simultaneous occurrence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies in contemporary social, political, and economic systems) of queer activism, can produce different consequences in different nations. On the one hand, these events can assert strong political symbolism, as was the case in Taiwan’s 2017 progression toward sexual rights and equality; on the other hand, backlash can result in the persecution of activists, as was the case in Bangladesh in 2016 when two LGBT activists were hacked to death by Islamist militants, or in China, where pride parade organizers were detained in 2013. Especially since the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, while many countries in Asia have battled over laws around sexuality and LGBT rights in particular (including India, Bangladesh, Indonesia, and Mongolia), other countries have advocated gay friendliness as part of their national branding (including South Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, China, and Taiwan). A 2016 study by the Pacific Asia Travel Association examined the way the treatment of LGBT people impacted economic development in thirty-nine emerging economies, including China, Taiwan, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Thailand. The results show a positive correlation between per capita gross domestic product and LGBT rights. China, India, Vietnam, and Cambodia currently rank among the Asian destinations most
popular with LGBTQ tourists [Henry-Biabaud 2016].

Sexuality in the context of Asia is complex, to say the least, with its socioeconomic and cultural contexts of inclusivity, as well as exclusivity politics at various historical points from the precolonial or premodern era to contemporary times. Social integration and acceptance of nonnormative gender and sexual identities and practices, discrimination and violent backlashes against the same identities, and the rise of rights movements are all part of the complex and often contradictory constructions of sexuality discourse. It is more than a struggle between “tradition” and “modernity,” because these are not exclusive to each other, at least not in this region.

The role of sex tourism in this complexity of sexuality discourses is, therefore, highly interesting. Sex tourism in many ways contributes to sustaining gender discrimination, the gender hierarchy, and the patriarchal nature of the political economy of sex through sexual violence, exploitation, and oppression. Yet, age-old strict norms and regulations on heterosexuality that preserve gender roles of masculinity and femininity are changing because of greater interaction between cultures, which includes reverse tourism as large numbers of Asians are now traveling to and residing in Western countries in a much more fluid way, and with stronger monetary power. Sex tourism and sex tourists are not that influential in altering discourses on sexuality and gender, except that they maintain certain colonial and/or imperial notions of the “Other” through race power relations. Interestingly though, LGBT tourism, of which sex tourism is a prominent part, increased as a market as part of a global queer travel culture and has had contradictory influences on LGBT positions in Asia, including gay subcultures, activism, and rights issues. LGBT (sex) tourists continue to engage with local LGBT communities beyond the power of their pink economy and contribute to bringing the global to the local.

SEE ALSO Cruising and Cruising Grounds; Gay European Tourism Association; Resorts; Sex Tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean; Sex Tourism in the Middle East; Sex Work in Asia; Sex Work/Sex Tourism/Sex Trafficking in Africa; Travel/Travelogues on the Middle East

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Sex Tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean

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The state of queer sex work in various countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as of organizations that support queer sex workers.

Although most of the research on sex tourism analyzes relations between heterosexual men from the Global North traveling to purchase sex from women in the Global South, same-sex and gender-nonconforming paid encounters between tourists and locals have a long history dating back to at least the nineteenth century (and likely much earlier). Most academic studies documenting nonheterosexual sex tourism focus on same-sex relations between men. Queer studies of lesbian and transgender sex tourism are largely absent from the scholarship.

The phenomenon of male and female sex tourists journeying from North America and Europe to Latin America and the Caribbean is not new, but the growth of mass tourism as a strategy for economic development, combined with increased disposable income in the Global North, has intensified sexual economies linked to foreigners. Nations in the region must outcompete each other in an effort to offer “authentic” cultural experiences to tourists. Arguably, the expansion of tourism in the region should be helpful to the growth of the local economy, but as many scholars have noted, the bulk of the benefit in the tourist industry is aimed toward transnational companies rather than the workers. The growth of the international tourist industries, frequently packaged as “all-inclusive” resorts, has led to the employment of multitudes of workers, though they tend to be low-waged and unskilled laborers. A prevalent critique of the mass tourism industry is that, while serving as an important source of income for impoverished countries, it does not provide sufficient opportunities for locals to thrive.

In the tourism sector, low wages and high demand for erotic services account for many of the locals participating in the sex trade, not just as sex workers but also as procurers, taxi drivers, and restaurant and bar employees. Everyday laborers want to access the resources that result from foreign tourism and increasingly must do so through the informal sector.
The economic result for people in Latin America and the Caribbean causes them not only to migrate to areas known for tourism but also to become involved in sex tourism and the informal labor sector in order to make money and perhaps even secure a ticket out of the country by establishing a relationship with a customer. Thus, travel and tourism have changed the face of prostitution, as ideas of romantic love blur the lines of the sex trade and international migration.

Queer sex tourism denotes the commodification of sex for money, but these sexual encounters also include gifts and other material and economic benefits attached to relationships that can evolve over time into romance, companionship, friendship, and queer kinship. The notion of sex tourism is ambiguous and difficult to define because of the flexibility and transformations inherent in the encounters between hosts and guests. Tourist-foreigner liaisons, for instance, are fluid in nature. These liaisons can free people to negotiate identities and relationships. For example, it is not uncommon for heterosexually identified tourists to seek sexual adventures with queer folk while on holiday. Within the queer enclaves of tourist sites, there are also many heterosexually identified men performing as gay sex workers.

While informality, fluidity, and spontaneity are characteristics of sex tourism—with encounters taking place on beaches and in discos and bars—queer sex tourism is also formally promoted via gay travel guides, websites, social networks, and organized tours. High levels of disposable income in the gay male communities of North America have generated many different tourist services promoting travel opportunities for sexual minorities.

**Colonial Power Relations of Race**

Sex tourism is conceptualized primarily as people from the Global North (former empires and current wealthier nations) traveling to destinations in the Global South that are not only poverty-stricken but were geographically inscribed as exotic and erotic destinations. What is understood as queer sex tourism is a field of study layered and crossed with power dynamics that include gender, racial, sexual, and class hierarchies constructed within historical relations of imperialist domination (and reinforced in the nineteenth century, during the era of independence from Spain and the processes of nation-building). There are many different dynamics occurring in sex tourism relationships, including an imbalanced economic exchange challenging locals to adjust to the new dynamics, racialized fantasies of the exotic “other,” and the use of a specific aesthetic to signal authentic local identity and desire (Kempadoo 2001). For instance, the combination of essentialist perceptions of black sexuality with stylistic aesthetics, suggested by markers like dreadlocks and black skin, works alongside notions of the heightened sexuality and vigor of the “native” people (Pruitt and LaFont 1995). These ideas reanimate and reconstruct relationships of domination between the North American and European tourists within the context of travel to Latin
America and the Caribbean.

The racialized perceptions and desires of tourists, and the accompanying marketing of sexual and erotic escapes, allow people with the financial means to drive the labor and romantic decisions and practices of people in the countries visited. In the context of research focusing on queer sex tourism to the region, studies frame a generalized idea about race, based on colonial constructs, between the Global North and South. The research on queer travel in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries portrays vacationers to Latin America and the Caribbean as primarily white, and the partners in Latin America and the Caribbean as brown- or black-skinned people. There are complex racial identities throughout the region, but what seems persistent is the browning of the racialized “other” in Latin America and the Caribbean. This, however, ignores some important points, like the presence of queer people of color as tourists, the presence of South Americans who visit the Caribbean or other parts of Latin America for sex, and the presence of white Latin Americans who also sell sex.

There are unspoken histories between racialized groups as they come together through the tourism experience. Even as strangers seek to meet for both romance and sex, there exist weighted histories of exotification of the sexual other. For example, the discourse describing black men and women as more natural, primitive, aggressive, sexual, and primal exposed in contemporary ethnographies on sex tourism reflects the historical thread connecting racialized perceptions of black sexuality from the past to the present (Hill Collins 2004; Kempadoo 2004; Saunders 2010). Kamala Kempadoo notes the way these historical perceptions play out in the tourism market: “Caribbean men and women alike were constructed in tourist imaginations as racialized-sexual subject/objects—the hypersexual ‘Black male stud’ and the ‘hot’ Brown or Black woman—whose main roles were to serve and please the visitor. Both women and men represented ‘the exotic’ to the tourist” (2001, 50). It is clear, moreover, that the exotification of black men and women by tourists, combined with a self-essentializing language around race, sexuality, and sexual vigor, is used to attract partners and clients, suggesting that the exotic “other” can reap economic and personal benefits by playing up ideas of an essential sexuality connected to blackness. Affirmations about one’s own hotness, virility, and strength seek to attract tourists while holding firm on what ultimately amounts to stereotypes about black and mixed-race sexual prowess (Allen 2007). In his work on Cuba, Jafari Sinclaire Allen notes how this affects relationships:

The demands and perceived preferences of these visitors drive supplies of old Cuban music, old Cuban costumes, old Cuban racial hierarchies, and old macho structures of feeling and gender/sex roles—this is in no way to say that these are “false” or obsolete, but certainly unreconstructed, if not emotionally and
sexually satisfying for the partners. Sex laborers exploit this, mostly in a very self-conscious way. The market for male sex laborers is driven by strongly held notions of hyperactive Cuban masculinity (machismo), romance, and sexual organs of legendary proportions.

(2007, 197)

Tourists are attracted to locked hair, for example, as exuding virility, wildness, strength. This reflects broad perceptions of sexuality as related to race. Ideas of racial differences posit the “natives” as black virile men with lots of sexual energy and large penises, black women as hypersexual and aggressive, and mixed-race women as exotic mulattas (Arrizón 2002; Kempadoo 2001; Fernandez 1999; Phillips 1999; Pruitt and LaFont 1995). These highly gendered and racialized perspectives on sexuality are often passed off as fact.

It is significant that most academic investigations on queer sex tourism have taken place in the Caribbean islands and in Brazil and Mexico. While there have been investigations into, for example, male sex work in other countries, they seldom identify the gender and sexuality of clients. Some of the studies hint at or mention in passing the presence of queer and transgender women, but generally there is an absence of research for these populations. We detail these findings on queer sex tourism below and conclude with an assessment of the sex-worker movement in Latin America.

**Queer Sex Work in Specific Countries**

The following section examines some of the major studies conducted by scholars working in Latin America and the Caribbean. This review primarily lists investigations published in English and Spanish.

**Cuba** Historians and other scholars have uncovered sex tourism and queer geographies in cosmopolitan cities such as Havana, Cuba’s largest city and historically the most urban space of the Caribbean. As the capital and principal port of Cuba, Havana had extensive connections to Europe and North and South America. This meant that travelers—whether merchants, sailors, industrialists, immigrants, tourists, or military occupational forces—were exposed to Cuba’s vibrant nightlife. The colonial area of nineteenth-century Havana had public locations, such as the Parque Central, that were widely known as queer meeting spaces. In the late nineteenth century, queer sex workers could be found working in the brothels of the red-light district of Havana. In the early twentieth century, sex-oriented businesses included male brothels, adult cinemas, and countless bars catering to male same-sex desires, such as Dirty Dick, Johnny’s Bar, and the Barrilito, where tourists and locals could socialize day and night. After the Cuban Revolution of 1959, the United States severed relations with Cuba and imposed a trade embargo, effectively ending Cuba’s tourist
industry.

Since the late nineteenth century, Havana's sex industry has served as an enclave for gender nonconforming individuals who labored, for example, selling heterosexual sex. Cuba's sexual markets of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included lesbian sex workers who provided erotic services to men. These patterns continue in present-day Havana, with queer women working as both brokers in the sex trade and laborers who provide sexual service to men and women.

In Havana and other Cuban tourist destinations, sexual markets declined with the Cuban Revolution, but they resurfaced with the rise in poverty exacerbated by the end of the socialist-trading bloc and Soviet subsidies beginning in 1989. As a result, present-day Havana has attracted scholarly attention for its large, visible, and vibrant sex trade, particularly its queer erotic laborers. New identities have emerged that partially advertise sex practices, such as the pinguero (shorthand for one who works with his penis). The term jinetera/o, which respectively refers to a female or male hustler, distances sex workers from terms (or “identities”) that carry the stigma of prostitution. Jineteras/os hustle foreigners for dollars to acquire necessities and luxuries or to gain access to spaces that are otherwise too expensive for denizens.

There is also a vibrant community of transsexuals and transvestites, many of whom make a living with foreigners, in Havana and other large Cuban cities. House parties, bars, nightclubs, cinemas, beaches, parks, and cafés connect foreigners with Cubans and mingle transvestites, pingueros, and jineteros. Although gender-nonconforming people experience considerable harassment, violence, incarceration, and prosecution by state authorities, there are now also queerer public spaces and queer-friendly discos that are tolerant of gender-nonconforming Cubans and their foreign clients. While sex work is not illegal in Cuba, transgressing and offending socialist sensibilities can be fined and criminalized according to the subjective judgment of the police. This gray area of the law means that the police have discretion to harass and extort participants in the sex trade.

Queer sex work has a long history in Cuba. Even though it has attracted scholarship since the late 1990s (Barron 2015; Fosado 2005; Hodge 2001, 2005, 2014; Allen 2007, 2011; Stout 2008, 2014), further studies are needed to elucidate the dynamics of the sex trade and the lives of all the participants. For instance, we need further accounts of the history of queer commercial sex, including the hazards and benefits experienced by participants, their romantic partners, communities, and families. Further investigations are also needed on how the domestic sex trade works, how commercial sexual settings operate in tourist destinations outside of Havana, how the formal tourist economy is connected to queer sex work, the possibilities for state recognition of sex work as a form of labor, and organizing for queer and sex-worker rights.
**Dominican Republic** Another Caribbean country with a history of queer sex tourism is the Dominican Republic. Male sex workers known as *sanky panky*, a word play on *hanky panky*, are popular with both male and female travelers looking for sexual adventure. Since at least the 1970s, young black men in the Dominican Republic have provided sexual services to tourists from North America and Western Europe. Gay male sex tourism was popular in the 1970s, with gay specialty cruise ships arriving in Puerto Plata, on the north coast of the Dominican Republic, on a regular basis. However, with the rise in homophobia associated with the spread of HIV/AIDS and an increase in the number of women travelers in the 1980s, some male sex workers started to perform sexual services primarily with women. Consequently, it is common for male sex workers to offer romance, companionship, and sex to both male and female visitors.

A *sanky panky* interviewed by anthropologist Mark Padilla revealed that he was initiated into sex-for-money exchanges with tourists by a friend who told him, “Look, a lot of American guys come here. Here they pay you. You have a good piece [pedazo, meaning penis] between your legs. With that you can make a lot of money.’ So, he educated me in what the search [la busqueda, roughly, sex work] is, because he had been in that environment and he knew how things worked there” (Padilla 2008, 786). This informant went on to specialize in providing sexual services to gay tourists. Contacts with gay business owners and a wealthy foreign clientele eventually led him to start an “agency” of sex workers who serve international queer visitors (Padilla 2008). While most of the sex-worker population is involved in sex tourism in direct sex-for-money exchanges, Padilla (2007, 2008) uncovered long-term romantic arrangements between young Dominican men and their older “Western Union daddies” from abroad. “Western Union daddies” refers to queer men who send financial remittances to their Dominican love interests. Ambiguous and complicated sexual-romantic relations mark these affairs, as participants seek affectual and queer kinship relations that challenge ideas of “casual sex.” Further research is needed to examine trans and women’s involvement, as well as that of Haitians and Haitian-Dominicans who participate in commercial erotic encounters with travelers.

**Barbados** The homoerotic social scene in Barbados presents a niche that attracts not only men traveling from the United States, Canada, and Europe but also intraregional tourists. Young black men—referred to as beach boys, hustlers, or beach bums—meet older tourists at gay bars and hotels, beaches, and local dance clubs. Barbadian “queens,” meaning effeminate gay men and trans women, are also visible in the sex trade. As David Murray (2012) details in an incisive analysis of queer life in Barbados, the diverse homoerotic social and sexual life on the island does not easily conform to Euro-American notions of gay identity. The idea that Murray expounds is that “Bajan” desires and sexual practices disrupt Western categories of “gay,” “queen,” and “transgender.” Unaware of cultural differences, foreigners assume stances of cultural superiority and “gay liberation” in relation to local populations. Nevertheless, economic necessity is, at times, the driving force for paid relations with transnational tourists, as working-class queens were involved in such
occupations as gas-station cashiers, hairdressing, and dressmaking that did not cover the cost of living (Murray 2012). Murray’s scholarship is a welcome exploration of the power dynamics at play in the ways in which “gay tourism may re-inscribe other modernist themes of progress, liberation, and individual freedom that reinforce political and economic inequalities between citizens of Euro-American and post-colonial nations” (2012, 56).

Brazil’s famed beaches attract both gay-identified and heterosexual men interested in sex. Queer sex tourism is widespread, not only in the touristic southeast cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo but also in the Northeast and the Amazon rain forest. Historian James Green (1999), who has written extensively about queer life in Brazil, has documented the development of male same-sex communities in cities such as Rio de Janeiro. Men seeking other men during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries used public parks, bars, cabarets, theaters, and music halls to find and build connections. By the mid-twentieth century, queers appropriated the yearly Carnival celebration and its attendant activities to create a space in Brazilian society and global culture on the margins of heteronormativity. In the 1970s, it was obvious that the Rio Carnival, for example, had become a rich spectacle that presented an opportunity for queer socializing and sexual economies, as the festivities became one of the most visible markers of gay life in Brazil. Carnival was attracting gay tourists from the Global North and queer porn filmmakers.

Another significant transformation in the 1970s was the visibility of *michês*, or *garotos de programa*, as young male hustlers are known. The *michês* are heterosexual or gay and perform queer commercial sex to escape their economically disadvantaged backgrounds. They perform hypermasculinity in the gay brothel-style saunas, as well as at beaches, parks, and other outdoor spaces. Prostitution is a way to make a living accompanied with the possibility for international migration and long-term financial support. Tourists originate primarily from the United States and Europe and are diverse in age, political affiliation, socioeconomic status, and race. Racialized sexuality, in particular, is a central attraction for tourists regardless of their background, with many of the vacationers preferring darker-skinned rent boys.

Prior to the 1990s, hustlers tended to work the street corners and train stations selling sex to openly effeminate gay men and to closeted married men. The growth in gay tourism during the 1990s channeled *garotos* into indoor venues with foreigners because of the enhanced financial rewards and safer working conditions. Long-term connections with clients have created queer forms of kinship, with *garotos* hosting their benefactors on yearly visits and crafting fictive families of “uncles” and “godfathers.” Clients tend to be generous and attempt to “save” *michês* from sex work by funding shopping sprees, education, housing, and family expenses. Regular clients also arrange for vacation travel and visas to Europe and the United States. For those who identify and otherwise perform heterosexually, these associations support heterosexual marriages, children, and
consumerist lifestyles.

In Brazil, sex-working _travestis_ have received attention from scholars. _Travestis_ refers to homosexual men who cross-dress. Starting in the 1970s, the advent of hormone therapy made it possible for men to modify their bodies, adopt women's names and linguistic pronouns, and use hormones and silicone to transform their bodies, emulating women's shapes (_Kulick 1998_). However, Don Kulick affirms that _travestis_ are not trying to be women and do not consider themselves transsexuals. Rather, as Kulick explains in his ethnography of the Bahian city of Salvador, they are “males who ardently desire men, who fashion and perfect themselves as an object of desire for those men” (_1998, 6_). Sex work for them is a profession that supplies a source of livelihood, pleasure, and personal worth. It is a valued aspect of a _travesti_'s life. Working in the streets, beaches, pornographic cinemas, or through agencies, _travestis_ sell sex primarily to other Brazilians and not to foreigners. Kulick clarifies that _travesti_ sex workers try to evade problems from the tourism police, who tend to protect tourists from sex workers. Further research is needed to ascertain if the exclusion of tourists as customers is still the practice in the twenty-first century.

**Mexico** Next to the United States, Mexico receives the largest number of international tourist arrivals in the Americas. Port cities like Veracruz have a long history of sexual commerce between tourists and natives. Other major cities, such as Guadalajara, Monterrey, and Tijuana, are known for their gay enclaves. These cities, along with beach resorts, such as Puerto Vallarta, Acapulco, Cozumel, and Cancún, have well-established male sexual economies. Since the late 1990s, a number of studies have illuminated the lives of these workers (_Cantú 2002; Córdova 2010; Howe, Zaraysky, and Lorentzen 2008; López López and Van Broeck 2010; Mendoza 2014_).

In Veracruz, for instance, the colloquial (and often derogatory) term _mayate_ denotes a male sex worker. Anthropological studies of _mayates_ during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries indicate that there is a consumer preference for Afro-mestizos, as Veracruz is a region of Mexico with a large community of people of African descent. Here, heterosexual men and trans women work in the historic city center as streetwalkers. Erotic services are readily available in a wide array of settings, such as parks, hotels renting by the hour, bars, nightclubs, beaches, strip shows, live gay sex shows, and bathhouses. Print media also publicize massages and escort services aimed at men. _Embarcados_ (embarkers) form a niche of the homoerotic market connected to maritime personnel who visit the port for temporary stays. Sailors, cabin boys, and other ship personnel who visit from Latin America and the United States are the sexual consumers of the ports. Whether on a full-time, part-time, or ad hoc basis, _mayates_ earn higher incomes participating in homoerotic services connected to foreigners than in other income-earning activities. Although some of the _mayates_ connected to foreigners identify as gay or homosexual and accept these labels within the queer enclaves, they also characterize themselves as heterosexual or bisexual in other contexts.
“Beach boys,” informal sex workers, hang out looking for sex-for-profit opportunities in the coastal beaches, such as Cozumel, Cancún, and Acapulco. Some beach resorts, such as Acapulco and Puerto Vallarta, have long established reputations for having queer-friendly businesses and accommodations. Because there are queer-friendly enclaves in these locations that are often advertised in international gay travel guidebooks, there are also opportunities for indoor monetized sexual connections. Linkages between consumers and erotic laborers can be made via discotheques and bars, or by phone and the internet. In the public spaces of cities, such as in Guadalajara, contact is made via a discreet codified set of gestures, whereas in the queer districts transactions are more direct.

Since the late 1980s, epidemiological studies have documented the HIV/AIDS prevalence among sex workers and intravenous drug users in border cities, such as Tijuana and Juárez, that receive sex tourists from the United States (Bautista-Arredondo et al. 2013). Vibrant sex markets attract tourists who cross the international border for a few days or sometimes for a few hours of recreation in sexual economies. Investigations into border sexual economies, as well as those in Mexico City, have brought us insights into the lives of male and trans sex workers, even if they are in narrowly focused epidemiological studies of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and injection drug use. Nevertheless, the scholarship for Mexico City and the US-Mexico border confirms that travestis, transgenders, and transsexuals are the most affected population with regards to stigma, discrimination, and violence. Violence can come at the hands of the police, gays, or clients.

Investigations into sexually transmitted infections in Mexico City have shed light on the working conditions, risks, and poverty facing transgender and transsexual sex workers. Here, as on the US-Mexico border, there is little information about the race, citizenship, age, and socioeconomic class of the clients. Given that Mexico City is a major cosmopolitan destination for Latin America and that Mexico received 35 million foreign tourists in 2016, we can surmise that not all of the clients of trans sex workers are conationals. Furthermore, Annick Prieur’s 1998 anthropological study of gender-variant homosexuals and cross-living vestidas from the economically marginal municipality of Mexico City known as Nezahualcóyotl and César O. González Pérez’s Travestidos al desnudo: Homosexualidad, identidades, y luchas territoriales en Colima (2003; Naked transvestites: Homosexuality, identities, and territorial struggles in Colima) offer ethnographic insights into the lives of trans folk in Mexico. These studies do not include North-South tourism but are important in the ways they illuminate the lives of trans sex workers.
Sex for pay is a survival tactic for many transgender women in Latin American and Caribbean society.

Peru

Peru’s homoerotic and transgender sex-work practices are heterogeneous. Most of the market is composed of male consumers, although a recent study mentions a small percentage that also includes heterosexual women clients. In large cities, such as Lima, and near jungle locations like Iquitos and Pucallpa and other tourist attractions, men seek clients in public spaces, gay saunas, theaters, nightspots and taverns, and via classified announcements and agencies. Indeed, there is a considerable sexual economy connected to the internet, with chatrooms for homoerotic sex and porn clubs. The term flete indicates gay and non-gayidentified men from marginal economic sectors of society who sell sex in and around parks and other public spaces. Escorts or strippers are men of higher income who publicize their expertise through agencies. In Iquitos and Pucallpa, young men participate by offering sex to foreign travelers on Amazon riverboats. Some studies on Peru focus on the public health issues of men who sell sex to men, but studies that take a more holistic approach to queer erotic markets (see Cáceres et al. 2015) are also starting to emerge.

Remunerated sex is a survival tactic for men and transgender women from the lower socioeconomic echelons of Peruvian society. But a higher income group with more education is entering the trade through the internet and international websites. This has
transformed the market by offering more security. International travelers contact websites through web portals personalized with standard information about the sex worker and the services offered. Social observers indicate that, for men of higher socioeconomic and educational status, with other occupational profiles and income sources, the sex trade is used as a means of pleasure and to satisfy curiosity.

Sex-Worker Organizations

There are organizations throughout the region that focus on empowering sex workers.

**Regional Networks** One such organization, the Red de Mujeres Trabajadoras Sexuales de Latinoamérica y el Caribe (RedTraSex; Network of Women Sex Workers of Latin America and the Caribbean) headquartered in Argentina, connects organizations in fourteen nations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean (Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, and Peru) and effectively organizes sex workers around a variety of issues, including health, violence, and access to safe working conditions. Sex-worker organizations in the region recognize the interconnected stigmas that sex workers face, including stigmas around sexuality, gender presentation, and their status as sex workers. The majority of sex-worker organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean cater to women and transgender women sex workers regardless of their sexual preference. One of RedTraSex’s training workshops highlights perceived normal behaviors that have the effect of stigmatizing queer and trans people: “In the workshop we discuss that sexual preferences of each person aren’t ‘normal’ or ‘abnormal.’ ‘Normal’ is a rule that society imposes that won’t let us be free” (RedTraSex, 108; translation by Amalia Cabezas and Mzilikazi Koné). The training critiques the notion of “normal” as a concept imposed by a restrictive society.

Sex-worker organizations often struggle to achieve visibility in public as a response to acts of violence, sometimes perpetrated by the state, and in an effort to normalize their presence in their communities. These organizations work on a variety of intersecting issues related to sex work, such as HIV/STI transmission, the experience of violence, self-determination, and human rights. Organizations are more likely to receive funding if they emphasize issues of health and HIV/STI prevention rather than solely working to empower their communities through other avenues, like human rights education or improved working conditions for sex workers. Consequently, the majority of organizations that receive international funding typically focus some portion of their work on HIV prevention strategies, either targeted at female sex workers or at homosexual men.

Smaller regional networks include the Caribbean Sex Work Collective, launched in 2011 with membership from the English-, Dutch-, and Spanish-speaking countries in the region and Plataforma Latinoamericana de Personas que Ejercen el Trabajo Sexual (PLAPERTS;
Latin American Platform of People Who Exercise Sex Work), started in 2014. The Caribbean Sex Worker Collective includes queer sex-worker organizations, such as Caribbean Regional Trans in Action, among others. Their work focuses on safety as well as sexual and health rights. PLAPERTS is an organization of sex workers of all genders from seven countries in Latin America (Ecuador, Peru, Colombia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Brazil) that was organized to exchange information about sex-worker safety and rights.

Further research is needed to ascertain the efficacy of these organizations, whether they impact the health and safety of their members, and to what degree they influence government policies and attitudes in society and culture toward queer sex workers.

**Transgender Organizations** REDLACTRANS (Network for Latin American and Caribbean Trans) is a network of trans organizations in sixteen nations throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, with headquarters in Buenos Aires, Argentina. There are a number of trans women’s organizations across the region, including the Sindicato Nacional Independiente de Trabajadoras Sexuales Travestis, Transgéneras, y Otras “Amanda Jofré” (National Independent Union of Sex Workers Transvestites, Transgender, and Others “Amanda Jofré”), a Chilean organization established in 2004. This organization helped establish a network of trans groups in Chile called Alianza Trans Chile (Trans Alliance Chile). Trebol (Clover), a network of trans organizations in Bolivia, works to highlight intersecting issues facing trans women, including incidences of violence.

In El Salvador, Fraternidad Sin Fronteras (Fraternity without Boundaries), established in 2000, was initially a gay male organization but the demographics of the group shifted as it became predominantly trans women sex workers. While Fraternidad Sin Fronteras remains open to gay men whether or not they are sex workers, transgender sex workers run the group. This organization focuses on gender identity laws, discrimination, and issues facing sex workers. Organizations like Fraternidad Sin Fronteras offer training to community members on issues ranging from combating transphobia and homophobia, preventing HIV, and organizing politically to rally support to change laws that discriminate against the gay and trans community.

The growing presence of these organizations since the late twentieth century may be in part due to changing laws and norms around gay rights throughout the region. Though there has been increasing decriminalization of homosexuality throughout Latin America and the Caribbean—including the recognition of gay civil unions in Uruguay in 2007, the granting of marriage licenses to gay couples in Mexico City in 2009, and the legalization of gay marriage in Argentina in 2010—acts of violence committed against the queer, transgender, and sex-worker populations continue. Trans sex workers are at particular risk of violence due to their location at the intersection of various stigmatized and criminalized identities related to sexuality and gender nonconformity.
While much of the research on queer tourism and sex work in the region focuses on queer men, the majority of sex-worker organizations involve primarily women and trans women sex workers. This may be because the international community continues to see sex workers as predominantly women. Male sex workers do express a desire for organizations, as noted in a study in Córdoba, Argentina, where gay male sex workers called for an advocacy organization that would focus on sexual health, decriminalizing sex work, and interacting with the police (Disogra et al. 2005).

**Conclusion**

For Latin American sex workers, sex tourism offers the possibility of making a living through love, friendship, companionship, or sex with tourists (Cabezas 2009; Piscitelli 2007). Additional studies are needed that enhance understanding of queer sexual economies, including ethnographies of customers, research on sex-worker organizations, and investigations into the histories of sexual markets. More investigation is needed into lesbian sex work, diversity of sexual practices, racial identities and politics, age, migration, clients, significant others, and the socioeconomic class of both sex workers and customers.

Vek Lewis asks a crucial methodological question: “How can queers, *afeminados*, and transgendered persons be represented without reproducing and reiterating the violence of their culture’s productions which inscribe them in sometimes abject, othering and generalizing ways?” (2006, 87). An additional question would be, when will the scholarship on sex tourism include the self-representations of queer subaltern Latin American and Caribbean sex workers? Finally, should the notion of queer sex tourism be expanded to include the experiences of migrant, undocumented trans sex workers who circulate between Brazil and Spain and Mexico and San Francisco?

Angelique Nixon has called for activist-informed scholarship: “The future of Caribbean feminist and sexual minority work relies upon our ability to prioritize decolonization that is centered upon sexual freedom and the rights of sex workers, sexual outlaws, women, domestic workers, migrants, and sexual minorities to determine livelihood and live freely with the rights and protections deserved by all people” (2016, 121).

**SEE ALSO** Gay European Tourism Association; Neoliberalism in Latin America; Resorts; Sex Tourism in Asia; Sex Tourism in the Middle East; Sex Work/Sex Tourism/Sex Trafficking in Africa

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


As could be reasonably expected from the Orientalist tropes of the Arab gay man as both polymorphously perverse and hypersexualized, sex tourism that capitalizes on the ubiquity of these tropes and that seeks to profit from them is found in the Middle East, often created by people from these countries in a manner that can be described only as “self-Orientalization.” Some of the countries in the Middle East where sex tourism is more established and that are discussed in this entry are Lebanon, Israel, and Morocco. It is important to note that pinkwashing discourses (discourses in which gay rights are championed as a way to distract attention from discrimination against other groups) play a major role in the construction of sex tourism in both Lebanon and Israel, as the technically ongoing war between the two countries has spilled over into contests of modernity that include gay sex tourism. This aspect of sex tourism in the region is also discussed in this entry, as is the role that Orientalist tropes have played in constructing gay sex tourism in Morocco.

Orientalism, Globalization, and Sex Tourism

In his 1978 book Orientalism, while analyzing the nineteenth-century French novelist Gustave Flaubert’s description of his travels to the Middle East, Edward Said observes that

The ways in which Orientalism has influenced the sex tourism industry, with a particular focus on the countries of Lebanon, Israel, and Morocco.
While Said declares the realm of sexuality to not be “the province of [his] analysis,” Joseph A. Boone in his 1995 article “Vacation Cruises; or, The Homoerotics of Orientalism,” takes that very task on himself, observing that even in the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth “the number of gay and bisexual male writers and artists who have traveled through North Africa in pursuit of sexual gratification is legion as well as legend” (90). He cites the examples of Andre Gide, who “lost his virginity on the dunes of Algeria in 1893 (where Oscar Wilde served as his procurer two years later), and E. M. Forster[, who lost his] on the beaches of Alexandria in 1916” (90). Since that period, the Middle East has been seen and constructed as a place of sexual possibility for people in the West, particularly gay men—a situation that has allowed the gay sex tourism industry to develop there.

The development of sex tourism in the Arab world, along with many other factors, has resulted in a process of the globalizing of sexual identities being undertaken throughout the world, as has been observed by thinkers such as Joseph A. Massad (2007) and Dennis Altman. Altman, in his 2001 book Global Sex, observes that “[sex] tourism has become the most significant and visible arena of global sexual inequality” (106) and that tourism is “a significant factor in globalization, both economic and cultural [,which] has become on some measures the largest single employer in the world” (107). He further observes that the “growing commercialization of sex is often the unintended consequence of opening up an economy to the larger world” (109).

It is important to note at this juncture that while sex tourism can involve the explicit payment for sex with a specific person, it does not necessarily always involve prostitution. Owing to the illegal nature of prostitution, the more institutionalized forms of sex tourism as industry usually involve bringing tourists to places and situations where meeting someone for (sometimes commercial, sometimes not commercial) sex is likely to take place or is easily accessible. One country in which both forms of sexual commerce take place in the Middle East is Lebanon.

**Lebanon and Sex Tourism**

Gay men sometimes visit Lebanon independently and use apps such as Grindr to find others to have sex with there or have assignations with escorts who frequent gay dance clubs in Beirut, as Lebanon is heavily advertised in Western gay media and on LGBT travel websites, such as Purple Roofs and BestGayTravelGuide.com, as a gay tourism destination. On Purple Roofs, the writer for the Lebanon page observes that “there is something special about this emerging gay scene, which has been long lost in Europe and America. The genuine ‘joie de vivre’ electrifies” (Bedford 2012). BestGayTravelGuide.com (2010) claims that “you will realise in Lebanon that you get invited always. For tours, for after-parties, for
dinner and—of course—sex.”

Until about a year after the beginning of the Syrian Revolution in 2011 and subsequent civil war, after a ninemonth-long peaceful popular revolution against the regime of Bashar al-Assad, Lebanon, uniquely in the Arab world, had a gay tourism company that facilitated the majority of organized gay travel and tourism in the country. The company, LebTour, was run by Bertho Makso, who now leads Proud Lebanon, an organization that provides assistance to LGBTQI refugees in Lebanon (Proud Lebanon 2017). While the website for LebTour is now defunct, a copy of the home page from September 2013 shows that the website advertised the organization as “leading unique adventure tours for gay men and open-minded friends and family who enjoy tours with a gay flair” (LebTour 2013a).

**Bear Arabia** The best-known event hosted by LebTour, however, was the Bear Arabia contest, the center of the Bear Arabia tour. From an archived copy of a page from the LebTour website, the event is described as follows:

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Can you hear the Bears of Arabia roar, for this summer’s hottest event?

This year’s Bear Arabia Special Trip is bringing you the magic of Istanbul mixed with the aromatic Lebanese spots.

The Arabian Bears are calling you to start your tour in Beirut, visit Baalbeck, Byblos, Ksara [sic].

In Lebanon, you will be part of the MEGA party pageant and you will vote for the sweatiest, sexiest bears and cubs, where only two will be granted the titles Mr. Bear Arabia and Mr. Cub Arabia.

After 5 days in magical Lebanon, we will proceed to Turkey ... [where] we won’t miss the magical Hammam [bathhouse] stops where we locals and foreign participants will mingle and socialize....

Be sure that there will be lots of hot men to meet!

(LEBTOUR 2013B)
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In his 2011 article “Hairy Chest, Will Travel: Tourism, Identity, and Sexuality in the Levant,” Jared McCormick describes the typical participant in the Bear Arabia tour as someone looking for an experience that “would put him in contact with ‘Arab men’ and ensure him safe passage with a group of friendly likeminded gay individuals. Perceptions of sexuality
and desire were an impetus for him to enter that which he viewed largely out of his reach alone: the ‘new gay Middle East’” (72). The allure of this “new gay Middle East” and the Orientalist tropes alluded to in this statement are things that Israel has also attempted to capitalize on in developing a sex tourism industry.

Israel and Sex Tourism

While marketing toward tourists during the early years of the modern state of Israel initially focused on the religious and historical aspects of travel to Israel, the nation’s Tourism Ministry in 2006 began a campaign to “raise the profile of Israel ... as a leisure tourist destination” through a campaign that featured “scantily clad women” and sold “Israel as a place to party” (Krawitz 2006). This marketing of Israel as a sexually charged leisure destination has also included the global LGBTQI community, and private-sector marketing of Israel to the gay community has been more direct in advertising the sexual possibilities and availability and attractiveness of Israeli men to gay men visiting the country.

In 2011 Israel was voted the “world’s best gay travel destination” in a survey administered by GayCities.com and American Airlines (Haaretz 2012). The status of Israel as a premier gay tourist destination has been particularly promoted by the Spartacus International Gay Guide, which was responsible for making gay Israeli model Eliad Cohen the unofficial face of gay Israeli tourism after putting him on the cover of the 2011–2012 issue of the guide, which catapulted him to the status of one of the most famous gay models and tourism promoters in the world (Halutz 2014).

Cohen is particularly notable for promoting the Arisa party in Tel Aviv, which according to the Electronic Intifada correspondent Benjamin Doherty (2012) has been marketed as “the world’s first gay Middle-Eastern party.” Doherty mentions that one of the most controversial advertisements for the Arisa party involves a video depicting

*Israeli model Eliad Cohen brutally beating Yekutiel [a Mizrachi Israel drag queen] who appears as a feminized orientalist caricature, and this violence is meant to amuse. It's not the only video that features abuse and violence. In another video for Eilat Pride 2011, Yekutiel announces his departure to Eilat but when the flight is cancelled, Cohen turns violent and cruel.*

As a Mizrachi Jew whose ancestors came from the Arab world and spoke Arabic, Yekutiel in this video functions as an embodiment of the trope of the effeminate gay Arab. Further underscoring the Orientalism inherent in the first violent video are the Orientalist tropes of
the Arab both as feminized and hypermasculinely violent. (While not Mizrahi, Cohen looks Middle Eastern and not European.) Implying that Israelis can still enact these tropes in a more Westernized setting, the beating is done to the tune of "a hebraized version of the Arabic song 'Ya ma sawa' composed by the Rahbani Brothers and made famous by Georgette Sayegh" (Doherty 2012).

Morocco and Sex Tourism

While the sexual potentialities presented by Israel’s gay tourism industry have been absorbed into legal and socially presentable channels, this has not been the case for other countries in the Middle East. One of the clearest examples of this is Morocco and its underground sex tourism industry. While Morocco was particularly famous as a sex tourism destination for gay men from the beginning of colonialism, as has been described in depth by Said and Boone, it also served during the 1950s and 1960s as a place of refuge for gay men from Europe and the United States, such as William S. Burroughs, Joe Orton, Allen Ginsberg, and Paul Bowles, who found a more tolerant environment than that of their home countries. (Tangiers, in fact, formed the backdrop for Burroughs’s 1959 novel Naked Lunch.) While this aspect of Morocco as refuge does not fit neatly with the mechanical application of the trope of the "Orient" as a place of sexual perversions that cannot be had elsewhere by Westerners, the dynamics of privilege and power between Westerner and Moroccan still held sway, and soliciting of male prostitutes by Westerners in Morocco was quite common in that period (Hamilton 2014; Boone 1995).

While the tolerance that existed in Morocco at that time is no longer present, and homosexuality is officially criminalized by the Moroccan government, an underground sex tourist industry that traffics in males and females—both adults and those under age—is reported by the media as extant in the country, which has led the government to crack down on gay travelers to Morocco, regardless of whether they were soliciting prostitutes or not (Forrester 2017; France24 2011). In 2014 Ray Cole, a British tourist, was arrested in Marrakech, Morocco, after he was discovered to be having a consensual, noncommercial liaison with a Moroccan man in the city. Cole, age sixty-nine at the time, was sentenced to four months in prison and served three weeks of his sentence before he was released as a result of a public campaign in Britain (Strudwick 2014).

While the construction of the “Orient” as a place of sexual potential is an Orientalist trope that stems directly from colonialist discourses surrounding the region, forces of global capital have resulted in the self-Orientalization of the tourist industries of the countries of the Middle East. Sectors of tourism that focus on sex, whether gay or not, have not been immune to these economical and discursive forces. One can see as well that even in a region where homosexuality and gay sex are both frequently considered legally problematic, these same economic forces have found ways not only to render legible and legitimate gay sex tourism in the region but also to incorporate this same industry into discourses of
modernity and Westernization that circulate powerfully throughout the region and that do not deal with sexuality alone but attempt to globalize sexuality as well.

SEE ALSO Gay European Tourism Association; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Orientalism in Gay Pornography about the Middle East; Pinkwashing; Resorts; Sex Tourism in Asia; Sex Tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean; Sex Work/Sex Tourism/Sex Trafficking in Africa

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Sex Work in Asia

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Terminology and gender in studies of “queer and trans sex work” in Asia.

This entry provides an overview of the issues, problematics, data, and debates that characterize academic research on sex work in Asia, with a focus on LGBTQI sex workers. There is no single literature that examines sexual services sold by queer and trans people in Asia. Instead, works that address the intersections of queer and trans identities and sex work are present throughout scholarship on HIV/AIDS, sex work, and queer and trans politics and communities. The relative lack of legibility of sex workers who are not cisgender women in studies of “sex work,” per se, is in part a result of the reification of women and girls as victims of trafficking within mainstream discourses of sex work and prostitution throughout the world. Most of the research in Asia, and elsewhere, that does account for sex workers of other genders or, for sex work where the client and sex worker are of the “same” gender, focuses on people who were assigned male sex at birth and who sell or trade sexual services to cisgender men. Although there is anecdotal evidence that cisgender queer women and trans men also sell sexual services, and that cisgender queer women and trans men have also been harassed on the basis of vagrancy, anti-trafficking, and anti-prostitution laws, there is as of yet little data on individuals or communities where this would be the case. This entry therefore restricts itself to the contours of the existing literature on sex work in Asia where gay men, men who have sex with men, and trans women are legible as sellers and traders of sexual services.

Politics of Terminology

Debates on how to understand the exchange of sexual services and money or other goods or services have been waged from at least the late nineteenth century onward (Kempadoo and Doezema 1998; Levine 2003). These debates have revolved around whether sex work should be understood primarily as a livelihood strategy, and therefore read through an economic lens, or whether it should be understood mainly as a manifestation of violence against people who sell sex, where the selling of sexual services is gendered female. This gendering of sex workers as victimized women and girls has a number of consequences for the ways in which sex work is understood, acted upon, and, in most countries, criminalized to varying degrees (Global Commission on HIV and the Law 2011).
The conflation of the sale or exchange of sexual services with human trafficking and violence against women has become dominant in policy and juridical discourses in many parts of the world. This has been the case since the rise of the contemporary discourse on human trafficking, in the late 1990s. This discourse on trafficking has numerous historical antecedents, including fears of “white slavery” in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the United Kingdom (Levine 2003) and the United States (Pilley 2014). However, unlike the discourse on “white slavery,” which was a discourse on prostitution, the contemporary discourse on human trafficking aims to consolidate a number of economic sectors and conditions of migration and unfree labor within a single rubric. The rise of this contemporary discourse on trafficking is rooted in “Western” feminist debates on pornography (in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom) that took place in the 1970s and 1980s. In these debates, feminists disagreed about whether pornography was equivalent to violence against women or whether it was a complex economic and social sector that produces a range of experiences and working conditions. The campaign waged by some feminists to legally ban pornography in the United States failed during that time. However, the networks, critiques, and infrastructure that those campaigns produced provided the basis for some antipornography feminists to shift their focus to “prostitution.” In this particular feminist context, both pornography and “prostitution” were seen to be the worst symbols of gender-based inequality, thereby rendering them both targets for eradication (Shah 2012).

The idea that sexual commerce and trafficking are essentially the same phenomenon informs the term sex trafficking; this idea is disputed and complicated by a wave of social science research on sexual commerce and other areas of work currently being read through the lens of human trafficking. While international policy now defines trafficking in relation to a host of labor activities, the ways in which the terms trafficking and prostitution evoke one another indicates a long-standing set of debates about whether prostitution is equivalent to violence against women. Some recent scholarly works on third-gender sex workers in Asia, as well as numerous media reports, also participate in this conflation when referring to transgender women and other “third gender” people who sell sexual services (Rizvi 2015).

Activist sex workers, sex workers’ rights organizations, advocates, scholars, and feminists with a different perspective on sexual commerce to that which conflates sex work and human trafficking have been producing a rigorous critique of the dominant policy discourse by arguing that, while doing sex work may entail exposure to violence, this exposure is uneven and usually produced within the conditions of criminalization and social stigma deployed against sex workers (Global Commission on HIV and the Law 2011; Hor 2012) rather than by the exchange of sexual services and money per se. The disagreement over what constitutes violence in the context of sexual commerce, and what to do about it, is at the heart of debates on how governments and attendant legal apparatuses should act with regard to sexual commerce.
The terminology associated with the exchange of sex and money reflects the disparate juridical and political positions on sexual commerce. Terms such as *trafficking* and *prostitution*, when used uncritically or without qualification, tend to espouse and advance a perspective that frames sexual commerce in the terms of violence. Terms such as *sex work* and *sexual commerce* advance a perspective that does not eschew the question of violence but repositions it in the terms of livelihood and economic informality. In this context, the term *prostitution* should be used when historically appropriate, as in references to a time or place wherein people used that term to describe sexual commerce. Otherwise, when used uncritically, it often indicates a perspective on sexual commerce in which sex workers have little value or power, such as when the passive voice—*prostituted*—is deployed. While no strictly “neutral” or descriptive term exists for the exchange of sexual services and money, the terms *sex work* and *sexual commerce* are accepted by those seeking to understand the exchange of money and sexual services in relation to questions of survival, migration, violence, and economic informality.

**Gendering of Sex Work and “LGBTQI” Sex Workers**

Putting aside the debate on sex work and human trafficking, a great deal of definitional instability is seen to be embedded within the term *sex worker* and within the idea of who may be categorized as “selling sex.” This is apparent when one considers the gendering of the sale of sexual services. Sellers of sex are primarily framed as women, girls, or people who inhabit feminine gender expression within mainstream policy and media discourses on sexual commerce. This is not because masculine-spectrum people do not sell sex, but because regnant notions of selling sex are theoretically informed by the idea of powerlessness as vested in the female gender, especially among Asian women (Doezema 2001). The rhetoric of protection subsequently produced within anti-trafficking campaigns that seek to “rescue” sex workers is an effect of the gendering of “sex worker” as female and, therefore, in this formulation, as a being without access to her own power or “agency.” There are indications that the humanitarian impulse to “rescue” people from sex work, even against their wills, also informs policy and policing practices targeting transgender and third-gender sex workers (Human Rights Watch 2010).

Raid and rescue operations in the brothels that still function in some Asian cities exemplify this. Brothels are where sex workers, mostly female, live and work, and they provide a clear target for rescue operations that are undertaken by anti-trafficking organizations and local police. These efforts have mixed effects and are often experienced by sex workers as extrajudicial detention, because sex workers are taken, sometimes forcibly, from brothels and sent to government remand homes (places of detention) for “rehabilitation,” sometimes indefinitely (GAATW 2007). While transgender sex workers may also live and work in brothels or red-light areas, transgender and male sex workers who solicit clients are more likely to do so from streets, parks, or other public spaces, as well as from brothels.
Sex workers throughout Asia, as elsewhere, have incorporated digital platforms as a way to solicit clients as well, as red-light districts and brothels have declined in the face of urban gentrification (Shah 2014) and the criminalization of sex work (McLelland 2005).

The normative gender politics of the dominant discourse on sex work is somewhat misleading because sex is sold and traded by people of all genders all over the world. This is in part because studies of sex work that focus on cisgender men or transgender women selling sex are usually published under the auspices of studies of HIV/AIDS (Keshab et al. 2014; Lahiri and Kar 2007), rather than within the scholarly literature on “sex work.” The fact that people of all genders can and do sell sexual services in Asia, as well as in the rest of the world, has two effects on the dominant discourse of sexual commerce. First, this “multigender” perspective on sex work serves to decenter femaleness in relation to sex work. Second, this perspective “queers” sex work by considering the sale and trade of sexual services as undertaken by transgender people and cisgender men. When cisgender men sell or trade sexual services, this sale or trade is sometimes not recognized or categorized as “sex work,” as the exchange may include favors, money, housing, or other forms of remuneration. Much of the literature on cisgender men selling or trading sexual services is found under the heading of “men who have sex with men” (MSM) in studies that focus on Asia (e.g., Kong 2014).

Because women who sell sexual services are more legible as “sex workers,” there is far more data on cis women who sell sex than on people of other genders who do so. What is clear is that, regardless of gender, people sell and trade sexual services for a number of reasons. While poverty is not always a contributing factor in the decision to sell sexual services, the economics and conditions of paid work are contributing factors for almost anyone who sells or trades sexual services.

**Legal Discourses of Sodomy and “Prostitution” in “Asia”**

Queer and transgender sex workers face arrest and harassment from local authorities via a number of legal regulatory mechanisms. The three main vehicles for police harassment and arrest of queer and transgender sex workers are anti-prostitution laws and antisolicitation clauses within those laws; antisodomy laws, which abet the targeting of gender-nonconforming people by police for arrest and extortion; and antivagrancy laws, which aid police in targeting anyone using the space of the street for commercial activity. Most of the harassment and arrests that queer and transgender sex workers experience occur in the process of their soliciting clients for sex, rather than occurring in the process of selling sexual services, or by virtue of identifying as a sex worker. Regulatory contact with local authorities most often results in extortion by the police for money, demands for “free” sex, sexual assault (PUCL-K 2003), or bailable detention. Few of these encounters result in criminal prosecutions or imprisonment, although a number of people who were “rescued” by anti-trafficking activists from doing sex work have described their subsequent
mandatory stay in a government-run remand home as “extrajudicial detention” (GAATW 2007).

The debate on how to legally regulate sex work is highly varied across Asian countries. Most places retain laws that reflect an earlier understanding of the relationship between sexual commerce and public space. These earlier laws, which stem from regulatory priorities set in the late nineteenth century, were intended to contain sex work within certain geographic zones, such as red-light districts in major cities, rather than to eradicate it altogether. The politics of containment also drive many of the ways in which these laws are enforced against queer and transgender sex workers. It is important to note here that the utility of the term Asia to describe and compare specific juridical, spatial, affective, political, and economic conditions under which sexual commerce is transacted is extremely questionable. “Asia” describes too vast a set of regions and histories for it to serve as an organizing rubric for localized or regional critiques of sex work. Many of the examples in this entry draw on the politics of sex work in South Asia, particularly in India. Any comparisons or general comments made about Asia in this entry are deployed alongside a number of important caveats; with respect to sex work, the primary caveat is simply that juridical regimes vary widely across the continent, making simple comparisons impossible. That said, some comparisons can be made with respect to the financialization and
gentrification of urban spaces in general, including those in Asia. This phenomenon has affected the existence of red-light districts in cities as diverse as Mumbai (Shah 2014), Seoul (Cheng 2013), and Amsterdam (Aalbers and Sabat 2012), where brothels are being replaced in urban centers by much more expensive, and lucrative, residential and commercial real-estate development. While it is difficult to say how this phenomenon affects queer and transgender sex workers, one can, from the existing literature, surmise that, as more and more people seeking a basic livelihood from street-based solicitation are being displaced from centrally located urban red-light districts, queer and transgender people who solicit from the street will also be affected by these changes.

When cisgender men and transgender women who sell sex are targeted by local authorities, this is generally done via laws that regulate their existence in public space rather than by anti-prostitution laws, because of the ways these laws frame gender. In other words, and in legal terms, queer and transgender sex workers are “regulated” relatively idiosyncratically (Aggleton 1999; Jackson 2011). For example, laws that criminalize homosexuality, including antisodomy laws, and laws that regulate public space are the primary vehicles for queer and trans sex workers experiencing arrest or other forms of legal regulation while soliciting clients. At the same time, some Asian countries are, at this writing, either considering passing laws that explicitly criminalize sex work, as in the case of India, or they have already done so, as in the case of Korea. These developments have proceeded in light of the US State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Report (2017), which ranks all countries according to their efforts to “combat trafficking.” While economic sanctions have never been enacted because of a poor ranking on this report, the possibility of the US government doing so is a part of the report’s legal mandate, and how it exerts pressure on foreign governments’ domestic policies in this arena. The explicit criminalization of the exchange of sex and money will continue to reify cisgender women as sellers of sex, and cisgender men as their clients. This is an example of how the law works in ways that are contradictory and, at times, at cross purposes. As laws are made that will increase regulations on sex workers, laws that criminalize homosexuality are being explicitly challenged, as is the case with the antisodomy law in India. This means that queer and transgender sex workers may soon enjoy expanded rights with respect to their sexuality and gender identities but reduced rights with respect to their livelihood options, where those options include selling sexual services.

In addition to the varied legal context that characterizes sex work in “Asia,” the context of the vast economic space known as the “informal sector” is salient in thinking of any legal, semilegal, or illegal work that operates through day wages or temporary contracts. The informal sector, or “informal economy,” generally describes legal work that is done for cash, as in day wage labor, or work that is untaxed and unsalaried. The structure of economic informality cannot be understood in isolation from questions of migration and what has been called “neoliberalism.” Neoliberalism refers to a range of economic policy changes that were undertaken in many countries and is generally pegged to have begun
with the passage of a number of regional free-trade agreements. With reference to sex work, neoliberalism might more specifically be understood as the abdication of the state from providing certain social services, such as education or health care, thus necessitating that people pay for these things themselves or try to do without them. The abdication of government support for people who are impoverished is directly linked with the increasing need for many to migrate for paid work (Mai and King 2009).

If sex workers are properly understood as working in informal economies, they must also be properly understood, by and large, as migrants. This is especially true of women doing sex work. Many impoverished people who migrate for work must do so by borrowing money and repaying it with enormous interest. The obligation to repay a debt to a brothel keeper, to a broker for migration, or to a broker for work in a particular sector, such as agriculture, is legible within scholarly and juridical discourses as “debt bondage.” Much more is known about migration and debt bondage in relation to women working as sex workers than is known among people who are not cisgender women who sell sexual services. It is clear, however, that people of all genders who migrate for work may be subject to working in conditions of debt bondage because of the economic necessity to migrate. Even if migrant workers are repaying such a debt while they work for meager wages and income, the lion’s share of these migrant sex workers also send remittances to family members living in their places of origin. The level to which rural areas in Asia are dependent on remittances for their economic sustainability is another factor in understanding the contours of sexual commerce in the region (Manalansan 2006).

Money Boys in China and the Category of “Asia”

In North America and Europe, Asia is often used as a shorthand term for East Asia in general, and China in particular. This entry has used the term Asia as a provocation to focus on the legal regimes and politics of South Asia in general, and India, in particular, with respect to queer and transgender sex work. Interest in comparing India and China substantively grew in light of the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) phenomenon, which marked these four countries as a potentially new set of economic players in the “world economy,” especially in the years leading up to the 2008 financial crisis. BRICS (South Africa was added in 2010) as a category of analysis was roundly criticized as well, in part for its potential to reify the expansion of “free-trade” agreements and the phenomenon of “neoliberalism” that these agreements augured (Armijo 2007). Evoking the example of “money boys” in China at the end of this entry in no way indicates an uncritical adoption of the BRICS rubric, nor does it indicate a broad endorsement of “neoliberalism” as a blanket rubric for understanding new ways in which “sexuality” is being consolidated outside of the idea of “the West.” Instead, the example of money boys is included here as both an important aspect of “queer” sex work and as a phenomenon that shows that some of the ways in which sex work is practiced and regulated in Chinese cities resonate with the ways
that sex work is described throughout this entry. The following passage, by Travis S. K. Kong, published in English, is from one of the most detailed ethnographic critiques to date of men who solicit paid sex from other men in China:

The emergence of contemporary male prostitution can be understood in the context of the reconfiguration of the “capitalist” market and the “socialist” party-state in reform China, which has generated new forms of possibility and control on both the societal and individual level (Rofel 2007; Wang 2003; Zhang and Ong 2008). First, as I argue elsewhere (Kong 2012), the state’s opening to the global economy has boosted the labor market, which has created enormous job opportunities and attracted many rural-to-urban migrants to work in the cities. Second, the state’s promotion of the market economy coincides with the resurgence of a sex market that encourages the commodification of the body. This has provided an alternative way to earn quick and easy money, especially for migrant workers, who often hold the hardest and most underpaid jobs. Third, the state has made efforts to lessen control over private lives, especially homosexuality. This can be seen in the removal of hooliganism from the 1997 revised criminal law, and the removal of homosexuality from the Chinese Psychiatric Association list of mental illnesses in 2001. These changes have led to the emergence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (tongzhi) communities, which have long been suppressed, especially in rural areas, thereby providing an increased demand for male prostitution.

(2014, 322)

A significant difference between the ostensible “literature” on queer and trans sex work in India and in China is that much of this literature necessarily focuses on the rapid economic transitions in China initiated in the 1980s. Unlike China, India did not experience this kind of rapid, systemic economic transition, although it did adopt economic reforms aimed at integrating India’s economy with an emerging post–Cold War world economic order, reforms that are also referenced as “neoliberal.” The above passage from Kong’s work is relatively laudatory about the impacts of those reforms in China. While the legal reforms that Kong lists do not mirror those in India, there is some resonance between domestic labor migration, expanding urban labor markets, and the ways in which sex work is both solicited and policed between major Indian cities and the cities at the heart of Kong’s study (Beijing, Shanghai, and Shenzhen) in China.

“Asia” and “sex work” are both too varied and vast to be contained within a singular understanding of how they may conceptually relate to one another. This entry summarizes
major problematics and debates that inform this relationship in scholarship, in policy discussions, and in legal discourses. Rather than outlining the facts of sex work in the region, this entry summarizes key concepts and questions that characterize contemporary scholarship on “sex work” in “Asia,” outlining the problematics of each term, and explaining why differently gendered sex workers may be differently legible within various literatures. The entry begins with a general discussion of the politics of sex work, including the contrasts between the terms *sex work/er, prostitution, trafficking*, and *sexual commerce*. It then reviews the politics of gender in relation to sex work and goes on to discuss six major themes that inform studies of sex work in Asian cities: economic informality, migration, urbanization, debt bondage, violence, and trafficking-related interventions. Sex workers’ organizing has been discussed less than these other themes mainly because LGBTQI sex workers organizing as queer and trans sex workers is a relatively new phenomenon at the local level, particularly with respect to queer sex workers. Trans sex work has been visible as a distinct organizing space in some places. In India, these include *hijra* (a third gender recognized in South Asian countries), *kothi* (someone assigned male sex at birth whose gender expression is feminine, and who is the penetrated partner in sex with cisgender men) and other female-spectrum trans sex workers’ caucuses in sex workers’ organizations like the Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee (*DMSC; Unstoppable Women’s Coordination Committee*) in Kolkata, Veshya Anyay Mukti Parishad (*VAMP; Prostitute’s Council to Stop Injustice*) in southern Maharashtra, and in gay rights organizing spaces like Humsafar Trust in Mumbai. Trans sex workers have also been visible in regional networks, such as the Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (*APNSW*). The entry has emphasized how local regimes governing sexuality in general, and sex work in particular, have necessarily reflected a set of socially accepted norms rather than the specific letter of the law. Hence, regulation is often contradictory, in purely legal terms, wherein one aspect of queer or transgender sex workers’ existence (e.g., their identity) may be “legal,” whereas their livelihood, where it involves sex work, may be illegal. These complexities are ultimately legible with respect to local histories, politics, and discourses of gender and sexuality throughout Asia.

There are a number of ways the writing of such an entry may be approached; this entry has emphasized contemporary work on sex work and migration, the discourse on sex work, and juridicism. Others may have taken a more historical approach, reflecting, for example, on the status of homoerotic love and sex in earlier periods and the ways in which these became marked as deviant or pathological in relation to the normativizing engines of “modernity” and late advanced capitalism. Whereas there is a growing body of literature in this vein, on sex as transacted between men, in China (see *Kang 2009; Sommer 2007*), historical work on sex work in South Asia has tended to focus more on female courtesans during the Mughal period (early sixteenth to mid-eighteenth centuries; see *Waheed 2014*). Given the extremely polarized nature of contemporary discourses on sexual commerce, this entry has offered the reader a way of understanding the question of queer and trans sex work in light of broader debates on sexual commerce, while indicating that other ways of
addressing this topic (e.g., via the historiography of sex work in Asia) are also vital to understanding why discourses and debates on sex work are changing rapidly.

SEE ALSO HIV/AIDS in South and Southeast Asia; Sex Tourism in Asia; Sex Work/Sex Tourism/Sex Trafficking in Africa

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Sex Work/Sex Tourism/Sex Trafficking in Africa

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Africa, particularly North Africa, as a destination for European sex tourism, and Europe as a hub for the sex trafficking of Africans, with a particular focus on gay sex workers.

Because of Europe's long-standing history of sexual projections in the direction of its south, Africa, and especially North Africa, have long been sites of sexual tourism and commerce of varying kinds. Precolonial traces exist, of course, in the form of concubinage on the African continent, although sex work may be an anachronistic term to describe what took place. For example, royal concubines in Nigeria proved instrumental to the development of the state from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries (Nast 2005). The Zulu emperor Shaka used concubines to manage his many homesteads, which also served as bases for his military regiments; fearful of heirs, he never married and executed any concubine who became pregnant by him (Ngwane 1997). The king of Buganda was said to have as many as 2,000 concubines, and he additionally chose women from among his subjects/servants and invested them with responsibilities as he saw fit (Kyeyune 2012).

Colonial Period

The first European colonists in Africa were primarily men, and thus the problem of companionship presented itself: these early white settler societies watched closely over their own communities to ward off the chances of "going native" and adopting African customs and, "worst" of all, marrying the indigenous and begetting mixed-race children (Shadle 2005). Yet, Nharas (or signaras), or mixed-race women from West Africa, played a key role as intermediaries in the Portuguese and French slave trades. In a masterful study of the way the French state organized and regulated heterosexual sex work during the colonial period in North Africa, Christelle Taraud (2003) explains how the French state actually instituted bordellos for military campaigns (BMCs) as early as the 1830s, during the military conquest of Algeria. She concludes that the state was deeply involved in the regulation of sex work, but that it occurred quite differently in the colonies in comparison with metropolitan France. This type of regulation departed from precolonial North African customs of sex out of wedlock, which were limited to courtesanship and domestic concubinage and servitude.
In the colonies, the French embarked on a strict hygiene campaign that sought to segregate indigenous sex workers from European ones by restricting European sex workers to *maison closes*, or brothels, whereas indigenous sex workers were relegated to the streets and special “reserved” quarters. All underwent weekly medical controls to screen for venereal disease aimed primarily at protecting the white settler population (*Taraud 2003*). Military-organized brothels were also widespread during World Wars I and II and were used as a way to provide troops with not only sexual release but also companionship (*Trouillard 2014*). As Taraud (*2003*) explains, segregation extended to metropolitan France in wartime, with indigenous soldiers who fought on the side of France directed to BMCs mainly populated by indigenous women.

**THE QUIET VIOLENCE OF DREAMS (2001; K. SELLO DUIKER)**

The Quiet Violence of Dreams is the second novel by South African author K. Sello Duiker (1974–2005), following the award-winning Thirteen Cents (*2000*) and preceding the posthumously published The Hidden Star (*2006*). It won the 2002 Herman Charles Bosman Prize and was adapted into a play by Ashraf Johaardien in 2012.

While it can be read as a coming-out narrative or a coming-of-age story, K. Sello Duiker’s The Quiet Violence of Dreams is more complicated than that, offering readers an intercut series of first-person narratives with multiple flashbacks focused on the journey of its central protagonist, Tshepo, through the worlds of postapartheid South Africa. Duiker is frequently heralded as one of the most important postapartheid or post-anti-apartheid South African writers by South African literary luminaries like Zakes Mda and Lewis Nkosi. The novel is perhaps best known for its partially redemptive representation of “gay” sex work. Tshepo—after leaving a mental hospital, Valkenberg, where he had been diagnosed with “cannabis-induced psychosis,” and after a brief stint as a waiter—chooses the name Angelo when he begins working at a gay brothel, called Steamy Windows, in the Sea Point neighborhood of Cape Town. The interior of Steamy Windows is decorated with reproductions of paintings by the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood. He discovers that his fellow workers take these nineteenth-century painters as inspiration for using sex and sex work to reimagine the possibilities of relations between men. Sebastian, the sex worker who explains this vision to Tshepo/Angelo, concludes: “Our commitment to being sexual visionaries with the fervor of artists is the secret badge, the unspoken password that makes us part of something bigger” (*Duiker 2001, 286*).

During interactions with the men who come to Steamy Windows, Tshepo/Angelo has many conversations about the history of homosexuality in Europe and in precolonial Africa. In an important conversation with an African American client, he broaches the differences between Africans and African Americans. The novel thus offers an
important fictional reworking of the ongoing debate about the putative “un-Africanness” of homosexuality and the politics of sexual and racial identities more generally.

Tshepo half falls in love with a coworker, West, who is an Afrikaans man from Hermanus, near Cape Town, in a way that could prompt a reading of their relationship as something like an allegory for national reconciliation in the postapartheid era. The partially reparative representation of sex work in The Quiet Violence of Dreams powerfully contrasts with the graphic representations of sexual violence elsewhere in the novel— both Tshepo and his mother survive brutal rapes—and the depictions of child sex abuse in Thirteen Cents.

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**Increasing Sex Trafficking and Other Trends**

More recently, with the opening up of transnational networks along the Mediterranean, there has been a significant increase in the sex trafficking of African women to Europe, a trend exacerbated by the migration crisis that began in 2015. According to the United Nations' International Organization for Migration (IOM), Nigeria has been hit especially hard: the sex trafficking industry operating between that country and Italy (for over three decades now) has seen a boom in numbers. For instance, during just the first half of 2016, 3,600 Nigerian women arrived in Italy by boat from Libya, with the IOM estimating that 80 percent of the women were destined to be trafficked into prostitution (*Kelly and Tondo 2016*).

While heterosexual men’s sex tourism is more prevalent and widely studied, heterosexual women have also had an impact on local societies in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, in Kenya white female sex tourists sustained economic and sexual relationships with local men they eroticized as their very own Masai warriors (*Meiu 2009*). On the coasts of the Gambia, beach boys locally known as “bumsters” cater to white visitors both heterosexual and homosexual, a commerce that drums up the mythology of, on the one hand, African male sexual potency and, on the other, plundered wealth concentrated in the West, a wealth that can be (re)accessed only via the *toubab*, or white tourist (*Nyanzi et al. 2005*).
Personal and Documentary Accounts

Gay male sex work was and is still widespread in North Africa, beginning in the late nineteenth century and really taking hold in the first half of the twentieth with the development of Euro-American tourism there. A 2005 book by Frédéric Mitterrand, formerly the French minister of culture, provided a very frank account of what drives middle-aged gay men to pursue sexual opportunity abroad, having to do with the greater availability of young men who might otherwise reject them in Europe and the rampant ageism that has led to an alarming social isolation among older gay men in the “West.” He was taken to task, however, for the unacknowledged privilege inherent in this rhetoric of sexual availability, casually divorced from considerations of inequality and seeming to place hedonism and the fulfillment of self above all. Maxime Cervulle and Nick Rees-Roberts (2010) view the controversy surrounding Mitterrand as a missed opportunity for the gay community to reflect on its penchant for exoticism and Orientalism, both of which drive sex tourism. The Moroccan writers Abdellah Taïa (2006) and Rachid O. (1995) have given witness accounts recounting the passage of European travelers in North Africa who were there in search of sexual opportunities unavailable (or even illegal) in Europe, the authors describing a fixation on adolescents. Joseph Allen Boone (1995) talks about the way that past gay travelers to North Africa signed up for a kind of “vacation cruise,” selectively picking which parts of North Africa to see and which to ignore: travelers refrained from grappling with the inequalities inherent in tourism, because that would have disturbed the process of their self-discovery and the comfort of the hedonistic enterprise.

In counterpoint to this view, however, other thinkers have described the ways in which tourism, including sex tourism, is fundamental to homosexuality itself, explaining that the “fulfillment or achievement of gay identity often involves travel” (Hughes 1997, 5) and that homosexuals have historically been more engaged with difference than heterosexuals as a result of their social marginalization (Dollimore 1991). The filmmaker Nouri Bouzid exposed the male “gigolo” business in 1990s Tunisia, visually depicting a sex tourism economy targeting Westerners, Tunisians striving to obtain visas for Europe, and the sexual fluidity of bisexual hustlers, as well as the contrasting moralities they upheld at home with fiancées (rigid) and outside with tourists (unrestricted) (Bouzid 1992; Videau 1992). Jasbir K. Puar (2002a, 102) has spoken of the necessity of critiquing the patterns of “gay and lesbian consumption” inherent in “queer tourism,” beyond simply speaking in positive terms of the potent purchasing power of white gay men.

The gay sex-work economy has more recently extended across the Mediterranean to the North African diaspora in Europe. The films Un fils (2003; A son) and Miss Mona (1987) showed how sex work can be pursued by immigrants, as well as their descendants, for reasons of economic distress and social alienation, leading to tragic results. Trans sex work,
often involving women of color, has also been the focus of feature films (Bégéja 2001; Lifshitz 2004). The documentary Welcome Europa (2006) exposed a culture of poverty involving male sex work, in which refugees and migrants (fleeing North Africa, eastern Europe, and the Middle East), after failing to find jobs or stable living situations, reluctantly resorted to sex work. Humiliated, respondents spoke of no longer being willing to contact family members back home out of shame, hurt in their sense of “manhood” because they were unable to secure status as providers or find heterosexual connection and implantation in Europe (Ulmer 2006).

SEE ALSO Involuntary Servitude and Same-Sex Sexuality in Africa; Sex Tourism in Asia; Sex Tourism in the Middle East; Sex Work in Asia

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Sexology in Asia

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The study of sexual science and its impact on queer subjectivities in the Asian context.

Although the terms sexual science (scientia sexualis) and sexology are often used interchangeably, the former is understood as including the Anglo-American idea of “science” as well as the humanities and social sciences (Fuechtner et al. 2018; Bauer 2009). Veronika Fuechtner and colleagues (2018) explain further that sexology, by contrast, refers to the post–World War II emphasis on medicalization, particularly sexual pathology, but also the popularization of scientific knowledge about sexuality since the nineteenth century. However, the two terms continue to be used interchangeably, especially in studies that emphasize a Foucauldian analysis of power and governmentality in relation to sexuality. Although sexology as a discipline emerged in Europe in the late nineteenth century, the term itself came into use in the early twentieth century and was firmly established by the 1960s in the Western world—mainly Western Europe and the United States. Sexual science has had significant implications for the emergence and subjugation but also the emancipation of queer subjectivities in these parts of the world, with ripple effects in other regions, such as Asia. But even before that, sexology also had an influence particularly in its selective use in nationalist and modernizing projects after independence from colonial rule.

This entry highlights these processes, focusing specifically on Asia, and discusses the gendered nature of these projects in both Western and Asian contexts. It begins with an overview of the sexological emergence of homosexuality and its subsequent appropriation by homosexual rights activists. It goes on to discuss the gendered nature of sexology and how this assisted in nationalist debates in non-Western contexts. Finally, it briefly reflects on a different path that transgender—more specifically, third gender—activism has taken in resource-poor South Asian contexts, moving away from the sexological focus of early queer activism and scholarship toward new forms of governmentality around sexuality still situated within the health paradigm (e.g., HIV/AIDS), though assisted by new institutions and experts.

Sexological Emergence of Homosexuality
Anglo-American academic understandings of sexuality have been shaped largely by American and selected European perspectives, although scholars based in Central Europe and Australia have also made significant contributions to the history of sexuality (Bauer 2009). Howard Chiang (2010) traces two turning points in the conceptualization of sex, gender, and sexuality in Europe and North America that significantly contributed to the emergence of the category of “homosexuality” and subsequent gay rights activism in these regions. The first was the development between 1880 and 1920 of the psychological understanding of gender that theorized homosexuality as a form of gender or sexual inversion, as opposed to a pathological and biological condition, as medical sexologists believed. The second turning point came in the mid-twentieth century with the theorization of gender roles and identities as separate from sex, and Alfred Kinsey's (1894–1956) work challenging the psychological interpretation of homosexuality as a mental illness.

Scholarly “rediscovery of sexology” in North America and Europe followed the rise of the gay rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s and the growing interest among activists in constructing a history and tradition of same-sex desire, with significant intellectual contributions from French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault (1926–1984), whose work made sexuality central to the construction of a modern self (Bauer 2009). But although Foucault's History of Sexuality (1979) is often seen as the pioneering work on the emergence of the homosexual category in nineteenth-century medicalization, the foundation for this idea, as Jeffrey Weeks (2000b) argues, had already been laid by the British feminist and lesbian and gay rights activist Mary McIntosh (1936–2013) in her groundbreaking essay “The Homosexual Role,” published in 1968, before Foucault’s work. McIntosh’s work helped Weeks critique the liberal sexological tradition from which derived the liberal sexual ideology of gay rights activism in the 1970s. Reflecting on gaps between behavior and identity categories that were obscured by the assumption of a distinctive homosexual condition, McIntosh argued that the concept of this separate category itself is a product of “transhistorical patterns” that helped organize same-sex activities, and that this process dated back no earlier than the late seventeenth century (quoted in Weeks 2000b, 6). Later, Foucault argued that the formation of sexual science in the late nineteenth century and the related emergence of new vocabularies marked a shift in Western modernity from religion to science that produced a modern sexual subject defined on the basis of desires and bodily acts. However, it was McIntosh who first argued that psychologists and psychiatrists, far from being “objective scientists of desire” or “decoders of the laws of nature,” are instead “diagnostic agents in the process of social labelling” (quoted in Weeks 2000c, 60). This is most evident in the role of sexual science in the subordination of female sexuality since early sexological texts, which is discussed in the following section.

Women and Sexology
English sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859–1939) was trapped in the conservatism of his biological theories, most significantly displayed by his attitude to lesbianism. He stressed that although “male homosexuals were not effeminate ... lesbians were inclined to be masculine” (quoted in Weeks 2000a, 34). Ellis devoted only one chapter of Sexual Inversion (1897) to lesbianism, which in turn relied on only six proper case histories. This was partly due to the dearth of easily obtainable material because there was “no visible subculture in Britain for lesbians until later in the twentieth century, unlike the situation of male homosexuals” (quoted in Weeks 2000a, 34). Thus, much of the early historical work on homosexuality—carried out predominantly by male sexual scientists and medical professionals—focused on men.

Feminists have pointed out the gendered nature of sexological texts that mainly focused on issues pertaining to heterosexual relationships (e.g., fertility, contraception, abortion, vaginal orgasm through penile intercourse), which resignified gendered roles. In relation to this, Paula Nicolson (1993) argues that classic sexological texts positioned heterosexuality and heterosexual sex as “natural,” which relied on women taking a passive/responsive role and men an assertive/active role (e.g., Ellis, Studies in the Psychology of Sex [1905]; Sigmund Freud, Female Sexuality [1933]; John H. Gagnon and William Simon, Sexual Conduct [1973]). These sexological discourses also posited orgasm through penovaginal sex as the ultimate goal of sexual intercourse, labeling failure to have an orgasm a sexual “dysfunction,” which led to the pathologization of female sexuality.

Moving away from the analysis of how sexology was gendered, Heike Bauer's (2009) focus is on the discursive context within which new sexual vocabulary emerged in different contexts in order to understand the construction of female sexuality within sexology and the ways in which women theorized sex within feminism (Bauer 2009). Bauer shows how within the context of nineteenth-century European histories of modern nation-states, female same-sex desires were mostly invisible and were treated as an afterthought in investigations of male sexuality. Furthermore, Bauer argues that from the 1880s, there was a shift to a more institutionalized organization of the study of sex, as in Psychopathia sexualis (1886), by Austro-German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902), which considered female same-sex sexuality only in relation to male sexuality, where the “female invert” was an “expository device” used to argue against the criminalization of male same-sex sexuality in the new German Empire of 1871 (quoted in Bauer 2009, 93–94). This was carried on in the engagement of the text in Britain. As Bauer points out, the 1902 English translation by Francis Joseph Rebman of the twelfth and final edition of Psychopathia Sexualis omitted five out of seven pages of Krafft-Ebing’s text on the legality of female same-sex practices; Rebman deliberately tailored his translation to suit a British readership that at that time associated legal discussions of same-sex sexuality with the 1895 trial of Irish writer Oscar Wilde for “gross indecency.”

Sexological discourses on female sexuality were debated not only in the West, as discussed
by anthropologist Sanjay Srivastava (2007) and historian Sanjam Ahluwalia (2018). Srivastava (2007) discusses the work of A. P. Pillay in India, who wrote extensively on sexual matters from the late 1930s until his death in 1956. Although he was deeply influenced by the writings of Ellis and sex educator and activist Margaret Sanger (1879–1966) and propounded eugenicist arguments, Pillay’s focus was on a science of pleasure as it applied to both men and women. For Pillay, an equal capacity for pleasure provided him with a theory of equality (Srivastava 2007). Pillay considered masturbation among women as well as homosexuality as possible avenues of achieving this equality in pleasure. However, Srivastava also points out that the involvement of women from the “educated class” in the birth control movement in India since the mid-1930s turned the movement toward the poor and “uneducated,” leaving discourses around sexual knowledge and pleasure to be discussed by the “educated classes” (Srivastava 2007, 50). In the postindependence period during the 1950s and 1960s, speaking about sexuality was considered “modern” and the perceived silence was seen as "backward." This designation of the “cultural” as “backward” is discussed in more detail in the next section on modernity and nationalism in colonial and postcolonial periods in India and China.

Ahluwalia (2018) provides a closer look at Pillay's radical contribution to modern sexology as it pertained to women's sexuality through a close textual reading of the pages of a journal he edited, the International Journal of Sexology (IJS), published in Bombay, India, in 1947. Ahluwalia points out that Pillay fought hard with his publishers to base the journal in India as opposed to Europe or the United States. Pillay had debated female sexuality and orgasm in the IJS before American sexologist Kinsey did in his 1953 Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, which is recognized as having initiated public debates about female pleasures in the United States. The "scientific gaze" of sexologists as well as of laypeople who read the IJS constructed women as bodies capable of having different and hierarchic orgasmic abilities on the basis of their race, class, gender, and national location, including “medico-scientific readings of pregnant bodies as orgasmic bodies; feminine anorgastic bodies as reproductively sterile bodies; and the role of breastfeeding as orgasmically auto-generative” (Ahluwalia 2018, 359).

Ahluwalia points out that in the introductory volume of the journal, a medical doctor from New York, Edmund Bergler, discussed female “frigidity,” defined on the basis that “frigid” women did not undergo a “typical sequence of events” during sex. According to Bergler, the central feature of frigidity was the absence of vaginal orgasm, and "neurotic women never achieve orgasm in the vagina and reach one, if any, only at the clitoris after prolonged massage.... He regarded cunnilingus and masturbation as deviant forms of sexual gratification among masochistic women” (Ahluwalia 2018, 360). Pillay, in response, questioned Bergler’s “scientific” deduction of frigidity as a neurotic condition. He challenged the hierarchical categorization of clitoral versus vaginal orgasm and argued that labeling “frigid” women neurotic would add to their misery and inferiority complex because vaginal orgasms are difficult for most women. However, as Ahluwalia goes on to
discuss, both Pillay and Bergler confined female sexual pleasure within heterosexual and reproductive matrimony.

Although the engagement of sexologists with sexological discourses might have been heterocentric in the context of India, feminist engagements with the same in Japan took a different form. Michiko Suzuki (2006) points out that prewar female writers and feminists also played a role in the production and dissemination of sexological discourse in the country. Suzuki takes the example of the works of Nobuko Yoshiya (1896–1973), an author who developed the genre of girls’ fiction in Japan and who received the most attention as a writer of female same-sex love. Suzuki argues that Yoshiya both appropriated and subverted “sexological truths” about same-sex love in her girls’ fiction and, later, in her adult fiction. Female same-sex love gained public attention from the early 1900s with the rise in women’s higher education, mostly among students attending higher girls’ schools. “Adolescent romantic friendships” between girls in such schools was considered by Japanese sexologists a harmless and sometimes even a useful human developmental process. The older girl mentoring the younger was seen as a step to the emotional maturity of girls and as “a kind of rehearsal for entry into ‘real’ sexuality—that is, heterosexual maturity and motherhood” (Suzuki 2006, 580). Hence, such love was considered a “transitory phenomenon” and “normal,” and it was expected that girls would grow out of this phase once they left school. However, as Suzuki emphasizes, in Yoshiya’s girl fiction series Hana monogatari (1916–1924; Flower tales) the author never lets the characters “grow up” and move on to heterosexuality. But even though adolescent romantic friendships were narrated as normal by Yoshiya herself, her adult fiction used sexological discourses around “abnormality” to define same-sex love. Using Ellis’s conceptualization of “truly inverted women” who reject men as “sexually abnormal,” Yoshiya emphasizes in her later adult novels, written after 1920, that such women, although abnormal, are still natural.

**Sexology, Race, and the Modern Nation-State**

If the heterosexual conservatism of sexology was its defining feature since its conception, it was also paramount for the propagation of a masculinist construction of nation and citizenry that was always in opposition to the racial Other. Kate Fisher and Jana Funke (2018) and Ralph Leck (2018) argue that the integration of anthropology with sexual science permitted an interdisciplinary view of sexuality, gleaning insights from non-Western societies that helped challenge conceptions of deviant sexualities in Europe, as in the work of Foucault, Ellis, and German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935). Fuechtner and colleagues (2018) take this further by asserting that while European and North American scholars and activists sought inspiration outside the “West” in their pursuit of knowledge, validity, and new audiences for sexual science, these projects also became central to “civilizing” missions of modernity in the context of decolonization. This is
illustrated in an earlier paper by Fuechtner (2013) on Hirschfeld’s visit to India as part of his world tour in 1931, describing his engagement with Indian sexologists and general audiences composed of both British expats and members of the Indian elites. Hirschfeld came to India at a moment when sexology was threatened by the Nazi rise to power in Germany but thriving in India, with widespread belief among the educated Indian middle class that “science would be the basis of national progress, modernization, and possibly independence” (Fuechtner 2013, 113). However, Hirschfeld in his account of travels in India in his book *Men and Women: The World Journey of a Sexologist* (1935) does not engage with “contemporary Indian sexology, its proponents, and their arguments,” but rather “develops an alternative account of ancient Indian sexology that establishes India as the birthplace of sexology” (Fuechtner 2013, 120). While sexologists in India engaged with Western sexology and shared similar professional interests as Hirschfeld, he does not engage with them at the theoretical level but rather uses them as “exhibit pieces in his ethnographic narrative” (Fuechtner 2013, 120). Hirschfeld posits himself as the catalyst who will play a vital role in encouraging a sexological renaissance in India, rendering Indian sexology a “native” science that needs to be modernized by Western science.

As discussed later by Fuechtner and colleagues (2018), transnational critiques of Foucault and sexual science in general highlight how global interactions with what was considered an unscientific *ars erotica* of the East was necessary for the formation of the modern *scientia sexualis* of the West. This oversimplified binary between “scientific” and “unscientific” perspectives around sex has limited understanding of how conceptions of sexuality developed outside Europe and how they were vital to sexological understandings within Europe. In response to this, the authors highlight Chiang’s pioneering work emphasizing the global dimensions of *scientia sexualis* through the adaptation of a Foucauldian approach but also through the rejection of Foucault’s understanding of non-European approaches to sexual matters as an *ars erotica*. Chiang (2009) asserts that the concept of sexuality and the scientific turn to sexual understandings not only stemmed from new methodologies of investigation in Europe but also depended on Orientalist scholarship and ethnology, especially from China and India. Chiang argues that an East Asian *scientia sexualis* in the early twentieth century bears striking similarities to discourses in late nineteenth-century Europe. Chiang does so by differentiating two opposed epistemological characterizations of same-sex desire in China’s transition from an empire to a nation: “culturalistic” and “nationalistic” styles of argumentation. The culturalistic argumentation described same-sex desire, specifically between men, as a “symbol of cultural refinement” (Chiang 2010, 56). This style of argumentation was replaced by the nationalistic style in the twentieth century.

In a later article, Chiang argues that the comprehensibility of homosexuality in republican China—and not just in the postsocialist era—depended on a “nationalistic style of argumentation that arose from the interplay between the introduction of a foreign sexological concept and the displacement of an indigenous paradigm of same-sex desire”
Chiang (2010) discusses two prominent figures in republican Chinese sexology: Jingsheng Zhang (1888–1970), popularly known as Dr. Sex, and Guangdan Pan (1899–1967), considered a pioneer in the introduction of Western sexology to China. Zhang was a university professor and a sex educator who drew significantly from Ellis's work. As opposed to the traditional or cultural expressions of love and intimacy through literature, Zhang's sexological project introduced a modern methodology derived from Western sexology of seeking the “truth” about sex through documenting life histories. However, Zhang focused almost exclusively on heterosexuality.

Pan, by contrast, delved more widely into “deviant” sexual practices in his writings, lectures, and translations of Western sexological texts. Pan reiterated Freud's five-stage understanding of psychosexual maturation, delegating homosexuality to an “underdeveloped” stage that people pass through on the way to a more “mature” stage of sexual physiology and psychology that he believed characterized heterosexuality. He referred to the one case of female homosexuality discussed in Ellis’s Psychology of Sex to illustrate this process of psychosexual development (Chiang 2010, 643). These understandings were also shared by other medical and scientific experts, especially those who had trained in European and US institutions. While Chinese sexologists did not view homosexuality as necessarily curable, they constructed same-sex desire and behavior as undesirable, equating it to other kinds of “sexual perversion,” such as sadism, fetishism, and bestiality. Homosexuality was also seen as something that could be acquired through “unhygienic” social environments and habits, especially in unisex social settings such as schools, factories, military camps, and prisons. This expression of same-sex desire was characterized as “immature or temporary homosexuality” that would disappear once people left these settings, or that could be cured through more opposite-sex social interactions (Chiang 2010, 645). While traditional Chinese medicine in imperial China did not single out any sex act or object of desire as pathological, this new Western psychiatric style of reasoning introduced the category of homosexuality as “sexual perversion and psychopathology” (Chiang 2010, 646).

The association of homosexuality with perversion and pathology during the republican period also contributed to the reframing of same-sex desire and cultural expressions of homoeroticism “as an indication of national backwardness” (Chiang 2010, 647–648). This nationalistic style of argumentation on same-sex desire stood in opposition to the culturalistic style of argumentation wherein homoeroticism—at least for men—existed alongside heterosexual marriage and was even considered an expression of a man's high social status. Chiang concludes that the “epistemic alignment” of homoerotic expressions in the imperial period with the foreign notion of homosexuality prevalent during the republican period was due to the appropriation of Western-style sexology in the latter period. In China, then, “there is no such thing as homosexuality outside epistemic modernity” (Chiang 2010, 650).
In this way, Chiang (2010) contextualizes sexological debates in republican China within the larger evolving context of the development of “scientific,” “Western,” or European sexology as a new marker of modernity. Chiang argues that Chinese sex scientists introduced, “on the level of epistemology, a new style of reasoning about sexuality, and in the social domain, an unprecedented forum for intellectual debates that defined their project as culturally relevant, socially legitimate, and disciplinarily independent” (2010, 642). This is the context within which the category of homosexuality absorbed the dominant frame of thinking about same-sex desire in twentieth-century Chinese culture. Chiang describes this process as “epistemic modernity,” wherein

[it] does not merely denote a system of knowledge; rather, it is a set of ongoing practices and discourses that mediates the relationship between systems of knowledge (for example, Chinese or Western medicine) and modalities of power (for example, biopower) in yielding specific forms of experience (for example, sexuality) or shaping new categories of subjectivity (for example, homosexual identity).

(CHIANG 2010, 633)
An Elephant Advertises Birth Control as Part of a Government Campaign to Control India’s Population Growth. Indian sexology during the late 1920s and early 1930s was focused on a strong birth control movement and the emergence of scientifically framed disciplines of sexology and eugenics as intrinsically connected with the nationalist movement.

Similarly, Liat Kozma (2013), Srivastava (2007), and Fuechtner and colleagues (2018) emphasize the agentic but “unruly appropriation” (Fuechtner et al. 2018) of sexological discourses in the service of national projects of modernity within the power imbalances of colonial and postcolonial times. Writing in the context of Egypt, Kozma explores written Arabic scientific discussions of sex from the 1880s to World War II—a period considered the “heyday of [European] scientific sexology”—to argue that talking about sex did not stop with the colonial silencing of Ottoman sexual discourses but rather that the discourses were “profoundly transformed” (Kozma 2013, 428). Kozma elaborates that while Ottoman medical discourses on sex highlighted sexual desire and pleasures, and men’s desires for both women and “beardless men” had been the subject of literary and poetic productions, it was the regulation of sex that became the focus of debates beginning in the late nineteenth century. Kozma asserts that this was due to the growth of the urban middle class and the subsequent adoption of “bourgeois rules of propriety and respectability” defined by “modernity.” Women’s rights were an important part of these debates, although the need for the regulation of “male conduct and selfhood” was considered of utmost importance for the overall health of the nation (Kozma 2013, 429).

Fuechtner and colleagues (2018) provide other examples of how European sexual science and its contributions to masculinist constructions of nation-states found important interlocutors outside of colonial Europe through “unruly appropriations” by sexologists and nationalists in these countries. The authors use the term appropriation instead of “Western influence” to emphasize that elements of sexual science were selectively and actively integrated into local modernizing projects in an unruly manner that “escaped the intentions and logic of the field’s canonical figures” (Fuechtner et al. 2018, 14) — that is, in fostering state power but also in contesting this power. These modernizing projects included “challenges to ‘traditional’ mores associated with patriarchal, religious, and colonial authorities; attempts to promote nationalism through eugenics; and state efforts to develop alternative disciplinary regimes” (Fuechtner et al. 2018, 14).

Other examples are found in Shrikant Botre and Douglas E. Haynes (2018), which illustrates the selective use of Western sexual science by Indian sexual scientist and birth-control advocate R. D. Karve (1882–1953) in the first half of the twentieth century. Karve challenged Indian conceptions of sexual science popular during that time that promoted nationalist theories of brahmacharya (sexual selfconstraint) as essential to the regeneration of Indian masculinity and the nation. However, Srivastava (2007) argues that although Indian sexual reformers in colonized and postcolonized India were influenced by Malthusian perspectives on control of such “subraces” as the “poor and middling classes,” they diverged from this perspective in two distinct ways: through their emphasis on
contraception as a tool to modernize Indian society, and through the conjoining of sexual reform with upper-caste nationalism. The latter was likely because of increasing non-upper caste assertion in many parts of southern and western India (Srivastava 2007, 44).

Such transnational and multidirectional influence of sexual science and sexual politics has also had profound implications on sexual subjectivities in the Global South, although in different ways. The following section focuses on third-gender activism in South Asia to show how HIV/AIDS medical intervention work since the early 1990s played a more salient role than classical Euro-American sexological texts in defining the parameters of activism in this context.

**Third Gender or Transgender in South Asia**

Sexological texts in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries initially put all gender- and sexually variant people under the category of “inversion.” Krafft-Ebing considered homosexuality a form of gender variance; that is, “He considered a man who loved a man to be more like a woman; conversely, he considered a woman who loved a woman to be more like a man” (Stryker and Whittle 2006, 21). German jurist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs used the term *Urnings* for homosexuals whom he categorized as a “third sex” that was neither fully male nor female, which gave rise to the notion of sexual inversion used extensively in early sexological discourse to define same-sex desire (Chiang 2010). But gay rights activism and the feminist sex wars in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in distinguishing the meaning of “transgender” from “homosexuality,” “casting the former in terms of what the latter negated” (Chiang 2012, 5). In the 1990s transgender studies emerged as a separate area of research pioneered by transgender activists and academics in the United States and Europe (Stryker 2006). Even while these academics, activists, and writers were still negotiating the meaning of the category “transgender” (Chiang 2012), their ownership of scholarship in this field was facilitated by the sophistication already gained by feminist and queer theories on gender and sexuality, their critiques of early sexual science, and the depathologization of homosexuality by the American Psychiatric Association in 1973. As a result of this, transgender studies was able to move away from a sexological framework, although it has mostly been limited to North American and European academic circles, albeit with some anthropological studies on the limits of Western-centric gender dimorphism through work on Native American and Southeast Asian societies (e.g., Gilbert Herdt’s *Third Gender, Third Sex: Beyond Sexual Dimorphism in Culture and History*, 1994).

In opposition to theoretical work intertwined with activism on transgender issues in the Global North, it is HIV/AIDS intervention through which this category has gained prominence in Asia. Although the AIDS crisis opened space for debates and studies on sexuality in the West from the 1980s on (Weeks 2000b), it also opened up formal spaces for trans and gay rights activism in Asia through the establishment of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working on HIV/AIDS intervention since the 1990s. This, in turn, has
partly facilitated the emergence and/or consolidation of new subjectivities relating to sexual orientation and gender identity (**Boyce 2007**). An example of this is the legal recognition of the “third gender” identity category in such countries as, Nepal (**2007**), Pakistan (**2009**), Bangladesh (**2013**), and India (**2014**). This stands in sharp contrast to the criminalization of same-sex practices in Pakistan and Bangladesh through a British colonial law under Section 377 of the penal code (**Human Rights Watch 2008**). The “third gender” identity category often includes and/or conflates transgender, intersex, *hijra, kothi, meti*, and other subjectivities, most of whom constitute key populations for HIV/AIDS intervention due to their high risk of infection. Hijras are “an institutionalised subculture derived from both Hindu and Muslim religious/cultural practices of feminine-identified male-bodied people” who might or might not undergo “emasculati（Hossain 2012, 495）. Kothi is a term of self-identification used by male-assigned (**Dutta and Roy 2014**), feminine-identifying (**Boyce 2007**), or gender-variant (**Dutta and Roy 2014**) people in India who enact “passive” sexual roles (**Boyce 2007**). Meti is an equivalent term used in Nepal. Metis and kothis might or might not identify as transgender/trans women. In Nepal, some metis also identify as *tesro lingi*, or “third gender/sex.”

In South Asia, international AIDS intervention assistance paved the way for the proliferation of NGOs working for these key populations who were mostly male-assigned, feminine-identifying people then categorized under a broad category of men who have sex with men (MSM). Lawrence Cohen (**2005**) argues that with the expansion of HIV/AIDS intervention projects, kothi became an “emergent reality” in India as community mobilizers hired by these projects interpolated more people into the category. Others, including Aniruddha Dutta and Raina Roy (**2014**), argue that it was more a consolidation and expansion of the networks of kothis than a new social emergence. Similar processes explained by Cohen (**2005** and Paul Boyce (**2007**)) in the context of India can also be seen in the consolidation of meti, and more specifically the third gender category in Nepal. Nepal was the first country in Asia to recognize a third-gender category, through a Supreme Court decision in 2007. However, there have been various contestations as to what this category actually comprises. In Nepal, the third-gender category has also been closely—although contestedly—associated with sexual identities in such a way that lesbians, gay men, and bisexual people are identified as belonging to this category.

As Susan Stryker (**2006**) notes, collapsing many types of gender variance into “transgender” holds both peril and promise. Third-gender activists—along with feminist and queer scholars and activists—in South Asian countries have relied on culturalist arguments to emphasize the historical existence of people of the “third nature,” as well as depictions of same-sex love in Hindu and Muslim texts (**Reddy 2006; Vanita and Kidwai 2001**). This has contributed to better social and legal recognition of this category in the Indian subcontinent, especially in comparison to the ambiguity about—and often hostility toward—homosexuality. However, when addressing the state through public interest litigations (legal actions to address issues of broad public concern, especially pertaining to
minority or disadvantaged groups), as in the case of Nepal, activists have also contradicted this when using the language of international human rights by pointing out that “customs” and "traditions" are obstacles in the path of this “truth” of human rights (Tadie 2016).

Sexology has been a contested terrain for both feminist and queer scholars and activists in the Global North as well as the Global South. The emergence of homosexuality as a category of identity and lived subjectivity can be traced to early sexological texts that were used to pathologize but also eventually depathologized this group of people. The integration of anthropology with sexual science permitted an interdisciplinary view of sexuality, gleaning insights from non-Western societies that helped challenge conceptions of deviant sexualities in Europe, as in the work of Foucault, Hirschfeld, and Ellis. However, feminist critiques of this field of study have pointed out its gendered nature since it mainly focused on issues pertaining to heterosexuality that subordinated female sexual pleasure to sexual responsibility, at the same time considering female same-sex sexuality only in relation to male sexuality.

Sexology developed through transnational exchanges and appropriations not just by the West from the East, but also vice versa. European sexual science, for example, found important interlocutors outside of colonial Europe through “unruly appropriations” of selective elements in postcolonial nations, particularly in projects of modernizing the nation-state. Hence these projects also became central to “civilizing” missions of modernity in the context of decolonization. Feminist and postcolonial critiques of sexology have thus been effective in exposing its role in the masculinist construction of nation and citizenry that has also always been formulated in opposition to racial Others. Additionally, such transnational and multidirectional influence of sexual science and sexual politics has also had profound implications for sexual subjectivities in the Global South, although in different ways. However, it has also lent credence to “local” discourses of sexual/gender identities, such as the third-gender identity category, without necessarily granting them equal access to resources and sites of knowledge production (Dutta and Roy 2014).

SEE ALSO Section 377 and Section 377A

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Sexperts and Sex Education in the West

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The impact of sex research, advice, and education on perceptions of nonnormative sexualities, both historically and in the twenty-first century.

Sexual behavior has long interested cultures across the globe, generating a wealth of thought on the social, moral, religious, political, economic, and national meanings of sex. However, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries sexual behavior increasingly was viewed as requiring systematic scrutiny and rigorous study, and new fields of knowledge production and expertise were dedicated to elucidating sexual behavior as a core aspect of individual, cultural, and national identity. Sexual behavior became subject to the attention of “experts” from a range of disciplines and professions who positioned themselves as uniquely capable of understanding sex and determining “normal” or “healthy” sexual behavior. LGBT individuals and communities—understood through a variety of historically specific frames such as the homosexual, the lesbian, the sex invert, and the sex variant—were central to this newly emerging focus, with both positive and negative consequences for LGBTQ+ people. As these expert discourses filtered out beyond specialized audiences to more general audiences, they had a tremendous impact on popular perceptions and influenced the political and legal rights of LGBT individuals across the world.

Sexology's Influence

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the rise of the public sexual health expert in the West and increased state scrutiny of sexual behaviors. Issues such as prostitution, venereal disease, masturbation, illegitimacy, and interracial sex have a long history of attracting social, religious, and state attention (Luker 1998). Sexology, a field dedicated to the study of sexual behavior and sexuality, initially had focused on scrutinizing aberrant or abnormal sexual behavior but increasingly sought to understand sexual behavior more generally and to redraw the boundaries of sexual normality. Sexologists Havelock Ellis (England), Richard von Krafitt-Ebing (Germany), and Magnus Hirschfeld (Germany) wrote extensively on homosexuality and participated in public debates on the status of the homosexual in society. Some of their ideas fueled mistaken assumptions about homosexuality; nonetheless, they all became outspoken in their belief that the homosexual and so-called sex invert was not a threat to society and should not be criminalized (Terry 1999). Hirschfeld, for example, helped form the Wissenschaftlichhumanitäres Komitee
(Scientific-Humanitarian Committee) in 1897, which advocated on behalf of homosexuals, including organizing opposition against Germany’s Paragraph 175, which criminalized sexual relations between men. International conferences such as the Internationale Tagung für Sexualreform auf Sexualwissenschaftlicher Grundlage (International Meeting for Sexual Reform on a Sexological Basis), held in Berlin in 1921, included researchers from across western Europe, the United States, China, Japan, and Argentina. The World League of Sexual Reform, formed in 1928, brought together an international community of doctors, scientists, and reform activists to champion the study of sex and advocate for more humane policies and laws informed by academic research rather than solely based on religious or moral grounds. The league was not without internal conflicts, however, as disagreements about homosexuality, in particular, often divided members (Matte 2005).

Researchers specializing in the study of sex and sexuality continued to have a tremendous impact on public perception well into the late twentieth century. Alfred Kinsey's research on sexual behavior in the 1940s and 1950s was widely influential and familiarized mainstream audiences with the idea that sexuality exists on a continuum rather than in discrete and mutually exclusive categories of “heterosexual” and “homosexual.” Kinsey’s work, as well as that of William Masters and Virginia Johnson in the 1960s and 1970s, also challenged the idea that penile-vaginal penetration was the primary means of pleasure for women, emphasizing the role of the clitoris and highlighting the possibility of pleasure for women outside of heterosexual sexual relations (Irvine 2005). Masters and Johnson also published *Homosexuality in Perspective* (1979), presenting their findings of a sample-based study of the sexual response patterns, behaviors, and fantasies of gay men and lesbians. Shere Hite’s survey-based research in the 1970s and 1980s further contributed to the recognition of women’s sexual pleasure.

**Marital Advice Literature**

The notion that the sexual self requires knowledge, scrutiny, practice, and mastery began to emerge in the early twentieth century in the United States and Britain, with a boom in the circulation of marital advice manuals reflecting a growing concern over a perceived marriage crisis attributed to a range of causes, including women’s changing roles in society, modernization and urbanization, the liberalization of divorce laws and rising divorce rates, growing acceptance of premarital sex, and changing courtship norms. Perhaps the most compelling aspect of this period’s marital advice literature is how forcefully authors such as Marie Carmichael Stopes, Margaret Sanger, and Isabel Emslie Hutton argued that sexual relations were the cornerstone of marriage, determining its success or failure. Hutton argued, “There is no doubt that, if the truth were known, the great majority of unhappy marriages are due to abnormalities in sex life, some of them dating from the earliest days of marriage” (1932, 92). The need for information about “normal” sexual relations was supported by an argument that sex cannot proceed from instinct alone; it must be learned,
cultivated, and practiced, with the help of expert advice (Lewis and Brissett 1967). “No man or woman should leave to chance or the play of blind instinct the most complex of all human ties,” argued Sanger (1926, 19). To proceed without sexual knowledge is akin to an “oranguotang [sic] trying to play a violin” (21).

While marital advice literature arose specifically to reinforce and support heterosexual marriage, it also served to expand the repertoire of sexual acts deemed acceptable in public discourse. Authors described in detail techniques of arousal other than penile-vaginal penetration, particularly direct clitoral stimulation, and defended their propriety (Laipson 1996). In an effort to shore up heterosexuality, they gave credence to a broader range of possibilities for sexual pleasure and satisfaction, particularly for women. It is important to note, however, that they rarely encouraged clitoral stimulation as the sole means of stimulation or an ideal. Marital advice literature of this period evinces a persistent anxiety about lesbianism in particular. Stopes, one of the most prominent and prolific marital advice authors of time, went so far as to argue in Enduring Passion (1931) that semen is a physiological necessity for women if they are to remain physically and mentally healthy. Stopes also warned that women who were sexually unfulfilled in their marriages would resort to other means, including infidelity and lesbianism (Stopes 1931).
Although marital advice literature was focused on shoring up heterosexual marriage, the proliferation of these texts signaled a marked shift away from a purely procreative and naturalized understanding of sexual relations, opening the door to considerations of nonheterosexual sexual relations and a more experimental sexual ethic. Post–World War II anxiety over gender relations, changing family structures, and the perceived threat of communism slowed the momentum of this shift, however, as advice manuals advocated a return to more traditional heteronormative dynamics. Cold War–era fears about “male softness” and homosexuality, as well as the increasing influence of US variants of Freudian psychoanalysis that viewed homosexuality negatively (Hale 1995), had a significant effect on 1950s marital advice manuals (Neuhaus 2000).

**Dating and Sex Advice Literature and Media**

In the 1960s and 1970s there was a gradual emergence of sex-advice literature that focused not on promoting healthy marriages but on experimentation and personal satisfaction, with more attention on LGBT communities (Seidman 1989). Sex and relationship advice literature increasingly emphasized sexual life as an issue of self-awareness, authenticity, and identity formation. These texts emerged in the same era that therapeutically oriented approaches to sexual life also became more influential. They were also increasingly authored by nonprofessional “experts” who claimed insight into sexual matters by virtue of personal experience; Helen Gurley Brown’s *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) and Terry Garrity’s *The Sensuous Woman* (1969) are notable early examples. Garrity states clearly, “I am not a psychiatrist, psychologist, gynecologist, trained researcher, or any other kind of expert…. This is definitely an ‘unofficial’ book by a laywoman (if you’ll excuse the pun)” (190–191). This “do-it-yourself” perspective became commonplace in sex advice media and positioned it within a growing self-help market in the United States.

Sex-advice texts of the late 1960s and 1970s were much more like manuals in their specificity, often including detailed suggestions for experimenting with different sexual behaviors and techniques, particularly nonprocreative sexual activities such as oral sex. Garrity’s *The Sensuous Woman* and M’s *The Sensuous Man* (1971) both extol the pleasures of oral sex and provide detailed instructions for orally pleasuring men and women, respectively. While neither text discusses nonheterosexual sex, their attention to and positive regard for nonprocreative sexual behaviors helped widen the scope of acceptable sexual behavior and encouraged a broader view of the sexual pleasures of the body.

Alex Comfort’s *The Joy of Sex* (1972), one the most successful sex manuals of all time, was firmly entrenched in a pleasure-for-pleasure’s-sake paradigm, representing a “libertarian sex ethic” (Seidman 1989, 310). Comfort argued that “any sex behavior is normal which (1) you both enjoy, (2) hurts nobody, (3) isn’t associated with anxiety, (4) doesn’t cut down your scope” (1972, 78). While Comfort’s comments regarding gays and lesbians were not always positive, his libertarian view and the wide variety of sexual behaviors he espoused

Advice columnists were also important voices in educating the public on issues of sexuality. Abigail Van Buren’s popular syndicated advice column “Dear Abby” (1956–2000), for example, featured columns addressing homosexuality as early as 1967, and she consistently gave advice that counteracted negative assumptions about homosexuality and homosexuals (Johnson and Holmes 2017). Her columns encouraged concerned parents to accept their gay and lesbian children and counseled gay men and women to be themselves.

In the late twentieth century “pop” sexologists and “sexperts” educated mainstream audiences in an effort to shape prevailing ideas about sex and sexuality. Dr. Ruth Westheimer, in addition to authoring numerous books and articles, hosted the popular New York City radio show *Sexually Speaking* (1980–1990) and several television shows (Melody and Peterson 1999), including the 1993 Israeli television show *Min tochnit* (literally, “kind of a program,” but a play on words because min means sex and gender in Hebrew). Susie Bright, Pat/Patrick Califia, Tristan Taormino, Dan Savage, and Violet Blue all developed wide readerships both in print and online, and they devoted significant attention to LGBT sex and relationship issues.

**Lesbian-Feminist Interventions**

Feminist analysis of gender roles and sexuality had a marked impact on discussions of sexual behavior across the globe throughout the twentieth century. Feminist writers and activists actively pushed back against sexist and homophobic accounts of women’s sexuality and championed the work of such researchers as Kinsey. For some feminists in the United States, the emphasis on the clitoris in sexology research on women’s pleasure came to represent sexual pleasure freed from a heterosexual imperative. The clitoris became a symbol of the possibility that women did not require sexual relationships with men or with anyone at all; they could tend to their own sexual needs through masturbation and focus their relational energies on nurturing meaningful, and political, connections with other women. One proponent, Betty Dodson, traveled around the United States beginning in the late 1960s giving intensive workshops that taught women about their sexual anatomy and how to masturbate (Queen and Comella 2008).

Feminists movements in the United States also championed a do-it-yourself ethic similar to
that in 1970s relationship and sex-advice literature, encouraging women to explore their
own sexuality through consciousness-raising (CR) and gynecological self-exam (Boston
Women’s Health Collective 1970; Tuana 2006). One result of CR was attention to culturally
taboo sexual practices. Through CR sessions, women began to talk to one another about
sexual fantasies and practices that were deemed “deviant,” not just by society at large but
also by many feminists. These often dealt with the role of power and difference in sexuality.
Issues such as sadomasochism, role-playing (particularly butch/femme role-playing in
lesbian relationships), the use of sex toys, such as vibrators and dildos, and the
consumption of pornography by women were discussed in feminist circles as potentially
positive outlets for sexual expression. These taboo practices were central in the so-called
feminist sex wars of the 1980s in the United States and led some lesbians to identify more
strongly with gay men than with heterosexual women (Rubin 1998; Gerhard 2001).

BDSM (bondage and discipline, dominance and submission, sadism and masochism)
organizations such as Samois and magazines such as On Our Backs made space for a
diversity of sexual practices in lesbian communities and often provided advice and detailed
discussions of sexual techniques. Susie Bright, also known as Susie Sexpert, authored a sex-
advice column in On Our Backs focusing on lesbian sexuality. Feminist adult retailers such
as Eve’s Garden, Good Vibrations, and Babeland opened women- and LGBTQ-friendly
establishments selling sex toys and erotica and offering advice and workshops.

HIV/AIDS

The appearance of HIV/AIDS in gay male communities in the 1980s in the United States led
to a focus on public health and sexual ethics, raising questions about sexual practices,
sexual health, and sexual expertise. In the early years, when it was not understood what
was causing these illnesses that affected gay men disproportionately (though not
exclusively), critical dialogues emerged regarding sexual practices and their relationship to
LGBT identities and communities. In an influential article published in New York Native in
1982, “We Know Who We Are: Two Gay Men Declare War on Promiscuity,” Richard
Berkowitz and Michael Callen positioned gay male promiscuity as both the source of AIDS
and the site of its solution. They favored what was then known as the “overload theory,” or
the multifactorial theory of AIDS, championed by Dr. Joseph Sonnabend. Sonnabend
theorized that it was not a mysterious new virus that caused AIDS but rather an
accumulation of factors that produced immune deficiencies in populations at risk, including
repeated exposure to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and to the presumed
immunosuppressive effects of semen (Sonnabend et al. 1984). Berkowitz and Callen, both
patients of Sonnabend, avidly supported his theory and warned against the consequences
of gay male promiscuity in gay periodicals. In 1983 they published How to Have Sex in an
Epidemic: One Approach, one of the first “safer sex” manuals, which was widely circulated.
The links they made between “lifestyle” and AIDS, however, did not go unopposed, sparking
intense backlash and debate over sexual practices in gay communities. For example, the Canadian newspaper *The Body Politic* published several articles in their November 1982 issue critiquing Berkowitz and Callen’s argument.

With the discovery in 1984 of the virus that came to be known as HIV and its modes of transmission, the multifactorial theory of AIDS was firmly discredited. Nonetheless, the response that Berkowitz and Callen had championed—“safer sex” techniques, particularly the use of condoms during anal penetration—was widely adopted as the primary means of combating HIV transmission. Safer sex by way of consistent condom use and personal responsibility became the message. Douglas Crimp (1987) argued that promiscuity allowed for an understanding and appreciation of the range and diversity of sexual exchange, and that it was this understanding that allowed gay male communities to respond so rapidly to the AIDS crisis despite tremendous social and political stigmas and the lack of institutional and government response.

Whereas Berkowitz and Callen, as well as many health professionals and state officials, took a harsh tone in combating HIV, other voices emerged that took a different tack and became important sources of sex education in LGBT communities. The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, for example, produced and distributed such pamphlets as *Play Fair!* (1982) and *Cum Clean* (n.d.), which used humor and direct language to educate gay men on STI prevention techniques (Brier 2009). Advertising campaigns by advocacy organizations used sexual imagery to draw people’s attention and emphasize that safer sex can also be sexy. Erotic and pornographic videos were also produced to instruct LGBT communities in safer sex techniques. In the early 1990s videos aimed at lesbians, such as *Well Sexy Woman* (1992), *She’s Safe!* (1993), and *Safe Is Desire* (1993), helped to educate and to eroticize safer sex practices (Milliken 1999).

Public advocacy and health campaigns specifically targeting gay men struggled to reach men who had sexual contact with other men but did not identify as gay or bisexual for a variety of social, cultural, and political reasons. The new term *men who have sex with men* (MSM) attempted to disentangle sexual acts from sexual identification in order to more effectively respond to a growing public health crisis and to prevent stigmatizing sexual minorities (Young and Meyer 2005). The challenges of developing a public health response to HIV/AIDS forced communities to think carefully about sexual identities and practices as contextually dependent and evolving. This became even more apparent as such international organizations as the World Health Organization, as well as transnational advocacy groups, struggled to develop HIV prevention and treatment solutions attentive to the needs of different communities.

**Sex Education in Schools**

The sexual education of children and young adults remains a controversial topic in
countries worldwide, particularly when the content incudes discussions of LGBTQ+ issues. In the United States, sex education in schools arose out of the progressive education movement of the nineteenth century. Initially focused mostly on reproduction and personal hygiene, sexual health courses in the 1950s began to address dating and sexual activity, and to tackle such taboo subjects as pedophilia, STIs, and homosexuality. Social guidance manuals and videos aimed at schoolchildren represented same-sex attraction as immature and misguided (Campbell 2017) and warned children that homosexuals were dangerous (Ides 2014).

As challenges to sexual conventions spread throughout many countries in the 1960s and 1970s, more schools began broadening their curricula and discussing issues pertinent to LGBT communities. For example, Peel County in Ontario adopted a sexual health curriculum in 1977 that included discussion of homosexuality, bisexuality, and transsexualism. With the emergence of the HIV epidemic, more schools around the world added discussion of a broader range of sexual behavior, but inclusion of LGBTQ+ issues is still more the exception than the rule. In the United States, some localities and states began explicitly forbidding the inclusion of LGBTQ+ content in curriculum. In 1995 Merrimack, New Hampshire, made headlines with its Prohibition of Alternate Lifestyle Instruction policy designed to prevent teachers and counselors from allowing any discussion or activity that portrayed homosexuality positively (Irvine 2000). According to the Guttmacher Institute (2018), only twelve states in the United States require that sexual orientation be discussed as part of sex education, and three of them (Alabama, Texas, and South Carolina) require that the information on homosexuality be negative. Arizona requires that if HIV prevention education is included in a school’s curriculum, homosexuality cannot be promoted or depicted positively. While LGBT content in US schools is still a controversial subject, other countries have repealed anti-LGBT education policies and, in some cases, have adopted an LGBT-positive curriculum. In 2003 Britain repealed its controversial Section 28 of the Local Government Act 1988 that forbade the promotion in schools of homosexuality or of homosexuality as a family form. Germany, Sweden, and the Netherlands have all adopted state-sanctioned sex curricula that include positive discussion of sexual and gender diversity.

Adolescents increasingly use the internet and other new media forms as a source of information about sex and sexuality. LGBT adolescents, in particular, report seeking information online to supplement heterocentric and/or abstinence-focused sexual health curricula (Pingel et al. 2013), citing a lack of offline resources and the relative privacy of online-information seeking as significant motivators (Mitchell et al. 2013). New media is more likely than school-based curricula to provide information regarding sexual pleasure—an issue that adolescents report having a strong interest in (Holstrom 2015). LGBT adolescents also report seeking sexual information via new media in order to find a sexual community, to learn from the sexual experiences of others who share their identity, and to find affirmation of their sexual interests (Flanders et al. 2017).
SEE ALSO BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism); Clitoris; Higher Education and LGBTQ+ Communities in the United States; HIV/AIDS; Institut für Sexualwissenschaft; Kinsey Scale; Penis; Pornography

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Sexual Revolution in Europe

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The impact on the LGBTQ community of the mid-twentieth-century shift of European attitudes about sex and greater sexual freedoms.

In the decades following World War II, Europeans were dealing with not only the direct legacies of the war in the form of a political division between East and West but also a renewed and revitalized Americanization in the form of increased consumerism. Eventually, there was an economic boom in the 1950s in much of the West, but in the immediate postwar period there was an increased sexual conservativism in attitudes to premarital sex and sexual minorities. This was in some respects a backlash response to the 1920s, which had seen increased debates surrounding birth control, eugenics, women’s rights, and sexual reform (led to a great extent by the work of Magnus Hirschfeld’s Berlin-based Institut für Sexualwissenschaft [Institute for Sexual Science]); indeed, many scholars see this period as the first sexual revolution. But it was in the 1950s that the ground was prepared for what later would be called the sexual revolution in Europe, a period of greater sexual liberation that culminated in the late 1960s sex wave. The sexual revolution saw a significant shift in sexual mores, not only in terms of changing legislature but more generally in changing attitudes toward sex and sexuality. The sexual revolution was not an uncontested affair, however, as both conservative politicians and religious authorities decried it as symptomatic of a general collapse of morality, especially when it came to attitudes about premarital sex. However, the revolution was driven forward by new modes of communication, especially mass media—which could not easily be censored, at least in the more democratic and liberal West.

Although the sexual revolution has largely been portrayed as a heterosexual affair, LGBTQ individuals also benefited from many of its developments. Increased belief and interest in sexological research, legislative changes, and the impact of mass media, consumerism, and leisure all benefited heterosexual individuals but also built the framework from which LGBTQ individuals could argue for greater rights and visibility of their own. In that sense, the sexual revolution was in many ways delayed for sexual minorities, not gaining momentum really until the late 1960s and reaching its height in the 1970s before the AIDS epidemic brought with it a renewed backlash.

The End of the War and the Postwar Economic Boom
The defeat of the Third Reich saw Germany occupied and later divided into east and west parts, and Europe divided politically and ideologically between Communism in the east and capitalist democracies in the west. In both halves there was a renewed conservatism when it came to sexual values, with a greater focus on family values. In both cases, those attitudes were a reaction to the supposed sexual excesses of the war and a need to return to normalcy after six years of fighting. This focus on rebuilding was particularly aimed at heterosexual individuals who were automatically viewed as the future of each nation. Although much was done legally to address the excesses and crimes of the Nazi movement all over Europe, LGBTQ individuals were generally left out when it came to redressing their experiences. For example, although West Germany reversed the vast majority of laws passed during the regime of the Nazi Party, a 1957 constitutional court ruling upheld the legality of a Nazi addition to Paragraph 175 that made even sexual glances between men grounds for arrest. Even though homosexual men had been particularly targeted by the Third Reich not only in Germany but also in occupied territories, their victimhood was not recognized after the war until the late 1960s. Paradoxically, the Nazi movement itself had been portrayed both before and during the war as a movement filled with homosexuals, which would explain somewhat the negative view of homosexuality in the first decades after the war, especially in the east, which prided itself on having defeated fascism.

The political division of Europe was manifested in the economic differences that defined the 1950s and 1960s, and these differences furthermore defined how the sexual revolution evolved in each part. The Western democracies of Europe experienced rapid economic growth throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, spurred originally by the US Marshall Plan (an influx of economic aid to Western Europe, named for its architect, US Secretary of State George Marshall) but later maintained by access to cheap oil and labor. Along with the Marshall aid came increased Americanization and consumerism. In many ways, it was greater access to leisure and mass media that drove the sexual revolution in Europe. Challenges to the sexually conservative attitudes of the 1950s mainly came from mass media in the form of films, magazines, and newspapers, all of which were generally protected by anticensorship laws in the Western democracies. Although there were some limits to this freedom, in most cases national governments did not censor the press or ask for films to be banned. However, most countries did limit access based on age in order to protect youth from material that could endanger their moral upbringing. Thus, many sexually explicit films and articles, both heterosexual and homosexual in nature, were not necessarily censored but kept out of the hands of youth.

The Kinsey Reports and the Popularization of Sexology

The publication of Alfred C. Kinsey’s reports on American sexual behavior, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948 and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* in 1953, sent shockwaves throughout the United States and also the American-influenced Western
democracies of Europe. Even though the subjects of Kinsey’s studies had been American, Europeans viewed the reports as a valid scientific sexological study broadly applicable to humans in general. Although immediately available in Great Britain, it would be a number of years before they were translated into other major European languages, but the major findings from Kinsey’s reports were immediately published in all major European newspapers and excerpts from the reports could be found in illustrated magazines. The prevalence of premarital sex and same-sex sexual activity, which was much more common than most people expected, were the most widely cited findings of the reports, and activists used these findings to argue for greater leniency in sexual legislation. While the Kinsey reports dramatically increased the visibility of sexological research throughout Europe and prompted many national sex surveys, the majority of European sexological research was still aimed at identifying, pathologizing, and further stigmatizing sexual minorities. In that sense the influence of eugenics was still felt throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s in most European countries. For example, in 1959 the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Sexualwissenschaft (German Society for Sexual Research) published Die Kriminalität der lesbischen Frau (The criminality of the lesbian woman), followed by Die Kriminalität des homophilen Mannes (The criminality of the homophile man) the following year, both written by the German criminologist Hans von Hentig.

The popularization of sexology was largely driven by illustrated magazines and weekly news magazines. Knowing that sexual information sold well, countless magazines published Kinsey’s findings and later commissioned from leading sexological research centers studies on sexual behavior in their own nations. By the late 1960s, in addition to stories about celebrities, popular music, and films, magazines also offered “scientific” reports on sexual behavior, advice columns on sexual questions, and even computerized dating services. At the height of the so-called sex wave, covers of magazines were filled with images of topless women, and some serialized what they called encyclopedias of sexuality with alphabetical entries on everything from bisexuality to fetishism to pornography. However, despite the increased openness and curiosity about anything sexual, sexual minorities had to battle continued stigmatization from sources of so-called sexual expertise, such as David Reuben’s book Everything You Wanted to Know about Sex (But Were Afraid to Ask), published in 1969 in the United States and later excerpted and serialized in many European magazines.
Differences between the East and West/North and South

Detailing how the sexual revolution differed in each country in Europe is beyond the scope of this entry, but there are a few basic differences that point to the role that politics and religion played in the sexual revolution. As highlighted above, the sexual revolution in the West was largely driven by mass media publications and films that both informed and titillated their audiences. Laws that forbade outright censorship allowed magazines to push the envelope in terms of what passed as acceptable material; the media in the Communist East did not enjoy the same privilege. Relationships between men and women were often considered to be more equal in the Communist East where the equality of the sexes was actively promoted, and in certain respects the East rivaled or even outdid the West in contraceptive and abortion policies. For example, in Poland, contraceptive clinics were set up in major cities in the early 1950s and the family-planning organization Towarzystwo Swiadome Macierzynstwo (Society for Conscious Motherhood) was founded in 1957; in contrast, Italy had no contraceptive laws until the 1970s. In Czechoslovakia, important aspects of sexual liberation were already underway in the 1950s, when abortion was legalized and the female orgasm became a focus for sexual experts. In contrast to trends in many other European countries, the late 1960s in Czechoslovakia saw an increased focus on family values and a renewed expectation that women should be caring mothers and
docile wives. However, the sex wave of the late 1960s did not emerge in the East as it did in the West. A sort of sexual revolution occurred in parts of eastern Europe in the later 1970s, but those changes were nowhere near as radical as those that landed after the fall of communism in 1989 when the East was flooded by the consumerist sexuality of the West.

The major differences between northern and southern parts of Europe revolved around religion. The Protestant Scandinavian countries in the north led the way when it came to greater sexual openness. Sweden served as a role model for many other countries in introducing compulsory sex education in schools, and it also produced many “scandalous” films such as Ingmar Bergman’s *Tystnaden* (1963; *The Silence*) and Vilgot Sjöman’s *Jag är nyfiken—en film i gult* (1967; *I Am Curious: Yellow*). Denmark was one of the first countries to legalize pornography, in 1967, which created a booming export industry for Danish pornography throughout Europe. In the predominantly Catholic south, the church had a much stronger hold over ideas of marriage; although marriage rates remained high in the north despite the sexual revolution, premarital sex was more widely accepted than in countries such as Italy and Spain. Everywhere in Europe there was a greater focus on the idea of good sex within marriage, which was popularized and spread largely by illustrated magazines and marital guidebooks.

**Decriminalization and the Importance of Mass Media**

Although LGBTQ individuals were stigmatized and discriminated against everywhere in Europe in the immediate postwar period, same-sex relations were not criminalized everywhere. In fact, it is difficult to link criminalization and decriminalization to a specific religion or political system. For example, all references to homosexuality had been removed from the 1791 French criminal code as far back as the French Revolution (1789–1799), and during the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) homosexuality was decriminalized in various territories that came under French control, including many German territories and the Netherlands, which later became a central location for gay liberation. Unified Germany recriminalized homosexuality in 1871, whereas recently unified Catholic Italy’s first penal code in 1889 contained no laws against private, adult, and consensual homosexual relations. The Soviet Union decriminalized homosexuality in 1917 but recriminalized it under Joseph Stalin in 1933. Under the fascist states of Nazi Germany, Vichy France, and Francisco Franco’s Spain, homosexuality was targeted and criminalized in various ways. Research since 2010 points to a general trend toward decriminalization of homosexuality throughout Europe in the postwar years, influenced by leading national sexologists inspired by Kinsey. This is evidenced by the United Kingdom’s Wolfenden Report, which recommended decriminalization in 1957, but decriminalization did not materialize until 1967. In the Communist East, homosexuality was decriminalized in 1932 in Poland, in 1961 in Czechoslovakia and Hungary (coming into effect in 1962), and in 1968 in both Bulgaria and East Germany. It was not until 1977, however, that the majority of the Yugoslavian
states (Croatia, Slovenia, Montenegro, and Vojvodina) followed suit, and Serbia waited until 1994. Despite these differences among countries in the legal status of homosexuality, what was common to most was a continued stigmatization of same-sex relations, both gay and lesbian.

Where same-sex relations were criminalized, homophile and other LGBTQ rights organizations remained hidden or under the radar. In Switzerland, where homosexual relations were decriminalized in 1942, the gay magazine Der Kreis (The circle) was published until 1967. It was the most widely read gay magazine in Europe in the 1950s, with sections in German, French, and English; at its height it had a bimonthly print run of 1,900 copies and 700 subscribers throughout Europe and the United States. Der Kreis was important not only for its open promotion of the legal and social rights of gay men but also because it connected and brought together gay men from across Europe. Every reader was offered membership in Der Kreis-Club, which held weekly meetings in Zurich where readers could gather and discuss current affairs. The club’s annual international ball in Zurich attracted hundreds of gay men from across Europe. Although the magazine’s popularity dwindled in the 1960s as its younger readers found it too conservative, its methods of bringing readers together were replicated by other gay publications, where they could be legally published.

The importance of mass media, and magazines in particular, was especially evident with the decriminalization of homosexual relations in West Germany in 1969. While homosexuality had been discussed and debated in political venues and in mass media publications before the decriminalization, publishing a gay-oriented magazine was not feasible until after decriminalization. Before 1969, any gay-themed magazine would most likely be placed in the index of publications considered to be endangering to youth. Although these publications had not been censored, they could not be sold openly in magazine kiosks, making them commercially nonviable. However, immediately after decriminalization went into effect on 1 September 1969, the first West German gay magazine, du & ich (You and I), was published. Within a year, two more magazines, Him applaus and Don, were also in circulation and available throughout West Germany. These new gay publications were modeled not on previous gay magazines, such as Der Kreis, but on regular illustrated magazines aimed at a mass audience, and they used similar methods to engage their readers.

The consumerism inherent in mass media publications aimed at heterosexual audiences and crucial to the spread of the heterosexual sexual revolution quickly became part and parcel of the new gay magazines. The new magazines were often political in nature, but the majority of their content was stories about gay celebrities, reviews of gay-themed literature and films, and serialized novellas and short stories. The magazines also included advice columns and readers’ personal ads. Like other illustrated magazines, the new gay magazines highlighted the consumerist focus on leisure by organizing cruises for its
readers and offering advice on where to go on vacation, and within a few years they were also offering a dating service where readers were matched with other readers through the help of a computer. In a sense, the consumerist focus of the sexual revolution in Europe did not really extend to same-sex–loving individuals until illustrated gay magazines became available. Although some of the new gay magazines tried to appeal to both same-sex–loving men and women, the vast majority of them were aimed exclusively at gay men, especially masculine-presenting men. Those that did include material for lesbian women did so with the best intentions, seeing a commonality in the struggle for acceptance for all LGBTQ individuals, but women never graced the covers of those magazines, and most of the content was aimed at a gay male readership. Eventually, most gay magazines reverted to an all-male focus. The marginalization of feminine-representing and trans individuals in most gay magazines, and even within the gay male community, was common throughout most of the 1970s.

In terms of the content, the attempted alliance between gay men and lesbians in the period was reflected in the uneasy alliance between the two when it came to gay rights organizations. Like many heterosexual women, many lesbians felt that the real beneficiaries of the sexual revolution were their male counterparts. Sexual imagery predominantly featured women and was created for the heterosexual male gaze. The result was a split between feminists and many of the radical male sexual revolutionaries of the period. Similarly, lesbian-identified women felt a closer kinship to other feminist women than to their gay male counterparts when it came to fighting for their rights and acceptance. Throughout Europe, lesbian-focused magazines and periodicals did not emerge until the second half of the 1970s—in most countries not until the 1980s—and they were not as widely distributed as the gay male–oriented publications.

At the height of the sexual revolution in the late 1960s and early 1970s, discussions of sexual matters could be found in movies, music, magazines, and eventually also on television. Same-sex–loving relationships did not appear in mainstream cinema for most of the 1960s in Europe. Same-sex characters were mainly found in British “kitchen sink dramas,” such as Tony Richardson’s A Taste of Honey and Basil Dearden’s Victim, both from 1961. It was not until the advent of openly gay directors, such as Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1945–1982), Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922–1975), and Rosa von Praunheim (1942–), that gay characters were depicted in a complex and positive, yet often critical, light. Some of their films were later shown on television, but because television was the most directly state-controlled medium throughout Europe until the 1980s, same-sex–themed films rarely made it to the home screen. This became especially evident with the debates surrounding the airing of von Praunheim’s Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt (1971; It is not the homosexual who is perverse but the society in which he lives) on West German television in 1973. Throughout the 1970s, same-sex–loving individuals seen on television appeared mainly in documentaries and news reports on their place in contemporary society. Nonetheless, these appearances were invaluable to making LGBTQ
individuals visible not only to the rest of society but also to other LGBTQ individuals unaware of the existence of like-minded people. Thus, the otherwise heterosexual revolution that was so prominently reported in every available medium eventually allowed a similar opening for LGBTQ individuals, especially in the consumerist West.

SEE ALSO Butt Magazine; Communism and Queers in Europe; Kinsey Scale; Sexperts and Sex Education in the West; Sexual Revolution in the United States; The Wolfenden Report

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Starting in the 1950s, gaining momentum in the 1960s, and concluding in the early 1970s, nearly every person living in the United States experienced a significant shift in the values and expectations around sex and sexuality, resulting in a more open, accepting, and experimental approach to sexuality than previously. Race, class, sex, gender, sexuality, and geographic location informed the new sexual norms contested and created during this period and also determined the extent of change individuals experienced. This sexual revolution extended into nearly every facet of life within the United States, from culture and politics to science and business. A response to the intense policing of sexuality that occurred in the late 1940s and 1950s that was symptomatic of larger Cold War fears and concerns, the sexual revolution embodied shifting sexual norms as much as it did a rebuke of existing political discourses, an embrace of new medical possibilities and understandings, and a commitment to greater legal equality. Although often portrayed as a largely heterosexual sexual revolution, in fact, the events and changes in this period either directly affected gender and sexual minorities or laid important foundations on which gender and sexual minorities built to gain acceptance and political ground. This sexual revolution resulted from significant medical, political, legal, and cultural developments, each explored here, and created unprecedented opportunities for members of the LGBTQ communities to claim legitimacy and visibility.

**Kinsey and the Pill**

Science and medicine fueled these shifting sexual norms, with two specific events acting as the scientific engines for the sexual revolution: the publication of Alfred C. Kinsey's (1894–1956) *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948 and the approval of the first oral contraceptive by the US Food and Drug Administration in 1960. A zoologist initially specializing in fruit flies at Indiana University, Kinsey and his colleagues compiled vast and in-depth research on human sexuality, offering the general public its first mass accounting of sexual experiences and practices in the population through an extensive survey, impressive in its breadth and depth. The resulting publications, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953), sent shock waves through the public as they showed that both premarital sex and same-sex sexual activity...
were much more common than existing sexual norms would suggest or allow. Of the two texts, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* earned much more widespread media attention and had a more lasting impact on society as a whole. While the majority of medical and scientific research, writings, and practice of the time worked to stigmatize and pathologize gender nonconformity and nonmonogamous heterosexual sexualities, the Kinsey reports provided research and evidence validating the practices and experiences of individuals from a full spectrum of gender and sexual identities. In this way, Kinsey and his colleagues gave members of these communities "proof" that they were neither alone nor as deviant as the existing social norms and medical attitudes would suggest. Kinsey himself and his research came under attack, with many of his research methods being proved unethical and some of his findings questionable. However, the gay liberation activists of the 1970s and the larger LGBTQ political movements that emerged decades later clung to some of the statistics in the study to demonstrate that sexual minorities existed in significant numbers and were therefore worthy of rights, destigmatization, and depathologization. In many ways, Kinsey's work proved groundbreaking, but for members of sexual minorities it offered two important contributions to their eventual legitimacy: it acknowledged their existence, and it did not assign stigma or judgment to their behavior.

The approval of the first oral contraceptive in 1960 also altered the sexual norms in the United States in ways that would allow sexual and gender minorities to lay claim to rights and validity. "The pill," as it quickly came to be known, gave women the medical ability to control their own fertility in unprecedented ways. Although it unknowingly posed significant health threats to women initially owing to the extremely high dosages of estrogen in the early version of the medicine, it also became highly sought after by women both in and outside of wedlock who wanted greater control over their fertility rather than reliance on condom use by male sexual partners. As the pill became increasingly available over the course of the decade, bolstered by US Supreme Court decisions discussed below, it became the most widely used prophylactic in the United States. Consequently, both the expectation for sex before marriage and the stigma around sex before marriage (that did not result in pregnancy) shifted dramatically over the 1960s and 1970s. Premarital sex became less taboo because its consequences diminished. This loosening of sexual prohibitions and renegotiations of sexual norms did not initially include acceptance of same-sex sexuality or gender nonconformity, but it created a sexual landscape in which these activities were no longer invisible or impossible. LGBTQ politics and identities took root in these medical and scientific spaces of possibility and flourished to create a national gay medical infrastructure in the 1970s that lobbied successfully for the removal of homosexuality from the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* as a diagnosable mental illness in 1973.

**Political Movements**
The political atmosphere of the 1960s and 1970s also played a pivotal role in the sexual revolution. The civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s and the beatnik counterculture movement of the same period demanded a rethinking of social norms with regard to race and class. The anti–Vietnam War and student movements that took shape in the waning years of the 1960s extended the questioning of existing norms and the challenging of the wisdom and authority of previous generations with regard to foreign policy, capitalism, interracial sex and marriage, and sexual norms. In this way, the sexual revolution appears as only one part of a larger social and political reordering. The younger generation doubted the acumen of their elders who had led them into the protracted war in Vietnam, the inequality of segregation, and the social unrest that resulted. As the politics of the older generations failed them, the younger generation also questioned their social norms, particularly around sexuality.

The hippies are perhaps the most iconic example of this challenge to existing norms. With their communal living, sexual freedom, and deep commitment to peace, the hippies often embodied the social and sexual revolution they hoped would transform the entire country. However, the reconsideration of social and sexual norms undertaken by the younger generations of the late 1960s extended far beyond the hippies' center in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. With more lax attitudes toward premarital sex, in part fueled by anxieties over young men being drafted and sent to Vietnam, sexual experimentation became more openly accepted and expected in ways that, again, provided an important backdrop to the increasing visibility and legitimacy of nonheterosexual sexual experiences and identities. As newscasts covered the so-called Summer of Love in 1967, images of sexual experimentation and hypersexualized culture appeared in living rooms across the country. On college campuses nationwide, students protested against and overturned parietals, the strict etiquette rules around women on campus designed to protect women's virginity.

**Key Legal Cases**

A series of legal rulings not only exemplified the sexual revolution of the mid-twentieth century in the United States but also facilitated it. The first of these Supreme Court cases, *Roth v. United States* (1957), dramatically redefined obscenity and expanded the sexual content protected under the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Early LGBTQ political and social networks relied heavily on newsletters and publications that were often targeted by police and prosecuted under a strict definition of obscenity set by what remained of the Comstock Law. Enacted in 1873, the Comstock Law broadly defined obscenity as a way to police and criminalize aspects of the suffragette and women’s movement. The *Roth* ruling, however, strengthened the constitutional protection of the vast majority of these publications and led directly to an increase in their number, while also resulting in greater access to nonheterosexual and gender-nonconforming information, an increase in
declared state laws barring interracial marriage unconstitutional—a significant win for both the civil rights movement and sexual freedom. Though not directly related to sexual or gender minorities, this ruling signified the shifting sexual norms of the period and laid the legal foundation for future court rulings related to sexual civil rights cases. The *Griswold v. Connecticut* ruling of 1965 and *Eisenstadt v. Baird* of 1972 both expanded access to birth control—first to married women and then to all women, regardless of marital status. Combined with the *Roe v. Wade* decision in 1973 to grant women access to abortion, these legal rulings created a new legal topography for sexuality and sexual norms in the United States—one that was much more open about sexuality and ripe, both socially and legally, for an emerging gay liberation movement.

**Cultural Changes**

The economic boom that followed the end of World War II (1939–1945) led to the increase of public spaces designed for courtship, entertainment, and the exploration of sexuality beyond the home and the watchful eyes of family members, whether in cities or in the growing suburban landscape. These ranged from drive-in movies to pornographic bookstores and from bathhouses to soda shops. As an increasing number of women grew more financially independent and postponed marriage to pursue college or careers, the sexual norms around courtship and marriage shifted as well. The roaring economy also increased access to spending money, particularly in stark contrast to the Great Depression and war years that preceded the period. As a consequence, there were greater options for and increased acceptance of exploring sexuality that spilled beyond strictly heterosexual interactions. Cities, in particular, became more open, providing venues and communities in which, like their heterosexual and gender-conforming counterparts, gender and sexual minorities could gather, mingle, date, and organize. Greenwich Village in New York City and the Castro in San Francisco became the most iconic and alluring destinations for gay men in particular.

During the sexual revolution, sex and discussions about sex also began to seep more obviously into culture through television, movies, music, and writings, which provided spaces for depictions and discussions of sexual variance within both heterosexual and nonheterosexual sexualities. As television became an increasingly ubiquitous technology in homes, the depictions of sexual norms and sexualities became hotly contested and constantly negotiated by producers, actors, and consumers. The shift in sexual norms in this period is perhaps most easily illustrated by comparing the depiction of a married couple’s bedroom in 1950s television sitcoms, each in complete sets of pajamas in their own single-sized bed, to the portrayal of sexuality in early 1970s television that not only acknowledged that people had sex but often depicted some form of it. Moviegoers of this period also witnessed a decrease in censorship around sexuality and, in films such as *The*
*Graduate* (1967), saw more open discussions of sex outside of marriage, including, as in *The Boys in the Band* (1970), nonheterosexual sexuality. Musicians of this period, including Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, and the Beatles, also became revered icons of not just music but sexuality as well, as they offered the soundtrack to the sexual revolution and embodied it personally. These cultural forces molded the landscape of the sexual revolution, paving the way for significant shifts in sexual norms that proved more welcoming to sexual and gender minorities.

Although the sexual revolution of the mid-twentieth century in the United States is often associated almost exclusively with heterosexuality, it in fact played a pivotal role in the increased legitimacy and visibility of gender and sexual minorities and thus laid the foundation for the modern LGBTQ communities. The sexual revolution forged important shifts in medicine, politics, law, society, and art that pulled gender and sexual minorities in from the furthest margins of society and permitted them to lay future claims in each of those arenas in ways that would allow LGBTQ identities to form and communities to grow. Thus, the sexual revolution provided a launching pad for many of the organizations and historical figures that constitute LGBTQ communities nationally today, from the Log Cabin
Republicans to the Radical Faeries and from Marsha P. Johnson to Andy Warhol.

SEE ALSO Kinsey Scale; Sexual Revolution in Europe; Stonewall Riots, International Effects of

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Sharaf (1997; Sunʿallah Ibrahim)

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Novel that connects homosexuality with globalization to suggest that both entail a loss of honor for the average Egyptian man.

*Sharaf* (1997) is the sixth novel by the Egyptian author Sunʿallah (or Sonallah) Ibrahim (1937–) and his first published by a state-owned publishing house. The opening chapters of *Sharaf* were serialized in the state literary weekly *Akhbar al-Adab* a few months before the novel’s publication in 1997. The novel’s title communicates a double meaning: the literal meaning of *sharaf* is “honor,” but it is also the name of the protagonist, Sharaf. (The full name of the protagonist is Ashraf ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Sulayman, but he goes by his nickname, Sharaf.) The novel chronicles Sharaf’s realization that it is impossible to keep his sexual honor because all Egyptians have already lost their collective national honor under globalization, which is served by local political repression and economic corruption. Because Sharaf’s limited education does not allow him to understand the integration of Egypt in the global economy or the effect of globalization on Egyptian politics, the story is told by a third person who communicates the author’s perspective.

The novel follows Sharaf, a lower-middle-class young man who fetishizes imported trademarks and designer labels in an intensely globalized and classed Cairo. After falling prey to a Western seducer, Sharaf ends up in a prison awaiting trial for murder. The threatened and eventually lost honor of Sharaf and of Egypt animates the novel as the author laments the socioeconomic and political conditions in Egypt and its subordination by global market forces. Although Ibrahim had used the metaphor of sexual impotence for national defeat in his previous works, *Sharaf* equates homosexuality with the loss of all kinds of honor—sexual, professional, and national. Without problematizing homosexuality as a possible sexual orientation, Ibrahim represents same-sex desire and practices as a deviance that mirrors Egypt’s degeneration under corruption and subordination to exploitative globalization.

Born in 1974, Sharaf graduated from high school but never attended university. His unfulfilled heterosexual desire and his sense of material deprivation dominate his thoughts, monologues, daydreams, and conversations with peers. Sharaf roams downtown Cairo, coveting the city’s designer brands, fashionable clothing, and rich women in miniskirts driving expensive cars, while he himself cannot afford an inexpensive meal out. Sharaf
despises spending time at home, where he lives with his family, including a divorced sister and her children. Suffering, like many others, from the national housing problem, his parents, their children, and their grandchildren share a one-bedroom apartment in a Cairo slum. The broken sewage system frequently overflows, making the smell in the entire slum unbearable year-round. Sharaf prefers to escape his home to avoid dealing with his frustrated father, who talks with a mix of pride and anger about his heroic efforts to make his modest monthly salary of 340 pounds stretch to the family needs of 800 pounds. Like that of most Egyptians, the family’s income has steadily declined under globalization and privatization policies in the late twentieth century.

SOURCE: DAR AL-HILAL

Cover the First Edition of the Novel Sharaf (1997) by Sun’h Ibrahim. This cover was drawn by Bahgat ʿUthman, one of the most important caricature artists of the 1980s and 1990s. It mocks authoritarianism and political corruption in Egypt in its depiction of a puppet show in which a policeman puppet (representing the state) beats a prisoner puppet (representing ordinary people). The illustration refers to a puppet show script in the novel but is also a reference to the traditional use of street puppet shows as a covert form of protest against repression and injustice.

Sharaf’s life goes from bad to worse after he encounters a blond foreigner named John who claims to be Australian but is actually English. Sharaf accepts John’s offer of a free movie ticket, and after the movie, his invitation to his luxurious apartment in the upscale Zamalik neighborhood for a drink. John plies Sharaf with fancy food, drinks, hashish cigarettes, and a gold necklace before attempting to seduce him. When Sharaf rejects John’s sexual
advances, John attempts to rape him; in the course of their struggle, Sharaf accidentally kills him. Sharaf explains to the police that he was defending his honor, but because he has John's necklace the police conclude that he killed him during a robbery attempt; after Sharaf is tortured under interrogation, he signs a confession to that effect. Sharaf becomes more confident that he will be found not guilty after he witnesses the court releasing a man who had killed his sister for engaging in premarital sex, on the grounds that he committed the crime defending the honor of the family. Although the Egyptian legal code contains no reference to honor killing (murder committed by a male family member against a female family member perceived to have brought dishonor on the family), judges often treat such perpetrators with maximum leniency. Sharaf hopes for the same sympathy, but the court dismisses his claim that he killed the Western man in defense of his honor. Sharaf’s imprisonment proves the inferiority of Egyptian masculinity as Sharaf’s sexual honor does not have any value, and his sexual services become a subject of negotiation among guards and inmates, including an Israeli spy. Sharaf’s entire life in jail becomes a journey toward his complete emasculation as he eventually accepts the role of a penetrative passive partner. Ibrahim’s Sharaf is a statement that the emasculation of Egyptian men was started by the colonial West and completed by the Egyptian authoritarian state.

Prison as a Model of Society

The novel details Sharaf’s progress from police interrogation to police detention, and to temporary prison awaiting trial. In prison Sharaf lives in a rigidly divided world where the “haves” keep all their privileges and the “have-nots” are stripped of their basic human rights and dignity. The power structure within the prison mirrors Egypt itself, which was divided in the 1990s between the fat cats (who accumulated wealth from corruption and shady business) and the violent Islamists. In prison, convicted drug dealers, pimps of supermodel prostitutes, and state personnel convicted of bribery can afford to continue their lifestyle behind bars, while Islamist prisoners wield power by threatening group violence against other prisoners and demanding that authorities remove anything deemed immoral or Western. The prison authorities themselves are thoroughly corrupt, selling supplies intended for prisoners, embezzling their wages, and taking bribes from them and their families. Having no connections, power, or money, Sharaf finds himself on the lowest level of the hierarchy: he must sleep next to the urine bucket, contend with bullying and rape, inform on his cellmates, and eventually rent his rectum to hide drugs.

Sharaf’s situation is vividly demonstrated when he is nearly raped by a nabatchi, a violent recurring offender whom the prison administration has selected to keep order inside the cell. One night Sharaf wakes to find the nabatchi on top of him, holding a razor blade in one hand and trying to strip off his underwear with the other. The attempted rape is interrupted when another inmate switches on a light, but rumors about what happened or could have happened stigmatize Sharaf as “the boy whom the nabatchi fucked.” Blaming
victims of sexual assault rather than offenders is part of the culture both inside and outside prisons. All of the novel's characters view homosexuality as a lack of masculinity, and the author employs it as a metaphor for the nation's degeneration, making Sharaf a strong denunciation of homosexuality.

The novel intertwines this theme with a condemnation of globalization, which is communicated from the viewpoint of another prisoner, Dr. Ramzi. Ramzi is a pharmacist who began his career dreaming of social justice but ended up working for a Swiss transnational drug company, where he witnessed the destructive effects of globalization on national economies and health. When he was chosen to manage the company's branch in Egypt, he could not keep silent about its dirty business practices that destroy local production and market harmful drugs. To get rid of Ramzi, a retired police general working for the company used his connections to frame Ramzi for bribery. While in prison awaiting trial, Ramzi composes his legal defense with evidence of how the economies, public health, and security of many countries are compromised to serve the few individuals who control global politics via a small number of mega transnational companies. Ibrahim uses Ramzi's voice to denounce the global economy that operates to concentrate wealth in a few hegemonic transnational companies that then destroy the economies of Third World nations including Egypt.

The reading of Dr. Ramzi's files shifts the novel's first-person narrative from Sharaf to Ramzi to better articulate the author's sophisticated critique of globalization. Ramzi echoes the views of Ibrahim himself—views that Sharaf would not be able to articulate, given his limited understanding. With Ramzi's papers, which constitute one-third of the novel (making it Ibrahim's longest), Ibrahim employs his creative trademark intertextuality to produce his best-integrated documentary narrative. Beginning with his second novel, Najmat Aghustus (August's star) in 1974, and continuing with al-Lajna (1981; The committee), Beirut Beirut (1984), and Dhat (1992; Self), Ibrahim has incorporated documentary material in his fictional narratives. These documents, or the “docu-fictional,” to use Samia Mehrez's (2014) expression, are an integral part of Ibrahim's work and often are equally if not more dynamic than the traditional narrative sections; his use of this structure has made Ibrahim a leader in one of the modern trends in the Arabic novel.

Ibrahim speaks through Ramzi as he attempts to warn others about the structural dangers of globalization even when they are not willing to listen. He does the painstaking work of documenting how a few transnational companies expand their businesses in different fields of production and services around the globe. Eventually, they drive local companies out of business, impose monopolies over local markets, concentrate global wealth in the hands of a few, undermine all systems of checks and balances, and enjoy a free hand to distribute harmful products, including medicines and foods that spread diseases rather than good health.
Ibrahim has tackled these themes in his previous works *al-Lajna* and *Dhat*, but in *Sharaf* he flatly equates subjugation with global economic forces and national degeneration with male homosexuality. In his view, as the national economy serves outsiders and their local agents, Egyptian men lose their honor and masculinity. In one scene, a puppet show staged by Ramzi to celebrate the anniversary of the 1973 Arab-Israeli War explicitly uses male rape to represent the destructive impact of globalization on Egyptians and depicts the global economy as primitive, bloodsucking tribes. Although presumably he means to drop the mask of modernity to expose how exploitative forces operate in the advanced West and to demonstrate their vicious inhumanity, Ibrahim portrays those tribes as African, so the metaphor, as Joseph Massad reads it, synthesizes antiblack African racism (Massad 2007).

**Homoerotic Elements in Sharaf**

The female body and heterosexual desire preoccupy Sharaf outside the prison, but in captivity the images of women fade away while the male body captures his attention and that of most of his fellow inmates. The stories of inmates are embedded in the collective demoralization and degeneration embodied in the tendency toward homosexuality and the
homoerotic. Early in his journey in captivity, Sharaf fetishizes power and beauty as performed by the controlling police officers. He enviously gazes at “their whiteness, handsomeness, and elegance: white cap under the armpit, short-sleeve white shirt, and white tight pants revealing details of thighs and butt” (1997, 37; translation by Hanan Hammad). He also stares at a young Lebanese inmate whose black shorts reveal his healthy white thighs covered with blond hair.

These homoerotic gazes throughout the novel express not only sexual frustration but also unsettled ideological tensions. Mr. Tamir, an operator of a supermodel prostitution network, exercises in revealing, tight shorts in the colors of the American flag, drawing Sharaf’s gaze as well as the ire of the Islamists. The connection of the shorts with the American flag meshes the conflicting emotions of ideological anger and consumerist desires that sweep through the passively gazing men. Interestingly, it is not Tamir’s crime but his male body that draws Sharaf's interest and the Islamists’ anger. Tamir is one of the leading agents of globalization and local corrupting forces. He is a regional manager of a five-star hotel whose kitchen sends him food daily, and he funds his consumption of global luxury brands by employing sex workers who are beautiful stars of television commercials. The exploitation of the female body to sell products is likewise the selling of female Egyptian honor; here, Ibrahim expresses anxieties over globalization and its local agents meshed with concerns over heterosexual normativity.

In the milieu of prison, male bonding becomes important to alleviate loneliness and fear. Sharaf develops an affection for another inmate around his age, ʾAbdu al-Fattah (ʾAbdu), from Upper Egypt. They spend their daytime breaks outside their cells together, holding hands—a common gesture of homosocial friendship without conscious sexual connotations. Yet the novel makes it clear that Sharaf has homoerotic feelings for ʾAbdu; he surreptitiously looks at ʾAbdu's naked chest and handsome face, thinks about him at night, and even arranges to sleep next to ʾAbdu one night on the pretext that it is his birthday. The attraction is more than physical, as Sharaf values ʾAbdu’s kindness and endeavors to learn all he can about ʾAbdu's life before prison. The account of ʾAbdu's background furthers Ibrahim’s narrative of globalization. He is from Upper Egypt, a region that Ibrahim references throughout Sharaf as having been particularly victimized by radical fanaticism and the corrupt alliance between the state and global drug companies, but ʾAbdu does not recognize the hefty price his region has paid; instead, he listens with fascination to Sharaf’s talk of foreign brands and the plots of American films.

When Sharaf learns that ʾAbdu is about to be transferred to another prison, he is overwhelmed emotionally and hugs him and kisses him on his mouth. ʾAbdu's transfer ends the men’s relationship. Although they never consummated their relationship, Sharaf feels guilty and in need of repentance because of their kiss as well as because of his own nightly masturbation, which is euphemistically called “nightly activities.” Ambiguity in the reference to his guilty feelings suggests that Sharaf, who throughout the text has used
female images to stimulate his sexual excitement, may have fantasized about sexual contact with ’Abdu.

Sharaf and ’Abdu’s relationship is about male-male bonding, providing comfort, and unfulfilled desire. Although attempts at sexual contact are never realized, Sharaf and ’Abdu’s relationship is the only one in the text that is not coercive but based on mutual and true friendship. By ending it abruptly, Ibrahim avoids having to justify their same-sex relationship. Aside from that un consummated relationship, throughout the text homosexuality appears as a horrific symptom of decay; it is rape by foreigners and corrupt locals. This depiction resonates with the Egyptian public’s perception, and thus it amplifies and dramatizes the political-socioeconomic decline of Egyptian society due to the corrupt, repressive regime and enforced integration into the global economy. Globalization is a destructive force.

**Male Prostitution**

The novel portrays all types of same-sex relationships in a negative light and associates homosexual desire with rape, male prostitution, and accepting buggery for protection and food. The plight of Haggag, a handsome young man with straight black hair, began when he was in eighth grade, living with his impoverished parents and four siblings in two rooms in a slum on the outskirts of Cairo. A hustler deceived the young boy and took him to his house in another slum, where he repeatedly raped the boy. Threatening to ruin the boy’s face with acid, the hustler added Haggag to his gang of street children who engaged in petty crimes. Haggag becomes a frequent offender, and when behind bars, he provides assistance and sexual services to drug dealers who cover his expenses. While celebrating the release of a drug dealer, Haggag performs an erotic belly dance wearing lipstick and a scarf wrapped around his waist in the style of female dancers, and he lifts his clothes to reveal his hairless thighs, intensifying the sexual excitement among his audience. Haggag’s homosexuality exemplifies the stereotype of men diverted from “normative” sex due to the trauma of rape during childhood: the raped child becomes a prostitute for older men who support him and satisfy his effeminate desires. On another level, homosexuality is the ultimate symptom and result of the dysfunction of state and society.

Inmates call another male prison prostitute ‘Aziza, a female-only name. ‘Aziza has a feminine laugh, moves his fingers around his mouth like lower-class women, walks in a sultry manner like a fallen woman, and wears many gold rings. Since cigarettes are the currency inside the prison, ‘Aziza charges a box (a dozen packs) for a quick, casual encounter during the daytime and several boxes for a whole night.

Sharaf has already offered his rectum to hide drugs for inmates before he attracts the attention of sex shoppers. Once Sharaf’s youthful body has gained some fat due to lack of exercise, one of the prison guards communicates offers from two potential sex clients and
Sharaf, who was committed to prison for defending his sexual honor, ends up making his rectum available for sex and and the concealment of drugs. He discovers that there is no place for sharaf (honor) in an oppressive, corrupt state, and he learns to manipulate his subjugation, obtaining protection and food in return for accepting the submissive and effeminate position in sexual acts. Just as he was consumed by his desire for global designer label brands beyond his means, he is consumed by his despair and need to secure the basic needs of food and protection. His lack of intellectual sophistication prevents him from understanding his subjugation inside and outside prison, and he has no chance to reflect on his experience. Yet Sharaf, as well as his fellow inmates and the majority of the Egyptian population, pays a high price. Globalization, corruption, and oppression emasculate him and lead to the loss of the honor of the entire country.

Sharaf deals explicitly with homosexuality as a symptom of the national decline in Egypt. Although he is one of the most prominent and progressive Arab/Egyptian writers, Ibrahim sustains heteronormative conservative biases toward male homosexuality. Like many other contemporary Arab/Egyptians writers, he expresses anxiety over globalization and political and economic corruption by condemning male homosexuality. According to this view, globalization castrates the Egyptian nation, the repressive, corrupt Egyptian regime emasculates Egyptian men, and both create castrated homosexuals. The metaphors of rape and honor that animate the novel express the author’s notion of homosexuality as a national degradation. There is no discussion of homosexuality itself; Ibrahim takes it for granted that homosexuality is a symptom of the decline of the nation. That decline began in the year Sharaf was born, 1974, when Egyptian president Anwar Sadat (r. 1970–1981) announced his open-market policies, infitah. After 1974 Egypt was increasingly integrated
into the global economy from a subordinated position, which allowed President Hosni Mubarak (r. 1981–2011) to rapidly privatize Egypt’s economy during the 1990s under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund. Thus, Sharaf’s trajectory and fate in prison correspond to that of the country torn by economic failure, political repression, and the rise of violent political Islamism.

Because Egyptian critics share Ibrahim’s views, Sharaf was not challenged for its depiction of homosexuality, but Ibrahim was accused of plagiarizing Fathi Fadl’s novel al-Zinzana (1993; The cell). Ibrahim does not deny that he benefited from Fadl’s work, and he mentions al-Zinzana, along with many other works, in the acknowledgments section of Sharaf. Although many defended Ibrahim against the plagiarism accusation, readers of Sharaf can find several passages taken directly from al-Zinzana, including paragraphs about the detention in the police station, the trip from the station to prison, the layout of the prison cell, and the daily routine of inmates.

Ibrahim himself was imprisoned under President Gamal Abdel Nasser (r. 1956–1970), an experience that shaped his worldview, according to his own statement. Nasser’s regime imprisoned Ibrahim along with many other leftists and communists between 1959 and 1964. The same regime confiscated and banned Ibrahim’s first novel, Tilka alraʾiha (The smell of it), upon its publication in 1966. (It appeared in incomplete versions several times until its final version was published in 1986.) Before Sharaf, Ibrahim published all his work in Lebanon or with Dar al-Mustaqbal al-ʿi, a private, progressive Egyptian publishing house; avoiding state publishers underlined the distance between Ibrahim and the Egyptian regime and grounded Ibrahim’s reputation as a dissenter. Thus, the publication of Sharaf by the state-owned publishing house Dar al-Hilal raised questions about whether there had been a radical change in Ibrahim’s relationship with the regime. Ibrahim ended this speculation and confirmed his independence in 2003 when he publicly refused the Arab Novel Award, a prize given by the Ministry of Culture under Mubarak.

SEE ALSO Imarat Yaʿkubian (2002; Alaa al-Aswany); Jannā-Iblīs (1992; Nawal El Saadawi)

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Amrad Relationships and the Acceptance of Homoerotic Practices

Until the end of the nineteenth century, erotic relationships between grown men and adolescent boys (amrad in Persian) were considered normative in Iran as in many other Middle Eastern societies. Men would court boys, write love poems to them, and act as their patrons and lovers. Such relationships did not preclude grown men's heterosexual relations and marriage, and being attracted to boys did not exclude sexual attraction to women. This, however, changed during the decades of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Homoerotic relations came to be considered as perverse, unnatural, and immoral, and male (and female) sexuality was heteronormalized. The figure of the amrad gradually disappeared from the public discourse and was forgotten by Iranians themselves.

In her book *Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity* (2005), Afsaneh Najmabadi follows the process in which male-male erotic relationships were marginalized and delegitimized in Iranian society and the ways this process influenced relationships between the genders. Najmabadi opens her discussion with demonstrating how, during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, notions of beauty were similar for women and for male youths, to the point that in paintings of lovers from that period it is sometimes difficult to discern the gender of the beloved. This changed as the nineteenth century progressed, when female attributes such as breasts became more pronounced in such paintings. Beautiful women and beautiful boys could equally evoke male desire, and adolescent boys who had only the first traces of a mustache were perceived as representing ideal beauty. This early mustache was a marker of beauty for both genders, and women of that period would draw thin mustaches above their lips (*Najmabadi 2005*). The importance of the mustache lay in the fact that it marked the beginning of the passage from adolescence to manhood. A boy would become a man with the growth of full facial hair. The first appearance of a mustache, then, marked the final
stage in which a boy was still a legitimate object of male desire, but was about to lose that status, becoming a desiring man himself.

Late nineteenth-century portrait photographs showing men and their boy-lovers positioned in a way that suggests an intimate relationship are one proof of the legitimacy of the practice. They attest to the fact that men deemed it appropriate to have their portraits taken alongside “their” boys as part of their self-representation. Despite the Qur’anic edict prohibiting sodomy (levat/liwat), and despite the fact that sexual relations between two grown men were considered a sin and a crime, various sexual acts were not as strictly prohibited when occurring between a grown man and an adolescent boy. Furthermore, some Islamic jurists perceived sexual acts that did not include anal penetration as less severe than sodomy (Afary 2009; Floor 2008). Socially, the role the man played in the sexual act was crucial. Having an adolescent boy as a lover did not jeopardize the grown man’s masculinity as long as he was the “active” (penetrating) partner. However, once a man took the passive (penetrated) role, he lost his masculinity and with it, his honor (Floor 2008).
The amrad and his lover do not fit into binary definitions of gender or sexuality. The former is neither a man nor a woman, and being courted and penetrated by an older man does not make him a homosexual. The latter can desire young boys, but this does not make him a homosexual. Najmabadi and Janet Afary demonstrate that the homo/hetero binary (and, indeed, the man/woman binary) was not entirely relevant to Qajar society. They point to the manner in which male-male desire in Iran disrupted the scheme of homo/heterosexuality. (Afary 2009, 86, 107; Najmabadi 2005, 237). In addition to the amrad, men, who after growing up wished to remain an object of desire for other men and showed that by shaving their faces (and were thus named amradnuma—he who looks like an amrad), were considered unmanly and perverted, and were socially rejected (Najmabadi 2005). However, the desire to be anally penetrated was considered a medical condition called ʿubna (with the person afflicted with this condition termed maʿbun) that could be medically treated and not a personality trait or identity marker. Another nonbinary type is the mokhannas/mukhannath, an adult effeminate male who might adopt some feminine visual attributes and who often worked as an entertainer (Afary 2009).

Afary adds to Najmabadi’s description of boy-loving the aspect of power relations, showing how such relationships were usually unequal and sometimes nonconsensual and even pedophilic. The adult man–amrad relationship was based on several levels of power inequality: age, socioeconomic status, and sexual positioning. The older man was usually wealthier. Sometimes he was even the owner of the boy, as long as slavery existed in Iran. He was also the penetrating partner in sex. The boy’s own wishes and desires were not taken into account, and it is even suggested that he was not supposed to enjoy the sexual act. Furthermore, if on the one hand tales and poems about the beloved’s cruelty or indifference were common, the rape of a boy was sometimes considered a proper subject for jokes or boasting (Afary 2009).

Adoption of European Heteronormativity

Starting with the late nineteenth century, definitions of desire and love went through a process of heteronormalization. This was expressed by the rejection of homoerotic practices by Iranian modernizing intellectuals (Najmabadi 2005). Najmabadi argues that the exposure of educated Iranians to Europeans’ abhorrence of homosexuality and to their criticism of Iranian society’s homoerotic practices was the main cause for the abandonment of amrad loving. Similar explanations are offered by Dror Ze’evi (2006) and Joseph Massad (2007) regarding the Ottoman Empire and Egypt.

The influence that Western perceptions of Iranian sexuality had over Iranian reformers can be partly explained by the political conditions of the country during this period. The early decades of the twentieth century were a period in which Western involvement and influence in Iranian internal affairs were at a high point. Russia and Great Britain were competing for influence in the country, and military losses in the nineteenth century
brought about increased European economic activity and presence in Iran. Militarily and economically, Iran was at a disadvantage vis-à-vis foreign powers. Attempting to ameliorate this situation, Iranian modernizing reformers suggested a range of political, military, educational, judicial, and cultural changes, inspired by Western models. Following Western assertions regarding Iranian sexuality, homoerotic practices (as well as women’s veiling and seclusion) came to represent Iran’s backwardness and lack of modernity (Najmabadi 2005).

Another explanation given by Najmabadi for the adoption of European heteronormativity by Iranians is that Iranian men who traveled to Europe were deeply affected by the experience of being surrounded by men and women in a heterosocial public sphere as well as by being courted by European women. In this manner, despite the fact that Iranians viewed both European beardless men and women as objects of desire, the attention they received from European women refashioned and reeducated them in the heteronormative direction (Najmabadi 2005).

Iranian intellectuals who adopted a homophobic stance used it also to protest the seclusion of women in Iranian society and their veiling. They claimed that the homoerotic practices of men in Iran resulted from the inaccessibility of women to men and from the fact that, because of the gender-segregated nature of Iranian society, men lived in an exclusively male society starting with adolescence. According to these intellectuals, if Iranian society were heterosocial like European society, this kind of phenomenon would not have evolved (Najmabadi 2005). This meant that the modernist attempt to reconfigure Iranian society as a heterosocial society, where unrelated men and women could interact freely in the public sphere, was thus connected to the process of heteronormalizing male sexuality.

**The Link between Heteronormalization and Nationalism**

The process of heteronormalization of love and desire took place not only via homophobic writing. The simultaneous exaltation of heterosexual love in patriotic discourse as well as in discussions of marriage and of women’s status was equally important in this context. The early twentieth century was the period in which an Iranian nationalist movement emerged and took shape, mostly surrounding the events of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905 to 1911. Looking into the nationalist discourse of late nineteenth-century Iranians, Najmabadi offers the intriguing notion that imagining the homeland as a woman (a mother or a beloved) and configuring love of the homeland as a heterosexual love in themselves helped in solidifying the heteronormalization of love and desire in Iran. It also provided men with an alternative homosocial activity in the public sphere to replace previous activities now seen as unmodern and immoral.

Another link between the rise of the Iranian nationalist movement and the rejection of boy-loving was suggested by Sivan Balslev (2016). Balslev points to the nature of the nationalist project as border-marking, marking the geographical boundaries of the homeland, and
marking the human boundaries of the nation. In a period when clear boundaries became central to the Iranian imagination, possibly due to the destabilizing effects of accelerated and radical changes that characterize a society going through a process of modernization, stable gender boundaries became increasingly important. As part of the discourse of reform and progress, early discussions on women's education, unveiling, and their status within the family both challenged and entrenched accepted notions of gender. Figures such as the amrad or mokhannas/mukhannath, who blurred gender boundaries, were less tolerable in such a period and became “abject” figures.

**The Promotion of Companionate Marriage and Procreation** Najmabadi considers the promotion of companionate/romantic marriage part of the process of heteronormalization of Iranian society. Introducing desire and love into a relationship that was traditionally perceived mostly as a procreative contract, or a way to cement ties between families, assisted in redirecting the homoerotic inclinations of men toward a heterosexual relationship (Najmabadi 2005). Romantic marriages were promoted in newspaper articles and serialized stories where Iran's political situation frustrated a happy union between man and woman. Thus, readers’ desire to see the lovers marry became a patriotic desire for political change. Patriotism and companionate marriage became interlinked in such stories.

This link also had much to do with demographic concerns prevalent in interwar Iran. Balslev shows how the debate regarding marriage reform in Iran tied together reform of male sexuality with anxieties about demography. The years following the Constitutional Revolution, followed by Iran's occupation during World War I (1914–1918), were years of political chaos, military weakness, and physical hardship for the population as a result of famine, droughts, and plagues. Demographic concerns regarding Iran's supposedly small and sickly population called for a heterosexual, monogamous, balanced male sexuality that was to produce numerous healthy and moral offspring. Heteronormalization was only one among several other changes in sexual norms promoted in Iran during these decades that aimed to solve the (real or imagined) demographic crisis of the country. The patriotic Iranian man was required to let go of boyloving as well as child-brides, prostitutes, polygyny, and promiscuity, and to avoid late bachelorhood. Legitimate objects of desire for a grown man narrowed down to the single, adult, Iranian woman.

These demands of Iranian men were promoted in the name of national interest, which required a procreation-oriented male sexuality. Homosexual sex was counter-reproductive and therefore unpatriotic. Not only did it not result in the production of children who would strengthen the nation, it also damaged companionate marriage by impinging upon the sexual and emotional ties between man and wife (Balslev 2016).

**Iranian Women's Homosexual and Homosocial Bonds** Companionate marriage, as Najmabadi shows, had a similar impact on women’s homosexual and homosocial bonds. Information about women's homoerotic practices in Iran is scant, but some practices may
attest to deep emotional and sexual ties between women. In Qajar Iran, women could profess “sisterhood vows,” which marked a union between two married women (single women were not allowed to take a sisterhood vow) and were a framework in which homosexual acts would sometimes occur. Such vows would take place in a shrine, usually on specific festive dates of the year; the ceremony itself resembled marriage in some aspects (Afary 2009). According to Willem Floor (2008), sisterhood vows were still in existence in the 1930s. However, Najmabadi claims that such vows were replaced during the twentieth century by masquerading practices, such as cohabitation or marrying the same man. Companionate marriage urged women to abandon former homosocial/sexual bonds with other women. They were supposed to detach themselves from the feminine world of their mothers and the harem and invest all their emotional energies in the new conjugal pact, marginalizing attachments to female relatives, friends, and servants.

**The Persistence of Homoerotic Practices in Twentieth-Century Iran** Despite the fact that the discourse regarding homosexuality became increasingly negative and that boyloving lost its legitimacy, homoerotic practices did not disappear from Iranian reality. The press still discussed such practices even in the 1930s, and sex among men continued as part of the sex industry, under the guise of relationships such as apprenticeship or employment (Afary 2009). The delegitimation of certain homoerotic practices can be seen in the penal code of 1925, which prohibited sodomy, both with males and females. There was no direct reference to homosexuality in the code, though, and the Persian term for homosexuality (*ham jens bazi* or *ham jens gara*) appeared only in the mid-twentieth century (Floor 2008).

SEE ALSO *Masculinity in Iranian Cinema; Mufākharat al-Jawārī wa-al-Ghilmān (al-Jāḥiz); Ottoman and Persian Miniature Paintings; Sex Reassignment Surgery in Iran; Transgender Identity in Iranian Cinema; Transgendered Subjectivities in Contemporary Iran*

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Sins Against Nature in Colonial Latin America

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The colonial prosecution of crimes grouped together under the term sodomy in Latin America from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

Spanish and Portuguese magistrates and inquisitors in colonial Latin America—from the late sixteenth century to the early nineteenth—grouped bestiality, same-sex relations, nonprocreative opposite-sex relations (primarily oral and anal sex), and masturbation under the term sodomy and referred to them as inherently nefarious, abominable, and against nature. Punishments given to transgressors suggest the general acceptance of Saint Thomas Aquinas’s (c. 1224–1274) views: bestiality was the gravest of the sins against nature because the “use of the right species is not observed,” followed by same-sex relationships because the “use of the right sex is not observed,” followed by “not observing the right manner of copulation” and, finally, “pollution without any copulation” (quoted in Gilbert 1981, 62). Inquisition and criminal cases provide insight into early modern Iberian and colonial Latin American perceptions of human desire. Unlike the more recent views of human sexuality that tend to classify people as heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual because of supposed innate sexual orientations, criminal and religious authorities in colonial Latin America thought that persons who had sexual relations with members of their own sex, for example, had sexual drives like their own but had surrendered to carnal impulses that both the Catholic Church and the secular justice system deemed “against nature” (contra natura).

The term sodomy derives from sodomiticus, the Latin word used to describe the biblical city of Sodom destroyed by fire and brimstone by Yahweh because of the supposed depraved sexual activities of its inhabitants. The act of sodomy was said to cause plagues, famines, and disasters (Nesvig 2001), and there are multiple examples throughout colonial Latin American history of communities trying to “purify” themselves after especially egregious (and highly public) cases of sodomy came to light and transgressors were punished. Much of the official rhetoric of the church and state referred to sodomites in colonial Latin
America as "abominable" and "dirty." The act itself was described as "the ugly crime of sodomy" and as "a vice completely contrary to nature." The derogatory word *puto* existed in common vernacular and was defined in colonial dictionaries, with pejorative connotations, as "a man who commits a nefarious act" (quoted in Penyak 1993), yet there is some evidence that the term itself may have been used by some men to describe themselves and their own desires (Tortorici 2007a). And, while in theory magistrates and inquisitors were equally concerned with both male and female sodomy, in practice relatively few cases of female sodomy ever came to light; some of them are discussed below (Black 2016; Vainfas and Tortorici 2016). It was not until the nineteenth century that the term *homosexual* was coined as a medicalized term to identify (and denigrate) those who exhibited same-sex desires, and for this reason the term itself appears in none of the colonial Latin American historical records.

The Spanish Inquisition set up tribunals of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Lima (1570), Mexico City (1571), and Cartagena (1610) largely to combat the crime of heresy, and while sodomy throughout the Spanish American colonies did not technically fall under the jurisdiction of the Holy Office, there is no shortage of Inquisition cases investigating men (and rarely women) for sodomy. Yet in nearly all these cases some other act of heresy was the principal crime, such as a priest who solicited sexual favors from penitents during confession or an individual who publicly asserted that sodomy was not a sin. In stark contrast to colonial Spanish America, the Portuguese in colonial Brazil never established an independent tribunal of the Inquisition. Instead, in the late sixteenth century, the Portuguese Crown sent two inquisitorial visitations to Brazil (1591–1593 in Bahia and 1593–1595 in Pernambuco), which uncovered several cases of male and female sodomy. Those records have been the key source for historians of colonial Brazil who have researched and written on the topic of female sodomy (Bellini 1989). Crucial records on the "sins against nature" exist for much of colonial Latin America, however sparse they may be, but the focus here is on colonial New Spain because of the unique wealth of documentary evidence and historical scholarship that have been produced on the topic.

**Contrasting Treatment of Clerics and Laypersons**

The organization and scope of the Holy Office of the Mexican Inquisition made it the ideal mechanism for supervising clerical morality, investigating priests accused of abusing the confessional, and safeguarding the reputation of the church by discreetly punishing clerics accused and convicted of sodomy (González Marmolejo 2002), a punishment that sharply contrasted with the harsh punishments received by laypersons convicted of sodomy, as discussed later in more detail. Papal decrees required inquisitors to punish any priest who provoked or tempted persons to participate in sacrilegious and heretical acts before, during, or after confession. Most solicitation cases concerned priests and female penitents; however, a smaller number examined priests who solicited sexual favors from men or from
both men and women. Despite its condemnation of the act of sodomy, the Holy Office proved reluctant to prosecute priests, which sometimes contributed to serial abuse (as in the present). The case of Father José María García (denounced in the cities of Zacatecas, Puebla, and Guanajuato between 1782 and 1795) serves as a case in point, demonstrating the high degree of inquisitorial negligence. The first denunciation against him in 1785 for fondling a male parishioner resulted in the rather benign punishment of undertaking “spiritual exercises” (i.e., he had to pray more) and making a general confession. Eight years later, however, the Holy Office decided to more thoroughly investigate García’s self-denunciation for “repeated solicitations of men,” in which he provided information on the thirty-two men (and at least two women) whom he solicited in the confessional in the interim. He said he had always been discreet, had sex with each person only once, and purposely selected individuals from the countryside of limited economic resources and little stature in society. His only punishment was being restricted to administering the sacrament of confession to clerics inside his own convent (Penyak 2008).

The 1799 case of Father José Gregorio Zebrón in the town of Calimaya typifies the sympathetic sentences reserved for priests. Four separate denunciations for solicitation against Zebrón (between 1784 and 1800) led to a formal inquisitorial review, in which he confessed that he had indeed had sex with forty additional men over the course of the last decade and a half of the eighteenth century. Inquisitors called his actions “sodomitic” (somético), forbade him from ever confessing men or women and from celebrating Mass for thirty days, and required him to say certain prayers on his knees on Fridays and Saturdays. He was placed under house arrest in a convent for two years (Penyak 2008).

In contrast, laypersons convicted of sodomy faced far harsher punishments: many were publicly shamed and whipped, sent to prison, forced to labor on public works projects, banished forever, or conscripted into the military for periods ranging from six to ten years. And, in especially harsh sentences, dozens of men were sentenced to death for sodomy, usually garroted and burned at the stake. An Inquisition trial in Mexico City that commenced in 1765 and concluded in 1768, illustrates differences in the interrogations and punishments involving nonclerics and similarities in the powerlessness of victims at the hands of sexual predators. In 1765 Mexican inquisitors charged Manuel Gordillo, a successful fifty-eight-year-old Spanish merchant, with saying that men were permitted to touch one another even to the point of orgasm without incurring sin. Because this statement contradicted Catholic Church doctrine, the Inquisition, rather than secular courts, handled the case. Nine witnesses testified that Gordillo used his economic status to persuade men to have sexual relations with him and that he used force when monetary inducements failed to elicit his desired goal. Because Gordillo refused to admit guilt he was subjected to torture, his arms loosely tied to an apparatus that tightened with each turn of its wheel. Four turns failed to elicit a confession. Inquisitors sentenced him to receive 200 lashes and then ordered his imprisonment in Havana for six years (Penyak 1993). Importantly, Gordillo was not punished by the Inquisition for having committed acts of
sodomy but rather for the heretical statements that he uttered—specifically, that neither “impure touches among men nor the orgasm that followed were sinful”—in order to convince other men to have sex with him (Archivo General de la Nación, Inquisición, vol. 1078, exp. 4, f. 132). The victims of García, Zebrón, and Gordillo were relatively powerless compared to their violators. Indeed, older, wealthier men in positions of authority were more likely to seek sexual favors from younger, less powerful males.

Male couples who had consensual sex could expect to receive similar punishment from magistrates regardless of the specific act they committed. Colonial magistrates considered all sodomites equally sinful and reprehensible and did not differentiate between or use distinct vocabulary to describe, for example, penetrator and penetrated. Each person received similar sentences (Spurling 1998; Hurteau 1993).

**Anal Sex**

Male-female couples who engaged in anal sex could also, in theory, be charged with sodomy, yet there are exceedingly few archival cases on this topic. In 1826 (only five years after Mexico’s independence from Spain in 1821) Policarpo Flores’s defense lawyer argued that his client was inebriated when he forced his wife to commit the offense—here, a criminal act—and therefore had lost his reasoning faculty, which he characterized as “man’s only brake, which guides him and prevents [people from committing] certain acts.” The influence of alcohol, the lawyer continued, left Flores “without the will or the force to resist them.” Flores’s wife also blamed alcohol: “Drink is the mother of all vices and the cause of all offenses that are committed” (quoted in Penyak 1993, 255). Husband and wife were sentenced to two years’ labor on a public works project and one year as a servant in a hospital, respectively. Church and state officials assumed that anyone might commit lascivious sexual acts under certain circumstances (and even more frequently under the influence of alcohol); free will enabled everyone to make voluntary choices and rational decisions, to control his or her emotions and passions, and not to surrender to impulses and animalistic pleasures.

**Masturbation**

Inquisitors in Mexico and elsewhere throughout colonial Spanish America also examined cases of masturbation. Confessional manuals followed the typical question-and-answer format of that genre and encouraged priests to inquire, “Have you felt your own flesh, having [as] the object [of your desire] some woman...? How many times has this happened to you?” (quoted in Alva 1999, 108). José Eugenio Nepomuceno Beltrán, for example, spent several months in prison in central Mexico in 1816 for his masturbatory habit, described as “the enormous sin upon which falls the curse of the Holy Spirit” (quoted in Penyak 2008, 354). Archival references to female masturbation, though rare, are occasionally documented, as in the 1621 Inquisition case of a young mestiza woman, Agustina Ruiz, who...
admitted to having engaged in repeated sexual acts with the Virgin Mary and the saints. For her heretical visions and beliefs, the Inquisition sentenced her to three years in a convent—a punishment that was meant to rectify her, and that was lenient in part because she expressed great remorse (Tortorici 2007b). It is worth recognizing that Ruiz’s crime was not the act of masturbation per se, but rather the heretical visions of Jesus, the Virgin, and the saints that accompanied her masturbatory visions.

**Bestiality**

Contemporaries generally considered bestiality the most evil of the “sins against nature” because it was “discordant with rational nature and indecent” and contravened the order of nature even more so than same-sex acts or masturbation (Ferrer 1778, 2:314). Rural areas throughout colonial Latin America accrued their fair share of bestiality cases (Bazant 2016; Tortorici, 2018), although there are relatively few historical studies on the topic despite the plethora of cases. Those accused tended to be young, single males who worked on haciendas and who abused the burros, mares, dogs, mules, and goats under their care when they thought they were unobserved. When caught and interrogated, men and adolescents blamed sexual privation for having caused them to abuse animals. Eighteen-year-old Vicente Bonifacio Isidro de la Peña said he “fornicated with a burro” in 1801 because he was “possessed by the heat of concupiscence and had no opportunity to relieve it.” In 1808 Lorenzo Aguirre said that he had resorted to penetrating a burro because he had been unable to find a woman (Penyak 1993, 283). Those found guilty received sentences similar to laypersons who had had sex with men: corporeal punishments, banishment, public shaming, and, far less frequently, castration or the death penalty (Tortorici, 2018). Importantly, the animals implicated in cases of bestiality were regularly put to death, usually by blows to the head or by fire “so that in this way the memory of the act will be deadened” (quoted in Penyak 1993, 280). This form of animal eradication was both symbolic (to purify the community) and practical (to prevent the meat or milk of a defiled animal from being consumed).

**Illicit Female Sexuality**

Regarding the topic of female-female sodomy, several publications from the late twentieth century forward have displaced the paucity of archival evidence on female-female sex in colonial Latin America (Bellini 1989; Vainfas and Tortorici 2016; Black 2016; Holler 1999; Velasco 2011). Women who sought the sexual company of other women or who engaged in self-gratification were not necessarily said to have been committing sodomy. The language in documents dealing with illicit female sexuality is devoid of the same careful detail and the virtual hysteria present in cases dealing with male criminalized sexuality, suggesting that officials did not consider sex among women to be as much of a threat to society as sex among men. The 1796 case of Gregoria Piedra in Mexico City even reveals that some
members of society thought that others might be sexually inclined toward a member of the same sex and not just victims of depraved temptation. Equally important, the trial references Piedra's friendship with female members of her community, suggesting that not everyone viewed her as an outcast. Inquisitors were less understanding; they sentenced her to eight years of confinement in a religious home for women—her use of men's attire in public and sacrilegious treatment of the Eucharistic host contributing to the lengthy sentence, as both acts were deemed worthy of punishment, respectively, by secular and inquisitorial courts (Penyak 1993; Camba Ludlow 2003).

**Same-Sex Subcultures**

Scholars of sodomy and “homosexuality” in colonial Latin America have long tried to document the existence of same-sex subcultures (Garza Carvajal 2003; Mott 2003; Tortorici, 2018). Asunción Lavrin and Serge Gruzinski, for example, have written separately about the 123 men from Puebla and Mexico who were prosecuted between 1657 and 1658, fourteen of whom were publicly burned at the stake in Mexico City. An additional boy received 200 lashes as opposed to death because of his young age. Lavrin (2005) notes that these men provided mutual support for one another but often lived as social pariahs. Gruzinski (2003) suggests the existence of a subculture with its own secret geography and networks of information and informants, as well as its own language and codes, but he acknowledges that these men were essentially thrown together through their marginalization and the repression of their activities. Zeb Tortorici’s (2010, 2018) examination of sodomy cases in mostly rural areas of Mexico convinced him of the existence of subcultures consisting of “social networks of men who sought out and knew where to have sex with other men” (Tortorici 2007a, 50).

**Societal Views on Same-Sex Intimacy**

Scholars’ conclusions about societal perceptions of and reactions to same-sex intimacy are influenced both by the primary documents they examine and by the politics of the present. While this entry has focused largely on the authors’ own expertise on colonial Mexico, there are a growing number of studies on the topic for other parts of Latin America and the early modern Iberian Atlantic world (Horswell 2005; Molina 2016; Few 2007). The historian who mines inquisitorial and criminal documents might conclude that such individuals almost always risked societal condemnation and severe punishment if caught. Yet, lest one think that this is solely a story of repression, the archival record makes clear that social control throughout colonial Latin America was sporadic and irregular. The death sentence for sodomy and bestiality was applied inconsistently, and punishment depended on the particulars of each case, the motivations of the court, and the social positions of those charged, testifying, or accusing. Many social actors evidently chose to ignore instances and allegations of sodomy or merely gossiped about them to friends and neighbors rather than
Researchers who rely on documentation from rural areas outside the immediate reach of powerful church and state officials often make a strong case for a more relaxed and even sympathetic attitude toward people who did not subscribe to societal norms. Both sets of researchers, however, admit to finding examples of leniency and intolerance that seemingly contradict their own conclusions. The lesson to be learned is that, like today, in many societies, some people believed or had as take in forcing all members of society to conform to a single religious and cultural sexual morality, whereas others, usually without pretentions to power and influence, adopted the view that individuals who were thought or known to share same-sex attraction did not negatively affect the lives of others and could be tolerated and sometimes accepted as they were.

**JUANA AGUILAR: HERMAPHRODITISM AND COLONIAL COURTS**

In 1792, in what is now El Salvador, the Real Audiencia (High Criminal Court) of Guatemala began criminal proceedings against Juana Aguilar for having reportedly “violated” a woman. Nearly a decade later, in 1801, she was charged with a similar crime: “double concubinage” with both men and women, though this time in Guatemala City (Martínez Durán 1941). Aguilar—a historical figure who is often read retrospectively as “trans”—has aroused more curiosity and generated more scholarship than perhaps any other “queer” figure in colonial Latin American or early modern Iberian Atlantic history. The murky details of her case—documented through medical writing published in colonial newspapers and in a handful of archival documents—continue to provoke scholars, and more recently, performance artists, who have sought to imagine the circumstances of her life and its disruption of colonial Latin American society.

Aguilar dressed and identified as a woman but rumors circulated, alleging her to be either a man or a hermaphrodite. In order to have committed sodomy—yet another crime that the criminal court charged her with—and be held accountable for her crime, if indeed there was one, Aguilar needed to be legally recognized as either a man or a woman. Unsure of how to proceed, the secular courts in both trials turned to medical experts—surgeons and midwives—to determine her sex and make sense of this legal, medical, and bodily conundrum. In multiple physical examinations, doctors probed and studied Aguilar’s body, especially her clitoris, all to determine how the criminal court might understand, categorize, and adjudicate her behavior. In 1803 Doctor Narciso Esparragosa concluded, perhaps paradoxically, that Aguilar was neither man, nor woman, nor hermaphrodite: “Not only is the exterior configuration of the clitoris very similar to the virile member, but also its internal structure, in the way that according to the uniform consent of the most famous anatomists, it only lacks the urethra or the duct through which urine leaves [the body], for which one cannot
Without a clearly visible vaginal cavity, or a seminal tube, the doctor recommended that Aguilar be exonerated of the crime of sodomy, which would have entailed her being either fully male or female, biologically speaking. In 1803 Esparragosa published his findings in the *Gazeta de Guatemala*, a late colonial Guatemalan newspaper, subjecting Aguilar to further inspection by her peers, as well as by contemporary historians, who have primarily encountered her through the doctor's reports published in this newspaper.

The story of Aguilar joins a long history of so-called hermaphroditism—embedded within the larger framework of the “sins against nature” of sodomy and bestiality and other unnatural acts and desires—within the Iberian Atlantic world, including such figures as Eleno/Elena de Céspedes in early modern Spain and Mariano Aguilera in colonial Mexico, on whom a growing number of scholarly publications have focused. The collective sexual ambiguity of those whom, today, we might term intersex greatly troubled medical and legal authorities that sought to naturalize heterosexual relations through binary categories of sexual difference. Early modern Christian views of sex and marriage relied on a clear physiological definition of man and woman, which was necessarily connected to their respective reproductive function. The logic held true for sodomy, which, as a nonprocreative act of sex, signified a violation of the natural order created and maintained by God. Hermaphroditism, too, challenged this definition of sexual order, and with it, the legal and social codes by which colonial society was governed. However, as Martha Few and María Elena Martínez both show, the threat of hermaphroditism also provided opportunities to redefine the rules of classification, extending the reach of authorities into the lives (and beds) of queer colonial subjects.

Aguilar—and her entry into the colonial archive—indicates the importance of sexuality and its control in late colonial Guatemala and the broader Iberian world, and well into the present. Bodies deemed unnatural were exploited to enhance science and medicine. However, the energetic but ultimately frustrated efforts made to meticulously classify Aguilar, down to the size of her clitoris, ultimately expose how heterosexual relations were socially and politically produced and made to seem natural. The decade-long debate over a suspected hermaphrodite reveals, through the uncertainty of professional medicine, how untenable these regulations were in defining what it meant to be a man or a woman.

Aguilar was, ultimately, as per the recommendations by Doctor Esparragosa, exonerated of any crime. The documents of the early nineteenth-century criminal trial have only recently come to light, and it is still unclear to what extent Esparragosa’s medical findings held sway in the court’s decision to set Aguilar free. Future research will certainly further illuminate how the reliance or rejection of medical expertise shaped competing ideas about sexual difference, criminal proclivities, and human
nature in the criminal case (and journalistic dissemination) of the body and desires of Aguilar. The (once presumed) lack of archival documentation that animates these questions continues to inspire alternative historical methodologies and queer performances, as evidenced by the scholarship of Martínez (2014). Aguilar—through the performative practices in radical queer art, history, and politics—resonates still for those contending with the enduring forms of discrimination and homophobia first shaped by the colonial desire to fix criteria for sexual and racial difference.

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Sodomy cases support research that emphasizes the pivotal role of the institution of marriage in colonial Latin America (Lavrin 2005). Courts promoted and protected this institution in the belief that moral individuals in stable families buttressed the order and stability of the realm. Men and women who offended that institution by participating in premarital sex or committing adultery received mild punishments if they acknowledged their wrongdoing and promised to respect the institution of marriage in the future (and many, of course, simply went undiscovered and unpunished). Men and women who succumbed to unnatural acts that could not lead to procreation received severe punishments because their sins were affronts to God and society, wasted precious seed, and mocked society’s most revered institutions of marriage and family.

**Postcolonial Developments**

Colonial views about gender and sexuality remained firmly entrenched after the early nineteenth-century wars of independence and shaped criminal prosecutions of same-sex couples in Latin America well into the nineteenth century. Sodomy was decriminalized in many countries, including Argentina, Mexico, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Paraguay, Peru, and Brazil, in the nineteenth century, often with new law codes and constitutions that were written and enacted after independence. Yet, in other countries, sodomy remained criminalized well into the twentieth century, and sometimes even into the present, most notably in several Caribbean nations, including Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, and...
Jamaica. Sodomy in Trinidad and Tobago was decriminalized as recently as April of 2018. Most countries, however—whether or not sodomy was technically decriminalized—continued to arrest men for same-sex intimacy, although they did so through vague laws related to “indecency,” public morals, and customs (Monsiváis 2003). Over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, citizens began to view the “homosexual” as a person (albeit disordered) with distinct preferences or orientations toward the same sex and not as someone whose vice perverted the natural order of men. Some scholars note the development over time of the active-passive dichotomy, which generally resulted in increasing scorn and hatred toward “passive” men (those who were penetrated) and a degree of tolerance toward discreet “active” participants (those who penetrated others) in male-male sexual activity (Lancaster 1992; Prieur 1996). Subcultures developed in most areas despite continued persecution and prosecution, sometimes resulting in scandalous roundups of groups of men, such as the forty-one men arrested at a drag queen ball in Mexico City in 1901 who were tried, convicted, and sentenced to hard labor on plantations (Monsiváis 2003). Only in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries have some countries, such as Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Cuba, and Colombia, acknowledged LGBT rights, some allowing marriage and adoption, and recognizing the rights of transgender people to legally change their names and gender without medical or judicial mediation. Several other countries—most notably Paraguay, Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, and Nicaragua—remain hostile to extending equal rights to people with same-sex attraction. Whereas the theology and ideology of the Catholic Church shaped colonial views of sodomites, some studies have noted that intolerance of “homosexuals” today seems strongest in areas with significant evangelical populations, and evangelicalism’s rapid growth throughout Latin America may not bode well for the precarious future of LGBT rights and welfare in many countries (Pew Research Center 2014).

SEE ALSO El Baile de los 41; Confessional Manuals in Colonial Latin America; Conquest and Sodomy in Latin America; Inquisition, Criminal Courts, and Sexuality in Colonial Latin America

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Situational Homosexuality

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A term used to describe same-sex sexual activity that occurs under specific circumstances rather than as part of a homosexual lifestyle.

The term *situational homosexuality* has, as the historian Regina Kunzel (2008) has observed, very specific origins. It was developed by sexologists and other social scientists during the middle decades of the twentieth century to serve various cultural purposes. Also characterized (in different contexts) as transient, circumstantial, pseudo, or emergency homosexuality and frequently cast as a form of sexual contact distinct from that engaged in by “true” homosexuals, the concept of “situational homosexuality” has been used to describe same-sex relations between men and women in contexts such as single-sex schools and colleges, the military, prisons, and religious orders. Scholars such as Kunzel and Jeffrey Escoffier (2003) agree that the term was coined in this period to differentiate context-driven sexual activities in these communities from those engaged in by homosexuals—individuals with increasingly fixed sexual and social identities that were predicated, at least in part, on a congenitally acquired predilection for a particular sexual object choice.

Still, David M. Halperin (2002) has provided a reminder that many acts that were labeled as “situational” in the mid-twentieth century were bound up with systems of hierarchy in which mutuality was masked by the exercise of power or the assertion of authority. Relations of this sort, he is careful to note, occurred in a variety of settings across time and space. In short, distinctions between “normative” same-sex behaviors and “pathologized” same-sex desire have a history that predates both the rise of sexual taxonomies and the growth of sexology in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The term *situational*, thus, might be used to describe a range of same-sex activities across various time periods and cultures. Historically, it can be applied to maledominated environments in Renaissance Florence where relations between older men and adolescent boys were common, even after they began to be policed (in 1432) by a specially created enforcement agency known as the Office of the Night (Rocke 1996). Similarly, it can be used to describe relations, in more contemporary contexts, between men who identify as “mostly straight,” “men who have sex with men,” “sexually fluid,” or men on the “down low” (Savin-Williams 2017).

Pre-nineteenth-Century Examples
Even though the term *situational homosexuality* is a relatively recent invention, it clearly still serves some utility in describing certain erotic behaviors that emerged in various historical contexts where same-sex behaviors were common. In the ancient Greek state of Sparta—a militaristic and masculinist culture that privileged and eroticized the nude, athletic body—the segregation of the sexes was common, with boys being removed from their homes at an early age to undergo physical and military training. Within such a context, relations between older soldiers and younger men just embarking on their military careers were common and considered to be of value to the recruit, who not only provided a sexual outlet to his older mentor, but also acquired from his partner invaluable knowledge about the ways of the world (*Scanlon 2005*). Similarly, in the dynastic courts of the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) in China, same-sex relations were common in the royal households of emperors where government officials, artists, musicians, astrologers, and military men congregated (*Carton 2006*).

Opportunities for intimacy between men and between women presented themselves in a variety of contexts in the medieval and early modern world. In Catholic Europe, sexual acts between monks in monasteries and nuns in convents were reasonably common, although the extent to which such acts can be documented is limited by the availability of relevant primary sources. One example, recounted in the work of the historian Judith C. Brown, among others, is that of the Italian nun Benedetta Carlini (1591–1661). A mystic and religious leader at a convent in the city of Pescia, she and her story became known when church authorities investigated her relationship with another nun, Bartolomea Crivelli. A large archival dossier documents an intimate sexual relationship, in which Carlini assumed the identity of a male angel named Splendidiello. While Brown has labeled her a lesbian nun, this category would not, of course, have been available to Carlini in the seventeenth century. Questions of identity aside, the case serves as a reminder that sexual activity in same-sex institutions was not a feature of the modern period alone (*Brown 1986*).

One final example serves to further illustrate this point. The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were characterized both by European exploration of North and South America, Africa, and Asia and increased international trade. The establishment of extensive imperial networks relied on a large labor force of sailors who manned the ships that traveled, in the Spanish case, from the city of Seville to the Caribbean, as well as to Central and South America. In a study on the topic, Pablo E. Pérez-Mallaína rehearses an explanatory theory that very much resembles the idea of “situational homosexuality,” noting “that the special conditions of isolation and the predominantly masculine component of the crews converted the workplace on long transoceanic voyages into a situation especially favorable to the development of homosexuality” (*1998, 170*). While Pérez-Mallaína notes that there were a small number of women frequently onboard these ships and that those who committed sodomy could be subjected to punishment, these environments were nonetheless conducive to same-sex relations, especially between more experienced sailors and young apprentices. Similar conditions prevailed among male vagrant populations in
England and pirate communities in the Caribbean around the same time (Burg 1995).

Segregated Communities and Same-Sex Behaviors—The Nineteenth Century

Relationships and activities among same-sex groups that might be labeled as situational abounded in a variety of settings in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In Canada, fur traders of French descent, known as voyageurs, likely engaged in sexual relations with each other and with their aboriginal guides, even though they had access to native women as sexual and romantic partners (Podruchny 2006). The push westward in North America by explorers, travelers, and settlers of European descent in the first half of the nineteenth century produced multiple circumstances to observe and engage in same-sex sex in predominantly male settings. William Drummond Stewart (1795–1871), a Scottish aristocrat, traveled with fur traders through the Rocky Mountains in the 1830s. In part, William Benemann notes in a 2012 biography, Stewart did so to pursue the company of other men and knew that, in this homosocial world, relationships between men (such as the one that he pursued with a biracial man named Antoine Clement) were both possible and permissible. Similarly, in documenting his journey along the Oregon Trail in a book that was published in 1849 and simply titled The Oregon Trail, the historian Francis Parkman commented on the social relationships among the native peoples he encountered along the way, recounting tenderly the same-sex intimacy of two Sioux men, identified as Rabbit and Hail-Storm (Katz 1992).

In studying the Pacific Northwest region of the United States and Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the historian Peter Boag has noted the degree to which the burgeoning economy of that region in these years relied on transient or migratory labor. Within the logging, fishing, and mining communities he examines, sex between younger men (referred to as “punks”) and older men (referred to as “wolves” or “jockers”) was relatively common and reflective, once again, of the opportunities that could emerge in frontier contexts. Within such settings, particularly in such cities as Seattle, Washington, where casual workers, fishermen, and loggers congregated during their leisure hours in bars and saloons, teenage boys were known to resort to prostitution to sustain themselves economically while satisfying the desires of their older clients (Boag 2003). Similar conditions prevailed in gold rush San Francisco in the 1840s and 1850s, where the predominantly male population interacted at work and in leisure, including in all-male dances. While the degree of sexual contact remains impossible to know fully, the conclusion that same-sex relations indeed occurred in these settings seems reasonable. Cowboys involved in the cattle trade in the American West and mountaineers in the Canadian Rockies also formed strong homosocial bonds, some of which were clearly sexual in nature, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Beemyn 2006; Deslandes 2009).
Relationships of this sort also predominated in many imperial/colonial contexts where men lived in single-sex communities, as noted in work by both Ronald Hyam (1990) and Robert Aldrich (2003). In nineteenth-century India, for instance, colonial officials worried openly that if British soldiers did not have access to wives or prostitutes, the homosocial world of the barracks would naturally lead them to pursue homosexual liaisons. By labeling relations of this sort “special Oriental vices” (Bhaskaran 2002, 17), officials not only commented on the situational nature of some homosexual activity but also sought to mark same-sex sex as a “foreign” problem. Black miners engaged in the lucrative extraction of gold and diamonds in southern Africa during this period often migrated away from their wives and families to other regions to pursue employment. In doing so, they entered an intensely homosocial world where intimate sexual relations often flourished. According to one government report published in 1907, this practice was identified as “a well-recognized custom.” The report went on to note that it was common for recruits “to select from the youths and younger men what are termed amankotshane or izinkotshane.” These younger miners received food and presents in return for performing the tasks of a servant and sharing their master’s bed where, the author noted, they were “utilised for satisfying the passions,” usually through intercrural or “thigh” sex (Murray and Roscoe 1998, 178).

Passions between women were also common in nineteenth-century contexts. The literary critic Sharon Marcus (2007) has noted that intense and passionate relationships could easily develop in female-dominated private spheres or in female institutions. Rather than being pathologized, she notes, such relationships were often seen as a prelude or rehearsal for heterosexual courtship and marriage. In the girls’ schools and women’s colleges that grew in the years after 1850 in Great Britain and the United States, intense, frequently homoerotic, and sometimes sexually intimate relationships developed between students. Especially common were the “crushes” or “smashes” that younger girls or women developed for older students or their teachers (Vicinus 1989)—a type of relationship that generated considerable cultural fascination well into the twentieth century, as reflected in the German film (based on an earlier play) Mädchenin Uniform (1931; Girls in uniform), which tells the story of a schoolgirl who falls in love with her female teacher. Relationships of this sort were common enough to prompt an investigation in the 1880s by one committee at Newcomb College in New Orleans, Louisiana, which noted not only the love and sense of attachment that could develop between students but also their tendency to cuddle and sleep together (Beemyn 2006). Some women who were committed to social justice and to improving the conditions of life in urban slums in such cities as London, New York, and Chicago in this period became involved in the settlement house movement. This movement involved the creation of residential communities (usually sex-segregated) where wealthier women moved to work among the poor and provide them with a variety of social services. Such organizations as Chicago’s Hull-House and London’s Canning Town Women’s Settlement also provided spaces in which same-sex desires occasionally flourished, temporarily for some or more permanently for others (Koven 2004).
The activities described in this section did not escape the notice of late nineteenth-century social scientists, even if they did not use the term *situational homosexuality*. The British sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), for example, in publishing his work on “sexual inversion” (a late nineteenth-century term for “homosexuality”) in his multivolume *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, did not shy away from discussing contexts that might be identified as “situational,” referencing contemporary and historical examples from, among other places, ancient Greece. Ellis noted, for instance, that “homosexuality is specially fostered by those employments which keep women in constant association, not only by day, but often at night also, without the company of men” (1910, 212). Singled out for attention in his work were convents and female servant communities in large hotels. In discussing boys and men, Ellis was careful to note both the prevalence of sex between boys in English public schools (private, boarding schools) and to assert that these acts were frequently committed not by the “truly homosexual,” but by those with an “immature sexual instinct” (78)—ideas that were also present in the contemporaneous work of the Russian venereologist and sexologist V. M. Tarnovskii (1837–1906), who formulated theories about what he identified as acquired pederasty (Healey 2001). Similarly, the American sociologist Josiah Flynt (1869–1907) observed this phenomenon while following and studying tramps or hoboes on trains around the United States, a project documented in his book *Tramping with Tramps* (1899).

**Situational Homosexuality—The Twentieth Century**

Some of the traditions and experiences described in previous sections of this entry continued to prevail in the twentieth century and beyond. Given the prominence of global war during the first half of the twentieth century, it should come as no surprise that same-sex behaviors remained common in military contexts. In a study titled *Sittengeschichte des Weltkrieges* (1930; *The Sexual History of the World War* [1941]), the German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) documented the sexual practices of men in the trenches during World War I (1914–1918). Aside from noting the predominance of erotic literature and masturbation, Hirschfeld also had a lot to say about sex between men, noting, “It has been reported that on and off pseudo-homosexual intercourse, or homoerotic love between men who heretofore had been of normal sexuality, also played a role as a substitute form of sex satisfaction” (1941, 87). With men at the front during World War I, women took on a variety of important roles in home industries and in providing auxiliary services (though some Russian women engaged in combat). The female communities created for nurses and ambulance drivers, for instance, were one place where some women pursued intimate relationships with other women (sometimes as an expression of identity, and sometimes as a mode of sexual experimentation), as evidenced in such literary sources as Rose Allatini’s *Despised and Rejected* (published under the pseudonym A. T. Fitzroy in 1918) and Radclyffe Hall’s infamous novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). Allatini’s work, a pacifist novel that was ultimately banned, discusses various forms of situational same-sex relations between
women, including the "crushes" discussed in the work of Sharon Marcus (2007) and Martha Vicinus (1989) (Cohler 2007).

In the British army during World War II (1939–1945), sex between soldiers and sailors was reasonably common. For most, acts of this sort had nothing to do with the expression of a particular identity but functioned, instead, as a form of sexual release. As one former officer in the British navy noted, “Sailors were a fairly randy lot and masturbation was not at all uncommon. You could go down in the middle watch which was twelve midnight to four and hear a whisper come from a hammock, someone saying ‘Give us a wank,’ which was just completely accepted by the lower deck ratings” (quoted in Vickers 2013, 56). The lack of female companionship in many contexts and the fear of venereal disease were frequently cited as reasons for what historians such as John Howard (1999) and Matt Houlbrook (2005) have labeled “homosex.” In the British military, relations of this sort were structured around either differences in rank, age, and experience or sexual identity, with heterosexually identified men pursuing an active role in sex with queer-identified comrades. Similar dynamics prevailed in Nazi concentration camps, where attractive young prisoners (referred to as pipels) might receive special favors and status in exchange for acting as servants and sexual partners to older, higher-status prisoners or guards—a phenomenon chronicled in memoirs and fictional sources (Shallcross 2011).

Concerns about this reality of military life led some to express anxiety about the corrupting influences of same-sex environments where access to members of the opposite sex was limited. One American general stationed in France during World War II, for example, worried that the sex drive of his men would get the better of them. He openly expressed concern that the lack of female company would lead some men to pursue sex with fellow soldiers as an alternative. Like other medical professionals during the war, the German American endocrinologist and sexologist Harry Benjamin (1885–1986) ruminated on the sexuality of military men. In one piece he wrote, “Morals versus Morale in Wartime” (1943). Benjamin noted that men sometimes resorted to sex with other men out of desperation and that, on occasion, this led some to pursue homosexuality on a more permanent basis. Historical evidence collected by Allan Bérubé in his 1990 study of US soldiers during World War II shows that, in fact, it was not uncommon for men who identified as heterosexual to seek out sex with other men in the army, especially if their partners assumed a “passive” role.

In some ways, it was the experiences of war that led those interested in understanding psychosexual development to consider more fully the various “routes” to homosexuality. Discussions about acquired or congenital causes were common among those who were considering what to do about homosexuality in the military in the United States. Following Freudian principles, psychiatrists differentiated between normal heterosexuals, deviant homosexuals whose development had been arrested, and regressive heterosexuals who, under the pressures of military life, “reverted” to the homosexual stage of human
development. Such an analysis also figured into considerations of sex in American prisons in the twentieth century. While various prison officials had been discussing sex between prisoners and the distinctive sexual culture that had developed in penitentiaries since the late nineteenth century, prison sex became a matter of public concern as reports of what went on behind bars began to enter public discourse through newspaper reporting in the 1930s and 1940s (Kunzel 2008).

In the 1940s and 1950s there was a growth in the popularity of detailed studies of prison populations that examined same-sex sex and the distinctive sexual cultures that emerged in men's and women's institutions. Many of these, conducted by sociologists, psychologists, and psychiatrists, sought to understand the incidence of homosexual acts in prison and what the sociologist Donald Clemmer called, in his 1940 book The Prison Community, “prisonization”—a process of socialization that led many to accept the unique sexual cultures and hierarchies that prevailed in jails and penitentiaries. These studies led many to understand same-sex sex as a natural expression of a human impulse, borne out of unique circumstances and not necessarily connected to some sort of core sexual identity. Public fascination with these instances of situational behaviors was fueled by a variety of popular cultural forms. One 1954 article in the tabloid magazine True Confessions chronicled the experiences of women in prison, noting the effects of these unique environments on sexual behaviors (Kunzel 2008).

An emphasis on the situational quality of same-sex sex in certain contexts and environments has also featured in work examining a variety of other historical and social contexts in the second half of the twentieth century. Beginning in the 1950s, scholars interested in studying same-sex relations between women have noted the existence of age-variant relations (sometimes called “mummy-baby” relationships) between girls and women in Kenya and in the southern African countries of Lesotho and Swaziland (Spurlin 2006). These emerged out of several homosocial contexts, including girls' boarding schools and communities from which men had migrated to take advantage of labor opportunities elsewhere. In South Africa in the 1990s and early in the following decade, relationships between girls in boarding schools (known sometimes as amachicken relationships) were relatively common (a part of normative gender and sexual socialization) and not necessarily indicators of future sexual identities. The forms of intimacy in these relationships included cuddling and innocent kisses but also genital eroticism (Gunkel 2009).

**The Fate of “Situational Homosexuality”**

The term *situational homosexuality* has engendered a fair bit of criticism over the years. Jonathan Ned Katz, for instance, in a study that he titled *Gay American History* (first published in 1976 and revised in 1992) offered the following observation on the concept: “The traditional concept of ‘situational homosexuality’ or ‘pseudohomo-sexuality,’ implying
the existence of some nonsituational ‘true’ homosexuality, is misleading. All homosexuality (and heterosexuality) is situational—situated within a specific time, society, and class—and takes on a particular character in that context” (1992, 446). In the twenty-first century, terms of this sort, which smack of a social scientific certainty that may belie human experience, have been abandoned in favor of ideas that emphasize the language either of a sexual continuum or, perhaps more popularly, a lack of sexual and gender fixity. Even as the term situational homosexuality has fallen into disuse, the acts it was used to describe have continued to be examined by historians and other scholars interested in exploring the dynamics of same-sex sex and desire among men who do not necessarily identify as gay. One study of men who pursued sex with men in a park in Delhi, India, noted the varied ways in which they interpreted their acts and tried to situate them in the context of traditional kin and friendship networks (Seabrook 1999). Some have even sought to resurrect the term situational homosexuality or identify it with new names reflective of early twenty-first-century preoccupations with sexual fluidity (Savin-Williams 2017).

In exploring the phenomenon of “gay-for-pay” pornography actors (straight-identified men who engage in homosexual sex on film for pay), Jeffrey Escoffier (2003) has posited that the term situational might still have analytical utility. For many of these men, the motive is economic. The production process, Escoffier notes, involves tactics (including erotic stimulants that ensure that straight-identified men can get aroused) for effectively creating a situation where believable performances are possible. Scholarly work, much of it completed by sociologists, from the second decade of the twenty-first century has examined men who have sex with men while retaining primarily heterosexual identities in both urban and rural contexts in the United States (Ward 2015). While some of these studies have examined military settings and fraternities, or what is sometimes labeled, within African American communities, as men on the “down low,” others have sought their subjects on websites such as Craigslist, where men searched for a kind of “straight” same-sex sex (identified by some as a form of heteroflexibility) (Ward 2015; Boykin 2005). (In March 2018 Craigslist shuttered its personals section after the US Congress passed the Allow States and Victims to Fight Online Sex Trafficking Act [FOSTA].) The reasons for these same-sex behaviors vary enormously, with some subjects describing the need as practical (women being inaccessible or unavailable), and others discussing the transgression of a taboo as exciting. Still others see sex with other men as a relief from the rigors of heterosexual manhood or as a celebration or affirmation of their masculinity. Studies of this sort provide a reminder that the conditions and practices that the originators of the term situational homosexuality sought to understand continue to exist as both genuine experiences and cultural preoccupations, as reflected in such contemporary artistic works as Orange Is the New Black, the American television comedy-drama (2013–) set in a women’s prison. Exploring them through both contemporary and historical lenses remains, in fact, an important and viable area of serious inquiry.

SEE ALSO The Closet; Foucault, Influence of; Mädchen in Uniform (1931; Leontine Sagan);
Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa; Military Law and Policy in the United States; Military/Navy in the United Kingdom; MSM (Men Who Have Sex with Men) in Asia

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Sexual violence was an inherent aspect of the institution of slavery in colonial Latin America, which lasted until the early 1820s in many of the newly formed postindependence nation-states. Brazil was the largest importer of African slaves in the Americas, comprising 40 percent of all slaves brought to colonial Latin America. It was also the last country in the region to abolish slavery, in 1888. This entry focuses on the context of slavery in Brazil, demonstrating how intersecting forms of sexual violence were aimed primarily at controlling and degrading both male and female slaves. It then focuses more closely on same-sex relations among male slaves, as well as between male slaves and their masters or free men in Brazil from the early 1500s until the abolition of slavery in 1888.

Cases from the Portuguese Inquisition (1536–1821)—which had jurisdiction over colonial Brazil and other overseas Portuguese territories—offer the most important entry point into the daily sexual practices of slave owners, free men, and slaves. Although inquisitorial cases regarding sexual violence deal mostly with female slaves who sought protection from their masters, men and children were also victims of sexual coercion. Of all sexual acts, the Holy Office considered sodomy and bestiality the most vile and punishable. Both of these acts were referred to as the pecado nefando (nefarious sin), and they were considered by religious and secular authorities to be “against nature” because they did not lead to procreation. Yet, less than 10 percent of sodomy cases went to trial: of 4,419 registered denunciations between 1587 and 1794 in Brazil, 394 went to trial and 30 men were burned at the stake for the crime of sodomy (Green 1999). The small number of death penalties for the act of sodomy is partly due to the moral laxity of the Portuguese inquisitors, who viewed sexual violence by white men against slaves as an inherent part of colonization. The massive and continual influx of African slaves for almost 400 years also helped perpetuate the image of the colony as sexually immoral, inspiring the saying by Portuguese colonists, “Below the Equator there is no sin!” (Mott 2003, 169).

**Historical Background of Slavery in Brazil**

In the early 1400s Portuguese expeditions on the sub-Saharan African coast were focused
on the acquisition of gold, with slaves and other products, such as ivory, sugar, and spices only secondary concerns. Their focus on gold and other precious metals stemmed from the growing relative scarcity of precious metals in Europe’s mercantilist economic system. The purchasing of slaves began in 1444, with only a small number of African slaves going to Europe to serve as domestic servants. Portuguese explorers also engaged in Africa’s internal slave trade by supplying slaves from the western African coast to central Africa, such as the Kingdom of Kongo, in exchange for gold needed to stimulate trade with Asia and Europe. By the middle of the fifteenth century the Portuguese Empire had established sugar plantations on islands off the Atlantic coast of Africa—Madeira, Cabo Verde, the Azores, and São Tomé—increasing the demand for slave labor for the production of sugar. This profitable experience gradually changed the primary focus of the Portuguese slave trade from acquiring gold to producing agricultural goods for European markets.

The establishment of the Portuguese colony of Brazil in 1500 marked a major shift in the Portuguese slave trade, which future colonizers, such as the English and French, sought to emulate in their agricultural economic pursuits: “What distinguished this American slave society from most previous societies was in fact the domination of slaves as agricultural workers, their vital importance in the production of goods for the international market, and their importance within the local societies” (Klein and Luna 2014, 13). At the beginning of the colonization of Brazil, the Portuguese exported mainly dyewood, but they eventually focused on sugar because of the colony’s climate and fertile land.

When they first colonized Brazil, the Portuguese sought to enslave the largely Tupi-speaking indigenous peoples for farming and for harvesting brazilwood, but the onslaught of diseases contracted from the colonizers, along with the harsh working conditions, led to high mortality rates among indigenous communities. In turn, bandeirantes (slave raiders) and acculturated Tupi-speaking indigenous people went in search of people to enslave in villages in the vast forests and savannahs of the colony. Portuguese missionaries, notably the Jesuits, who came to the Americas to convert these communities fought against the enslavement of indigenous people. In particular, Father Antônio Vieira (1608–1697) traveled throughout Brazil and condemned the bandeirante slave trade in letters to the king of Portugal, João IV (1604–1656). In 1757, after the expulsion of the Jesuit order from Brazil, the governor of Maranhão ordered the abolition of indigenous slavery.

Making use of their extensive experience of the slave trade in the interior of Africa since the 1400s, Portuguese colonizers sought large-scale importation of African slaves for the production of sugar in the northeastern region of Brazil, in the states of Bahia and Pernambuco. Although sugar plantations had been established in the Spanish Caribbean in the first decades of the sixteenth century, Brazil emerged as the largest producer of sugar in the seventeenth century, accounting for 95 percent of Brazilian exports. The Portuguese Empire also dominated the Atlantic slave trade in the sixteenth century, enabling it to acquire slaves more cheaply and more easily than its European counterparts.
Consequently, Brazil became the most important importer of slaves in the New World, with an estimated 5 million coming on slave ships primarily from West Africa (Ghana, Nigeria, Benin, and Togo) and the former Portuguese colonies of Angola and Mozambique. By way of comparison, it is estimated that a total of 12.5 million arrived in the New World as a whole between the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries.

The diversifying exports of the colony, however, required the labor of slaves in a wide range of fields, such as cattle ranching, the production of foodstuff, and the fishing industry in both rural and urban spaces throughout the vast territories of Brazil. By the end of the seventeenth century, slaves also worked in gold and diamond mines in the southeastern state of Minas Gerais until the mining industry's decline in the second half of the eighteenth century. According to Mieko Nishida (2003), up to one-fourth of slaves between 1811 and 1888 (when slavery was officially abolished in Brazil) were employed as artisans in the northeastern city of Salvador—Brazil’s first capital—and provided a profitable return to their masters. By the nineteenth century, the rise of coffee and tobacco production further increased the importation of slaves, this time in the southern states of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. In other words, slaves played a fundamental role in a wide range of economic industries, and slave ownership was common among all social classes. This led to the continual arrival of slaves from Africa to Brazil for almost 400 years, distinguishing the Brazilian slave trade as the largest and most enduring of all the European colonies in the Americas.

In both urban and rural settings, the living and working conditions of African slaves were brutal (Conrad 1984). Slave merchants sought to maximize their profits by shackling people and cramming as many as possible into the ships, under very harsh conditions. Underfed and trapped in unhygienic conditions, an estimated 20 percent of slaves died before landing on the Brazilian coast. Many more perished within the first weeks after their arrival. For those who survived, an estimated 75 percent of slaves died within the first years in the colony due to extremely harsh working conditions. The average life span of an African-born slave was about twenty-three years, which was four years more than indigenous slaves (Skidmore 1999).

Once the slaves were in Brazil, Portuguese masters engaged in wide-scale violent practices to keep them under their control. Such violence as flagellations was often perpetrated in public squares to instill terror. African slaves often revolted against their masters, and those seized and convicted were typically punished by death. Many slaves also escaped and established quilombos, settlements founded by fugitive slaves who established self-sustaining communities. The most famous and longest-standing quilombo was Palmares, which comprised more than 30,000 escaped slaves, near the northeastern city of Recife. It was established around 1600 and lasted for almost a century before Portuguese soldiers managed to dismantle it. In addition, slave revolts were common from the sixteenth into the nineteenth century. The largest urban insurrection, the Malê revolt, occurred in
Salvador, Bahia, in 1835; 600 Africans led by Muslim African leaders ran in the streets shouting “Death to the whites” and fighting against 1,500 police officers. Although the revolt was put down, its impact contributed to a shift in popular and official opinion in support of ending the slave trade (Graden 1996).

Sex and Sodomy in Colonial Brazil

It perhaps comes as no surprise that the sexual exploitation of men, women, and children was one of the most important mechanisms of social and bodily control employed by many slaveholders (Aidoo 2018). Children born of enslaved mothers inherited their mothers’ status as slaves, making sexual violence a way of ensuring the reproduction of slaves. Cases from the Portuguese Inquisition demonstrate that male slaves were also coerced into sexual acts by their owners or by free men (McKnight and Garofalo 2009). Some of these owners engaged slaves in homosexual acts in exchange for money, food, or drinks, while others used intimidation; some cases reveal love affairs between masters and slaves living in homoerotic concubinage. If necessary, however, owners could resort to physical coercion or rape, a sexual privilege they held as colonizers of Brazil. Forced sodomy by male slaveowners was not limited to male slaves. Documents from the Holy Office of the Inquisition reveal that female slaves, too, accused their masters of the crime; moreover, several of women accused of sodomy were engaged in some form of sex work, or had been coerced by their husbands to commit sodomy. In defending themselves, these women often argued that they had been taken by surprise or were forced by their lover or client (Soyer 2008).

Sexual acts considered borderline heretical, such as sodomy, bigamy, bestiality, and the solicitation of sexual favors in the confessional, came under the jurisdiction of the Portuguese Inquisition, which sought to regulate both religious and cultural behaviors in the colony. A major target of inquisitors was Muslim and Jewish people in Portugal and its colonies who had converted to Catholicism, most often under coercion, but who secretly continued to practice their original faith. With regard to sexuality, Brazil was considered a sinful place in the imaginations of Portuguese colonizers and inquisitors, who lamented the sexual disorder of the colony. During the eighteenth century, the administrator Pedro Miguel de Almeida “was relentless in pointing out the moral deficiency of his domain, linking it to the tense and rebellious environment that was indeed prevalent in Minas Gerais” (Almeida [1720] 1994).

Nonsanctioned sexual behaviors stemmed largely from the strictures set up by the Catholic Church with regard to marriage: white men could not marry black or mulatto women. However, the majority of colonizers arriving from Portugal were male and therefore had no choice but to seek women of African, indigenous, or mixed races as mates. Also, the church’s overall laxity on sexual matters until the second half of the eighteenth century enabled men and women to engage in sexual behavior forbidden by the Inquisition more
openly than in Portugal (Vainfas 2014). With regard to same-sex relations between men, historian and LGBT activist Luiz Mott (1946–), founder of the Grupo Gay da Bahia, argues that this moral laxity enabled small homosexual subcultures to emerge in urban centers during the 300 years of Brazilian colonization (Mott 2003).

The Inquisition deemed sodomy a crime in the sixteenth century. Sodomites were called *fanchonos* (faggots) and *somitigos* (sodomites). By 1613, Mott explains, only *sodomia perfeita*—understood as anal penetration with ejaculation—could be prosecuted by the Portuguese Inquisition (Mott 2003); all other sexual acts between men fell under the jurisdiction of the secular justice, though in reality this division was less clear. It was also important for inquisitors to identify who were the “active” and “passive” partners in the sexual act in order to better determine the severity of the crime of the accused. Inquisitors were more likely to punish passive partners than active ones because male penetration was considered more “natural” (Alves Dias 2006, 55).

It is important to note that African slaves also sought other male slaves for emotional and sexual satisfaction, especially in areas where the ratio of men to women was low (Sweet 2003). For newly arrived slaves, Western gender constructions did not allow for the more flexible gender identities that existed in some parts of Central Africa. For example, in Angola and Congo, cross-dressing men who performed the passive role in acts of sodomy sometimes made up a third-gender category termed *jimbandaa*, which did not carry immoral connotations. In fact, cross-dressing males in Angola were considered an important and powerful caste. In the Portuguese colonies, however, consensual same-sex relationships between slaves were punishable by death. In 1591 a young slave living in Bahia, Francisco Manicongo, was denounced to the Holy Office for dressing as a woman and being known as a sodomite among the slave community (Sweet 2003).

Although same-sex sexual acts were prevalent throughout the colony of Brazil, only approximately thirty sodomites were executed throughout the nearly 300-year period of the Portuguese Inquisition. In contrast, historian Serge Gruzinski found fourteen cases of sodomites burned at the stake in colonial Mexico in 1658 alone, and Zeb Tortorici has shown that some three dozen men were executed between 1530 and 1786 in Mexico (Vainfas and Tortorici 2016). This leniency in Brazil over the crime of sodomy stemmed largely from the implicit agreement between colonial officials and the church regarding colonization: despite their strong disgust for the act sodomy, colonizers and the Holy Office believed that the successful enslavement of African men and women entailed sexual abuse (Vainfas 2014).

Some accused sodomites from Portugal were exiled to Brazil as part of their punishment. For example, Father António Soares was exiled in 1643 after his confession of countless of homosexual acts in Lisbon. During his lengthy stay in the Brazilian colony, he continued to engage in homosexual acts, but he was able to avoid execution, or any form of punishment,
because of the wealth and reputation of his powerful family (Higgs 2003). In the majority of cases, accused sodomites from the upper classes were protected by their social status and were rarely punished for crimes against their slaves.

The Holy Office was also known for covering up sexual violence by even the most notorious clergy members. David Higgs’s 2003 study of inquisitorial cases of Carmelite friars accused of the pecado nefando explains that sex with young slave boys served as a sexual outlet for some friars and monks, and that, despite considerable evidence against ordained priests, fellow Carmelites protected accused sodomites from punishment. For example, two summaries of evidence gathered by Carmelites about the friar Thomé da Madre de Deus Coutinho reveal his repeated sexual abuse of slave boys in his cell at the monastery. The accusations came from other friars living in the convent as well as from some of the victims. For example, a slave and barber of the convent heard from two other young slaves that Coutinho had violently raped his son. After the father’s testimony, all three boys were sent to the country estate “in order to heal some great evil which is public among the monks and slaves of the Convent” (Higgs 2003, 162). Although the prosecutors believed there was clearly a case against the friar, they claimed that they were forced to dismiss it because the social position of some of the witnesses, as creoles, slaves, and minors, meant that their testimonies were not trustworthy.

Sexually abused slaves had little recourse other than fleeing or reporting their abuser to the Holy Office. Trials and confessions documented by the Holy Office, however, reveal a bias against the victims. Their testimonies were written down by scribes but constrained by the inquisitorial genre and its vocabulary, thus mitigating the demands for protection of the slave from his master. For a sodomy conviction, two witnesses as well as the confession by the defendant himself (i.e., slave owner), were needed. Paradoxically, the victim (i.e., slave) had to confess to having committed the crime of sodomy even though the sexual act occurred against his will. Often, slave owners and free men offered detailed and voluntary confessions of sodomy because it was a way to satisfy the Holy Office and avoid harsh punishment. In 1593 a twenty-one-year-old man confessed to an inquisitor that he had had sexual relations with two of his father’s male slaves, stressing that they had been receptive to his advances. Higgs (2003) suggests that the man may have come forward as a way to forestall his sexual partners from accusing him of sodomy. Confessions by Portuguese slave owners could easily cast sexually violent acts against their slaves in consensual language to conceal their crimes.

Inquisition cases also shed light on how some male slaves successfully secured protection from their owners by denouncing them to the Holy Office. Julie Elizabeth Redekopp’s analysis of the 1743 trial of Luiz da Costa, a Brazilian slave from Pernambuco, demonstrates how he appropriated hegemonic discourse regarding sodomy to receive a lenient punishment (Redekopp 2013). Redekopp suggests that da Costa’s understanding of the act of sodomy in the eyes of the inquisitors enabled him to formulate a confession that
stressed his passive role in the act of sodomy as well as his social position as a minor and marginalized individual. By underlining his passivity and marginalization, he was able to navigate the inquisitorial system in ways that positioned his aggressor as the perpetrator of the crime and prevented him from further abusing him. Da Costa received the light punishment of an injunction never to commit sodomy again.

Despite the inherent biases embedded in inquisitorial sources, they remain invaluable for the study of sexual violence and sodomy. Following the end of the Portuguese Inquisition in 1821, there was a relative absence of explicit cases of sexual violence against the enslaved. In fact, some of the main sources for students interested in the intersection of same-sex relations and sexual violence after the Inquisition are documentary evidence, such as runaway slave advertisements, reports by doctors, bills of sale, the journal writings of European travelers in nineteenth-century Brazil, and Brazilian literature such as Adolfo Ferreira Caminha’s novel*Bom-Crioulo* (1895), which deals openly with homosexuality and the legacy of slavery in Brazil. Almost forgotten during the first part of the twentieth century, *Bom-Crioulo* has been translated into Spanish, French, English, and German since the 1980s, and scholars of gender and sexuality have offered many interpretations of the novel (*Mendes 2003; Howes 2001; Foster 1988*).

The legacy of slavery in modern Brazil is evident in the social and economic disparities between its white and Afro-Brazilian population. Despite the myth of racial democracy promoted by such thinkers as sociologist Gilberto Freyre (1900–1987), people of Afro-Brazilian descent earn 58 percent as much as whites and represent less than a quarter of the government officials elected in the federal and state races in 2014 (*Economist 2016*). Afro-Brazilians are also more likely to suffer police brutality than white citizens (*Mitchell and Wood 1999, 1001*). With regard to LGBT rights, Brazil legalized same-sex marriage in 2013, and legal protections of the LGBT community have gradually increased since the end of the military dictatorship in 1985. That said, violence against the LGBT community in Brazil is among the highest in the world, with more than 445 deaths related to homophobia in 2017 (*Cowie 2018*). In addition, very few studies have looked at the intersection of race and hate crimes against the LGBT community. One study suggests that approximately 52 percent of murdered LGBTQ persons in 2012 were of Afro-Brazilian descent (*Secretaria de Direitos Humanos 2012*). Crimes against Afro-descendant Brazilians of the LGBT community include, but are not limited to, daily incidents of intimidation, rape, sexual harassment, and murder; these forms of violence occur as a result of police abuse and minimal efforts by the Brazilian government to combat these, as well as a lack of legal resources.
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Sodomy Laws in the United States

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The history of US laws against sodomy and the legal battle to decriminalize it.

Throughout the history of the United States, sodomy laws have been used to police and punish nonnormative sexualities. Sodomy laws refers to a category of laws that criminalized consensual sexual acts between adults under statutes of various names, including “unnatural offenses,” “crimes against nature,” and “buggery.” In the United States, sodomy laws were state laws and, prior to 1961, every state had a sodomy law (Eskridge 1999). While the overwhelming majority of US laws criminalized sexual acts regardless of the sex of the participants, the laws were often interpreted, and enforced, as bans against same-sex sexuality and were used to target LGBTQ people. Over a period of several decades, decriminalization occurred state by state until 2003, when the remaining sodomy statutes were invalidated through the US Supreme Court decision Lawrence v. Texas. This entry briefly describes the history of sodomy laws in the United States, their relevance for LGBTQ people, and the process through which sodomy was decriminalized.

History of Sodomy Laws

The criminalization of consensual sexual activity between adults in the United States can be traced back to the country's history as a British colony. British common law instituted prohibitions against “buggery” in the sixteenth century during the reign of Henry VIII and, through colonization, spread those prohibitions in criminal codes across the globe, including the original British North American colonies. Prior to the inclusion of buggery in the common law, sodomy was criminalized in England through canon law (i.e., religious law) (Sanders 2009; Eskridge 1999). After independence from Britain, the first US states criminalized sodomy, and subsequent territories and states included prohibitions against sodomy as they developed their laws. Sodomy laws had significant penalties attached. The original buggery law in Britain had the penalty of death, as did the first colonial laws. After independence (between 1786 and 1826), the death penalty was removed from US laws, though sodomy remained a felony in most states until the 1950s (Andersen 2006; D'Emilio 1983). Even as late as 2003, when sodomy was decriminalized nationwide, eight states still classified sodomy as a felony, with penalties of up to fifteen years in jail (Eskridge 1999, 2008).
The statutory language of sodomy laws was often purposefully vague; the sex acts were considered so reprehensible that they “should not be named.” However, general interpretation of the laws was that they criminalized anal sex, covering activity between male partners, as well as between male and female partners. Buggery under British common law and the original sodomy laws within the United States also covered sexual activity with animals (bestiality) (Eskridge 2008). In contrast, sexual activity between women was not originally criminalized (Andersen 2006; Eskridge 1999).

In the late 1800s, states became increasingly concerned with nonnormative gender and sexual expression. As the urban population increased, female prostitution became more visible, and identifiable queer spaces were established. A portion of women also began to enter the public sphere, earning college degrees, joining the workforce, and delaying or avoiding marriage. Some of these women developed close relationships with other women (Eskridge 2008). These challenges to existing gender and sexuality norms were perceived, by many, as evidence of moral and societal decline. In response to these perceived threats, states began to explicitly define the sex acts prohibited and to broaden their laws to include a wider range of sexual activity, including oral sex. These specifications and expansions, through legislative action or judicial interpretation, meant that sexual activity between women began to fall within the law, at least in some states (D’Emilio 1983; Eskridge 1999, 2008).

**Implications and Uses of Sodomy Laws**

Sodomy laws criminalized acts, not identities, and the language of the laws covered participants regardless of the sex of their partners, but the laws were used to persecute lesbians and gays. Arrests under sodomy laws were relatively uncommon, particularly for consensual acts that occurred in private. Most enforcement targeted prostitution, acts involving a lack of consent, or activity in public spaces (Andersen 2006; Eskridge 2008; Hassel 2001; Sanders 2009). But arrests did occur, and usage of the law varied depending on police and political interests (Klarman 2013). For example, William N. Eskridge Jr. (2008) documented a dramatic uptick in sodomy arrests after the wave of sodomy law expansion in the late 1800s, as states attempted to control and suppress nonnormative gender and sexual expression. Local priorities could also increase enforcement, such as attempts to “clean up” areas of the city or be “tough” on crime (Klarman 2013). When arrests did occur, those engaging in same-sex sexual activity were disproportionately targeted.

Sodomy laws, while criminalizing the engagement in sex acts, were also interpreted and used much more broadly so that any suspicion of same-sex sexual activity, or even implied solicitation of such activity, was used to justify arrest (Sanders 2009). Mary Bernstein, in her historical analysis of the US gay and lesbian movement, argues that “most arrests of homosexuals came from solicitation, disorderly conduct, and loitering laws which were
based on the assumption that homosexuals (unlike heterosexuals), by definition, were people who engaged in illicit activity” (2002, 540). Police would target areas where lesbians and gay men congregated, such as bars and public spaces, and arrest them for the “intent” to commit sodomy (Bernstein 2002). For example, the New York City police targeted male “degenerates” in the 1920s, using the disorderly conduct laws to arrest men engaging in activity such as fondling in parks and public toilets.

Targeting of LGBTQ people and places continued into the 1950s and 1960s, when gay bars were denied liquor licenses for serving “known” criminals, criminalizing gay space and creating the rationale for police raids of bars serving liquor illegally where patrons were arrested. Arrests publicized in the newspaper led to other harms, such as job loss and violence, even if the arrests did not result in prison time (D’Emilio 1983; Klarman 2013). Some of the earliest protests of the modern US gay and lesbian movement were in reaction to police harassment during the 1960s, including the 1966 Compton Cafeteria riots in San Francisco, the 1967 Black Cat Tavern protests in Los Angeles, and the Stonewall riots of 1969, when patrons of a gay bar in New York City fought back against a police raid, leading to a multi-night protest and spawning new activism and organizations within the gay and lesbian community (Armstrong and Crage 2006; D’Emilio 1983).

Even when sodomy laws were not used to arrest people, they still had consequences through the symbolic messages they conveyed (Cowell and Milon 2012). The laws were often interpreted as if being gay or lesbian was sufficient evidence to determine that one was engaging in criminal acts. “Thus, unproved status as a violator of the sodomy laws becomes a basis” for denying other rights to lesbians and gays and blocking programming around lesbian and gay issues (Hassel 2001, 822). Using the argument that sodomy laws defined all homosexuals as criminals, US judges denied parents custody of their children, university officials denied recognition of student groups, lawyers were prohibited from joining the bar, and legislators voted against the inclusion of sexual orientation in civil rights bills (Cain 2000; Eskridge 2008; Hassel 2001).

Miriam Smith (2008) argues that one of the key reasons why the United States made progress on lesbian and gay rights so much later than Canada—a very similar country in numerous ways—was Canada’s decriminalization of sodomy in 1969. Canada’s initial policy change made the whole conversation around gay and lesbian rights different—reducing legal barriers to other policy gains—while the United States continued to use the sodomy laws to discriminate against its gay and lesbian citizens. Therefore, the decriminalization of sodomy was an important, long-term goal of the modern lesbian and gay movement because of its both concrete and symbolic implications (Andersen 2006; Cain 2000; Eskridge 2008).

Decriminalization
Sodomy was not decriminalized nationwide in the United States until 2003, but thirty-six states removed their prohibitions prior to national decriminalization, starting with Illinois in 1961 (Andersen 2006; Kane 2003). Decriminalization occurred through either legislative repeal of the law, where legislators voted to remove consensual sexual activity from their criminal code, or through judicial invalidation of the law, where a state supreme court ruled that the statute violated the state constitution. Of the thirty-six states that decriminalized sodomy prior to 2003, twenty-six did so through legislative repeal, while the remaining ten decriminalized sodomy through judicial decisions.

**Model Penal Code Era** Sodomy reform within the United States can be broken down into several phases (Andersen 2006; Kane 2007). The first phase ran from 1961 to 1983, when twenty-five states decriminalized sodomy. Most of the reforms during this phase occurred legislatively through larger, general revisions of state criminal codes. The American Law Institute (ALI), an independent group of judges, lawyers, and law professors, drafted a “Model Penal Code” in the mid-1950s as a guide for individual states updating their penal codes to help them remove old and unnecessary criminal laws, including consensual sodomy laws (Eskridge 2008). Of the states that used the Model Penal Code to help draft new codes, almost half followed the ALI’s recommendation and removed their statutes when the new codes were adopted (Eskridge 1999; Kane 2003). Though the adoption of new codes did not guarantee that a state would decriminalize sodomy, it did provide an important opportunity for decriminalization.

States that adopted new codes without repealing their sodomy law either kept the law as it was or made other changes, such as reducing penalties. Several states, including Kentucky and Texas, chose to make their sodomy laws same-sex specific. By changing the law to prohibit specific, consensual acts between same-sex partners while decriminalizing the same activities between different-sex partners, these states made the previously implied targeting of nonnormative sexuality explicit.

During this initial period of decriminalization, legal experts and legislators were the primary instigators of reform. There is some evidence that the early US lesbian and gay movement purposefully stayed quiet on the issue since repeal was happening through penal code revision. Movement activists were afraid that if they advocated for change, it would turn a relatively noncontroversial modernization of the criminal code into a lesbian and gay rights issue, undermining the likelihood of change. In addition, by leaving decriminalization to legal elites, the movement could focus on other goals (Bernstein 2003). However, once decriminalization became seen as a lesbian and gay rights issue, repeal through these code revisions slowed, and activists became the primary advocates for reform.

*Bowers v. Hardwick (1986)* After Wisconsin’s repeal in 1983, almost ten years passed before another state decriminalized sodomy. The second phase of sodomy reform covers
the period from 1984 to 2002, years in which no state-level sodomy reforms occurred. There are two primary explanations for this lack of change. First, the arrival of AIDS in the 1980s increased discrimination against gays and lesbians and reoriented public attention toward sexual activity within the community, particularly anal sex. This made it more difficult for decriminalization advocates to bundle reform as part of general penal code revisions or to frame sodomy laws as state overreach into people's private lives. At the same time, AIDS provided decriminalization opponents new arguments against reform, including concerns about public health, and a focus on specific sexual acts (Andersen 2006; Kane 2003).

**THE SODOMY CASE AGAINST NICHOLAS SENSION**

Nicholas Sension, a married farmer who lived in Windsor, Connecticut, appeared in court on charges of sodomy in 1677. The surviving documentation from his trial—the most detailed known to exist for any sodomy case from the colonial period in North America—suggests that popular attitudes toward sodomy did not always match official declarations. Sension had been making overtures toward men for over three decades. Although his behavior prompted three informal investigations, only when Sension sued one of his servants for defamation (after the young man complained to other townsfolk about his employer's sexual aggression toward him) did the court hearing that case decide to prosecute Sension for sodomy. Despite strident denunciations of sodomy by New England ministers and in the region’s legal codes, colonists mostly preferred to avoid taking formal action against men such as Sension, even if notorious for their sexual interest in other men and especially if otherwise valued as neighbors. Prosecutions for this crime were unusual but not necessarily because sodomy occurred only rarely. Some townsfolk may have been reluctant to admit that such behavior was taking place in their communities, but others were apparently less upset by the occurrence of sodomy than official statements might lead one to expect. Even those who condemned Sension's behavior had difficulty finding enough allies to make a legal prosecution feasible.

Sension's case also casts doubt on the success of ministers and legislators in popularizing their understanding of illicit sexual desire. People living in the past did not think about or evaluate sex using the categories that modern Westerners take for granted. The notion of sexual orientation, which assumes that most people are drawn sexually and romantically to either men or women, is a relatively recent invention. Indeed, the introduction of the words *homosexuality* and *heterosexuality* at the end of the nineteenth century marked a major shift in thinking about sex. Puritans in New England saw sex as an expression of moral, not sexual, orientation. Ministers taught that sexual sins, like any other form of sin, resulted from corrupt tendencies that everyone inherited from Adam and Eve: all sins were interconnected, and no one was
drawn in particular to one form of offense, so that anyone could be tempted to commit any sin. Sension's neighbors clearly identified in him an ongoing attraction toward men, but they had to come up with their own vocabulary to describe that. They referred to Sension's behavior as a “trade,” meaning a calling or way of life (albeit an unwelcome one that Sension prayed God would release him from). Neither Sension nor his neighbors identified in his behavior a distinct sexual orientation, but they did recognize a consistent and specific impulse.

New England courts rarely convicted on charges of sodomy or other sexual acts that carried the death penalty unless there was clear proof that intercourse had occurred. Neither intent nor intimacy short of penetration could justify conviction: the courts focused on acts, not symptoms of desire or identity. Yet Sension's neighbors repeatedly described his attraction to men and his attempts to have sex with them; such evidence was revealing of popular attitudes but of little use to those who wanted a conviction. Only one witness claimed to have seen sexual intercourse take place, and there was no corroborating witness (as required in capital cases). The court therefore found Sension guilty only of attempted sodomy. He was whipped and shamed in public, lost his right to vote, and gave bond for his future good behavior, but he escaped with his life. The records surviving from Sension's trial provide a reminder that the court system was much more rigorous and restrained than present-day stereotypes of Puritan society as intolerant, repressive, and trigger-happy might lead one to expect. They also suggest that New England settlers were quite independent-minded and pragmatic in dealing with illicit behavior, whatever their ministers may have preached from the pulpit.

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As reform through penal code revisions ended, lesbian and gay rights organizations, through the Ad-Hoc Task Force to Challenge Sodomy Laws (later the Litigators' Roundtable), began to proactively work together, looking for court cases that they could
use to make effective challenges to the constitutionality of sodomy laws (Andersen 2006; Eskridge 2008). The focus on a federal case to take to the Supreme Court, with the hope of invalidating all remaining sodomy statutes in one fell swoop, also contributed to the lack of state-level reform during this period.

The task force needed a case that showed actual harm, where someone engaged in a criminalized act, in private, and was arrested. Without direct harm, judges would likely dismiss the claim due to a lack of standing, preventing the constitutional challenge from going forward (Andersen 2006). This kind of case was difficult to find since few people were arrested under sodomy statutes for activity that occurred in private. Most harm was indirect, through the use of sodomy laws to deny other rights to lesbians and gay men. A case from Georgia—Bowers v. Hardwick—appeared to fit the bill. In 1982 a police officer entered Michael Hardwick’s home to serve a warrant for failing to appear in court on a charge of public drunkenness. (Hardwick had already taken care of the fine; the warrant was in error.) When the officer looked into Hardwick’s bedroom, he saw him engaging in oral sex with another man and arrested them under the Georgia sodomy statute (Andersen 2006). Hardwick sued the state of Georgia, arguing that the law violated his right to privacy (see Eskridge 2008 for a detailed description of the case).

Relying upon the right to privacy established in Griswold v. Connecticut (1965) and Roe v. Wade (1973) as the constitutional justification for their challenges (Eskridge 1999), advocates argued that consensual sexual activity in the home was also protected. Advocates thought the ruling would be close, based on their knowledge of the nine justices sitting on the court at the time, but advocates were optimistic about their chances after oral arguments. However, in 1986, in a five to four decision, the Supreme Court ruled in Bowers v. Hardwick that the Georgia sodomy law did not violate the constitutional right to privacy, and therefore states could criminalize specific sexual acts between consenting adults (Andersen 2006; Eskridge 2008). While the Georgia statute criminalized both same-sex and different-sex sexual activity, the majority opinion’s argument was largely based on the supposed long history of the illegality of sodomy and the assumption that most people in Georgia believed homosexual sodomy to be immoral (Eskridge 2008). The ruling contributed to the failure of other pending judicial challenges as well, including cases in Missouri, Louisiana, and Texas, halting the momentum that had been gained in sodomy law reform (Andersen 2006; Cain 2000).

After Bowers After suffering the dramatic setback of the Bowers v. Hardwick decision, US lesbian and gay rights organizations began concerted grassroots efforts to target individual states (Boutcher 2010). In addition to advocating for legislative repeal, activists continued their judicial strategy, turning from the federal courts to state courts, arguing that sodomy laws violated state constitutions. These alternative strategies took time to yield fruit, especially in the case of judicial strategies, since cases take multiple years to weave through the lower courts before reaching the state supreme court. Phase three, from 1992 to 2002,
marks the period in which the new state-level strategies implemented after *Hardwick* became effective and sodomy decriminalization resumed.

Advocates needed to develop strategies to circumvent the *Bowers* ruling (*Andersen 2006; Cain 2000*), and state-focused approaches provided a couple of ways to do that. In the United States, states can provide additional rights beyond those guaranteed through the federal constitution; they just cannot provide fewer rights. Any rulings made on state constitutional grounds, in most cases, would not be reviewed by the federal courts, and the decisions would stand irrespective of *Bowers*. Therefore, advocates could still use privacy claims, pointing to state constitutions as the source of those privacy rights (*Andersen 2006*). In addition, several states had same-sex specific laws. By criminalizing sexual activity between same-sex partners that was legal for different-sex couples, same-sex specific laws were also open to equal protection challenges to which other, more inclusive, sodomy laws were not, because of their more explicitly discriminatory nature (*Cain 2000*). The gay and lesbian movement took advantage of this legal argument and used equal protection claims in most, if not all, of the constitutional challenges to same-sex specific laws. In fact, research has shown that same-sex specific laws were more likely to be
decriminalized in this period than broader, more inclusive laws (Kane 2003).

Under this new post-Bowers strategy, Kentucky became the first state to decriminalize sodomy in 1992 when the Kentucky Supreme Court ruled that the law violated its state constitution under both privacy and equal protection grounds. After that decriminalization, reform picked back up again—with ten additional states decriminalizing sodomy between 1993 and 2002 (Kane 2007). Unlike the Model Penal Code era, which was dominated by legislative repeal, eight of the eleven reforms after Bowers were achieved through the courts, including in Georgia, whose state supreme court ruled in 1998 that the law upheld by the US Supreme Court was invalid under its own state constitution (Andersen 2006; Eskridge 2008).

**Lawrence v. Texas (2003)** As the movement pursued its state-by-state strategy, it also debated when to return to a federal-level challenge. The state-by-state strategy was successful, but it was expensive and time intensive, and it left the Bowers v. Hardwick decision uncontested. Bowers, as a federal precedent, harmed the movement’s ability to litigate other forms of discrimination through the courts. Federal judges used Bowers in their decisions as a rationale for deciding against other gay and lesbian rights claims, such as cases involving employment discrimination. Therefore, Lambda Legal and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Lesbian and Gay Rights Project, two national legal organizations active in the battle against sodomy laws from the beginning, decided to identify, and pursue, cases where they could include both state and federal challenges (Andersen 2006).

Advocates needed a case where, like Bowers, the person was arrested for engaging in a criminalized act in private (Andersen 2006; Klarman 2013). They also wanted a case from a state whose law was limited to same-sex sexual activity so they could make the equal protection argument, in addition to privacy. This time, a case from Houston, Texas, matched their criteria. In 1998, based on a fraudulent report of an armed man, police entered the home of John Lawrence and, claiming to see Lawrence and Tyrone Garner engaging in sexual activity in the bedroom, arrested both men. After discussions with lawyers from Lambda Legal, Lawrence and Garner agreed to plead guilty to the misdemeanor so they could be the plaintiffs in a constitutional challenge to the law (see Eskridge 2008 for a description of the case).

In 2003 Lawrence v. Texas reached the US Supreme Court where, in a six to three decision, the court ruled that the Texas sodomy law was unconstitutional. Five of the justices, led by Justice Anthony Kennedy, ruled that the law violated the federal right to privacy, thereby invalidating all remaining state sodomy laws—those limited to same-sex sexual activity as well as broader, more inclusive laws (Andersen 2006; Eskridge 2008; Klarman 2013). The majority decision overturned the Bowers v. Hardwick decision, finding it to be made in error—an unusual act, especially for a relatively recent decision (made just seventeen
years before). In contrast, Sandra Day O’Connor, a justice who had ruled in favor of Georgia’s law in *Bowers*, also ruled against the Texas law in *Lawrence*, but on equal protection grounds, rather than privacy (Klarman 2013). Regardless, consensual sexual activity between adults was officially decriminalized throughout the United States, and *Bowers* could no longer be used as precedent in subsequent lesbian and gay rights court cases.

**Conclusion**

*Lawrence v. Texas* was an important success for the LGBTQ movement in the United States, finally decriminalizing consensual sexual activity between adults more than forty years after the first state law was repealed in 1961. The path to nationwide decriminalization was arduous and the result of substantial dedication, effort, and time from activists in the LGBTQ movement.

Embedded in US laws since the nation’s inception, states expanded and revised their sodomy laws as a way to police and repress the growing visibility of nonnormative sexuality and gender expression. While sodomy laws focused on sex acts, not identities, the laws were used to target people who engaged in, or who were assumed to engage in, same-sex sexual activity through direct sanctions like arrests, as well as indirectly through the stigmatization of LGBTQ people.

Once same-sex sexual activity was decriminalized, a key justification for denying other rights to LGBTQ people was removed. Justice Antonin Scalia’s minority opinion opposing the *Lawrence* decision specifically argued that the invalidation of sodomy laws would open the door to legalizing marriage for same-sex couples, which Massachusetts did, via its state supreme court, less than a year after the *Lawrence* decision (Eskridge 2008; Klarman 2013). Twelve years later, Justice Kennedy, who wrote the majority opinion in *Lawrence*, wrote the majority opinion in *Obergefell v. Hodges* (2015), which granted marriage equality nationwide. It is difficult to imagine marriage equality or other recent LGBTQ policy gains, such as the repeal of “don’t ask, don’t tell,” which enabled LGBTQ people to serve openly in the US military, without the removal of criminal sanctions for same-sex sexual activity.

Of course, the decriminalization of sodomy does not necessarily improve conditions for gay and lesbian citizens if the underlying attitudes behind these laws continue to exist. For example, many of the states whose laws were invalidated by the *Lawrence* decision still have their laws “on the books.” Legislative action is required to remove the laws from the state criminal codes, and most states have not done so. In fact, several state legislatures have actually voted to retain their sodomy laws (Murphy 2011). These laws cannot legally be used to arrest people, so the unwillingness to remove them suggests the laws are being maintained purely to continue to send symbolic messages condemning nonnormative sexuality. There is also evidence that remaining laws can still be used to harm LGBTQ
people. For example, police in Louisiana continued to use the invalidated sodomy law to arrest people “soliciting” consensual gay sex and using the arrests to encourage people to plea bargain to reduced charges, demonstrating the residual power of these laws in the United States, even today (Mustian 2013).

SEE ALSO Antisodomy and Buggery Trials; Canadian Criminal Code Reform (1969); Compton's Cafeteria Riot (1966); Cruising and Cruising Grounds; Inquisition, Criminal Courts, and Sexuality in Colonial Latin America; Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund; Offences Against the Person Act (1861); Section 377 and Section 377A; Section 377 in South Asia; Stonewall Riots, International Effects of

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Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1695)

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The Proto-feminist Tenth Muse

Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1695) is one of the Spanish-speaking world’s most iconic figures, the seventeenth-century nun/poet/scholar who is known the world over as “the first feminist of the Americas,” and the Mexican décima musa, or “Tenth Muse,” the same name Plato gave to the lesbian poet Sappho millennia earlier. It is well-known that Sor Juana’s intelligence was the rival of any man’s (scholar, priest, or ruler) in both New Spain and the Iberian Peninsula.

What is not so known, or rather, not popularly acknowledged or accepted, is that Sor Juana was not only a proto-feminist, or rather, a woman who advocated for women’s rights 300 years before the women’s movement, but also a woman who loved and desired other women—in short, Sor Juana was a seventeenth-century Spanish-Mexican lesbian nun. As the many love poems she wrote to (or about) other women attest, Sor Juana felt a passionate, erotic, and intellectual connection to two vicereines (wives of viceroys, who were the representatives of the king and queen in the colonial world): La Marquesa de Mancera, whom Sor Juana served as lady-in-waiting when she lived at court (1664–1668), and La Condesa de Paredes, whose husband, the Marquise de la Laguna and Conde de Paredes, ruled as viceroy of Mexico from 1680 to 1688. It is Sor Juana’s veiled love for these two women that earned her the allegorical title “Tenth Muse.”

In those eight years of the Conde de Paredes’s reign, arguably the most productive years of Sor Juana’s cloistered life, she enjoyed the full protection of the palace and produced some of her most intrepid work, in which her passion for La Condesa, as well as her battles with the patriarchal church, take center stage. These include her famous poem “Hombres necios” (Stubborn men), in which she accuses men of the very “sins” they ascribe to women; her intellectual autobiography, La respuesta a Sor Filotea (1691; Response to Sister Filotea), in the form of a response to a letter from a pseudonymous bishop of Puebla, who, writing as a woman, accused Sor Juana of endangering her soul with secular study and suggested she should study only the Bible; and her most baroque poem, “Primero sueño” (First dream), which illustrates her perpetual struggle between reason (or male enlightenment) and
passion, both for learning and for other women.

Portait of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1750) by Miguel Cabrera. Sor Juana is an iconic figure of the Spanish-speaking world as a proto-feminist who advocated for women's rights hundreds of years before the women's movement as well as a poet who expressed desires for other women.

In her twenty-six-year tenure in the habit of a Hieronymite nun, Sor Juana created a large archive of her proto-feminist struggles and intellectual accomplishment that she left behind in four thick volumes of collected works. The first collection, published in 1689 and edited by none other than her beloved María Luisa, La Condesa de Paredes, when she and her husband returned to Spain a year earlier, taking Juana’s writings with them, is titled *Inundación castalida de la única poetisa, musa décima, Soror Juana Inés de la Cruz*, or, *Castalian Inundation of the Only Poet and Tenth Muse, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz*. It would be difficult to believe that a learned woman such as La Condesa would not have known that she was deploying a double entendre (or secret code?) with that epithet: Sor Juana the sublime writer of *décimas*, poems of ten-line stanzas, and Juana, the New World’s equivalent to the Greek lesbian poet Sappho, whom Plato baptized the “tenth muse.” That first book can be seen as the cerebral offspring of the love, admiration, and erotic desire she shared with La Condesa de Paredes.

The Worst of All Women

Three years after penning *La respuesta*, in one of the documents Sor Juana wrote to renew
her vows as a nun, she calls herself “yo, la peor de todas,” which translates accurately into “I, the worst of all women” (not just “I, the worst of all,” as it has typically been translated). In the document, she confesses to having “lived in religion not only without religion, but worse than a pagan” (de la Cruz 1700, 130; translation by Alicia Gaspar de Alba). The renewal of vows as a sister in the Holy Family of Church and Crown was a rite of passage that all the cloistered nuns in the Convent of the Hieronymite Order had to undergo during their twenty-fifth anniversary, or silver jubilee.

In 1694, fourteen months before her death and five years after the publication in Spain of her first book of compiled works (followed by a second edition, as well as a second volume), Sor Juana stabbed her sharp quill into the inside of her wrist and signed her name to the convent’s Book of Professions in her own blood, giving herself the epithet, “yo, la peor de todas”—“I, the worst of all,” that is, the worst nun, the worst woman in the world. Using the “worst” as a way of describing her behavior as a nun and a criolla (a “Creole” or a Spaniard born in New Spain, the racial caste with the most privilege in colonial Latin America), Sor Juana admits in La respuesta that she elected to join the convent because she felt “a total antipathy toward marriage,” and thought the cloister would be “the least unsuitable and most honorable” place in which to “insure [her] salvation” (de la Cruz 1997, 17), as well as a place where she would have a cell of her own to study and write.

A master of rhetoric and double entendre, Sor Juana’s self-inflected “worst of all women/all nuns” epithet situates her within both the private world of the cloister and the public world of authorship—both spheres intersected by the religious rules that circumscribed her female body, rules that she defied to the bitter end. It is this defiance that she deems as “living without religion,” without rules, without limits, and in her mind as a “pagan.” Thus, she can only be the worst of all nuns and all women. Sor Juana was not only confessing her “sins”—pride rather than humility, rebellion rather than obedience, passion rather than chastity, and pagan rather than Christian beliefs—but also, and more significantly, she inscribed her female body’s difference in her own blood.

It was because Sor Juana recognized that she had, perhaps, gone too far in pushing the boundaries of her sex and her vocation that she signed her name in blood to renew her religious vows in 1694. As part of her entrapment by the bishop of Puebla and the archbishop of Mexico, with her own father confessor, Padre Antonio Nuñez de Miranda, in his role as censor of the Holy Office serving as pawn of the bishops, Sor Juana was required to offer a public confession before the Holy Inquisition. It was not enough that, in both La respuesta and the penitential documents she wrote in 1694, she “confessed” every egregious sin she had committed against the rule since she entered religious life. There had to be a public humiliation, as well as a total dispossession of everything that had given meaning to her life: all her writing instruments were impounded, she was forbidden from corresponding with the world, and her massive library of books and instruments (both musical and scientific) was taken and sold by the archbishop, the proceeds going to the
poor, by way of the archiepiscopal coffers. In an act that can be read as either capitulation or self-orchestrated sacrifice, or as her last act of rebellion against the oppressive mandates of the Holy Office of the Mexican Inquisition, Sor Juana threw herself into the care of her terminally ill sisters in the convent. Abandoning all caution against infection, she soon contracted typhus during an epidemic that for months had been ravaging the convents and religious houses of Mexico. On 5 April 1695, a year after she had renewed her vows in blood, Sor Juana succumbed to the disease.

**Scholarly Interpretations of Sor Juana's Sexuality**

Male and female scholars from all over the world, but most notably the Mexican Nobel laureate Octavio Paz (1914–1998), have gone to great lengths to deny Sor Juana’s “Sapphic tendencies” (Paz 1988, 217) or masculine qualities (i.e., her lesbianism), arguing that “it is futile to try to learn what her true sexual feelings were. She herself did not know” (Paz 1988, 111). Calling her lesbianism everything from a hormonal imbalance to penis envy to “an excess of libido” (Paz 1988, 217) expressing itself as a platonic relationship with La Condesa, to a complex web of repressed emotions made even more complicated by what Paz sees as Sor Juana’s own shame over her illegitimacy, Paz’s massive tome Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, o, Las trampas de la fé (1982; Sor Juana, or, The Traps of Faith [1988]) constructs Sor Juana as a highly intelligent, socially astute, erotically naive cloistered nun who became a celebrity in her own lifetime, but who was also relentlessly persecuted and finally ensnared in the political intrigues and gender-normative constraints of the colonial church and state.

For Paz, Sor Juana’s tragic flaw was that “she wanted to become like a man [and her inability to do so, then] turns her against men, [hence, she] defends women, and anticipates modern feminism” (Paz 1988, 112). Because “Sor Juana lived among erotic shadows,” he argues, “her poems reveal ... that she was a true melancholic ... [filled with] an internal emptiness” and Freudian “grief [over] the loss of a desired object” (Paz 1988, 216, 217). Thus, while Paz recognizes the depth of passion (albeit “chaste”) that exists in Sor Juana’s love poetry to the two vicereines, particularly La Condesa, his heteronormative mind can only associate desire for a woman as a masculine prerogative; in his view, only men can desire women. If a woman desires another woman, according to Paz (and others), she wants to be like a man. The occluded lesbian in this equation is the veiled subjectivity that Alicia Gaspar de Alba undresses in the historical novel Sor Juana’s Second Dream (1999).

It was not, as Paz believes, because she hated men that Sor Juana defended women, but rather because, as a woman, a poet, and a scholar, living at a time when it was deemed anomalous for a nun to have a public reputation as a scholar and a poet, Sor Juana was defending herself from the virulent misogyny of a colonial hierarchy that included every form of domination, but particularly those based on race, class, and gender. Throughout her life, right up until renewing her vows in blood in 1694, Sor Juana employed her quill, her
wit, and her knowledge to challenge male double standards and advocate for a woman's right to learn, study, and publish. Although she endured constant harassment from the Catholic Church for her defiance, nothing stopped her from producing (and publishing) a body of work that both freed and condemned her in seventeenth-century New Spain, a legacy that, in the twentieth century, the Mexican nation, as well as scholars of the Iberian Golden Age, proudly claim as their own. Sor Juana’s image on the Mexican 200-peso note, quill in hand against a backdrop of books, suggests what it is about Sor Juana that we should remember and pay homage to: her intellect, her dedication to learning, and her writing. Divorced from her own body, or, as she says in the very last poem that was found among her papers after her death, “diverse from [herself],” she exists in our imaginations and representations as anything we want her to be.

Cinematic and Literary Portrayals

Sor Juana's is such a compelling story that it is difficult to understand why there have been so few visual, celluloid, and literary representations of her work in Mexico, Spain, or other Latin American countries. In English, aside from a few stories and poems that have Sor Juana at the center of the work, there are two novels about the Mexican Tenth Muse: Gaspar de Alba’s novel, *Sor Juana’s Second Dream* (1999), a lesbian interpretation of Sor Juana based on the author’s own queer reading of her erotic poetry and personal papers; and Canadian writer Paul Anderson’s massive (and somewhat appropriative) *Hunger’s Brides* (2004), in which Sor Juana’s lesbianism is voyeurized but never averred. In Spanish, prior to Paz’s 1982 tome, and even to Rosario Castellanos’s writings on Sor Juana, Televisa produced a black-and-white, one-season telenovela titled *Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz* in 1962.

**The Netflix Series Juana Inés** There would not be another televised Sor Juana until more than fifty years later, with Netflix’s *Juana Inés* (2016). Created by Patricia Arriaga-Jordán, the seven-episode miniseries shows the life of the woman inside the habit (hence the title *Juana Inés*, rather than the better-known Sor Juana). Told in flashbacks from the point of view of a delirious older Sor Juana on her deathbed, the story begins with her teenage years as a lady-in-waiting at the viceregal palace, during which she consistently proves her brilliance and rebelliousness, even as she does her best to avoid the attentions of the vicereine, La Marquesa de Mancera, portrayed in the series as a deranged pedophile who insists on touching and being touched by Juana Inés in inappropriate ways.

The Juana Inés of this part of the series, played by Arantza Ruiz, is young, sassy, and heterosexual; she falls in love with a gentleman of the court, who asks her to marry him until he discovers her illegitimacy and then must take back his ring and proposal. According to the strict racial and moral codes of colonial New Spain, her illegitimacy cancels out her status as a *criolla*, which ruins her chances of ever finding a good (read, *criollo*, or upper-class) husband. Rejected by her suitor, Juana Inés decides to leave the palace and become a nun, where at least she can devote herself to her books and letters.
The court’s father confessor, Padre Antonio Nuñez de Miranda, places her in the ascetic order of Discalced Carmelites, where she endures three months of torture and humiliation before being rescued by La Marquesa and returned to the palace to heal. The following year, Juana Inés, having taken the religious name of Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz, chooses to profess in a milder order, and enters the cloister of the Convent of Santa Paula of the Order of Saint Jerome.

The series’ older, wiser, and more tormented Sor Juana, played adroitly by Mexican actress Arcelia Ramírez, shifts between the delirium of her sickbed that racks her mind with painful memories and her body with the ecstasies she shared with La Condesa. Sought after by noblemen and clergy alike who long to participate in the literary salons she hosts in the convent’s receiving room, Sor Juana enjoys privileges that none of her other sisters in the convent gets to experience. Housing the court’s favorite clearly benefits the convent in material ways, but her rising popularity and entourage of guests greatly displease her mother superior and father confessor, and raise the suspicions of the new archbishop of Mexico, Francisco de Aguiar y Seijas, a zealous misogynist whose sole mission is to rid New Spain of the debaucheries of women. Finding a kindred spirit in the new vicereine, María Luisa Manrique de Lara, La Condesa de Paredes, and feeling more secure in her influence and sensuality, Sor Juana begins to experience physical desire for La Condesa, and the feeling is mutual. Because of the power invested in her as vicereine, the story intimates, La Condesa is allowed to visit Sor Juana privately in the nun’s cell (without supervision from the convent’s mother superior), where their erotic encounters are openly portrayed on the screen. Indeed, the Netflix website describes the plot as “Juana Inés de la Cruz, a powerful feminist nun involved in a forbidden love affair with a woman, faces oppression in 17th-century Mexico.” This is a far cry from the representation of their clandestine love affair in the only feature film on Sor Juana, Yo, la peor de todas (1990).

María Luisa Bemberg’s film Yo, la peor de todas María Luisa Bemberg’s film Yo, la peor de todas (I, the Worst of All) was shot entirely inside a dark convent to intensify the claustrophobic environment in which Sor Juana lived, aptly capturing the push and pull between light and darkness, or rather, reason and passion, that her critics and biographers say was the driving force of Sor Juana’s life. The film also depicts Sor Juana’s battles with the leadership of the convent and the male clergy who futilely tried to control her genius. Interestingly, although Yo, la peor de todas opens with a quotation from Paz’s book on Sor Juana, the film itself contradicts Paz’s homophobic reading, and instead depicts a brilliant, energetic, and at times arrogant Sor Juana (played by Assumpta Serna), who is clearly aroused by and in love with La Condesa de Paredes (Dominique Sanda). The intimacies shared by Sor Juana and La Condesa in the film are limited to coy glances, double entendres, and even power struggles between the two women, but their common ground is a love of books and La Condesa’s desire to take Sor Juana’s writings with her when she returns to Spain so that she can have them published. At no point does Bemberg’s film represent what Sor Juana and La Condesa felt for each other as simply a “Platonic love-
friendship” (Paz 1988, 217). The one expressly erotic scene in the film shows Sor Juana unlacing the pregnant vicereine’s corset in Sor Juana’s booklined cell; this is as much “lesbian passion seething behind convent walls” (Sherman 1994, 59) as the film offers.

As La Condesa tells Juana in Yo, la peor de todas, the two of them live similar lives, though Sor Juana wears a monastic veil and La Condesa a viceregal crown. In both the convent and the palace, La Condesa asserts, each one is tied to the normative behaviors and choices of her station in life. Each one is cloistered in her own gender and class, and at twenty years of age, became either a bride of Christ or a count’s wife. For each of them, their world is small and socially constructed to erase their free will. La Condesa’s publication of Sor Juana’s work, then, like Sor Juana’s own life and death, are acts of resistance to Catholic patriarchal conscriptions of their womanhood.

With the celebrity granted her by her published volumes, Sor Juana knew her words, her ideas, her wisdom would live on, even when her body lay in the ground. In an unfinished poem where she declares herself a product of someone else’s interpretation, she writes, “I am not the one you think. / Your Old World quills have given me / another life, breathed another spirit into me, / and diverse from myself, I exist between your plumes, / not as I am, but as you have wanted to imagine me” (de la Cruz 1997, 73–74; translation by Alicia Gaspar de Alba).

Legacy of a Woman’s Genius In the essays “The Politics of Location of La Décima Musa” and “The Sor Juana Chronicles” that appear in her 2014 book [Un]Framing the “Bad Woman,” Gaspar de Alba argues that, despite how Sor Juana may have been embraced in the nineteenth-century nation-building campaigns of Mexico, during her seventeenth-century lifetime, she was constantly persecuted, punished, berated, ridiculed, and ultimately suppressed by the church powers for being a “bad” nun and a “bad” woman, that is, for refusing to adhere to the dictates of the day regarding the female gender, especially in religion. Remonstrated by her mother superior, her father confessor, her sisters in religion, the bishop of Puebla, and the archbishop of Mexico, and with her writing and visitation privileges curtailed, her quills confiscated, her books expurgated against the Index of Banned Books, Sor Juana eventually succumbed to her bleak fate as a silent “daughter of the Church,” as she was described in her childhood register.

Rebel with a cause that she was, however, Sor Juana managed to leave behind a legacy of a woman’s genius in the face of insurmountable opposition, a story that has prevailed across cultures and centuries through her writings, and through the twenty-first-century embodiments of Sor Juana by scholars, poets, novelists, playwrights, directors, and composers—many of them queer. Her life retold in biographies, novels, poems, and plays, Sor Juana’s twenty-first-century incarnation reenters the imaginary sphere in a Netflix miniseries, a children’s book (Clinton 2018), several stage plays, an opera, and an upcoming feature film (the last two based on Sor Juana’s Second Dream).
SEE ALSO Confessional Manuals in Colonial Latin America; Erauso, Catalina de (1592–1650); Inquisition, Criminal Courts, and Sexuality in Colonial Latin America

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Despite progressive provisions in the 1996 South African Constitution that grant equal rights to citizens and prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, color, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language, and birth, individuals who claim same-sex sexual identities in South Africa continue to face daily and varying forms of discrimination designed to render them invisible and unwanted. The toxic mix of culture and religion, inherited through imperial colonialism, produces violent forms of resistance against practices deemed to be “unAfrican,” “unChristian,” and “unnatural.” However, this does not mean that the context is simply riddled with corrupt forms of homophobia and discrimination against same-sex–desiring individuals. The intersection of patriarchy, communalism, colonialism, and the legacy of apartheid produces a much more complex picture, where a single narrative of discrimination is an inaccurate depiction of how same-sex sexuality is experienced in the context. This entry argues that the South African experience of same-sex desire is dependent on individual experience, informed by intersecting identity markers, as opposed to a global, all-encompassing narrative of victimhood. The context presents, at best, what can be characterized as curtailed freedoms; that is, freedoms that are regulated, defined, and constrained through cultural and religious frames. This is best understood through an exploration of the role of religion and culture in shaping the experiences and understandings of sexualities in Africa during the colonialism and apartheid eras, and the strategic articulations (Grossberg 1996) that were enabled when a new constitution, premised on equality, was adopted at the collapse of apartheid.

This entry begins by unpacking the historical understandings of same-sex desire in South Africa prior to colonialism. It then proceeds to discuss documented experiences of same-sex desire during the colonialism and apartheid periods, with the aim of exploring the ways sexuality was brought under the control of the state. The third section discusses the strategic articulation of the equality clause extending beyond race to include sexuality at the collapse of apartheid, and some of the reasons for the continued discrimination against individuals who engage in same-sex relations in postapartheid South Africa. The fourth section showcases some of the enabling forces in South Africa that have made struggles
around sexual orientation and gender diversity more visible and accepted in the public space. The final section explores future possibilities pertaining to gender diversity and sexual orientation in South Africa. Through these five parts, this entry presents a complex image that suggests a mix of experiences when it comes to same-sex issues and argues for the need to move beyond identity labels to address homophobic discrimination in South Africa.

**Same-Sex Desire as African: Precolonial Exploration**

Any exploration of same-sex desire in South Africa cannot occur outside an understanding of a context deeply riddled with a history of racial oppression and inequality. Equally, it also cannot occur outside an understanding of the force of imperial power that attempted to redefine and perhaps erase the African experience through processes of psychological colonization, with the aim of buttressing ideas about white superiority over the uncivilized native. Therefore, in order to understand current practices and understandings of same-sex desire, it is important to understand certain historical processes that enabled current understandings and practices.

From a historical point of view, as evidenced by Marc Epprecht's pioneering analysis of same-sex practices in Africa from the precolonial to the contemporary period, it can be argued that while same-sex desire in Africa was not openly welcomed, there was a degree of tolerance, enabled by existent local cultural practices designed to protect both the individuals who pursued same-sex desire and their families. Homosexual practices in Africa thus predate colonialism. However, these practices were strategically erased by imperial politics of racial superiority, which presented African societies as primitive and thus in need of European civilization. Brenna Munro, writing about the history of same-sex sexuality struggles in South Africa, notes that

> homosexuality in Africa is bound up with a contradictory modernity that has been produced both within and against imperialism.... Europe's "civilizing mission" constituted itself through attempts to eradicate indigenous social formations that were deemed deviant, from polygamy to "female husbands," all while unruly new sexual cultures were being forged in the cities, industries, and institutions of a changing Africa.  

*(2012, XIII)*

In focusing on these competing and contradictory discourses, this entry demonstrates that it is European and missionary homophobia that was imported into Africa, not
homosexuality (Ndijo 2013).

Same-sex sexual engagements in Africa are not a European imposition, as some African leaders have argued. Evidence of precolonial same-sex practices includes paintings by early Bushmen that depict men engaged in what appears to be same-sex sexual acts (see Epprecht 2004). Equally, there is anecdotal research suggesting that African society in southern Africa found strategic accommodations with same-sex sexuality prior to colonialism through existing social norms. For example, if a young man was suspected of being interested in other men, his family would make arrangements with a woman to marry him in order to maintain the family’s respectability in the community. In this arrangement, they would be married in public only, while in private the wife would be having sex with the man’s brother. Therefore, same-sex desire would not be on display in public, but in private, family members would know of the arrangement and make accommodations. Similarly, in acknowledgment of an opposite-sex ancestral spirit among some women, particularly sangomas (traditional healers), such women were able to pursue same-sex desire. For example, Nkunzi Nkabinde and Ruth Morgan (2006) show that there were (and still are) traditional and institutionalized ways in which sangomas could obtain ancestral wives (unyankwabe), with the full public knowledge and appreciation of local subjects. Simply, these women sangomas were seen to be possessed by dominant male spirits and therefore were allowed to have wives (see also Reid 2003). These arrangements were similar to those for certain Native American identities, such as Two-Spirit.

This brief discussion posits simply that same-sex practices in traditional, precolonial societies were neither celebrated nor frowned upon. Certain culturally sanctioned accommodation processes were established in line with local norms. While of course these examples do not represent a global, all-encompassing analysis of experiences across all cultural groups in South Africa, they nevertheless give an indication of the various accommodations that existed. (For a more elaborate discussion of these accommodations, see Msibi 2011, 2018.)

**Colonialism and Apartheid**

First, it is important to provide a brief history of the foreign occupation of South Africa through colonialism. The colonization of South Africa began with the arrival in 1652 of Jan van Riebeeck (1619-1677). The Dutch were primarily concerned with obtaining spices and other produce not available in Europe from the Indonesian archipelago. They thus established a fueling station in what is now known as Cape Town in South Africa to supply sailors with fresh produce during their dangerous missions from Europe to the East. The Cape Colony of the Dutch East India Company was established under the command of van Riebeeck. To amass land and resources, and also to provide free labor for the Cape Colony, van Riebeeck and his team adopted a strategy of slavery and forced labor. This early colonization by the Dutch continued until 1795, when the British Empire became the
country's new colonial masters. For centuries that followed, wars and conflicts between the descendants of the Dutch, German, and French Huguenot settlers (known as the Boers or Afrikaners) and the British persisted, with each side claiming control over expanding territories at different times. The discovery of diamonds and gold only heightened the existing tensions, with local people being used as cheap labor at the receiving end of violence and subjugation.

The hostilities between the Afrikaner and the British settlers reached a boiling point in the Anglo-Boer war in 1899, when each warring side presided over two self-governing states within South Africa: the Cape and Natal for the British, and the Transvaal and Orange Free State for the Dutch. By the end of the war, the Dutch (Afrikaners) had been defeated, and a new Union of South Africa came into effect in 1910. This union was active until 1961, when South Africa became a republic. The National Party had already assumed power in 1948, and it heightened the exclusionary and discriminatory laws that treated Africans as second-class citizens in their own land. Through apartheid, a strategic and deliberate system of institutionalized disenfranchisement of black people through “separate development,” racial purity and white supremacy ideals were advanced. It was also at this stage that the state became powerfully involved in the regulation of sex and people's bodies. Apartheid came to an end officially only in 1994, when a new democratic government was elected.

At the very heart of colonialism was an imperial strategy of rendering local subjects as uncivilized while simultaneously extracting raw materials for significant economic gains, both for those who were settling in the region and of course for the colonizing state. It was not surprising, then, that the missionary exercise and strategy were driven by the desire to position local practices as abhorrent while presenting Christianity as civilized. Xolela Mangcu (2010) has written prolifically on this topic, noting that this arrival led to tensions between the native amakholwa (believers and civilized) and amaqaba (heathens and continuing with local customary practices). Africans were required to relinquish their “uncivilized” practices and to move to the more modern, civilized space of Christianity. Christians were formally educated and taught Western ways of being, and African practices were seen as backward and unsophisticated.

In terms of sex, Mark Hunter notes that “sex became formative of, as well as viewed through, this new register. According to missionaries, to be civilized required rejecting ‘lewd’ practices of ‘sex’ and embracing Christian virtues of self-restraint and sexual prudery” (2010, 57). Same-sex sexual practices therefore could never be accommodated, as they represented what was most reviled and rejected by society. It was under colonial rule, with ideological backing from Christianity, that penal codes were introduced in the laws of African nations (even beyond South Africa) making “sodomy” illegal. As early as 1735, the Dutch executed a young Khoi man, Klaas Bank, for having sex with another man. Immediately after their arrival in the Cape, the Dutch introduced very strict laws against same-sex sexual acts between men, informed strongly by their Christian faith. Similar
attitudes toward same-sex relations prevailed in British thinking, as well as negative attitudes toward “racial mixing.” For example, after the formation of the Union, the Immorality Act, which prohibited sexual engagements between Africans and Europeans, was introduced in 1927. This was followed by the Prohibition of Mixed Marriage Act in 1949, immediately after the nationalist government came into power. In 1950 the Immorality Act was expanded to criminalize sex between any different racial groups. This was followed in 1957 by another amendment directed at same-sex--desiring white men (see Weeks 1981), prohibiting “immoral and unnatural sexual acts.” In the wake of a national scandal after a raid on a party with 300 men in attendance, the government once more amended the Immorality Act in 1969, adding sections on “crimes against nature” that prohibited men from having any sexual contact with each other or engaging in any acts that may lead to sexual gratification at a party, which was defined as “any occasion where more than two persons are present” (see Munro 2012, xxiii). Mark Gevisser (1995) notes that these laws were designed to erase same-sex desire from public view.

The colonial desire to amass riches in South Africa through the establishment of mines, mostly located in the northern parts of the country, led to new configurations of same-sex practices among African people. Epprecht's (2001, 2004) account of same-sex sexual practices in the mines presents a compelling picture of the various ways same-sex desire came to be accommodated by African men. While some have argued that these same-sex sexual practices were largely coping and economic survival strategies for men forced to leave their wives in the villages to work in the mines, the documented accounts of mine marriages (inkotshane) between older men and younger men shatter any idea of a “pure” Africa with no same-sex relations. The issue of men engaged in same-sex sexual practices was so concerning for the authorities that a commission of inquiry was launched in 1907 to look into the matter (Epprecht 2001). The “unnatural practices” initially had been blamed on the Chinese who had been brought in to work at the mines. The findings from the initial investigations by the mine authorities (prior to the establishment of the commission) concluded that the majority of the Chinese men were “moral” and put the blame on a small group who were subsequently deported. However, a missionary, the Reverend Baker, was not convinced, arguing that these practices had been present before the arrival of the Chinese. The commission that was then established concluded that the inkotshane practice was well known among the men in the mines and appeared to be confined to men coming from Portuguese territory (modern-day Mozambique) (see Epprecht 2001). While this conclusion should be viewed within the broader context of colonial treatment of African sexuality and homosexuality as disparate and abnormal, evidence that these African men were having thigh sex (nonpenetrative sex that involves the insertion of the penis between the thighs of the “receiving” partner) with each other is adequate to dispel the myth that African men did not engage in same-sex sexual practices. There are other examples of same-sex male intimacy, such as the marriages in Mkhumbane, an informal settlement in Durban (see Hunter 2010; Louw 2001) in the South African province of KwaZulu-Natal.
Following on the colonial governments that sought to erase same-sex desire and render it outside the space of white liberal English civility, the apartheid government worked to contain not only same-sex desire but all forms of desire deemed to be in opposition to white purity. With the Sexual Offences Act of 1957 (a continuation and strengthening of the Immorality Act of 1927), consensual sexual relations among individuals from different racial groups were completely prohibited. Same-sex relations between white men were also prohibited; interestingly, the ban was not extended to women. Gevisser (1995) notes that many of the legislative prohibitions emanating from the apartheid government were never quite enforced by the apartheid state, and that as early as the 1950s, a thriving gay subculture existed in various spaces of white South Africa. During World War II, sailors and soldiers encamped in various parts of the country and in need of entertainment were courted in “cruising” spaces frequented by men seeking to have sexual relations with other men, including restaurants, bathing spots, and certain bars. Sex between young white Afrikaner working-class men and older, middle-class white men was a frequent occurrence in spaces such as café-bios, or “ordinary cinemas where you could eat, smoke, and have it off while watching a movie” (quoted in Gevisser 1995, 26). White women also had thriving lesbian subcultures where they met in homes to engage sexually. Gay neighborhoods such as Atlantic Seaboard, Sea Point, and Bantry Bay also had flourishing gay and lesbian cultures. These “queer” spaces included “coloured” spaces, such as District Six, where same-sex–identifying men participated in drag shows and even had their own sporting teams, such as the District Six netball team.

Given that it was public same-sex acts that were outlawed, white South African same-sex–desiring citizens continued to enjoy relative freedom by engaging in same-sex relations in private spaces. However, these freedoms came to a halt when the police raided a party of 300 men in Forest Town in 1966. The newspaper headlines screamed of national disgrace, causing a sex panic and triggering the apartheid government to propose new draconian legislative amendments to the Immorality Act. These amendments would essentially outlaw same-sex desire, even in private, and proposed to include women for the first time. Gevisser (1995) argues that fear of the repercussions from the antihomosexuality legislation led to the formation of the first real “movement” against same-sex discrimination with the launch of the Homosexual Land Reform Fund, euphemistically known as the “Law Reform.” The Law Reform grouping was successful in curbing some of the outlandish amendments to the Immorality Act proposed by Minister of Justice P. C. Pelser, but three amendments were finalized: first, the age of consent was extended from sixteen to nineteen for male same-sex acts; second, dildos were banned; and third, the “men at a party” clause was added.

Following these amendments and the relative success of the Law Reform team, several organizations were launched in the 1970s and 1980s as gay culture became more entrenched. Gevisser argues that the movement of South African white men to the United States and Europe enabled the transnational exchange of gay cultures into the South
African scene. Clubs and bars thrived, and gay men's support networks (built on parties, not politics) emerged. Organizations such as Gay Aid Identification Development and Enrichment (GAIDE) offered support for same-sex–desiring white people in South Africa. The first national organization to advance gay politics, the Gay Association of South Africa (GASA), was also launched. GASA's stated raison d'être was to advance gay liberation by being apolitical. Thus, they failed to engage in any material way with the oppression and subjugation of black people at the height of apartheid brutality, which resulted in their suspension from international gay and lesbian organizations. As Gevisser's (1995) historical account shows, the disdain shown by middle-class white men toward black gay activists during GASA's existence was one of the main reasons for its failure (in addition to the general mismanagement of the organization). GASA's failure to deal with the issue of race—and its decision to limit the number of black members that could be admitted to the organization—resulted in the formation of the Saturday Group in 1984 by black activist Simon Nkoli (1957–1998). Unsurprisingly, when Nkoli was arrested in the same year for leading a rent boycott demonstration in his township of Sebokeng, GASA sought to distance itself from him. Judging from Nkoli's writings at the time, as captured by Gevisser (1995), the gay liberation movement in South Africa only served to peddle white gay middle-class interests without ever challenging the machinery of the apartheid state. As such, it can be fairly argued that the gay liberation movements, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s, protected white interests only, thus colluding with the apartheid and colonial agenda. It was only in the era of HIV and AIDS—and mainly because white gay men were also affected—that strategies driven by social justice were adopted.

**The Postapartheid Paradox: Constrained Freedoms**

When South Africa dismantled its system of apartheid in 1994 under intense pressure from international and domestic actors, activists moved to strategically articulate the equality clause in the South African constitution to include not just race but also gender and sexual orientation. Some of these activists, including Nkoli, who was imprisoned during the apartheid period, assisted in formulating a progressive, inclusive constitution. Unfortunately, these strategic articulations enabled traditional, conservative Africanists to claim equal rights in rejecting same-sex desire, resulting in a complicated narrative emanating from the South African government.

**BEV DITSIE (1971–)**

Beverley Palesa Ditsie, known as Bev Ditsie, is a gay and lesbian rights activist, writer, and filmmaker. Raised by her grandmother, who worked as a domestic servant, and her actor-singer mother, Eaglet Ditsie, Bev grew up under the yoke of apartheid as a self-described “Soweto tomboy.” Coming to terms with the radical potential of her dissident sexual identity at a young age, Ditsie was still a teenager when, in April 1988,
she became a founding member of the multiracial and explicitly anti-racist Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW). Befriended and mentored by the well-known gay rights and antiapartheid activist Simon Tseko Nkoli (1957–1998), Ditsie became an organizer and activist who articulated the injustices and marginalization faced specifically by black lesbians in South Africa. Along with GLOW being a site for Ditsie’s early activism, Ditsie described her finding community in GLOW as coming home. In 1990 she was part of a cadre of GLOW activists who organized the first gay and lesbian pride march on the African continent, in Johannesburg, South Africa.

After identifying openly as a lesbian on a television news report covering the march, she was forced to contend with an onslaught of threats on her life and autonomy. Despite the threats of violence she faced, Ditsie’s appearances on South African television are remembered as watershed moments that inspired many lesbians in the country to embrace their sexual identity in the public sphere.

During the South African transition to democracy in early 1990s, Ditsie’s work centered on sustaining a politics of visibility for black gay and lesbian people’s full inclusion in the new South Africa. Ditsie used print media to share her thoughts on justice for gays and lesbians and the racial politics within the LGBT community, sharing her perspectives in the column “Bev’s Beat,” which was published in the glossy gay and lesbian magazine Outright in the mid-1990s. As a representative of GLOW, Ditsie traveled extensively to mobilize support for gay and lesbian rights in South Africa and beyond. Successfully working to strengthen ties within an increasingly global LGBT network, Ditsie was honored in 1994 by the San Francisco proclamation of 5 July as Simon Nkoli and Bev Ditsie Day. On 13 September 1995, at the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, Ditsie became the first openly lesbian-identified person to address the United Nations. In an uncompromising and brave speech asserting that lesbian rights are women’s rights, Ditsie challenged the silencing of lesbians and sexual minorities within the emerging transnational feminist movement. Along with gay and lesbian rights organizing, Ditsie also led safe sex and sexual empowerment workshops for lesbians and other women living with AIDS.

Frustrated by what she saw as the lack of support for lesbian issues within the organization, Ditsie left GLOW in 1996. Thereafter, she focused primarily on film as a vehicle for activism and social change. She, along with codirector Nicky Newman, released the documentary film Simon and I in 2002. Chronicling her development as an activist and her complex friendship with Nkoli, the film is a memory project documenting the formation of GLOW and the tireless contributions made by Nkoli, who died of HIV-related illness in 1998. Ditsie also worked as a director in the South African television industry, developing variety, educational, and reality programming. In 2017 Ditsie released a full-length documentary titled The Commission: From Silence

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Essentially, the top-down approach in introducing a bill of rights for the new nation without fully engaging at the grassroots level (although Munro [2012] argues that there was active consultation at grassroots level) has meant that circulating homophobic discourses remain in force, even among government officials. For instance, former South African president Jacob Zuma (1942–) recorded his displeasure with same-sex marriage by saying that when he was younger he would have beaten a gay man. In 2010 a former minister for arts and culture, Lulu Xingwana (1955–), walked out of an exhibition by world-renowned artist Zanele Muholi (1972–), declaring that the depiction of same-sex desire among women was against the values of nation-building. In 2016 there was great surprise when South Africa, one of the first countries to legalize same-sex marriage and offer constitutional protections on the basis of sexual orientation, voted against the United Nations’ resolution Protection against Violence and Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. In 2017 a deputy minister, Mduduzi Manana (1984–), was forced to resign from government after assaulting a woman who had allegedly called him gay in a nightclub. Hande Eslen-Ziya and colleagues (2015) suggest that this is a “paradox” emerging from the interests of the South African political elites who sought to present South Africa as progressive once apartheid had collapsed, and utilized the constitution as evidence.
Despite the constitutional provisions, harrowing newspaper headlines indicate that South African black lesbian women, predominantly based in townships, have been raped and murdered in alarming numbers. One of the participants in a study conducted by Amanda Lock Swarr stated, “I thought he was going to kill me; he was like an animal. And he kept saying, ‘I know you are a lesbian. You are not a man, you think you are, but I am going to show you, you are a woman. I am going to make you pregnant. I am going to kill you’” (2012, 961). These crimes have been theorized as an outcome of the bruised masculinity of African men, which was wounded during apartheid and continues to be wounded postapartheid due to poverty and a lack of employment opportunities (see Swarr 2012). It is not only women who experience this violence; men who claim same-sex sexual identities are also targeted. Gay men have been identified as being at risk of violence and attack, particularly in rural communities.

It would be easy to assume that South African homophobia is primarily black and rural, but this is too simplistic a reading. The complexity of the South African space, together with its history, makes it challenging to offer a universal account of the same-sex experience. For example, the modalities of homophobia vary if one is a white working-class transgender woman or a black middle-class cisgender (i.e., one whose gender identity corresponds to the identified sex at birth) man. Homophobia is influenced powerfully by class and gender, and context, too, often defines the experience. A study of black male teachers who engage in same-sex relations and are based in rural and township contexts (Msibi 2018) found that the teachers’ experiences of homophobia were limited, mainly because they had the economic means to define and control the agenda at home, in their churches, and in their professional work spaces. It was clear, however, that without the money and professional standing, these teachers would be subjected to homophobia on a daily basis. Urban spaces such as Cape Town have been shown to offer greater visibility for same-sex–desiring individuals, but again here, both race and class define those experiences (see Tucker 2009). While many studies in South Africa focus on black subjects when studying same-sex issues, work by Renée DePalma and Dennis Francis (2014) at primary and secondary schools has shown that homophobia also affects white, liberal middle-class spaces, often taking more covert forms as opposed to the overt violence seen in other spaces (see also Bhana 2015). Novels by South Africans have also long brought this issue to light (see Munro 2012 for an exploration of these novels). What becomes clear from the literature on same-sex desire and the South African experience is the particularity of each individual experience and context. In some South African township spaces, for instance, being black and openly gay is not received with the same vitriolic, violent response found in some other spaces. Simply put, South African experience of same-sex desire is largely shaped by race, gender, sex, class, and context; at the intersection of these markers rests the complex relationship of the individual with the community. Thus, experiences will vary from one individual to the next.

Queer Visibility and Opportunity
While the harrowing stories of rape and murder present an image of queer identity under siege, the reality is that experiences of same-sex desire in South Africa are characterized paradoxically by both freedom and constraint. In recent years, an emerging queer visibility has taken shape, particularly in the more urban spaces, including rural areas. Historically, asserting a gay or lesbian identity has been frowned upon, but gradual shifts in public sentiment have meant greater opportunities and recognition for individuals who claim same-sex sexual identities, and therefore an increasing number of individuals are doing so. At the heart of this progress are three forces: constitutionalism as expressed via the legal system, the media, and globalization.

**INXEBA (2017; JOHN TRENGOVE)**

Premiering in 2017 and the winner of multiple international awards, this South African film, the title of which translates into English as “the wound,” centers on the secret amaXhosa custom of *ulwaluko*: initiation with ritual circumcision. During three weeks of isolation and privation in Eastern Cape mountain locales, teenagers (*abakhwetha*, or “learners”) are instructed in manhood. After cutting, the traditional surgeon shouts “You are a man!” with the initiate replying “Ndiyindoda!” (“I am a man!”).

The movie was inspired by the director John Trengove’s reading of *A Man Who Is Not a Man*, a 2009 novel by the South African public health researcher Thando Mgqolozana that describes the traumatic experiences of an initiate whose circumcision was botched. Pain and the attendant social stigma of being a “failed man” lead the initiate to reflect on deeper meanings of masculinity. Mgqolozana became a co-scriptwriter for the movie, which was filmed in the Xhosa language.

The film follows Xolani, a lonely, closeted gay factory worker taking youngsters to initiation school. Xolani looks forward to rekindling his romantic liaison with Vija during the initiation period, but their reunion is complicated when Kwanda, an initiate whom Xolani is assigned to mentor, discovers their relationship. Kwanda, himself gay, feels Xolani is a hypocrite for remaining closeted, resulting in escalating tension among the three.

In March 2018 *Inxeba* won six prizes at the annual South African Film and Television Awards ceremony, including best film, director, screenplay, actor, and supporting actor. Yet what international and national critics recognized as edgy, aesthetically powerful, taboo-breaking gay love, powerful local forces saw as heretical transgressions; they threatened enforced closures of any movie theater that dared to show it. These threats resulted in *Inxeba* being taken off-circuit in the Eastern Cape.
focus, all reflecting acknowledged fissure lines in South African society and constitutional law. First, who is authorized to comment on secret traditional male initiation ceremonies? In a society influenced by identity politics, commentators asked if even young, “born free” (i.e., postapartheid), first-language Xhosa-speaking women may speak on the matter, much less Trengove, a white South African. Second, why does the film deal with the taboo of homosexuality? Finally, do individual rights to creative freedom triumph over collective rights to preserve the sanctity of traditional customs?

Leading the protest was the African National Congress–aligned Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA), whose appeal to the national Film and Publication Board (FPB) saw Inxeba’s viewing license raised to that of a pornographic film, despite the film inclusion of neither full sex scenes nor an exposé of ulwaluko secrets. The FPB denied the film’s director and supporting civil society groups the opportunity to represent their side, considering CONTRALESA’s and a supporting civil society group's views as having primacy by representing customary authority. The FPB has been accused in the past of allowing a conservative ideology to influence its actions; in 2017 ousted FPB CEO Themba Wakashe accused the board of pushing him out for being gay. As noted by Charl Blignaut, who covered the story for the City Press, a Johannesburg newspaper, “According to several sources, the FBP is known to house ... a culture of conservative Christianity that does not hold homosexuality in a favourable light” (2017, 5). On 27 June 2018 the North Gauteng High Court restored the FPB’s original viewing license on the grounds of procedural unfairness, while not making any findings on the substantive issues raised by the case.

Initiation schools are now of great public concern. Many schools are bogus. Initiates suffer often irreparable disfigurement and death from botched circumcisions. Some suggest that circumcision should be performed at state hospitals as part of the ritual. Yet, there is a wider crisis of masculinity, reflected in rising levels of gender-based violence, including assault, murder, and rape, and violent homophobia, including “corrective rape” of women “accused” of being lesbian. What exactly are tribal elders currently secretly teaching the abakhwetha, tradition’s new Xhosa men?

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The provisions and protections explicitly articulated in the South African constitution have enabled a greater number of individuals to lay claim to their rights in their day-to-day expressions of identity. While the equality clause offers protections only on paper, and the experiences of individuals who claim same-sex sexual identities have been generally negative, these individuals have been able to appeal to these provisions when under attack or in need of additional protections. For instance, the constitutional provisions of the right to sexual orientation have enabled other legal advances for same-sex–identifying individuals, the repeal of the criminal offense of sodomy (1994); the extension of benefits to permanent residents in same-sex relationships (1999); the extension of adoption rights to individuals who claim same-sex sexual identities (2002); the grant of civil service pension benefits to individuals in same-sex partnerships (2002); and the legalization of same-sex marriage in 2005 (see Klaaren 2005). While access to legal services in South Africa is still raced and classed, meaning that many poor black individuals who engage in same-sex relations are unable to access these services, the general provisions of the constitution mean that the dignity of those who claim same-sex sexual identities is fully protected. Thus, many people are able to publicly claim same-sex sexual identities because increasingly they are not viewed as inherently abhorrent and dirty. This is not to say that these negative beliefs no longer exist; clearly, they still do. But the constitutional provisions have allowed people to question religious and cultural scripts, thus leading to greater freedom and, when desired, visibility.

South African media and novels such as K. Sello Duiker's pioneering *The Quiet Violence of Dreams* (2001) have played an activist role in normalizing same-sex desire in the public mind. Local soapies (television soap operas) such as *Generations* (1993–), *Isidingo* (1998–), *Rhythm City* (2007–), and *Uzalo* (2015–) have featured black gay characters who skillfully and positively portray same-sex desire, challenging homophobia. *Generations* has been particularly groundbreaking in this regard; unlike some soapies that have presented gay characters as excessively and stereotypically feminine, *Generations* portrayed masculine men involved in same-sex–desiring relationships when the general public still found such ideas palatable. In 2009, when two of the show's characters, Senzo and Jason, shared their first kiss on national television, there were public expressions of outrage and disgust.
One viewer remarked, “If you are gay, it's fine, but don't publicize it because it's disgusting. It's worse than animal behavior. I hate gays. I get goosebumps every time I think of them. My days of watching Generations are numbered” (City Press 2009). There was a similar reaction from some Xhosa men to the sex scenes in Inxeba (2017; The wound), the award-winning film about same-sex desire in an initiation school. The thinking here is simple: same-sex desire is acceptable as long as it stays in the private space of darkness. Visibility requires recognition and acknowledgment of reality; it is this reality that homophobia often seeks to hide. In addition to gay characters, Generations also portrayed transgender characters, including Wandi, whose introduction once again forced the South African public into an uneasy conversation, though unlike Jason and Senzo, Wandi did not inspire virulent homophobia in viewers.

The positive portrayal of same-sex identity in the media has resulted in many “gay” celebrities emerging and being celebrated by many South Africans. Somizi, a celebrity and judge in the local version of the singing competition Idols, has captured the imaginations of many in South Africa, with people from varied backgrounds celebrating his craft and responding warmly to him. Local reality dating shows such as Date My Family and Uyangithandana (Do you love me?) have also featured same-sex–desiring individuals, though these programs tend to rely on an identifiable “gay” or “lesbian” subject, which often serves to concretize existing stereotypes, thus doing little to undermine homophobia in fundamental ways.

Finally, globalization has played an incredibly important role in terms of the transnational borrowing of terms and concepts regarding same-sex desire. Social media has ensured that a greater number of South Africans are able to interact with people in other parts of the world. While being gay or lesbian takes on a particular local South African flavor, the availability of the repertoire of terminologies and concepts has made it possible for many South Africans to name themselves. African societies have always had same-sex practices, but these practices were seen not as identities but rather as acts, or in other contexts, as characteristic of a third gender (see Msibi 2011). The powerful combination of the constitutional provisions, the media, and globalization have enabled greater freedoms and visibility for many same-sex–identifying individuals, thus challenging the perception that South African same-sex experience is exclusively homophobic.

While these positive forces have gone some way toward helping individuals who engage in same-sex relations to enjoy freedoms in South Africa, it goes without saying that HIV/AIDS has presented serious constraints and devastating consequences for South Africans across racial lines. From the first appearance of the HIV virus in South Africa in the 1980s, activists such as Zackie Achmat (1962–) have sought sustainable ways of managing the spread of the virus and fighting off stigma while also offering health care to those infected. Although the transmission rates remain high for men who have sex with other men, with some studies suggesting an HIV-infected population of between 23 and 48 percent, depending on
location, successful organizing by the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) has ensured that antiretroviral treatment is readily available for working-class people, including those in same-sex relationships. The homophobic nature of the society forces many men who have sex with men to hide their HIV status for fear of rejection. Often, if they do attempt to access health-care support, they are pathologized and judged for their sexual identities. Clearly, the postapartheid freedoms are seriously constrained, and this continues to limit the lives of same-sex–desiring people in material ways.

**Looking Ahead: Future Possibilities**

South Africa has come far since the introduction of the equality clause in the South African constitution in 1996. Significant gains have been and continue to be made for individuals who claim nonnormative sexual identities. These gains survive in the tension-filled space amid pushback from conservative forces that draw on religious and cultural notions of sexual purity. It is clear that the fragility of heteronormativity cannot be sustained via these institutions. Younger South Africans are beginning to chart their own directions, insisting on recognition and acknowledgment. A video of two high school boys sharing a romantic kiss on Valentine’s Day while their peers cheered is a strong indication of these shifts in the public space. Conversations about same-sex desire are happening in schools, in social and communal spaces, and via social media and other public platforms, suggesting that in the long term, the failures in public engagement when the constitution was drafted will likely become inconsequential. The homophobic conflicts and violence witnessed today are happening in a society in transition, and the homophobia experienced by many individuals who engage in same-sex relations is a reflection of the strenuous tensions that exist in the paradox of freedom and constraint facilitated by the equality clause.

What will ultimately define the future of South Africa in terms of sexuality is the degree to which local queer identities develop their own expression, without assimilating and mimicking Western cultures (notwithstanding, of course, globalization). “Coming out of the closet” and publicly claiming gay identities should not be the defining feature of the South African experience. Instead, a pluralistic and malleable understanding that centers identification on fluidity and flux needs to inform South African thinking. The complex history of colonialism, together with traditional African responses to same-sex desire, mandate an approach to sexuality that is deeply appreciative of the complexity of human sexuality, including the complexity of love. Proclaiming an identifiable, recognizable gay and lesbian identity results in continued tensions, many of which are unnecessary; moving away from sexual categories might lead to the creation of a much more inclusive society.

**SEE ALSO** Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Cape Town; Cinema, African (Anglophone); Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara; HIV/AIDS in Africa; Internet in Africa; Nkoli, Simon (1957–1998); Rape, Corrective, in Africa; Refugees and Asylum in Africa; Sports, Women in, Africa


**FILMOGRAPHY**


The Southern Comfort Conference is an annual convention for transgender and gender-nonconforming (GNC) people and their families. The conference bills itself as “a safe place for LGBT people with a familial atmosphere” and offers seminars, presentations, and workshops by leaders in trans issues, including health professionals, educators, researchers, activists, and public figures (SCC 2018a). In short, the conference seeks to create a sense of community for trans and GNC people nationwide and to provide a space in which members of the community can connect, socialize, and share common experiences. It is the largest convention designed specifically for trans people in the United States.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GREATER FORT LAUDERDALE CIB
Banquet Dinner of the 2016 Southern Comfort Conference in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. The Southern Comfort Conference is an annual convention for transgender and gender-nonconforming people and their families.

History and Organization

From its founding in 1991 until 2014, the Southern Comfort Conference was held every year in Atlanta, Georgia, in September. After the 2014 conference, the board of organizers announced that the event would be moved to Fort Lauderdale, Florida, citing dwindling
attendance numbers and “adding an element of vacation to the conference” as factors for the change (SCC 2018a). The 2017 conference, which was to be held at the Riverside Hotel in Fort Lauderdale, was canceled due to the threat of Hurricane Irma, a category five storm that did significant damage to south Florida and parts of the Caribbean. The 2018 conference was scheduled to be held at the same venue in Fort Lauderdale.

Since its inception the Southern Comfort Conference has welcomed over 400 different speakers and presenters. Presentations at the event, whether in the form of public addresses, seminars, or workshops, vary widely in topic and are delivered by people from a range of career fields and disciplines. Medical doctors and other health-care providers who specialize in trans health are especially frequent guests. For example, cosmetic surgeons who specialize in gender-confirmation procedures, including “top” (torso and abdomen), “bottom” (genital and reproductive), and facial surgeries, often lead information sessions about the process of medical transition. Gender-confirmation surgeries are generally so expensive that most trans people are denied access, and most procedures are not covered by insurance plans.

Psychologists and other mental health professionals are also regular guests, offering sessions on trans-related mental health issues, including workshops designed to help trans people manage the coming-out process and to effectively support their loved ones during their transition. At the 2018 conference, a speech and language therapist was scheduled to offer voice-modification coaching for both trans-feminine and trans-masculine individuals, including “ways to modify and maintain your true gender’s pitch, modify vocal resonance, intonation, breath support, tone, and the melody of your gender’s speech,” in addition to training on how to adopt nonverbal cues that are consistent with one’s gender identity (SCC 2018b).

As trans and GNC people have gained more mainstream visibility, the number of celebrities, prominent trans activists, and other public figures in attendance has also increased. For example, in 2016 the conference welcomed Schuyler Bailar, a Harvard University student who is the first openly trans NCAA Division 1 swimmer and the first known NCAA Division 1 trans man to compete in any sport. The conference also hosted Sean Dorsey, an award-winning modern dance choreographer from San Francisco who offered an all-levels dance workshop to conference attendees. Gloria Stein, a trans activist, was in attendance to screen the film Uncle Gloria: One Helluva Ride (2016), based on her life and work. Other 2016 guests included British boxing manager and promoter Kellie Maloney, who is credited with helping famed fighter Lennox Lewis become the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world, and Sarah McBride, the national press secretary of the Human Rights Campaign.

In 2007 the Southern Comfort Conference held its first transgender career expo, which helps trans job seekers find work settings and career paths in which they feel safe being themselves. At the time of the first expo, no federal protections existed for trans employees
in the United States, some of whom report significant harassment, discrimination, or abuse in the workplace. In addition to its schedule of presentations and professional networking opportunities, the conference also offers a range of informal and social activities for attendees. For example, the event hosts a marketplace where vendors sell products specially designed for trans consumers. Since the conference’s move to south Florida, it has organized excursions to local sites, including the Everglades and Fort Lauderdale’s famous Las Olas Boulevard shopping district.

Advice and Guidelines for Attendees

Southern Comfort organizers make clear efforts toward inclusivity at the conference. The official website strikes an informal tone in offering potential attendees information on what to expect from the weekend’s events. For example, “first-timers” are encouraged to visit the welcome table near registration, which is designed to get the “First-Time-Outer” comfortable enough to not only leave their [hotel] room, but participate and enjoy the many events available during the conference (SCC 2018c). All guests are encouraged to “leave those self-conscious feelings at the curb—we are your brothers and sisters and have all been where you are. The difficult part was getting here and actually deciding to come out of your room, don’t miss your opportunity to experience it all” (SCC 2018c).

The conference website also offers information pertaining to the personal safety of its attendees, because transgender people are significantly more likely than cisgender people to be victims of hate-based harassment, assault, and violence. To provide support to guests who are anxious about attending, the conference offers a “Big Brother/Big Sister” program in which guests unsure of their ability to safely and successfully navigate the weekend’s events can partner with more experienced attendees. Because the conference has historically been held in hotel settings, attendees are advised about contact with nonattendees in a way that lightheartedly raises the issue of potential conflict:

_The mainstream public does not pay much attention if we present ourselves and behave like ladies and gentlemen.... Even if we are “read” [identified as a transgender person] we want to be seen as normal people expressing themselves in a non-threatening way. Remember that during the day there are families with children in the mainstream so we are invading their space to some extent. Travel in small groups, 1–4 ladies together is not unusual (unless they are all tall with the wrong lipstick, lol!)._

(SCC 2018c)
Furthermore, conference organizers issue strict guidelines about how to comport themselves at the event and suggest a dress code:

*DO NOT* dress like a hooker for the seminars or banquets—you have the freedom to express yourself later in the evening. This is *NOT* a sex convention, nor is it a fashion show so there is no “wrong” outfit within the guidelines of decency and appropriateness for any event. Casual or professional during the day, the Friday night events are a bit more flashy while Saturday night is more of a formal event. Gowns and tuxes if you like to really go formal. (SCC 2018c)

The website goes so far as to broach the subject of behavior in bathrooms, again suggesting a potential for conflict if these guidelines are violated: “Play the part of the gender you are presenting! Ladies—when in the stall—always sit, feet facing the door, and leave the seat down when you leave.... If you can minimize drawing negative attention to yourself you will have fewer problems” (SCC 2018c). The rights of transgender and GNC people to use the bathroom of their choice has become a hot-button issue in recent years, as several conservative politicians in regions across the United States, especially in the South, have proposed legislation designed to ban people from using gendered bathrooms that are inconsistent with their biological sex, irrespective of how the person identifies. Ironically, organizers caution attendees about getting “political—we all have views and this conference is more educational and social than it is for political activism” (SCC 2018c). Some argue that liberally offering advice about dress and comportment is a form of respectability politics that may reflect the conservative values of conference leadership. In recent years, longtime attendees have encouraged younger interested parties to reach out for more leadership roles. Historically, the conference has been predominated by transfeminine older adults, many of whom began their transition later in life. But as the transgender community has changed over time, organizers have suggested that leadership roles should be distributed more evenly across generational divides. The continued preeminence of the Southern Comfort Conference reveals the significant growth of support networks for trans people in the United States and serves as a symbol of the diversity—familial, social, political—within the trans community.

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Spectra Project

SUBHI NAHAS
Founder
Spectra Project

US-based charity supporting LGBTQ refugees in Turkey.

Spectra Project is a US-based charity that formed in 2016 to provide housing, food, and education to LGBTQ refugees who have fled to Turkey from Syria, Libya, Iraq, Egypt, and other countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Driven by war and instability in their own countries, many LGBTQ refugees flee to Turkey as a safer country of transit, but they may not find refuge in a third country. These LGBTQ refugees are an especially vulnerable subset of the refugee population because discrimination against LGBTQ individuals in refugee camps prevents them from receiving the support offered to others. Spectra Project aims to provide a safe house (located in or near Istanbul) where these refugees can be free of persecution and receive both immediate emergency support and ongoing support in the form of language and vocational education so that they have a greater chance of becoming self-sufficient wherever they may end up living. Although operating in Turkey, Spectra Project is based in San Francisco, California. Subhi Nahas, a gay refugee from Syria who was granted refugee status in the United States in July 2015 after spending two and a half years in Turkey, started Spectra Project to provide support to LGBTQ refugees he left behind, many of whom may never be able to leave Turkey. The name Spectra Project reflects both the range and spectrum of countries from which those who need help come and the wide array of needs LGBTQ refugees have.

Background

Increased activism has resulted in significant gains for LGBTQ Americans in the early twenty-first century, but people living outside North America, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, have not shared these gains. While the United States and other nations have moved toward more tolerant policies, many countries globally have implemented harsher penalties, and hate crimes are on the rise. As of 2017, seventy-nine nations criminalize same-sex relations in their penal code. Seven of these apply the death penalty for consensual same-sex conduct. In many African and Arabic-speaking nations, gay men, lesbians, and gender-nonconforming individuals face brutal violence, honor killings, or so-called lesbian corrective rapes if their homosexuality or gender variance is revealed. After the late 2010 and 2011 uprisings popularly known as the Arab Spring destabilized many of the affected countries, there was an increase in radicalism and terrorism in countries such
as Syria, Libya, Egypt, and Iraq (Carroll and Mendos 2017). Ironically, in the midst of what was supposed to be greater liberty, many minorities and vulnerable groups were targeted.

In Syria specifically, Islamic radicals and armed terrorist groups such as ISIS (the Islamic State), al-Nusra Front, and a few Syrian militias targeted LGBTQ community members. In addition, the Syrian government's laws against homosexuals left no safe place for members of the LGBTQ community. As a result, the number of LGBTQ asylum seekers and refugees from that region both drastically increased.

As of June 2016, there were over 21 million refugees living in North Africa and the Middle East, with over 34,000 people forcibly displaced every day. The number of Syrian refugees is especially high, doubling between 2015 and 2017, reaching 4.9 million. As of 2017, there were over 2.7 million registered Syrian refugees living in Turkey (UNHCR 2018). Their arrival in Turkey does not guarantee their safety, however, as many still face threats and assault (Weise and Banks 2016). In 2016, for example, a gay Syrian refugee named Muhammed Wisam Sankari was found tortured and beheaded in Istanbul. Fellow refugees noted that this was not an isolated incident and that the Turkish police did not investigate his death (Weise and Banks 2016). As noted in a 2009 news release by the Organization for Refuge, Asylum and Migration (ORAM), LGBT refugees in Turkey often must go without medical care, social support, or employment, choosing to remain in their dwellings rather than risk violence. According to that ORAM release, “Turkey was named one of the worst countries in the world for refugees in the 2009 World Refugee Survey…. Discrimination and hate crimes against LGBT individuals are commonplace in Turkey, where ten transgender and gay individuals have been murdered since the beginning of 2009.”

While a number of very large organizations help refugees, these organizations are limited by lack of funding and the increasing number of individuals in need. Two-thirds of the Syrian programs are unfunded, leaving many refugees to seek protection, shelter, and survival on their own. All Syrians displaced by the ongoing civil war depend on humanitarian aid for food, clothing, and shelter; LGBTQ refugees—a subset of the larger group—face additional hardship in that they experience discrimination in refugee camps given the largely homophobic and increasing religious atmosphere in Syria in particular and the Middle East in general. They may have already been cast out by their parents, threatened by classmates, or terrorized by government officials or militia. These LGBTQ individuals have few options.
Subhi Nahas, Founder of the Spectra Project. Nahas, a gay refugee from Syria who fled to Turkey and eventually settled in the United States, founded the Spectra Project in 2016 to aid other gay refugees in Turkey.

**Mission**

Spectra Project focuses on LGBTQ refugees eighteen years of age and older, providing temporary emergency shelter to up to four individuals at a time and other services to approximately 100 individuals each month. As of June 2017, there were over 250 identified LGBTQ individuals living in Turkey, and these individuals needed not only basic support and refuge but also health education, language courses, and legal aid. One aspect of the Spectra Project’s support involves plans for a safe house to be managed by fellow LGBTQ refugees, who understand firsthand the threats, fear, and isolation associated with living as a minority in such difficult circumstances. The safe house is designed to serve as an education and resource center where more than fifty refugees per week can learn other languages such as English and Turkish, as well as skills such as sewing, which will help them find temporary or permanent work in Turkey, encouraging self-sufficiency.

**Challenges**

Some of the challenges faced by Spectra Project have included fund-raising in the United States, where knowledge of the LGBTQ refugee situation in the Middle East and North Africa is fairly limited; determining reliable, safe, and legal methods for transferring funds to Turkey; and ensuring that employees and benefactors are protected at all times while
engaged in Spectra Project–related activities in Turkey. Spectra's work has also been unsettled by the efforts of US president Donald Trump to implement severe travel restrictions targeting the predominantly Muslim countries of Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, and Chad, as well as North Korea and some groups from Venezuela (Liptak 2017). As Kate Moran noted on the Spectra Project website on 8 June 2017, “The travel ban is yet another blow to LGBTQ refugees’ tenuous hold on a viable future for an already-marginalized minority.”

Raising Awareness

Nahas has used his position as a prominent gay activist to bring international attention to the plight of Middle East refugees, using his own experience as a gay man in Syria to vividly illustrate the dire conditions. In 2015 he testified before the United Nations Security Council to advocate that the Security Council establish an agenda for protecting LGBTQ rights. He spoke of how both militants and government soldiers targeted gay men in Syria, which included public executions of men suspected to be gay by ISIS, as well as a government-sponsored media campaign that portrayed all dissidents as homosexual (Wolpow 2015). In June 2016, speaking before the US Senate's Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, he told the personal story of his life as a gay man in an area of Syria controlled by forces aligned with ISIS, as well as his subsequent escape to Lebanon and then Turkey. In his testimony, he boldly proclaimed the need to combat the ideology of ISIS by confronting bigotry and xenophobia in all its forms and promoting human rights for LGBTQ persons (C-SPAN 2016).

SEE ALSO The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Human Rights and Queer Arab Refugees; ISIS Gay Trials

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Social scientists consider the realm of sports to be a key site for the study of both male and female masculinity. Sports reveal a given society’s valorization of a particular style of masculinity, thus mirroring an idealized form of masculinity in that place while simultaneously serving as a way for young people to learn, construct, rehearse, refine, and perform that masculinity competently (Archetti 1999). This emphasis on idealized masculinity has consistently created tensions for two sets of athletes in particular who experience stigma as a result of their incursion into prototypically and hegemonically masculine territory: women and LGBT individuals, the latter of which experience a gradation of severity within this group. Misogyny and homophobia, oftentimes mutually reinforced, permeate most sports and sporting cultures worldwide. In the case of Latin America, local variants of machismo—a particular regional style of masculinity emphasizing positive attributes of provision and mentorship but also many negative attributes such as rigidity in gender roles—are central to considerations of both misogyny and homophobia. Yet, because sports are a site for performing masculinity, there is also great potential for people to perform counterhegemonic masculinity through sports and to thereby increase acceptance of more diversity in the sporting world.
Gender and sexuality are not isolated as identities within sports. These identities intersect with other performances of identity, including class, race, ethnicity, ability, and nationality. Hosting major events is a way for countries to position themselves geopolitically through intersectional performances of nationhood. Latin American states that have used male athletes’ bodies for the purpose of particular political aspirations on the global stage include, for example, Uruguay during the World Cup in 1930, Guatemala during the Central American and Caribbean Games in 1950, and Mexico during the 1968 Summer Olympics and the World Cup in 1970 and 1986.

Certain sports may even have distinctive associations with axes of identity and particular performances of masculinity (e.g., wealthy white equestrians and snow-boarders; working-class nonwhite Latin American men playing football; hypermasculine and aggressive men playing wheelchair rugby). Such stereotypes often play out in global contests such as the World Cup where the national team’s style of play has implications for how the country is perceived (e.g., sportsmanlike, corrupt and prone to feigning injury, etc.). There are also intersections with politics and political identity. For example, after Fidel Castro took power in Cuba in 1959, his regime sought to create a “new man” and incorporated recreational and professional sports programs into that idealized vision of state-sponsored masculinity that the government expected boys to learn to perform (Pettavino and Pye 2002). This
extended beyond highly visible sports such as football and baseball to other areas of Cuban excellence such as volleyball and boxing, sports for which Cuba began exporting successful coaches to wealthier European clubs. As for the fans, the ability to discuss sports is nearly universal as a means of performing one’s competency at masculinity, but scholars have pointed out how this is especially true in Cuba, where “arguing baseball” with other men is essential to establishing one's status in the hierarchy of masculinity that has been so carefully crafted by the political and economic interventions of the state (Carter 2002).

In the case of Cuba, having successful professional sports teams that performed well in international tournaments was especially important during the Cold War because it showed that communism could produce excellent specimens of manliness. Indeed, battles over communism and capitalism have played a profound role in shaping sports and masculinity in Latin America. And in the early twentieth century, Catholic Church officials and state government representatives supported football activities as a way to battle for political influence among rising classes of workers (Urbina Gaitán 2002). All these formations of identity are encapsulated in sociologist Pierre Bourdieu’s canonical theory of sports, which argues that sports are a means of indoctrinating youth with values of nationalism. For Bourdieu (1978), however, sporting cultures also indoctrinate youth with sexism, violence, and the central values of capitalism through the creation of cults of spectatorship based on imagined participation in a militantly competitive community, although other scholars have pointed to similar uses and effects within noncapitalist authoritarian regimes (cf. Lenartowicz and Jankowski 2014).

**Homophobia and Sports**

The issue of homophobia dominates scholarly discussions of gender and sexuality in sports, particularly in Latin America. The origins of homophobia in sports are deeply rooted, but scholars frequently trace the modern incarnation of this phenomenon to the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when fears over industrialization and transitions to urban life led medical and political leaders to fret that men were losing their natural ruggedness. They postulated that boys and men needed a renewed emphasis on sports in order to remasculinize them (Kimmel 2017). Precisely because sports are often associated with hegemonic masculinity, gay men are seen as poor candidates for excellence in this area and may often internalize this homophobia and thereby come to see themselves in this manner. This creates particular anxieties around football for boys in Latin America (Tobin 2000). Indeed, a lack of interest in sports or sports fandom may make a boy’s sexuality suspect. Conversely, a girl’s interest—rather than lack thereof—can be highly suspect for the same reasons, further increasing associations of athleticism, female masculinity, and lesbianism. One consequence of this homophobia, however, is that gay male athletes frequently attempt to mitigate stigma by adopting hegemonic masculinity, including exhibiting dominance, making hierarchical displays, policing rigid gender norms, and even
reproducing homophobia (Anderson 2005).

Homophobia does not arise only within the realm of the athletes themselves but also manifests among fans and spectators. During the second decade of the twenty-first century, homophobic verbal abuse at football matches became a highly controversial and widely covered issue in conversations about sports in Latin America. Since 2015, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), the international body governing football (soccer), has issued fines to seven countries for homophobic crowd chants. Of the seven countries (Chile, Peru, Mexico, Paraguay, El Salvador, Honduras, and Croatia), six are Latin American. This has not stemmed the abuse. Other possible penalties in the future could include larger fines, ordering teams to play in empty stadiums (as happened to Croatia when fans chanted fascist slogans), taking away points, or forcing forfeits, but these seem unlikely.

FIFA had until the mid-2010s showed tolerance for the most common chant: “Putoooo!” Many fans disagree on the exact translation, objecting to its rendering as puto—that is, “faggot” or “queer”—and instead arguing that it is not a homophobic slur at all. However, given that it literally is the male form of the word whore, it certainly is an epithet with connotations for gender and sexuality. It is also commonly deployed in a variety of nonsporting contexts, but the communalized ritual chanting of the term at sports events shows how spectators form in-group solidarity around a term that creates hierarchies of masculinity. Outside Latin America, other organizations such as the Chicago Fire and San Jose Earthquakes (both Major League Soccer clubs) were able to effectively quell this chant by ejecting fans who use it. Within Latin America, though, it is a much beloved practice, and few leaders or teams have shown interest in halting the practice.

**Homophobia in Decline**

Despite the visibility of homophobia in sports and the invisibility of LGBT players in Latin America, it is also important to note that the scholarly consensus is that homophobia is markedly decreasing over time (Anderson, Magrath, and Bullingham 2016). In a large US-based study of fan perceptions of gay male athletes, male fans showed no change in feeling toward an athlete after he comes out, and female fans formed significantly more positive impressions of the out athlete (Campbell et al. 2011). Latin America may be following suit, as there has been a proliferating number of amateur leagues and clubs for gay players, especially in major cities. For example, São Paulo has the Unicorns team, and Mexico City now has the Halcones (Falcons) league consisting of five teams: El Clan, Fashion Team, The Fuckers, Fuerza G, and Tu Mamá. Although the International Gay and Lesbian Football Association includes multiple Latin American member associations (in Brazil and Argentina, as well as many in Mexico) that are active, opportunities and leagues for queer women are less prominent. Still, this shift toward more visibility and inclusion for queer athletes correlates with broader advances in gay rights in Latin America in areas such as
marriage, adoption, and antidiscrimination, even though homophobia and homophobic violence have also accompanied the increased visibility and advocacy.

Because sports are sites where athletes perform gender and sexuality, sports cultures also allow a range of behaviors that can challenge heteronormativity. For example, many gay men in working-class and poor areas in Lima, Peru, play vóley callejero, or street volleyball. These men engage in ritual insults and competitiveness but use these social practices differently than one sees in hegemonically masculine contexts. In contrast to the latter, their verbal exchanges highlight playfulness, use feminizing grammar, and show linguistic prowess with a gay argot. Spectators from across the communities respond well to these gay volleyball games and turn up at the matches more for the linguistic competition than the volleyball itself. In this way, the gay men use sports to cultivate and perform specifically gay masculinities, queering the sport (Perez 2011). In another example, Mexican lucha libre (wrestling) features exóticos who adopt a flamboyantly effeminate style when they fight. Within these scripted narratives, the exóticos (who often do not identify as LGBT or queer) succeed in periodically emasculating their macho opponents when the exóticos vanquish them (often with displays of penetration and dominance), creating queer challenges to conventional masculinity and heterosexuality that delight audiences precisely through the contestation of Mexican heterosexual masculinity (Levi 1998). Nevertheless, LGBT fans may also experience ambivalence or outright negative feelings about these putatively queer contestations of hegemonic masculinity and machismo because of the ways that homophobic slurs, chants, and displays occur onstage and off in the realm of lucha libre performance.

Although athletes have been slower to come out as openly LGBT in Latin America than their counterparts in the United States, Canada, and much of Europe, this is beginning to change and was especially visible at the 2016 Summer Olympics in Brazil, where athletes from the host nation came out publicly. There are also more out women than men in sports both generally and in Latin America, which reveals the simultaneous effects of homophobia in rendering gay male athletes invisible and rendering gay female athletes hypervisible owing to their respective conforming to and deviation from gender norms.

Female Athletes

Female athletes have historically faced strong bias from the medical establishment, which commonly told women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that it was not in women’s nature to compete. This sentiment was common in Latin America and still persists. Brazilian law, for example, banned girls and women from football and certain other sports (even as purely recreational pastimes) from 1941 until 1979 because the government deemed it incompatible with their “feminine nature.” Western women’s widespread desire to participate in sports such as tennis, golf, and bicycling in the early twentieth century led to debate between those allied with health and wellness movements
and their opponents who feared that playing sports could give women a muscular, mannish appearance and possibly even cause them to take on other male characteristics. This bias is present today in the policing of intersexed athletes, as officials look for telltale signs of “excessive” masculinity. Such policing, however, was present in the Olympic Games going back to Mexico City and Grenoble, France, in 1968 and has variously been known by the International Olympic Committee as “sex verification,” “women’s medical examination,” “sex check,” “femininity testing,” and “gender verification,” among other terms (Pieper 2016).

Concerns about female masculinity were undergirded by homophobia and the fear that tomboyism and its associated athleticism would result in gender inversion or lesbianism (Griffin 1998; Lenskyj 1986). In Latin America, many countries followed on the successes of Title IX in the United States, a 1972 federal law stating that “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” Both international sports organizations for women and girls and domestic grassroots recreational organizations contributed to a growing number of opportunities for female athletes. In 2016 Colombia joined Chile, Argentina, and Brazil as the fourth Latin American country to have a professional women’s football league. Revenues and funding are scarce for women, however, and the leagues sometimes go so long between matches that they risk being “deactivated” and declared defunct by FIFA. Despite these concerns, recreational leagues in Latin America run by community groups and nongovernmental organizations are increasingly promoting football and other sports programs for girls, especially in low-income areas. For example, through the Guerreiras Project in Brazil, football is used as a tool to promote gender justice, create opportunities for girls to participate in sports, and bring athletes, artists, academics, and activists together for workshops, exhibitions, research, and other activities. Another central issue facing female athletes is sexualization. Even in Latin American countries where women do play, they may be expected to wear revealing uniforms or titillating costumes to attract crowds. Despite these setbacks, women’s football is on the rise and increasingly visible. In the 2015 Women’s World Cup, 27 million viewers in the United States watched their team play in the final—the largest turnout for any football match (male or female) in that country. Women’s sports advocates in Latin America are hopeful that with increased audiences and visibility as well as more girls playing globally there will be a knock-on effect in the Latin American region that results in more opportunities, more sponsorships, and more funding for female athletes.

The 2016 Summer Olympics in Brazil

LGBT visibility in athletics is increasing steadily owing in large part to the Olympic Games, which features a wide array of sports and athletes from around the world. In 2008 only 12
of the nearly 11,000 participating athletes openly identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual. By the next Summer Olympics in 2012, that number had reached 23. In Brazil in 2016 there were 64.

The 53 female and 11 male openly gay athletes competing in Rio de Janeiro hailed primarily from Europe, Australia, the United States, and Canada. However, seven were from Latin America (six Brazilians and one Argentine). The Brazilians included five women: Larissa França (beach volleyball), Mayssa Pessoa (handball), Rafaela Silva (judo), Isadora Cerullo (rugby), and Julia Vasconcelos (tae kwon do). Brazil’s Ian Matos (diving) was the only Latin American out gay man. Valentina Kogan represented Argentina (handball).

No publicly “out” transgender or intersexed athletes competed. Great controversy exists within various sporting bodies about how to handle the inclusion of intersexed athletes and transgender athletes. This is complicated by the great variety of physical conditions that can fall under the category of intersex. In 2009 the media pushed this issue into great prominence in its coverage of Caster Semenya, a runner from South Africa who was subjected to controversial “sex testing” by the International Association of Athletics Federations. The results are not officially known, but some of them leaked to media sources, further angering many advocates for intersexed and LGBT people. At the time of the Brazilian Olympics, neither Semenya nor Dutee Chand of India (another athlete subjected to controversial sex testing) confirmed their intersexed status, although Semenya is married to a woman and is included in the total number of out lesbians. Nike also featured a transgender male runner from the United States in one of its advertisements, although that athlete, Chris Mosier, did not compete. Three transgender women participated in the Olympic torch relay and a transgender Brazilian model, Lea T, led Brazil’s team of athletes into the stadium for the opening ceremony.

Although the number of men was low, the 11 men represented a significant shift from the single out gay male athlete in 2008. There were a number of other high-profile LGBT moments in the Brazilian games, including the first same-sex marriage proposal (made on the field to Brazil’s Cerullo after a rugby game). Brazil’s first gold medal (judo) came from Silva, a black woman from the City of God favela, who told the news media that she owed her success to her longtime girlfriend (O’Boyle 2016).

LGBT representation during the Olympics in Brazil, which was the first South American country to host, stood in marked contrast to the previous games in 2014 in Sochi, Russia. Although seven openly gay women participated in Russia (with no Latin Americans among them), the Russian government remained staunchly homophobic and stood behind its much-publicized antigay legislation passed the year prior that banned as propaganda all activities it construed as promoting “nontraditional sexual relationships” in front of minors. Using this law, Russia even went so far as to ban the Olympics from offering a “Pride House,” a temporary venue that had become customary for hosting and supporting LGBT
athletes, volunteers, and visitors (analogous to the houses used in support of various participating countries). By contrast, Brazil's Pride House Rio Pavilion offered an opening day cocktail reception; featured drag shows and musical guests; displayed banners with dozens of lesbian, gay, and bisexual athletes; offered yoga classes; featured roundtables and discussions about sexuality and health access, homophobia, and issues related to sports; and offered artistic activities for children to showcase their feelings about diversity. Brazil had also hosted a Pride House in São Paulo in 2014 during the FIFA World Cup. Despite the positive nature of the events at Pride Houses, some scholars have sharply criticized the deployment of such venues as homonationalistic, or using the veneer of gay rights to whitewash violent histories of settler colonialism, hide the fact that sports events occur on stolen land, and cover up the economic and material damage wrought by major sporting events on poor and marginalized (often displaced) communities in host countries (Sykes 2017).

Not all the media coverage of LGBT issues at the Olympics was positive, however. In what became perhaps the most widely covered LGBT story, the Daily Beast sent Nico Hines, a heterosexual, married male writer to the Olympic Village to lure gay men out into the open using Grindr, a hookup app for gay and bisexual men. Hines then outed numerous male athletes by disclosing identifying information about them, including several closeted men from countries that Hines described as “notoriously homophobic” or possessing restrictive laws about homosexuality. Gay athletes and activists worldwide protested the story. Amid widespread complaints about Hines's journalistic ethics, the Daily Beast retracted the story, published an apology, and called its reporter home. For its part, Grindr later released its own anonymous data about users in the Olympic Village, noting that 38,000 people from 109 nations sent 14 million messages on the app just from inside the village (a restricted area not open to the general public). The Grindr numbers showed that there was a great deal more same-sex sexual activity among men associated with the Olympics beyond the relatively few out athletes and suggest that there is a need for more scholarship on the question of sexuality and sports related to coaches, journalists, delegates, and others involved with such events. Importantly, representatives of Brazil, the United States, and the United Kingdom were the most active on Grindr, but users from countries with antigay laws were disproportionately represented, including Russia and Qatar, the hosts of the FIFA World Cup in 2018 and 2022, respectively.
Given the prevalence of football in Latin America, it is unsurprising how much of the activity and visibility of LGBT athletics is concentrated in that one sport. Further academic study may reveal, however, whether the trends, patterns, and questions outlined above related to football could also function in other sports. It is also important to consider to what extent team sports create or rely on different hierarchies of gender conformity compared to more individualized sports (e.g., track and field, martial arts). Further attention should also be given to questions of race and racialization in sports and to investigating how race intersects with questions of class, access, opportunities, and the accrual of social capital for LGBT athletes in Latin America. The lack of research on LGBT sports cultures may reflect biases on the part of researchers and/or societal exclusion of LGBT people from this realm, but it should not be assumed that the lack of information reflects a lack of importance. Finally, it is noteworthy how much three countries—Brazil, Argentina, and Mexico—dominate in the media coverage and academic literature. To some extent this reflects the economic clout, size, and fundamental material realities of these countries. Much more could be learned, however, from further refocusing scholarly
 attentions to the anglophone, francophone, Dutch, and indigenous cultures of Latin America and the Caribbean. Sports rise and fall in popularity regionally, and the spread of particular sports can reveal much about the histories of trade, colonialism, and domination. Therefore, there is both an academic and political urgency to furthering the study of sexuality and sports in this region so that a greater understanding of sexuality's relationship to these other vital aspects of Latin American culture and history can be realized.

SEE ALSO Athletics, Trans and Intersex; Athletics, Trans and Intersex, in Asia; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Sports, Women in, Africa

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Sports play an important role in the cultural identities and nationalist sentiments of African people. When women play sports, they simultaneously challenge and affirm normative ideas about gender and sexuality. Likewise, women’s sporting experiences—whether as athletes, spectators, or administrators—reflect conflicting meanings around women’s place in the national imagination, the economy, the political sphere, and the home. African sportswomen face structural barriers such as inadequate field time, ineffective coaches, lack of adequate childcare and compensation, insufficient access to sanitary napkins, and policing around their sexuality. All these constraints hinder their ability to play, whether for leisure or professionally. These structural barriers reproduce the idea that women are uninterested in, or bad at, sports. At the same time, however, women in sports challenge the normative idea of sports as belonging to men. Social and economic inequalities in sports are a product of how, despite women's increased participation, the terrain remains coded as a site for men.

Although African women play all kinds of sports, some are coded more appropriately feminine than others. For example, track and field is a sport in which women have historically participated without much contest. Kenyans Joyciline Jepkosgei (1993–) and Mary Keitany (1982–) hold world records, as of early 2018, for fastest half marathon (mixed-gender races) and marathon (women-only races), respectively. Mozambican 800-meter track and field athlete Maria Mutola (1972–) attended six consecutive Olympics over the course of her career and consistently placed in international competitions. When women depart from such acceptably feminine sports to participate in or watch (in public) boxing, football, basketball, or hockey, they face heightened opprobrium for transgressing prescriptions for normative gender. Often this censure is in the form of sexual harassment, reifying the heteropatriarchal claim that men have on women's leisure time and embodied practices. The complex terrain on which African women engage in and with sports reflects a long-standing struggle around the meanings of gender and sexuality, both on and off the playing field.

**Normative Gender and Sexuality as a Postcolonial**
Heritage

The modern gender system reifies binary gender, which is the firmly held belief that there are only two genders: men and women. Attached to these binary genders are particular roles, stereotypes, and beliefs about what constitutes a “real” man or woman. The binary gender system asserts heterosexuality as normative human sexuality. Hence, a “real” man is sexually attracted to a “real” woman. This framing of gender and sexuality interprets and assigns social characteristics and expectations such as physical strength, sexual pursuit, leadership, and working outside the home as male traits. By contrast, women are expected to be homebound, demure recipients of men’s sexual aggression and interest.

There has been much contestation around the primacy of gender as an embodied category of difference in pre- and postcolonial African societies. In some contexts, age, social status, and kinship took precedence over gender as a biologically determined binary construct. As such, women could be husbands or kings while remaining women (Amadiume 1987; Oyěwùmí 1997). The challenge posed to the gender binary from such indigenous analyses demands a reassessment of what constitutes a man or woman. Despite the idea that African genders might challenge the Western/colonial binary system, heterosexuality largely remains the only publicly acceptable sexual orientation for African men and women. As such, the postcolonial heritage of binary gender and heterosexual patriarchy upholds a dichotomous system of gender and sexuality.

The Role of Sports in Reinforcing Normative Gender and Sexuality

In sports, the binary is held in place through a variety of means, including segregating athletes according to gender, harassing female sports fans and spectators, and employing diminutive and sometimes demeaning names for sportswomen and teams. One might point to the Black Queens of Ghana (football), Malawi’s Queens (netball), or Uganda’s She Cranes (netball), just to name three examples. Such naming simultaneously enthrones women and positions them as subordinate to men, the implied kings or ungendered Cranes. By positioning women’s teams as Queens or Ladies, sporting organizations, media, and spectators enforce a gendered expectation of sportswomen. Queens are subordinated to their kings, and ladies to their lords. This gendered naming also imposes Victorian class and heterosexual expectations on African sportswomen.

In addition to the class, gender, and sexual implications of how women’s sports teams are named, some sports are also designated as men's sports or women's sports. In Africa, netball is the most popular women's sport—a result of its colonial designation as an appropriate sport for women. When women play and watch this sport, their actions are not seen as disrupting the gender order (Mansfield 2014; Pelak 2009). The construction of
Netball as a “women’s game” reifies the sport as less important, less aggressive, and less masculine than other sports. Sometimes gendered rules deviate from the sport itself to concerns about athletes’ uniforms. For example, the president of FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association), Sepp Blatter, was reported to have said in 2004 that if women want a greater audience at their football (soccer) matches, they should wear tighter shorts (Christenson and Kelso 2004). Such gendered rules are justified by the belief that women are physically weak and that their sexuality belongs to men. These rules and regulations extend beyond the playing field to affect female spectators and fans. Women who attend live matches alone can expect to be sexually (physically and verbally) harassed by male spectators, who construct the stadium as an all-male private playground (Shehu 2010). When sporting organizations and the general social structure constrain how African women experience sports, they reproduce narrow prescriptions for gender and sexuality.

The Role of Sports in Challenging Normative Gender and Sexuality

Although women’s sports are largely acceptable when they reinforce normative ideas about gender and sexuality, sports also provide a venue for challenging these prescriptions. When women play sports that are perceived as masculine (e.g., football or rugby), they are seen to transgress normative gender. As a result of this perceived transgression, women may experience various sanctions against their involvement in the sport. Sportswomen who do not embody femininity are accused of being lesbians or men in women’s clothes. For example, the Nigerian and Ghanaian women’s football leadership have repeatedly claimed that “lesbianism” is a big problem in the sport. Equatoguinean footballers Genoveva Añonma, Salimata Simpore, and Bilguisa Simpore have been accused by opposing teams of being men posing as women because of their athletic builds and style of play. Such accusations are a reminder that, regardless of their athletic training and focus on sports, sportswomen are expected to be recognizably feminine and thus sexually available to men.

Sportswomen challenge this expectation of sexual availability in a variety of ways. Sometimes these ways reify the gender binary and compulsory heterosexuality. For example, in response to accusations from coaches and other match officials, the Ghanaian and Nigerian women’s football teams have vehemently denied that they are anything but heterosexual. Such denials reject sweeping generalizations and stereotypes about sportswomen’s sexuality. However, these athletes also generally fall short of challenging the negative stereotypes attached to queer sexuality in an African context. Consequently, simple denials of lesbianism might reject the stereotype that sportswomen transgress heterosexual femininity, while leaving intact the idea that there is something morally and socially reprehensible about masculine women and same-sex desire. Of course, coming out as a lesbian athlete is not easy in a context where so-called corrective rape and even murder remain implicitly acceptable and there is no legal protection for queers (Ogunniyi...
2014). For example, in 2009 the South African footballer Eudy Simelane was gang-raped and murdered, and her corpse was disposed of in a public space (Kelly 2009). Consequently, it is not surprising that women footballers would vehemently deny allegations that they are lesbians. Despite the dangerous landscape that lesbian athletes navigate, South Africa had its first and only openly lesbian football team, the Chosen Few, which was in operation from 2006 until 2013. According to players, the club folded because it was too dangerous to remain active (Collison 2017).

CASTER SEMENYA (1991–)

The South African middle-distance runner Caster Semenya came into the public eye in 2009 when she won gold at the world track and field championships in the 800-meter race, but controversy quickly gained her unwelcome fame when questions arose about her gender. The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) subjected Semenya to gender-verification testing, compelled by complaints from her rivals and suspicion that her performance had improved too easily. While the results of these tests were not initially released, rumors widely suggested that Semenya was not “fully female.” Athletes, forced into oppositional conceptions of male/female, have long been subjected to controversial gender testing, including visual inspections of genitals, invasive surgical examinations of reproductive organs, and chromosomal and hormonal testing. But despite binaries in sport, scientists widely agree that no tests can successfully classify “sex,” and intersexuality may occur in more than 1 percent of the population.

Semenya’s gender testing elicited angry responses, evoking critiques of racism and reminders of taxonomies of colonialism and apartheid based on pseudoscientific tests to determine race and rights. As gendered questions were raised about Semenya—a strong and successful black athlete whose success threatened her European rivals—South Africans rallied together against the invasion of her body and privacy. Semenya was celebrated by crowds of supporters and referred to with nationalist pride as “our first lady of sport.” The vehemence of the defense of Semenya even compelled Makhenkesi Stofile, then serving as South Africa’s minister of sport and recreation, to famously declare that excluding Semenya from competition could create a “third world war” (Roelf 2009).

Many politicians undermined intersexuality; for instance, the African National Congress Youth League issued a statement suggesting that “hermaphroditism” (long considered derogatory) does not exist (Levy 2009). But some of Semenya’s supporters extolled her specifically as an intersex athlete. South Africa has been at the forefront of LGBTQI activism for decades, and intersex activists drew on the attention to Semenya’s plight to further highlight medical education and the challenges of the legal imposition of gender binaries. Semenya’s gender again came under scrutiny when she
underwent a hyperfeminizing makeover in the South African magazine *You*; many deemed it uncharacteristic of Semenya's usual gender expressions, but Semenya herself called questions about her gender a "joke" (*Beyers 2009*).

Semenya has continued to excel as an athlete and ignore controversies to focus on her performance. She was chosen to carry the flag representing South Africa at the opening ceremonies of the 2012 Summer Olympics and won silver at that event in the 800-meter race. In 2017 Mariya Savinova of Russia—one of Semenya's biggest rivals and critics who grumbled after Semenya's first big win in 2009, “Just look at her!”—was convicted of doping and stripped of her Olympic gold medal, which was then awarded to Semenya (*Kessel 2010; Guardian 2017*). Sporting regulatory bodies such as the IAAF are still striving to establish consistent testing patterns and “proof” of sex. In 2018 the IAAF introduced new regulations of “normal” testosterone levels that only apply to women athletes running in track distances from 400-meter to one mile, a move widely critiqued as targeting women of color from the Global South and especially Semenya. Semenya has continued to win—claiming victory in twenty-five consecutive public competitions at the 800-meter distance as of 2017—and is legally contesting the regulations of the IAAF (*O’Riordan 2017*).

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One athlete who has created space for African female athletes to be gender variant and queer is Caster Semenya (1991–). The South African track-and-field star was, like the Equatoguinean footballers, accused of being a man and tested for so-called dominant male hormones. Following an invasive health examination, Semenya continued to compete in women’s competitions, going on to win gold in the 800-meter track race at the London (2012) and Rio (2016) Summer Olympics. Semenya’s visibility as an internationally acclaimed, medal-winning, trans-masculine athlete who married her longtime girlfriend and fellow track athlete Violet Raseboya in a lavish ceremony in 2016, followed by a “white” wedding in 2017 (Dayile 2017), shifts the landscape of women’s sports in Africa. Semenya, like the white South African Olympians Sunette Viljoen (1983–) and Karen Hultzer (1965–), rejects the insistence that African sportswomen must be heterosexual and conform to a binary feminine gender. The visibility of masculine sportswomen and lesbian athletes serves as a rejection of the societal imposition of binary gender and limited prescriptions for women’s place in African societies more generally.

SEE ALSO Athletes, Trans and Intersex; Athletes, Trans and Intersex, in Asia; Sports and Sexuality in Latin America

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Stone Butch Blues (1993; Leslie Feinberg)

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Novel about an American lesbian's transition to a trans man.

In 1993 Leslie Feinberg (1949–2014) published hir (Feinberg preferred zie/hir pronouns) debut novel Stone Butch Blues with Firebrand Books, an independent lesbian feminist publishing house in Ithaca, New York. Prior to Stone Butch Blues, the bulk of Feinberg's writing had appeared in Communist periodicals such as Workers World and Liberation and Marxism magazine. In 1992, the year before the novel's publication, Feinberg also published a pamphlet titled Transgender Liberation, and excerpts from hir forthcoming novel appeared in The Persistent Desire, an anthology of writing on butch-femme relationships. Typed on a borrowed laptop at night after work, Stone Butch Blues extends the earlier pamphlet's focus on the history of trans and gender-nonconforming people before the emergence of a transgender movement in the 1990s.

Specifically, Stone Butch Blues tells the story of Jess Goldberg, a protagonist who is clearly modeled after Feinberg. Following the currents of Jess's life from the 1950s through the 1990s, the novel offers a window into the formation of LGBTQ communities and social movements in the United States during the late twentieth century. After its publication, Stone Butch Blues was quickly cemented as a classic of LGBTQ literature. Partially because Stone Butch Blues coincided with a growing popular and academic interest in gender and sexuality, the novel also established Feinberg as, to quote the historian Susan Stryker, “one of the chief architects of the new transgender sensibility” (2017, 154). Since 1993, the novel has been translated into seven languages, while the original English version has been reissued twice. The third and final edition of Stone Butch Blues was released after Feinberg's death in 2014. This edition is available as a free PDF on Feinberg's website as a way to, in the author’s words, “give this novel back to the workers and oppressed of the world” (2014, 352).

Butch-Femme Bar Culture

Stone Butch Blues is narrated as a retroactive account of Jess's life, beginning with their childhood. Much like Feinberg, Jess was born in 1949 to a working-class Jewish family and grew up in Buffalo, New York. Throughout their childhood in the 1950s, an era noted for its vigilant policing of gender and sexual norms, Jess’s appearance was an ongoing source of
anxiety for their family, classmates, doctors, teachers, and strangers alike, with the question of whether they were a “boy or girl” echoing as a “constant refrain” (Feinberg 1993, 13). After enduring years of abuse as a gender-nonconforming child, Jess discovered that they were attracted to women during a Saturday matinee at a local theater. “I melted as Sophia Loren moved her body against her leading man,” Jess recalled (24). Although Jess was initially frightened by their “new secret,” their budding interest in women soon prompted them to visit Tifka’s, a bar in Niagara Falls, New York, where they were introduced to working-class butch-femme bar culture.

Published the same year as Stone Butch Blues, Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis’s Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold (1993) traces the history of butch and femme bar culture in Buffalo from the 1930s to the 1960s, ending their study at around the time that a young Jess worked up the courage to step inside Tifka’s for the first time. As the introduction to Boots of Leather explains, butch and femme identities were central to the development of working-class lesbian culture in the mid-twentieth century. Within this cultural context, identifying as a butch (that is, a masculine person) or a femme (that is, feminine) mattered more than a shared lesbian identity. Kennedy and Davis’s interviewees, in fact, “rarely used the word ‘lesbian,’” identifying instead as butch or femme (1993, 6).

As a companion to Kennedy and Davis’s ethnography, Stone Butch Blues offers a moving literary account of butch-femme bar culture as it existed in the 1960s, emphasizing the resilience of LGBTQ people in the face of structural violence. On Jess’s first trip to Tifka’s, they met Butch Al, who takes Jess “under her wing,” teaching them “all the things she thought were most important for a baby butch” to know (Feinberg 1993, 29). Literally and metaphorically grooming Jess, Butch Al took Jess to purchase new clothes and also sat Jess down for a “butch ‘father to son’ talk” (30). However, most of Butch Al’s guidance was centered on Jess’s survival. Although Jess was already aware of the “tremendous power” the world wielded over them, the police emerged as a new and central threat to their safety after their introduction to the bars (22). During routine raids of Tifka’s, the police specifically targeted butches, drag queens, and known sex workers for arrest. As a teenager, Jess was apprehended for the first time along with Butch Al. Thrown in the “bulls’ tank” for butches, Butch Al was beaten and presumably raped, while Jess was warned that as soon as they grew a little bit taller, the same would happen to them. “I learned to fear the cops as a mortal enemy,” Jess remembered (22). With her unflinching account of Tifka’s, Feinberg positions butch and femme bar culture as central to LGBTQ history—and especially the development of what became known as gay liberation in the late 1960s.

**New Social Movements**

The story of Jess’s teenage years in the mid-1960s intersects with broader histories of US social movements against the Vietnam War and for racial, gender, and sexual liberation, while also suggesting some problems with how these histories are most often told. After
their initial introduction to butch-femme bar culture in Niagara Falls, Jess spent the 1960s frequenting bars in the Tenderloin strip in downtown Buffalo and working a series of factory jobs. In the 1950s butches who did not capitulate to gender norms were generally unable to secure jobs (Kennedy and Davis 1993). By the mid-1960s, however, Stone Butch Blues describes factories populated by a sufficient number of butches to form their own “baseball or bowling team” (Feinberg 1993, 77), a historical shift facilitated by the passage of employment discrimination protections in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as well as the intensification of the Vietnam War. “All the young guys were getting drafted left and right,” Jess explained (81). In the factories, Jess developed a leftist-oriented politics through their work with the union. Yet Jess nevertheless felt alienated from the student-led movements of the 1960s.

Jess's girlfriend, Theresa, however, worked as a secretary at the State University of New York at Buffalo, a campus that was rocked by student activism, culminating in a police occupation of the campus in March 1970 (Heineman 1993). Through Theresa, Jess learned about the antiwar, Black Power, and women’s liberation movements, as well as the Daughters of Bilitis, the first lesbian organization founded in the United States. Gay liberation and lesbian feminist groups also sprouted up on campus following the 1969 Stonewall riots, an uprising against a routine police raid of the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village, New York, that helped catalyze a broader national movement. In attending campus-based lesbian feminist meetings, however, Theresa was alarmed to discover that many newly politicized lesbians were critical of butch and femme relationships, despite the predominance of butches and femmes in the bar culture that ostensibly prompted the movement. Through Jess’s and Theresa’s experiences, Stone Butch Blues suggests the importance of class in historicizing the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s.

**Toward a Transgender Movement**

In 1973 Jess decided to transition in order to, in their words, “pass” as a man (Feinberg 1993, 231), a decision that Feinberg also made in the early 1970s (Feinberg 1992). In subsequent popular and scholarly accounts of the novel, critics have debated if Jess is best read as a “lesbian” or “trans” character (see Prosser 1995; Halberstam 1998). Especially in the 1990s, Feinberg’s novel in fact became a flashpoint in what the queer theorist Judith (later Jack) Halberstam (1998) termed the “butch/FTM border wars.” As Halberstam argues, considerable overlap exists between trans masculine and butch lesbian identities, which has resulted in a series of struggles over the definitional boundaries and political stakes of these identity categories. In the novel itself, Feinberg emphasizes three main reasons for Jess’s decision to transition. First, Jess feared for their safety, following an escalation of police harassment “after the birth of gay pride” (Feinberg 1993, 135). Second, Jess had economic motivations. In the 1970s, factory work was scarce in Buffalo on the heels of a global recession in 1973 and a more gradual decline of manufacturing jobs in the...
region since the 1950s. “It seemed as though everyone we knew was laid off,” Jess explained (141). By presenting as a man, Jess hoped they would have greater access to employment opportunities.

At the same time, however, Jess also viewed testosterone injections and breast reduction surgery as a means of obtaining the body they had “expected before puberty confounded [them]” (Feinberg 1993, 171), an understanding of gender-affirming hormone treatment and surgeries that aligns Jess with more contemporary trans activists. Yet, even as Jess is legible to readers as a trans character, Stone Butch Blues underlines the great personal cost of transitioning in the years before the emergence of a transgender movement in the 1990s. In the 1970s Jess and their friends understood their transition not as an affirmation of Jess’s trans identity but rather as a pragmatic decision to present as a “clean-cut young man” (174). In navigating the world, Jess thus had to remain vigilant in the face of “constant terror of discovery” (173). Simultaneously, their transition, which resulted in Jess presenting as a purportedly heterosexual man, also isolated them from the queer culture that nurtured them, a fate most poignantly illustrated through Jess’s painful breakup with Theresa following their decision to take hormones.

After living as a man for a decade, Jess decided to quit taking hormones in the early 1980s. “My face no longer revealed the contrasts of my gender,” Jess explained. “I could see my passing self, but even I could no longer see the more complicated me beneath the surface” (Feinberg 1993, 222). As well as ceasing hormones, Jess also built a community of trans and gender-nonconforming people in the closing pages of the novel. Signaling an emerging understanding of transgender as a distinct identity category, one of Jess’s friends commented that she wished “we weren’t always lumped into gay” (267). Intersecting trans and queer activism, Stone Butch Blues ends on an optimistic note with Jess testifying at an AIDS rally in Greenwich Village. Vowing to “imagine a world worth living in, a world worth fighting for” (301), Feinberg’s novel ultimately advances a vision for a radical social movement that is attentive to gender, sexual, racial, and class politics.

**Critical Reception**

Stone Butch Blues won a Lambda Literary Award and an American Library Association Stonewall Book Award in 1994. Reaching a large international audience, Jess’s story has resonated with a wide range of readers and has been taken up as a crucial text by trans and queer studies scholars. On 15 November 2014 Feinberg died of complications from chronic Lyme disease. Echoing the themes and larger vision of the novel, hir last words called for “the revolution” and implored that zie be remembered “as a revolutionary communist” (Advocate 2014).

SEE ALSO Daughters of Bilitis; Femmes and Butches; Lavender Menace
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Stonewall Riots, International Effects of

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The global impact of the 1969 riots at the Stonewall Inn, which marked a symbolic turning point in gay rights activism.

The Stonewall riots, which began in the early hours of Saturday, 28 June 1969, are often credited as the spark that set gay liberation alight, not just in the United States, but around the Western world. As Marc Stein aptly notes, Stonewall is frequently understood “as the first act of lesbian and gay resistance ever” (2000, 289). Such is Stonewall’s iconic status that gay pride events and Christopher Street Day parades around the world usually take place over the last weekend in June to commemorate the riots. Activists and historians often frame important domestic catalysts for gay and lesbian activism as “our Stonewall,” whether in France, Poland, or Australia, and the leading LGBT rights charity in the United Kingdom, founded in 1989, is called Stonewall. The riots remain the preeminent reference point not only in contemporary activism but also in LGBT history, with the “mythical queer historical marker” (Ramírez 2012, 194) of Stonewall looming large in how we conceptualize and periodize the gay and lesbian past.
This entry traces the international ramifications of the Stonewall riots and the international dimensions of their celebration and commemoration, and demonstrates that it is the memory of the Stonewall riots, rather than the riots themselves, that has played such a powerful role in gay and lesbian activism—and history making—around the Western world. Stonewall was internationally significant. However, gay and lesbian movements across the Western world have their own histories, their own contexts, which often proved more significant than events in New York.

**Gay Power!**

While we may never know who threw the first bottle or brick, who was the first to resist arrest, we do know that the police did not receive the response they were expecting in the early hours of Saturday, 28 June 1969, when they raided the Stonewall Inn, a bar located in the Greenwich Village neighborhood of New York City. Accustomed to meek and fearful acquiescence to regular police raids, they were met instead with a rising tide of anger, shrieks of “Gay power!” and trash cans set alight; the police were forced to call for backup from the Tactical Patrol Force, a riot-control unit that had been set up to deal with militant demonstrations against the war in Vietnam. Skirmishes continued for hours that night and were repeated the following night and into the next week. Deputy Inspector Seymour Pine, who had been forced to take shelter inside the Inn from the baying crowd outside, recalled in 1990, “For those of us in public morals, things were completely changed ... suddenly they were not submissive anymore” (quoted in Duberman 1994, 208).

News spread quickly of the events at the Stonewall Inn and in its immediate vicinity on Christopher Street and Sheridan Square, attracting local queer luminaries to the scene; the poet Allen Ginsberg (1926–1997) visited on the second night and described patrons of the Stonewall as “beautiful—they've lost that wounded look that fags all had 10 years ago” (quoted in Duberman 1994, 208). The riots were widely covered in the local press; headlines included “Homo Nest Raided, Queen Bees Are Stinging Mad” (New York Sunday News), “Gay Power Comes to Sheridan Square” (Village Voice), and “Police Again Rout 'Village' Youths” (New York Times). The international media did not—yet—report on the riots.

**Gay Liberation**

For a few days it seemed that little had changed in homosexual politics in the United States. The very next week, on 4 July 1969, the homophile movement’s fifth Annual Reminder took
place: around seventy-five men and women dressed in a formal and gender-normative fashion walked silently in front of Philadelphia’s Independence Hall in their annual picket meant to remind the public that homosexual Americans were being denied the rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness promised to all citizens in the Declaration of Independence. It would prove to be the last annual reminder as Frank Kameny (1925–2011) and other leaders in the homophile movement were confronted by the rise of a more militant tendency in activism in the form of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), which had its genesis in heated discussions that same evening. Rather than commemorating the Stonewall riots with a candlelight vigil—the proposal put forward by the New York chapter of the Mattachine Society, an early homosexual rights organization—the GLF supported loud direct action, tackling oppression (and self-oppression) head-on by publicly confronting the police, city officials, and antigay psychiatrists.

Describing itself as “a revolutionary homosexual group of women and men formed with the realization that complete sexual liberation for all peoples cannot come about unless existing social institutions are abolished” (Gay Liberation Front 1970, 2), the GLF demonstrated solidarity with other oppressed peoples through their choice of name: the “Liberation Front” designation was inspired by liberation struggles in Algeria and Vietnam (Duberman 1994, 217). This refusal to focus on specifically “gay” issues led some members to split from the GLF and set up the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) as early as December 1969. The GAA adopted from the GLF the mantle of direct action, but in its single-issue politics was arguably more reminiscent of the Mattachine Society. Any similarity between the GAA and Mattachine did not extend to questions of vocabulary; the Mattachine Society and other homosexual rights groups founded in the 1940s, 1950s, and early 1960s often used the term homophile to avoid drawing attention to the sexual in homosexual. While the North American Conference of Homophile Organizations chose “Gay is good” as its official slogan in August 1968, it was only after the Stonewall riots that groups and activists more readily used the term gay in their public activism.

However, neither the Stonewall riots nor gay liberation was all the work of self-identified gay men only. While the GAA was a largely gay male organization, the GLF was more mixed in its gender makeup (at least until 1970, when several activists left to form the all-lesbian group Radicalesbians). Martin Duberman points out that “street queens” such as his interviewee Sylvia Rivera (1951–2002) were an important constituency for the Stonewall Inn, alongside what he describes as “ordinary gay male patrons” (Duberman 1994, 197). The Stonewall riots are therefore also a celebrated moment in transgender history, although the term transgender was not used by gender–nonconforming individuals such as Rivera who took part in the riots. Writing a few years later, Rivera claimed that “a transvestite half sister” threw the first stone at the riots, arguing that “transvestites are the most liberated homosexuals in the world. We have had the guts to stand up and fight on the front lines for many years before the gay movement was born” (1972, 10). This did not prevent a lesbian member of the GAA from trying to prevent Rivera from addressing the
crowd at the 1973 gay pride rally, accusing Rivera of “parodying womanhood” (Duberman 1994, 236).

**Christopher Street Liberation Day**

Stonewall's iconic international status was not an inevitable result of an immediate impact of the riots on gay and lesbian activism in the United States; rather, it was the outcome of tenacious activism that built on the opportunity presented and a determined campaign to commemorate the riots, which found expression in “Gay Liberation's First Birthday Celebration” twelve months later. This campaign was led by Craig Rodwell (1940–1993), the owner of the Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop, which had opened in New York City a few years earlier. Meeting at Rodwell's apartment, the grandiosely named Christopher Street Liberation Day Umbrella Committee (CSLDUC) began in February 1970 to plan a rally to mark the first anniversary of the riots. The first Christopher Street Liberation Day was held on Sunday, 28 June 1970, part of a wider Gay Pride Week; approximately 2,000 people assembled in Sheridan Square, adjacent to the Stonewall Inn, before marching up Sixth Avenue and enjoying a “Gay-In” in Sheep Meadow, Central Park. Smaller events took place in San Francisco, Chicago, and Los Angeles.

According to the organizers, “These riots of last year in New York City's Greenwich Village area marked the first time in history that homosexuals rose up in massive and violent resistance against the forces of oppression and many centuries of cumulative abuse by society and its institutions” (CSLDUC 1970a). But there was, in fact, queer resistance before Stonewall; even if we narrowly define resistance as street protest, the riot at Compton's Cafeteria in San Francisco in August 1966 preceded Stonewall by almost three years. Nevertheless, the annual Christopher Street Liberation Day successfully embedded this mythological narrative of Stonewall. We continue to talk and write about the riots not because Stonewall single-handedly inaugurated a new era in the history of homosexual emancipation; activists were able to build on the opportunity presented by the riots because of the level of organization and consciousness that had already been reached by 1969, which in part is the historical legacy of the postwar homophile movement. Therefore, rather than “a literal account of its origins,” the “Stonewall story” is better viewed as an achievement of gay liberation (Armstrong and Crage 2006, 725). Indeed, marchers at that first Liberation Day rally in 1970 were told, “We are all participants in the most important Gay event in history”; that is, not Stonewall but its first annual celebration (CSLDUC 1970b).

**Germany**

One historical consequence of the Stonewall story is that the United States eclipsed Germany as the national context most associated with homosexual emancipation. After all, it was in Imperial Germany that the first homosexual emancipation movement in the world
was founded, in 1897: Magnus Hirschfeld's Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee). With the relaxation of censorship following World War I and the German revolution, Die Freundschaft (Friendship) became the first homosexual paper anywhere to be sold openly on newsstands (Beachy 2014, 164). Although their language was somewhat anachronistic, early gay community historians John Lauritsen and David Thorstad had a point when they wrote in their 1974 book on the German homosexual movement, "In reality, the Stonewall riots represent not the beginning of gay liberation but the beginning of a new wave of gay liberation. 1969 marks a rebirth, an anniversary—indeed, one might say the 100th anniversary of gay liberation" (5).

News of the Stonewall riots seems to have reached Germany after a delay of twelve months. Revealingly, it was coverage of the first Christopher Street Liberation Day in New York City in June 1970 that saw Stonewall mentioned for the first time in the German press. Wolfgang Selitsch covered the event for him, West Germany's largest gay magazine, which along with du & ich (You and I) and other gay magazines had been sold openly on newsstands only since September 1969, when the liberalization of Paragraph 175 came into effect; previously, West Germany had enforced the 1935 Nazi version of the law, which criminalized male homosexuality. It was therefore homosexual law reform and not Stonewall that was the most significant event in 1969 for West Germany's same-sex-desiring population.

A correspondent for the conservative daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung who was also in New York City for Christopher Street Liberation Day identified the genesis of a “new homophile consciousness” (Lietzmann 1970; translation by author). The most obvious manifestation of this new consciousness in West Germany was Rosa von Praunheim's iconoclastic film Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt (1971; It is not the homosexual who is perverse but the society in which he lives). First screened in 1971, and broadcast on national television in January 1973, the film was a key factor in the expansion of the gay movement. In his program notes for the film Praunheim (1942–) praised the “historical act” of Stonewall and expressed hope that it would serve as an example, because the “inhibition and cowardice amongst German gays still stinks to high heaven” (Internationale Forum des Jungen Films 1971; translation by author).

Praunheim later described West Germany as “a second America,” blithely stating that “everything that happens there comes over here someday” (Blatt 1979, 15; translation by author). However, gay liberation was never a one-way street. Consider activist salience crossing the Atlantic in the other direction, such as the symbol of the pink triangle worn by homosexual prisoners in the Nazi concentration camps, rediscovered by West German activists in the 1970s and soon adopted also in the United States and Canada. North American gay liberation has dominated the historiography of gay activism, but events in the United States did not provide a wholly amenable framework for gay activism elsewhere; not least, the models provided by the civil rights movement and black power
were absent in West Germany.

It is true that Stonewall and its commemoration by gay and lesbian activists in the United States offered inspiration to international observers and, perhaps, gave rise to a certain jealousy. In his coverage of the 1970 Christopher Street Liberation Day events, Wolfgang Selitsch commented that West German homosexuals were at an earlier stage in their activism, and he called on homophile students to set up grassroots groups at their universities. The model he cited in this regard was not the United States, however, but the Netherlands. Indeed, for West German homosexual activists, Dutch, French, and British influences were to prove especially significant.

**Elsewhere in Western Europe**

Arguably, the most successful homophile organization internationally was the Dutch Cultuur en Ontspanningscentrum (COC; Center for Culture and Leisure), which was founded in 1946. The moderate nature of the COC’s leadership and their dealings with police and government officials did not endear them to a younger generation of gays and lesbians radicalized by the student movement, who staged the first gay and lesbian public demonstration in The Hague in early 1969, several months before Stonewall (Hekma 2014, 126). When activists decided to stage a national demonstration, rather than a merely local event, the impact of Stonewall became more evident: the date chosen by Dutch lesbians was the last weekend in June 1977, and the model was the annual Christopher Street Liberation Day. Similarly, there was a public gay and lesbian demonstration in Münster, West Germany, as early as May 1972, but there was no annual fixture until June 1979, when the Christopher Street Liberation Day model was deployed in Bremen and in West Berlin.

The first gay and lesbian rally in France to commemorate the Stonewall riots was held on 25 June 1977. It was met with opposition by some activists who preferred to focus on French gay and lesbian contributions to annual May Day rallies organized by socialist and communist groups. Similarly, some organizers in West Germany sought to commemorate not Stonewall in late June but the capitulation of the Nazi regime on 8 May, thereby honoring the homosexual victims of fascism. Still, it is a date emanating from New York that quickly became the favored occasion for annual rallies across Europe.

At least one French figure was radicalized by Stonewall: Guillaume Charpentier (a pseudonym), who was an exchange student in New York at the time of the riots in 1969. He returned in 1971 to France, where he cofounded the Front Homosexual d’Action Révolutionnaire (FHAR; Homosexual Revolutionary Action Front). He later described his time in New York as formative: “I americanized my experience of liberation” (Sibalis 2009, 244). Nevertheless, there were domestic incitements, too. Julian Jackson describes how the “Stonewall’ of French homosexuality” took place live on radio on 10 March 1971 when gay and lesbian activists disrupted a popular discussion program that had as its topic
“homosexuality, this painful problem” (2009, 183). The informal group of activists soon founded the FHAR, which engaged itself in sharply opposing the homophile organization Arcadie, whose leader, André Baudry, was one of the panelists interrupted on the radio show. These French disputes bear the hallmarks of similar debates that took place in the United States immediately following Stonewall, as the newly founded Gay Liberation Front outflanked the longstanding homophile group the Mattachine Society.

Historians locating different national “Stonewalls” have not always looked to moments of protest. According to Peter Edelberg, Stonewall took on a different meaning in the Danish context because LGBT Danes “did not experience the same oppression and police harassment as in New York” (2014, 69). Instead of Stonewall, it was the introduction in 1961 of a law criminalizing same-sex prostitution with a minor under the age of twenty-one, and the repeal of this law in 1965, that were pivotal. The debate about this discriminatory measure gave Danish homosexuals “a final push out of the closet” (Edelberg 2014, 67).

**Eastern Europe**

Łukasz Szulc has argued that rather than 1969, 1985 was a “watershed year” in the history of Polish LGBT activism (2011, 161). Under the so-called Operation Hyacinth, police raided bars, clubs, bathhouses, and other meeting places, detaining and collecting details of an unknown number of men suspected of being gay. This series of raids was not followed by gay and lesbian public protests, given the difficulty of mounting any kind of protest in Communist Poland. But the raids did provoke Polish same-sex–desiring individuals to unite against oppression and to start building a sense of community, which found expression in Poland’s first magazines aimed at a LGBT audience (Szulc 2011). Eastern Europe’s first gay liberation group, the East Berlin–based Homosexuelle Interessengemeinschaft Berlin (HIB; Homosexual Interest Group Berlin), was formed in 1973 when, with the aid of Peter Tatchell, an Australian member of the London Gay Liberation Front, activists distributed German translations of a gay liberation flyer at the Tenth World Festival Games of Youth and Students, much to the ire of the East German police and, indeed, Tatchell’s heterosexual fellow British delegates (McLellan 2012).

**The English-Speaking World**

The London GLF was the first GLF organization set up outside the United States, in autumn 1970. London GLF member and trailblazing historian of homosexuality Jeffrey Weeks recalls reading about the 1970 Christopher Street Liberation Day in New York: “I remember feeling that that could never happen in London.” Yet, due to “a turbulence of ideas in the United States and a penetration of the new movement abroad,” the GLF and other groups found themselves in late June 1972 organizing the United Kingdom’s first gay pride march, which was the first time the annual commemoration of the Stonewall riots
had been celebrated outside the United States (Weeks 1999, 189).

Much like its American counterpart, the British GLF was not on the scene for long. Stephen Engel has argued controversially that gay liberation was “an American transplant which never firmly took hold” and that “the British had no Stonewall legend with which to incite anger, excitement, and energy” (2001, 83). He underscores the significance of the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which partially decriminalized male homosexuality in England and Wales; this legal reform prevented the formation of “revolutionary outrage.” Instead, Engel points to the battle in the late 1980s over Section 28, a measure that prevented local authorities and schools from promoting the “acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship.” This oppression, and the protest to which it gave rise, “could be conceived of as Britain's version of the Stonewall riots” (Engel 2001, 93).

Australia’s first organization that explicitly defined itself as gay liberationist was set up in Sydney in 1972, but this group had its origins in the Campaign against Moral Persecution (CAMP), founded in 1970, and the Homosexual Law Reform Society, established in 1969. In 1978 Australian activists responded to calls from San Francisco for an international day of protest over Anita Bryant’s antigay crusade “Save Our Children,” which supported the introduction of Proposition 6 in California. Had the law passed, it would have banned gays and lesbians from working in public schools in California. On the night of 24 June 1978 activists in Sydney staged the first Australian gay pride, or Mardi Gras, as it was better known. The police withdrew the permit they had previously issued, ordered the crowd to disperse, and arrested more than fifty marchers. Remembering what has been dubbed “our Stonewall” by the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives, the parade became an annual fixture commemorating the police oppression in Sydney in June 1978, on a date chosen to commemorate police oppression at the Stonewall Inn in June 1969. However, Australia also provides a rare example of how the symbolic power of Stonewall has its limits. In 1980 activists shifted the date of Mardi Gras to March to take advantage of the Southern Hemisphere summer. Over time, this defined the Sydney Mardi Gras as a major gay and lesbian event in its own right, which has helped construct Sydney as “a gay and lesbian city of international standing” (Waitt and Markwell 2006, 62).
The First Australian Gay Pride Parade, 1978. This event, also known as Mardi Gras, has been dubbed “our Stonewall” by the Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives. The parade became an annual event, initially held in June to commemorate the anniversary of the Stonewall riots, before switching to March in 1980, to take advantage of the Southern Hemisphere summer.

South America and Beyond

A gay liberation group was formed in Argentina as early as 1971—the Frente de Liberación Homosexual (FLH; Homosexual Liberation Front), which survived until the military takeover in 1976 (Green 1994). It seems that this Argentine example proved more influential than Stonewall for activists in São Paulo, because Brazil’s first gay liberation group in 1978 renamed itself after the FLH’s magazine Somos (We are) (Green 1994). Like some of their counterparts in France, Brazilian gay and lesbian activists chose a date associated with socialism, not with Stonewall, as the occasion of their first public protest, with about fifty men and women taking part in a homosexual contingent at São Paulo’s May Day rally in 1980. São Paulo’s first gay pride parade took place in mid-June 1997; according to its organizers, it is now the largest in the world. While the São Paulo parade emulates earlier gay pride and Christopher Street Liberation events around the world, it does not take place on the last weekend in June, thereby decentering the commemoration of the Stonewall riots.
While this entry has focused on Western nations, a case could be made for the truly global impact of Stonewall were we to link recent gay pride rallies in cities such as Moscow; Kampala, Uganda; Delhi; and Shanghai to the riots in New York’s Greenwich Village in late June 1969, but this would not make for good history. Rather than assuming the global salience of a particular incident in a specific place and time, we should interrogate the prevailing conditions for LGBT and queer consciousness in each locality. While the transnational commemoration of the Stonewall riots was remarkable, historians should be cautious in adopting Stonewall as a lens through which to analyze the LGBT struggle around the world, because this assumes the existence of (1) a more or less openly accessible gay scene, (2) the possibility of meeting police oppression with street protest, and (3) a media prepared to report on this protest. Moreover, it directs our attention toward the 1970s, the decade of gay liberation, which can lead to new insights but also to a trivializing of all that came before and all that has happened since. In particular, organizing around HIV/AIDS prevention in the 1980s, 1990s, and the next decade has been more foundational for many LGBT groups in the Global South (Roberts 1995). It does not play down the contribution of those who stood up to police oppression at the Stonewall Inn in late June 1969— and those who commemorated their actions—to recognize that the “Stonewall story” has its limits.

SEE ALSO ACT UP; Australia and New Zealand; Bathhouse Raids, Toronto (1981); Bookstores; Compton's Cafeteria Riot (1966); Gay Liberation Front; Mattachine Society; Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo, Brazil; Pink Triangle; Pride Demonstrations in Europe; Pride Parades and Marches; The Ugly Law (1961–1965; Denmark); “We Demand” Protest (1971); The Wolfenden Report

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The Amsterdam-based Strange Fruit collective, whose name simultaneously references queer positionalities and African diasporic networks, almost perfectly represents the subaltern of contemporary European discourses around race, religion, and migration in their assumed impact on gender and sexuality. Active from 1989 to 2002, the group was founded by a small group of queer youths of Muslim and Afro-Caribbean background, mostly welfare recipients and/or sex workers, who came together to challenge their marginalization within both their ethnic communities and the Dutch gay scene. Committed to a nonhierarchical self-help approach, the activists focused on empowering other queer youths of color, using the expertise present within the community itself. Much earlier than others in continental Europe (and partially informed by queer-of-color activism in the United Kingdom), Strange Fruit questioned the widespread assumption of a deficiency of nonwhite/non-Western queerness and identified racism and Islamophobia as intrinsically linked to dominant models of gay liberation.

This was particularly obvious in the Netherlands, which in the late twentieth century had become a key site of the Othering of racialized Europeans via a discourse that presents Islamophobia as the logical response to Islam's homophobia. Cracks in the idealized narrative of Dutch liberal tolerance, manifest in the success of the extreme right, are largely seen as caused by the nation's Muslim communities, which make up just 6 percent of the population (Wekker 2016; Hackett 2016). Several studies devoted to the issue of Islam and homosexuality produced results that seemed to confirm the adversarial relationship between the two. One of the earliest was a 1996 survey of Amsterdam high schools identifying rampant homophobia among migrant youths (Strange Fruit 1997). In its search for responses, the city turned to the only local organization that combined the seemingly incompatible identities of Muslim and queer: Strange Fruit became the main contact point for press and politicians amid growing concerns around allochtoon (nonwhite) youths and the supposed threat they posed to the nation’s commitment to gender equality and sexual tolerance (Arts and Nabha 2001). The group’s assessment of the larger Dutch context, however, differed drastically from the prevailing focus:
It is often assumed that all minorities have psycho-social problems, ... criminal behavior, runaways, drugs, prostitution ... [and] supposed taboos in the diverse communities, often based on the assumption of backwardness/underdevelopment. It is hardly ever discussed what problems these minority youths encounter within the Dutch society/the Dutch education system, in gay and lesbian organizations, subcultures, in contacts, friendships, relationships with Dutch peers/adults, hardly ever is there room for survival strategies, statements by the youths themselves or for the insights of black/migrant experts.

(STRANGE FRUIT 1997, 23; TRANSLATED BY FATIMA EL-TAYEB)

The tension caused by the group’s refusal to internalize the narrative of deficiency and be treated as native informers, while simultaneously using its growing influence to open spaces for other queers of color, remained a central challenge and led to several transformations. Founded without resources, Strange Fruit had initially constituted itself as a workgroup within the Amsterdam Cultuur en Ontspanningscentrum (COC; Center for Culture and Leisure, Europe’s oldest LGBT organization). When changes in the COC’s structure brought more formal control, most of the group left and, to be able to operate independently and receive direct funding, reconstituted itself as a foundation. A minority of members remained and reorganized as Secret Garden, focusing exclusively on the concerns of queer Muslims, primarily through monthly gatherings at the COC. (In 2008 Secret Garden became a foundation aimed at supporting LGBT refugees.)

The transformation into Vereeniging Strange Fruit in 1997 caused conflicts with the group’s nonhierarchical structure that were never fully resolved. The collective functioned through largely independent subgroups: from a refugee support group to weekly "Safer Sex and Culture" evenings focused on AIDS education through art; a weekly local radio program covering everything from Amsterdam news to queer activism in Zimbabwe; a monthly party; the weekly Women of Color Café, frequently cooperating with feminist organizations and spawning new groups such as Asian Lesbians Outside Asia; and the Strange Fruit Machine, responsible for the group’s visual art production, from flyers to posters and slide shows. This variety of activities was driven by Strange Fruit’s internal diversity, combining artists and activists, feminists and AIDS educators, refugees and members of the second generation, and believers and atheists. Trans members were a small but vocal presence from the beginning, and while most of its founders were men, the group soon included an equal number of women and became increasingly ethnically diverse, with activists of North African, Caribbean, Middle Eastern, Afro-Dutch, Asian, and Asian Dutch background (as well as some white queers). While productive and contributing to the group’s unique
position, this diversity also frequently led to tensions, which were primarily resolved through a radically democratic structure, granting far-reaching autonomy to subgroups while retaining overall coherence through biweekly, open roundtable meetings at which all decisions were made.

This approach became increasingly difficult as interactions with authorities and the social services sector grew, forcing the activists into a position they had always resisted: that of representatives, spokespeople, mediators, and service providers for migrant and minority queers. It speaks to the success of Strange Fruit’s intersectional, peer-focused strategy that it gradually became the main hub of queer-of-color activism in the Netherlands, if not continental Europe, and a major access point for those looking for help and information. This, however, put increasing stress on the organization, which remained strictly volunteer-based and whose core membership never exceeded twenty people. The group eventually dissolved in 2002.

For more than a decade, Strange Fruit practiced a locally grounded activism with a global perspective, connected to a transnational feminist/queer-of-color network spanning several continents. The collective was the first to explicitly represent queer-of-color perspectives, emphasizing shared experiences and goals rather than offering “ethnic” support. Rejecting culturalist categorizations, the activists resisted divisive discourses that not only pit “gay” against “migrant” communities but also divide the latter. Instead, they persistently sought contact with community organizations and elders while maintaining explicitly queer positions. They applied an understanding of cross-communal solidarity that allowed for alliances without denying differences. They practiced a form of resistance rooted in women-of-color feminism’s intersectional analytical framework (first introduced to the Netherlands by feminist groups closely working with Strange Fruit, such as the Sister Outsider and ZAMI collectives, both founded in Amsterdam in the 1980s). This resulted in, for example, the incorporation of Afro-Caribbean practices such as *toris*—storytelling events that offered an alternative to and creolization of individualized Western coming-out narratives and instead emphasized collectivity and the complex dynamic between queers of color and their communities, which can be and often are both safe havens and sites of oppression.

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Sufi Treatment of Same-Sex Relations in Poetry and Prose

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Homoerotic expressions in the literature of Islamic mysticism.

Sufism produced one of the richest literary and artistic traditions in the world in which same-sex relations are treated as serving a range of purposes. Sufi homoeroticism cannot be fully understood without considering the courtly traditions and literature in which such relationships were the rule rather than the exception. Homoeroticism is an essential component of Persian poetry and in the cultures under the Persian literary spell, such as Ottoman Turkey and India. In the courtly tradition, the beloved is chiefly a handsome young man. These young men were recruited from Central Asia, India, and China. After training for several years, they would become an appealing cupbearer, a musician, a fearless soldier, and even the boon companion of a king, and in courtly literature they are called the beloved. The beloved is described as a Turk, an Indian, a soldier, a general, a pleasing male cupbearer, a musician, and so on. In hundreds of poems, the poetic persona is depicted as longing to steal a kiss from the beloved, whose beauty has stolen his patience:

O boy, if you wish to please my heart,
After serving me wine, you must give me kisses

(FARROKHI 1992, 45; TRANSLATION BY ALI-AS GHAR SEYED-GOHRAB)

The beloved as a brave soldier steals souls on the battlefields and hearts at convivial gatherings. The texts in which such homoerotic relations are depicted range from panegyrics, love lyrics (ghazals), and romances, to ethicodidactic prose and poetry. The lack of an indicator of grammatical gender in the third-person pronouns ʿu and ān in Persian allowed for some confusion about the gender of the beloved, but descriptions of the budding beard and mustache give the game away (de Bruijn 1989).

Sufis took over a rich repertoire of tropes, metaphors, and stories from this courtly literature and applied them to their relationships with the divine. One should distinguish here between homoeroticism, homosexual relations, and homosexual identity (Schmidtke...
While homoeroticism was ubiquitous in the Islamic world, and homosexual relations were—to judge from the literature—not uncommon, homosexuality in the form it is understood in modern times did not exist. Attraction between people of the same sex was viewed as natural. For instance, Kay Kāvus has a whole chapter titled “Enjoying Sexual Relations” in his Qābus-nāma (eleventh century; Mirror of princes), which he wrote for his son, delineating why a prince should share his bed with both sexes.

**Active and Passive Partners and Punishment**

Many texts distinguish an active and a passive partner. The former, the penetrator, is commonly a person of a higher status and power, whereas the passive partner is usually a slave or boy. In such social hierarchies, there was rarely a question of punishing the penetrator. A famous example is the story of the judge from the city of Hamadan and the farrier boy, recounted by Saʿdi (c. 1210–1292) in his Golestān (Rose garden). The judge is caught with a boy in his arms, drunk with wine in the middle of the night. When the king, who is the judge's friend, wants to punish him by throwing him from a building as an example for others, he begs the king to throw someone else so that the judge too may profit from this example. The story shows an awareness that the theory of religious law was hard to apply in practice. Saʿdi’s moral is that homoeroticism exists, human beings are sinful, and one should not blame others (Lewis 2009; Southgate 1984).

The Qurʾan does not specify punishment for sexual relations between two men but expresses abhorrence, exemplified in the story of Lut (see 7:80–81; cf. 26:160–166, 27:54–55, 29:28–29). Jurists and exegetes understood the story to mean that anal intercourse was a major sin, supporting their arguments through a plethora of prophetic traditions (hadith), whose authenticity was sometimes questionable. There is no agreement between the Islamic legal traditions as to the penalty: the severest punishment cited is death by stoning for both partners, but other jurists are satisfied with flagellation (Pellat 1986). Despite the abhorrence for same-sex relations in the Qurʾan, Islamic societies possessed a homoerotic sensitivity.

**Shāhed-bāzi and Other Sufi Same-Sex Associations**

Several Sufi practices, doctrines, and symbol systems are based on homoeroticism or homosexual relationships. Inspired by the tradition “God is beautiful and loves beauty,” the practice of “gazing at a beloved person,” usually a beardless youth, emerged. This is called shāhedbāzi or nazar-bāzi (literally meaning “witness playing” or “the gaze game”) in Persian and nazar ila al-murd in Arabic (ʿAyn al-Qozāt Hamadān 1991; Ritter 2003; Pourjavady 2005; Wafer 1997). The purpose of such practice is to become absorbed in the divine beauty by contemplating a human beauty. The youth is called the shāhed or “witness” of the presence of God’s beauty. As Leonard Lewisohn observes, “The reflection of divinity within humanity ... was based on the Sufi mystico-erotic doctrine that taught,
similar to Aristophanes’ speech in *Symposium*, that love always pursues wholeness and is essentially the desire of lover and beloved to merge into one” (2010, 44). This erotic theology is related to the notion of *al-majaz qantarat al-haqiqqa* (metaphor is a bridge to reality), which Sufis use to refer to the importance of human love as a bridge to the divine love.

The shāhed-bāzi was subject to vehement criticism from Islamic theologians accusing Sufis of belief in *holul*, or “God residing in beautiful youth” (Ritter 2003; Shamisā 2002). Sufis rejected such accusations, emphasizing the contemplative aspect of the relationship and the sublimation of erotic affection. Sufis also justified such relationships by saying that God makes man fall in love with a beautiful face in order to learn the ways of love, preparing him for divine love. The didactic function of earthly love is often used as a rationalization for same-sex relations. Such validations generally stem from the Sufi philosophy of pantheism, developed by the Andalusian mystic Ibn al-ʿArabi (1165–1240). Relations between a mystic and a boy were not always sexual, because some treatments include chastity. The oft-cited tradition “He who loves and remains chaste, and then dies, dies a martyr” was applied to those mystics who chastely contemplated a shāhed (Lewis 2009, 710). In addition, Sufis related shāhed-bāzi to the prophet Muhammad’s ascension (*miʿraj*), his nocturnal journey through the heavens to encounter God. Sufis repeatedly cite the traditions: “I saw my Lord on the night of ascent in the form of a young man” and “Beware! The beardless youth has a complexion like that of God” (Ridgeon 2012, 9; Schimmel 1975, 290–291; Ritter 2003, 459–460).

Another purpose of same-sex associations among Sufis was, as Hellmut Ritter delineates, “a community-building bond of sociological and pedagogical significance” to be found in Islamic organizations such as *futuwwa*, or the *akhi*, which were guild communities bringing people together. Such relationships are known through the “vehement polemic directed against [them] by the law-revering orthodoxy” (2003, 377), such as Ibn al-Jawzi (1126–1200) who, in his *Talbis iblis (The Devil’s Deception)* [2014]), severely criticized several mystics, including Ahmad Ghazāli (c. 1061–1123 or 1126). Although Sufism could be regarded as a path in which each individual attains personal development, it is also equally a way of life centered around a spiritual leader (*pir*) who guides his disciples (*morids*) through the spiritual path in Sufi hospices. The emotional bond between the mentors and disciples was strong, and relations between the disciples themselves sometimes tended toward homoeroticism. Women were excluded from most Sufi lodges. It is not clear how physically homoerotic love was expressed. Several reports indicate that boys were physically exploited at such lodges (Lewis 2000; Bashir 2011).

**Kings and Princes and Their Lovers**

Anecdotes of the love between a king and a youth are frequently used in mystical literature to depict the subtleties of love and the relationship between man and his creator. In such
stories, the beloved, usually a slave boy, rises in rank as soon as a love relationship commences. The kingly lover is ruled by the beloved’s wishes, willing to sacrifice everything for a glimpse of the beloved. A good example is Sultan Mahmud and his favorite slave boy Ayāz, a paragon of beauty in Sufi literature. In his influential theory of love, the Sawāneh, Ahmad Ghazāli shows how love removes the earthly status of bondage, making the prince an obedient slave and the slave a powerful man. Anecdotes of Sultan Mahmud and Ayāz are repeatedly used to delineate the power of love, the subjection of the prince to the beloved’s whims, their inseparability, and their proverbial mutual devotion (Ritter 2003; Kugle 2002). A relationship with such a boy depended on his not yet being virile. As soon as his beard began to grow, his beauty would be destroyed and his social role would change. If an adult man were subject to penetration, it would be a disgrace to himself and his family. These partners were called mukhannath, meaning effeminate male (Najmabadi 2005).

Another related theme is of a man of the lowest social status, usually the furnace stoker of a bathhouse, falling in love with a prince. The lover craves a glance from the princely beloved. Ghazāli tells one such anecdote to emphasize the necessity of the gaze of the beloved and man’s lack of control over love:

> There was a furnace stoker who had fallen in love with a king. The vizier told the king. The king wanted to punish the furnace stoker, but the vizier reminded him of his justice, saying: “You are famous for your justice; it is not befitting for you to punish someone on account of something which is beyond one’s control.” It so happened that the king’s regular route passed by the bathhouse of that poor man. Every day, he would sit at the edge of the road, waiting for the king to pass by. When the king reached that place, the amorous flirtation of the beseeching lover would connect with the amorous gesture of loveliness. This continued for some time, until one day, when the king arrived, the stoker was not there when the king was donning the flirtatious stance of the beloved, but that stance requires the supplicant gaze of the lover. Because he was absent, the king remained naked, for he found no response, and the king’s mien changed. His vizier, who was a shrewd man, grasped intuitively what had happened and came to him courteously, saying: “We said that there was no sense in punishing him, for he does no harm; now we realize that his importuning was necessary.”

(1942, 25–27; TRANSLATION BY ALI-ASGHAR SEYED-GOHRA)

This topos (literary theme) is so popular that it has grown into a distinct genre, the Shāh-o Gedā, or “king and beggar.” An aspect of this genre is that the lover desires to be wounded
or killed by the beloved. Often the imagery of polo is used (Seyed-Gohrab 2007). The lover desires that the polo-playing prince should play with his head, removing and tossing it around on his polo stick, as an image of his total submission to the beloved. Related to such stories are anecdotes in which a Sufi falls in love with the beautiful son of a vizier, or an army general falls in love with a prince. Farid al-Din ‘Attâr tells many anecdotes about Sufis who fall in love with a youth (‘Attār 1989).

Musical Audition

Another Sufi ritual in which the same-sex relationship appears is the Samā’, or musical audition, during which mystics listened to the recitation of certain formulas from the Qur’an, or erotic poems, often accompanied by musical instruments and dance. References to homoerotic contacts are made in Sufi manuals on Samā’. In their ecstatic rapture, Sufis would tear open their shirts, embracing young boys or other dancing mystics. An example is Khwāja ʿAbdollāh Ansāri (1006–1088), who once frequented musical auditions but stopped after one incident:

*One day during the samā’, I was in rapture, and tore open my shirt. After the samā’ I went to the Jāmaʿ Mosque. While I was still drunken from the samā’, a person came to me and said: “Who was the youth who was moving around you during the dance?” I said: “Why?” He said: “A young boy with a long stalk narcissus was dancing with you. Every time he brought the narcissus near your nose, you became ecstatic, losing all your patience.” I begged him: “Do not tell this to anyone.” Afterward, I never saw him anymore.*

(*QUOTED IN JĀMI 1991, 3 4 6; TRANSLATION BY AL I-ASGHAR SEYED-GOHRAR*)

Another example is Owhad al-Din Kermāni (d. c. 1238), who would tear open the shirts of prepubescent boys, rubbing his chest against them (Lewis 2000; Ridgeon 2012). Similar stories could be given of Sufis such as Fakhr al-Din ʿErāqi (1213–1289) (Zargar 2011).

While verses of the Qur’an were chanted at such gatherings, it was common to recite erotic couplets such as the following: I will hide

*I will hide myself in my poem*
*So that I can kiss your lips when you read it.*
For modern Western audiences, it is hard to imagine that this erotic couplet was sung in tenth-century Persia at a gathering in which male Islamic mystics were listening to music. The couplet demonstrates quite well how different sorts of love, earthly and heavenly, are intermingled. Yet the primary use of this poem was to come into rapturous ecstasy in order to come close to God.

**Ghazals**

The largest body of homoerotic poetry in Islamic literatures is without doubt in the ghazal form, which was used for a variety of purposes for more than one millennium. Many of these ghazals praise a boy, often a Zoroastrian or Christian. Probably it was the poet Sanāʾi (d. 1131) who introduced such poems. Other influential mystic poets such as ʿAttār (c. 1142–c. 1220), Rumi (1207–1273), and Hafez (c. 1326–c. 1390), to name a few, elaborated on the themes and metaphors. In such poems, the poet is the Muslim lover who is smitten by the love of a Christian boy. He accepts all denigration and humiliation, even renouncing Islam and drinking wine dregs in response to the beloved’s whims. Aside from sexualizing Christianity in such representations, the poet finds a playful way of criticizing orthodox Islam, distancing himself from orthodox Islamic creeds that he regards as impediments on the spiritual path. The references to other religions create a space to view one’s own religion from a new perspective, rejecting the orthodox Islamic appreciation of outward piety. Outward piety is a dangerous pitfall on the mystical path, as it invites people’s respect and can lead to hypocrisy. True piety is between the mystic and the Creator and can be achieved in an outwardly sinful life. It is in the taverns, among the pagans, drunkards, and vagabonds who ridicule Islamic norms and values, that the mystic experiences true love for the one Beloved. The mystic takes refuge from the mosque in the tavern, as here he hears wisdom from a Christian or Zoroastrian guide, whereas in the mosque, the preacher preaches one thing and practices the opposite in private.

These Sufi poems are examples of homoerotic courtship, yet they also idealize and spiritualize love by praising other religions. One example is from the first two couplets of one of Sanāʾi’s many ghazals:

```
You have again robbed me of my Muslim faith; bravo, heathen boy!
You have chained me and have thrown me into a dungeon; bravo, heathen boy!
Again and again you bring me back to the reckless ones, who gamble everything;
You bring me to those masters of love; bravo, heathen boy!
```
Sanāʾi composed a series of poems with the rhyme refrain “boy” (pesar) in which he expresses the erotic relationship and radical renunciation:

\[
\begin{align*}
I, & \text{ your slave, wear a ring in my ear, my boy!} \\
\text{Do not sell me, hold me with you, my boy!} \\
\text{Do not pain yourself in torturing,} \\
\text{Exert yourself to be faithful, my boy!} \\
\text{My dear, take a cup of wine from the cupbearer,} \\
\text{Kiss me with your honey lips, my boy!} \\
\text{Fetch your harp and play like a vagabond,} \\
\text{To bring my soul to its senses, my boy!} \\
\text{Your absence told me stories yesterday,} \\
\text{I repeated them to you in my dream last night, my boy.}
\end{align*}
\]

(SANĀʾI 1983, 894; TRANSLATION BY ALI-ASGHAR SEYED-GOHrab, BASED ON J. T. P. DE BRUIJN’S RENDITION)

In such poems, the lover and the beloved remain anonymous. Such poems in praise of a boy belong to the genre of qalandariyyāt (vagabond) expression (de Bruijn 1992), characterized by a set of imagery for radical detachment, related to the debauchery of beggars, gamblers, and drunkards, who stay in pubs, taverns, and brothels at the fringes of Islamic towns, usually called kharābāt (ruined places; from which the word cabaret derives). The masochistic lover describes all the hard things the pagan beloved has done to him so that he might lose his own identity and assume the beloved’s identity. Sufis believe that separate identities are a barrier to union: the lover must annihilate his own identity to attain union. The following example by ʿAttār illustrates the flavor and merits of such ghazals:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{A Christian boy like a heavenly idol} \\
\text{came unwittingly but drunk from the monastery,} \\
\text{With a Christian belt, a face like a heart-ravisher, a bell, and wine in his hand.} \\
\text{He loudly praised the wine and the disgrace of the Muslims.} \\
\text{When I looked at him carefully, at his eyes, lips, and curls,}
\end{align*}
\]
that moon came to sit on the throne of my heart like a sultan.
I grabbed his belt and fell at his feet;
I said, “My life, what should I do?” He replied, “You know this yourself.
O old man who wears the woolen mantle! If you want to have me,
you must burn your mantle, you must pray in another direction;
You must then come to our monastery, and choose another prayer niche.
You must read a few lines of our book of love.
We have set these three conditions in the heart of our monastery,
so that you leave yourself, let go of your soul and of your heart.
Drink wine in our monastery so that you are enraptured by drunkenness,
for in ecstasy you will find what you are looking for.
When it is clear to you who you really are,
then shout ‘I am the truth’ in the world of humanity.”
‘Attār! Transcend your own path so you can see;
free yourself because you are hidden from yourself.

(1940, 659–660; TRANSLATION BY ALI-ASGHAR SEYED-GOHrab)

This poem depicts how a Muslim falls in love with a Christian boy, employing a wide range of non-Islamic religious symbols, such as the monastery, bell, idol, and the belt or cord that the non-Muslim population had to wear to distinguish themselves from Muslims. While the love relationship remains central, these symbols and the Christian boy’s provocative statements prepare the ground for the mystic to reject all conventional Muslim piety. It is common in such poems that the male Christian beloved asks the amorous mystic to turn against Islam, to drink wine, to burn the Qur’an, and to follow the path of homoerotic love, leaving behind conventional Islamic piety. The only way to become one with the beloved is to risk one’s good name and reputation, choosing the beloved unconditionally. The mystic uses an outwardly sinful life as a shield from the dangers of hypocritical piety. Such poems are used symbolically to show how the Sufi who yields himself entirely to the immaterial beloved is ready to sacrifice all, including his religion, to attain spiritual love. These erotic motifs remain popular today. Even Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–1989) used these motifs in his poetry to convey his hatred for Islamic orthodoxy and ironically to emphasize his own superior piety (Seyed-Gohrab 2011).

While these motifs are metaphors used to emphasize one’s inner piety, the antinomian mystics actually lived in Islamic societies from the Balkans to Bengal from the twelfth century onward under various names, such as abdāl, qalandar, or malang. They were famous for appearing naked or semi-naked in public, shaving all facial hair, using piercings in their ears, noses, and genitals, and practicing homosexual relations. The shaving of bodily hair made these qalandars “feminine.” Abu Bakr ibn Abi al-Wafāʾ of Aleppo (1503–
1583) addressed his male audience in Arabic using the grammatical feminine. Shah Hosayn of Lahore “spoke in the voice of a woman’ in his Punjabi poetry, but openly lived with his Brahmin lover Madho in a homoerotic relationship in defiance of prevalent heteronormative custom” (Karamustafa 2015, 121 [quote within quote by Scott Kugle: see Kugle 2007, 201]). Some reports of these wandering mystics call them sodomites. There were also qalandars who refused to participate in the sexual reproduction of society but who “did not exclude unproductive forms of sexual activity” (Karamustafa 1994, 20).

To conclude, homoeroticism is intrinsic to Islamic mysticism, serving various purposes. While admiring a beautiful young male face is to commune with the divine, a profane love relationship is regarded as an exercise to prepare oneself for the divine love. Metaphors, imagery, and anecdotes from daily life are reflected in poetry exhibiting the subtleties of the psychology of love and a homoerotic love relationship. The radical renunciation of the world for the beloved is conveyed in the ghazal genre in which the lover falls in love with a Christian boy and is expected to offer everything to attain union. The qalandar mystics showed the extreme of such an antinomian approach to the norms and values of Islamic society, flouting them by their appearance and by indulging in homosexual love.

From the twentieth century onward, modernizing Muslim intellectuals have treated Sufism as a superstitious backward movement that hindered the progress of Islamic countries (Ridgeon 2006). Basing themselves on modern Western political philosophy, these intellectuals have criticized various Sufi rites and doctrines, including homoerotic relationships. While Sufi literature is still a living tradition in Islamic societies, homosexual practices are repressed in these societies, and homosexual relations are often regarded as a Western cultural invasion that should be resisted.

SEE ALSO Homoerotic Poetry of Abū Nuwās; Homosexual Acts in Shariʿa; Literary Discourses in the Ottoman Middle East (1500–1900); Ottoman and Persian Miniature Paintings

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Traditionally, Nepal has been a country with deeply ingrained social norms regarding marriage and gender roles. However, the abolition of the monarchy in 2008, along with the rise of democratization, led to a rapidly changing social climate. Traditional cultural expectations and family values came under pressure from the processes of globalization and modernization. This caused shifting norms in gender roles, opening up social spaces for sexual and gender minorities to campaign for their rights (Boyce and Coyle 2013). As travel and access to education increased, sexual and gender minorities in Nepal gained exposure to Euro-American conceptions of sexuality, leading to widespread usage of previously unheard-of LGBTQ terminology. Not only are these categories useful in understanding the self in regard to human sexuality, but Paul Boyce and Daniel Coyle (2013) argue that they are essential for campaigning for rights and visibility of gender minority populations.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that the usage of these prescribed labels is a double-edged sword, because legislating for particular groups such as “gay,” “lesbian,” “intersex,” or “transsexual” creates rigid categories that may not represent actual lived experiences of sexuality in Nepal and across South Asia (Coyle and Boyce 2015). In fact, the hegemony of Euro-American conceptions of sexuality and their invasion into the Global South have created conflict between preconceived Euro-American categories and South Asian expressions of sexuality. Research has shown that many Nepali men and women who engage in same-sex activities may not identify explicitly as sexual and gender minorities. Furthermore, it is not uncommon for those who do identify as part of the LGBTQ community to be heterosexually married, a kinship arrangement that allows individuals to satisfy the social obligation to create a family while participating in same-sex relationships and intimacies (Coyle and Boyce 2015).
Discrimination

Queer subjectivity in Nepal and across South Asia is complex and multifaceted. Although the introduction of Euro-American categories such as “lesbian,” “gay,” and “transsexual” is relatively recent and radical, gender nonconformity has been an aspect of cultural ceremonies throughout Nepali history. In these settings, cross-dressing and gender nonconformity are not only sanctioned but an essential aspect of rituals. One example of this phenomenon can be found in the Tharu ethnicity of southern Nepal. In this subgroup, there is a revered ceremony revolving around a dance called the dhumbra, in which a man dresses as a woman and performs emotional dances, songs, and stories, often bringing his audience to tears. The man is referred to as a natuwa, a highly respectful term signifying a creator of happiness. However, individuals who display similar forms of alternative gender expression outside of the role of a natuwa are ostracized and referred to as chakka, a derogatory term (Frisbie 2014). This contradiction represents the conditional acceptance of gender nonconformity that is sanctioned in specific settings but never as a day-to-day existence. Much of this discrimination is rooted in the perceived rejection of patriarchal and social values rather than explicit homophobia. Boyce and Coyle (2013) explain that individuals experience discrimination based on social visibility, given that metis (effeminate or cross-dressing males) are more likely to be targeted than their masculine counterparts, tas (masculine gay men), because metis contradict the social expectations...
regarding gender norms.

Discrimination against sexual and gender minorities takes many forms, including harassment, social isolation, difficulty finding employment, and disproportionate detention by police. A central issue for these minorities revolves around citizenship certificates, which are essential documents identifying individuals as members of Nepali society. Without these, individuals are unable to access driver’s licenses and passports, government services, health services, bank accounts, the right to vote, employment opportunities, and land inheritance (Blue Diamond Society and Heartland Alliance 2013). This issue primarily affects those who identify as third gender, a recognized community of Nepal and other parts of South Asia that consists of individuals who fall outside of the gender spectrum, including transgender individuals and those who identify as neither female nor male. A recurring issue for these individuals has been their difficulty in obtaining citizenship certificates that note their self-identified gender rather than the gender they were assigned at birth. Problems occur when these individuals attempt to use a citizenship certificate that lists their birth gender and are denied services or accused of fraud because their gender expression does not match the gender listed on the certificate (Bochenek and Knight 2012). This has prevented third-gender individuals from fully participating in Nepali society and from accessing countless opportunities.

The Case

The issue of citizenship cards along with the aforementioned discrimination led to the 2007 court case Sunil Babu Pant and Others v. Nepal Government. Sunil Babu Pant (founder of the Blue Diamond Society, an LGBTQ rights organization), along with a number of organizations representing sexual and gender minorities such as MITINI Nepal, Cruise AIDS Nepal, and Parichaya Nepal, challenged the government of Nepal and other legislative offices by filing a writ petition under the Interim Constitution of Nepal. Their objective was for sexual and gender minorities to be given the full range of constitutional human rights through the legal recognition of a third-gender category and the creation of a law forbidding discrimination on the basis of gender identity and sexual orientation (“Decision of the Supreme Court on the Rights of Lesbian” 2008).

The petition used Nepali domestic law, comparative law, and international law to demonstrate the legitimacy of its claims. The use of domestic law centered on sections of the Interim Constitution of Nepal, such as Articles 12, 13, 32, and 107. These passages guarantee the right to freedom for all individuals, establish equal protection under the law, provide the right to file a petition before the Supreme Court, and require the Supreme Court to review legislation and enforce constitutional rights. The use of comparative law and international law included the constitutions of Ecuador and South Africa, as well as relevant court cases from other countries that resulted in forms of protection for LGBTQ communities. One example used was the court case McCoskar v. the State (2005), in which
the High Court of Fiji established that legal provisions prohibiting homosexual conduct were discriminatory and unconstitutional, overruling Fiji’s sodomy law (Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada 2007).

The government of Nepal responded to the petition with the assertion that it lacked validity, stating that its arguments were based on assumptions of discrimination rather than actual data. It called for a dismissal of the writ petition and argued that any individual who had been mistreated had the ability to use the courts to enforce his or her rights. Conclusively, because the existing legal framework guaranteed all Nepali citizens freedom from discrimination, the government felt that the creation of a separate law for the LGBTQ community was unnecessary (“Decision of the Supreme Court on the Rights of Lesbian” 2008). In response, the petitioners asserted that numerous international courts had created laws catering to the needs of sexual and gender minorities, and they reiterated specific evidence of discrimination.

**Court Deliberation**

After hearing arguments presented by the petitioners and the defendants, the Supreme Court of Nepal narrowed its deliberation down to four key questions (“Decision of the Supreme Court on the Rights of Lesbian” 2008). These were:

1. Whether the petition regarding the rights of a minority community (on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity) fell under the category of public interest litigation.
2. Whether members of the LGBTQ community and those identifying as “third gender” possessed these characteristics naturally or whether they were a result of mental perversion.
3. Whether the state of Nepal had truly discriminated against members of the LGBTQ community.
4. Whether the order for legal provisions sought by the petitioners should be issued.

The court concluded that the petition was in fact in the public interest, because it concerned a matter of social justice, citing the constitutional duty of the state to provide equal rights and access to opportunities for all. In regard to whether sexual and gender minorities occur naturally or unnaturally, the court mentioned relevant evidence from the laws of other countries, including the United States, South Africa, and Australia, as well as the European Court of Human Rights. After considering these contexts, as well as widely cited medical research (such as the Kinsey reports), the Supreme Court of Nepal concluded that sexual orientation was a natural aspect of human development rather than a mental perversion or psychological disorder (“Decision of the Supreme Court on the Rights of Lesbian” 2008). As for whether or not LGBTQ individuals had been discriminated against, the court referred to evidence from multiple sources detailing mistreatment of sexual and
gender minorities, particularly those of the third gender. It also cited the existence of Nepal’s law on “unnatural coition,” which criminalized same-sex relations and marriage, and urged its removal, noting that it was an appropriate time to begin destigmatizing and decriminalizing same-sex marriage.

Finally, the Supreme Court of Nepal came to its last question: whether or not the orders sought by petitioners should be issued. This was perhaps the most influential segment of the case, because it could lead to court-ordered mandates regarding the legal protection of the LGBTQ community. The court reiterated Nepal’s commitment to equality, concluding that sexual and gender minorities were full citizens under Nepali law and were therefore entitled to all rights provided by the Nepali constitution (“Decision of the Supreme Court on the Rights of Lesbian” 2008). The court then issued a series of instructions to the government of Nepal, the first being an order for the creation of a committee to study the endorsement of same-sex marriage, with the eventual goal of full legalization. The court also ordered the government to recognize the rights of sexual and gender minorities through the creation of new laws prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as through the annulment of discriminatory laws. These legal provisions were to be reflected in Nepal’s new constitution, which was in the process of being written.

**Legal Outcomes**

The 2007 court case *Sunil Babu Pant and Others v. Nepal Government* significantly improved the legal standing of the LGBTQ community of Nepal. With the ratification of Nepal’s new constitution on 20 September 2015, legal security for the community was made official. Article 12 of the constitution guaranteed every individual the right to a citizenship certificate that coincided with their actual gender identity. As a result of this decree, new citizenship cards were created with a separate column for “third gender.” Recognition of the third gender gives these individuals greater opportunities, from the ability to vote and access public services to increased engagement in social, political, and economic processes. Not only is a third-gender category now included on citizenship certificates, but it also appeared on the national census for the first time ever in 2011. This census is used for the creation of budget allocations by the government for programs benefiting these individuals (Boyce and Coyle 2013). Additionally, Nepal’s Ministry of Education planned to include third-gender issues in the national health and reproductive curriculum, a development with the potential to raise awareness regarding sexual and gender minorities (Boyce and Coyle 2013). Not only have third-gender individuals benefited, but the new constitution guaranteed all sexual and gender minorities the right to employment opportunities (Article 42) and listed the community among minority groups of Nepal that deserved empowerment and protection (Article 18). The constitution also reiterated Nepal’s commitment to equality and condemned all forms of discrimination, authorizing protection
for sexual and gender minorities in a legal format for the first time.

The constitution failed, however, to address the issue of same-sex marriage. Although this issue was still being discussed within the government of Nepal as of 2017, the country is expected to take steps toward legalization in the future because the Supreme Court of Nepal's order was binding. As legalization looms, a common quandary is the question of whether marriage involving third-gender individuals will be classified as same-sex or heterosexual marriage. In one case, a union between a transgender woman who identifies as third gender and a man was categorized as same-sex (Agence France-Presse 2017). (This marriage was registered locally but remains legally unofficial.) If this serves as an indicator for future cases, it implies that unions involving third-gender individuals will be classified as same-sex marriages regardless of the original birth certificates and gender identities. Yet, because no official same-sex unions had been performed as of 2017, the resolution of this issue remains uncertain.

Related Casework

The Supreme Court of Nepal's progressive ruling not only had a notable influence on the new constitution, but it laid the groundwork for progressive outcomes in derivative cases. One such case was the 2012 Supreme Court case Rajani Shahi v. National Women Commission et al., in which Shahi petitioned for the right to live with her female partner rather than her husband. Shahi filed for divorce from her husband after beginning a relationship with a woman, Prem Kumari Nepali. However, Shahi's husband threatened her and, at the recommendation of the National Women Commission, sent her to Maiti Nepal, an institution whose goal was “eradicating social evils” (Scribd.com 2013, 3). Maiti Nepal held Shahi in custody for forty-five days with the explanation that they were attempting to change her sexual orientation. In response, Prem Kumari filed a writ petition in Shahi’s name, asking for her release and for the two to be allowed to live together freely. This case highlighted the conflict between Nepal’s traditional structure of heterosexual marriage and the right to freedom. The court declared that despite the importance of marriage in Nepali society, it was not worth the cost of personal liberty. It argued that all individuals deserve equal rights, regardless of sexual orientation, and concluded that it was not legal to prevent two consenting adults from cohabitating (Scribd.com 2013).

An Altered Climate but Challenges Remain

Sunil Babu Pant and Others v. Nepal Government altered the situation for sexual and gender minorities in Nepal. Steps were taken with regard to both legal recognition of LGBTQ rights and acceptance of the third-gender identity. Despite these advancements, attitudes toward the LGBTQ community remain complex, and many of these individuals are far more marginalized than legal progress would suggest. For instance, although the government of Nepal created a third-gender category on citizenship certificates, reports show that many
individuals have been unable to actually obtain these documents. The causes behind this serious shortcoming range from bureaucratic obstacles to noncompliant government officials (Coyle and Boyce 2015). This demonstrates that altering legislation does not, in itself, guarantee the elimination of discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

In fact, some scholars claim that the creation of an official third-gender category in Nepal and other parts of South Asia, although legally progressive, has led to negative social outcomes. As Adnan Hossain explains, the designation of individuals as third gender can be misunderstood as “a form of gender failure on the part of those who fail to be either sufficiently masculine or feminine” (2017, 1428). In addition, the promotion of the third-gender community as a marginalized group has inadvertently led to misunderstandings, causing many to view third-gender individuals as being sexually or otherwise disabled (Hossain 2017). It is clear that, despite positive legal reform, sexual and gender minorities face the difficult task of transforming social perceptions and altering cultural norms that have existed for centuries. Social pressure and discrimination still shape the lives of sexual and gender minorities in Nepal. However, shifting social attitudes are slowly leading to greater acceptance of this marginalized population, as Nepal creates its own narrative of sexual and gender subjectivities.

SEE ALSO Family Law in Asia; Section 377 in South Asia

BIBLIOGRAPHY


tatiana de la tierra (1961–2012) was a Colombian writer, archivist, librarian, activist, and pivotal figure in the formation of transnational networks of Latina lesbians across the Americas. Primarily known for her role in the creation and circulation of the Latina lesbian magazines *esto no tiene nombre* (1991–1994; this has no name) and *conmoción: revista y red revolucionaria de lesbianas latinas* (1995–1996; commotion: magazine and revolutionary network of Latina lesbians), de la tierra was also a prolific writer who published essays, short stories, poetry, and critical scholarship. Writing in Spanish, English, and Spanglish, her creative production engaged directly and explicitly with themes of sexuality, the body, migrant memory, and lesbian desire and includes the books *Para las duras: Una fenomenología lesbiana* / *For the Hard Ones: A Lesbian Phenomenology* (2002); *Porcupine Love and Other Tales from My Papaya* (2005); *Píntame una mujer peligrosa* (2005; Paint me a dangerous woman), and a Spanish-language children’s book, *Xía y las mil sirenas* (2009; Xía and the thousand sirens).

**Biographical Overview**

Born in Villavicencio, Colombia, on 14 May 1961, de la tierra immigrated in 1969 at the age of eight to the United States, where her family settled in Homestead, Florida. In one of her several artist bios, this one published on her website, she states, “I grew up in typical Spanish-speaking immigrant fashion—poor and future-less” (de la tierra 2004). Her writing frequently commented on both the devastating beauty and quotidian violence of her homeland, as well as the vicissitudes of migration, exile, displacement, biculturalism, and geographic longings. After high school, she attended Miami Dade Community College and later, in 1984, graduated from the University of Florida; shortly afterward, she completed certification to become a massage therapist. In her piece “Wings,” published in Michelle Tea’s collection *Without a Net: The Female Experience of Growing Up Working Class*, de la tierra describes her early induction into the US school system, writing, “I would master the English language. I would infiltrate the gringo culture without letting on that I was a traitor. I would battle in their tongue and make them stumble. I would cut out their souls and leave them on the shore to be pecked on by vultures” (2003, 96). In 1999 she
completed a bilingual master's in creative writing at the University of Texas at El Paso, and a year later she earned another master's degree, this one in library science, at the State University of New York at Buffalo, where she worked as a librarian before moving to Long Beach, California. As a librarian, she was a fierce advocate for Latina/o and Latin American queers, publishing book reviews and bibliographical accounts of Latina lesbian literary history, including the essay “Latina Lesbian Literary Herstory: From Sor Juana to Days of Awe,” published in *The Power of Language / El poder de la palabra: Selected Papers from the Second REFORMA National Conference* (2001). In these professional library venues, she would repeatedly decry the whiteness of LGBT literature and the lack of queer representation of Latinas in mainstream literary circles.

Colombian Writer and Activist tatiana de la tierra. de la tierra was a pivotal figure in the formation of transnational networks of Latina lesbians across the Americas as well as the creation of the Latina lesbian magazines esto no tiene nombre and conmoción.

A lifelong writer and adventurer who described herself as “a barefoot traveling lesbian in search of an exotic secret society,” de la tierra was immersed in the emerging transnational Latina and lesbian of color movements of the 1980s and 1990s (de la tierra 2004). She was a frequent participant in the Encuentros de Lesbianas Feministas de América Latina y el Caribe, gatherings of Latina lesbians from across the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean that first took place in Cuernavaca, Mexico, in 1987, and were later hosted in
Argentina, Costa Rica, Puerto Rico, and Brazil. Organized to create transnational networks of exchange, these Encuentros served as a means to share locally produced newsletters, books, pamphlets, and other forms of creative production among Latinas across the hemisphere.

**Editorial Contributions**

Inspired by these international identity-based formations and the recent publication of *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981), de la tierra joined the newsletter committee of the nascent Miami-based Latina lesbian group Las Salamandras de Ambiente (The Queer Salamanders), and along with Vanessa Cruz, Patricia Pereira-Pujol, and Margarita Castilla, she worked to produce *esto no tiene nombre*, a bilingual newsletter that featured poetry, interviews, comics, drawings, photography, and reviews. After publishing a review of a lesbian pornographic film, de la tierra and her collaborators were asked to leave Las Salamandras for printing what were deemed “groserías” (vulgarities) that some more conservative members felt did not reflect the values of the group, and the magazine broke away from Las Salamandras after the first issue.

Born out of this early moment of censorship, much of the writing and images published in *esto no tiene nombre* explicitly documented in images Latina lesbian sexuality and desire, including the editorial decision to publish an orgasm in every issue, whether as a poem, image, or prose. The magazine went on to develop an international circulation throughout North and South America and Europe while also serving as a venue to promote local events organized by the many identity-based gay and lesbian groups that emerged during this period in Latin America and the United States. In 1995 *esto no tiene nombre* was followed by the glossier and more professionally published magazine *conmoción*, an effort that received limited funding from a variety of LGBT and feminist sources before filing for bankruptcy in 1996.

In photography, drawings, poetry, editorials, letters, and prose, these magazines boldly tackled topics of AIDS, sadomasochism, sex work, drug addiction, sexual roles, race and racism, online hookups, and local political debates in diverse Latina lesbian communities. In the process, they provided a publishing venue for emerging writers and artists including Laura Aguilar, Alicia Gaspar de Alba, Erika Lopez, Carmen de Monteflores, Cherrie Moraga, Achy Objeas, Rosamaría Roffiel, Sheila Ortiz Taylor, Carmelita Tropicana, Luz María Umpierre, and many others. In her 2002 essay “Activist Latina Lesbian Publishing: *esto no tiene nombre* and *conmoción*,” published in the journal *Aztlán*, de la tierra provides a vibrant, hilarious, and vital account of this moment in Latina lesbian history and discusses the messy personal and political dynamics involved in the formation and dissolution of these groundbreaking publications. In connection with *conmoción*, de la tierra and Lesley Salas created La Telaraña (The Spiderweb), a web platform to connect Latina lesbian writers and artists; years later; she was an active member of the online community *La
Bloga, a bilingual blog focusing on Latina/o writers.

Unapologetically sexual, fat, and decidedly femme, de la tierra often wrote odes to lesbian sex, her own “big fat pussy,” and what she describes as lesbian smut and drama (2005b, 5). In describing her initiation into lesbianism, she writes, “I discovered an incredible knack for good sex and sick relationships” (1998, 128). With titles such as “Neurotic Love Letters,” “True Cunt Stories,” and “When Cunt Is Angry,” her prose evinces humor and heartbreak, perverse passions, and lesbian love stories alongside her own theorizations on life, sex, and language (de la tierra 2004). In the essay “About the Tongue,” included in Para las duras, she writes,

why not admit that the tongue is the lesbian mascot?

with the tongue you can say: “I’m going to eat you piece by piece.”

with the tongue you can make: a platter between the legs, a
direct connection between the body and soul, thunder and
lightning at the base of the throat, a private dish, multiple
orgasms, silence from the eye of the hurricane, a lesbian sym-
phonic orchestra.

(2002B, 37)

Experimentation with Literary Forms

While much of her work could be described as creative nonfiction, throughout her career she experimented with literary forms, including monologue, the epistolary, lyric poetry, erotica, and drama. The musicality and orality of her writing was felt most powerfully in her numerous international public performances throughout the United States, Latin America, the Caribbean, and Spain, some of which exist in digital form. A survivor of childhood sexual abuse, her writing luxuriated in the vulnerability and sensorial delights of the flesh, and she frequently published naked photographs of herself as a way to reclaim the pleasures of her own body. An avid collector of Latin American music, particularly music by women, her extensive music library was donated to the UCLA Ethnomusicology Library as the tatiana de la tierra Collection of Sound Recordings, while her letters and papers are collected in the UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center.
Throughout her life, de la tierra struggled with health issues; in 1990 she was diagnosed with lupus, and in 2012 she was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Throughout her life, she pursued a range of alternative health options and cultivated an active spiritual practice—topics that she integrated into her writing and her identity. These were activated most fully as she prepared herself and her community for her eventual passing with rituals and the gathering of the queer tribe that formed around her Long Beach home. Shortly before her death, she renamed herself Suerte Sirena (Lucky Mermaid). She died on 31 July 2012.

In 2018 the journal *Sinister Wisdom* and A Midsummer Night's Press republished Para las duras: Una fenomenología lesbiana / For the Hard Ones: A Lesbian Phenomenology as part of their Sapphic Classic editions. This new edition includes an introduction by scholars Olga García Echeverría and Maylei Blackwell, a foreword by creative writer Myriam Gurba, an essay on the influence of de la tierra's editorial work by Sara Gregory, and a tribute to de la tierra's life and work by her mother.

**SEE ALSO** *Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Lesbian Feminist Encuentros of Latin America and the Caribbean*

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Thai K-Pop

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The impact of this popular music genre on queer Thai identity.

New technologies and media have been employed to heighten the power of the Thai monarchy and state. Thailand was one of the first countries outside the West to employ film and photography in the service of imagined citizenship and nationalism. Thai print magazines in the early twentieth century were instrumental in developing middle-class consciousness around national identity, social status, and normative gender and sexuality (Barmé 2002). The state continues to monitor and manage the production of “national” representations. Culturally inappropriate imagery is censored or banned, while the state sponsors historical films, particularly about the monarchy. The Thai state uses media in support of “Thainess,” in an ongoing effort to create a national culture designed by elites to improve the image of the nation to itself and outsiders. Political figures, for example, would be accused of not being patriotic if they were associated with anything but Thai music.

However, media is a contested, expanding, and increasingly unregulated global resource. Since the 1980s, Hong Kong cinema and Japanese animation and music have become popular in Thailand. Following the financial crisis of 1997, Korean popular music (K-pop) and Korean television series (K-drama) have become trendy among the urban middle class in Thailand. Importantly, the transnational genre known as K-pop is but a subgenre of Korean popular music (since the incorporation of rap) that is branded as distinctly Korean and promoted overseas. Similarly, K-drama generally refers to nighttime soap operas of relatively short duration that are easily packaged in seasons and sold as DVDs, as opposed to ongoing daytime soaps of indefinite duration.

Styles and Market Value of Popular Music in Thailand

Regarding music, there is a distinction between “populist” and “popular,” in that the former is associated with spaces of protest and marginalized dissent (Tausig 2013). Thai popular music is more broadly associated with rurality, the urban working class, and the urban middle class. Common Thai genres include mor lam (Lao-Thai folk music with roots in Buddhist moral fables that now include a wide variety of themes and styles, including electronic dance music) and luk thung (“songs about life,” often referred to as Thai “country” music, centered on difficulties in life, poverty, and longing). Foreign pop music,
especially from the United States, is also widely disseminated. While all these genres are modern, *luk thung* and *mor lam* are often described as “traditional” Thai music. These styles of music, often considered low class, are quite popular among middle-class urbanites with roots in provincial areas and those nostalgic for traditional Thai culture. Thus, *mor lam* and *luk thung* are widely broadcast on television and radio and are common in live performances.

Thai pop music, based on Western pop music, became a genre in the 1970s and 1980s following the extensive presence of American soldiers during the American War in Southeast Asia (known as the Vietnam War in the United States). Thereafter, Thai pop music became mainstream among the urban middle classes. As Ubonrat Siriyuvasak and Hyunjoon Shin (2007) note, Western music has a relatively low market share (10–15%) in Thailand, and the trend is toward K-pop. In 2011 the Thailand Creative and Design Center estimated the market value for music to be 20 billion Thai baht, or about $654 million. However, the extent of Thai K-pop’s fan base and revenues in comparison to Thai pop, rock, *luk thung*, or *mor lam* is unclear, as objective data on sales and rankings are not available. There are no independent figures about the market provided by the industry itself. Two highly competitive companies, GMM (generally credited with creating the genre of Thai pop music) and RS, control the market. Each publishes its own charts, restricted to its own artists. Additionally, since so much music consumption in Thailand occurs via pirated sources, these figures are likely unreliable. Late in the first decade of the twenty-first century, street vendors selling “Top 100 K-pop” CDs typically charged around 50 baht (about $1.75), while copyrighted digital downloads generally cost 29 baht (about $1.00) per song. The Thailand iTunes store, Intensive-Watch, and MusicWeekly.asia provide proxies but have their own limitations. Thus, there is no reliable way to measure the sales impact of K-pop in Thailand.

**Cultural Salience of K-Pop in Thailand**

Alternatively, one can examine the cultural salience of Kpop. K-pop, which is already a hybridized pop genre, has become incorporated into Thai pop. RS has several subbrands of music, including Kamikaze (also called Zheza) and RSiam (*luk thung*). Kamikaze targets young people nine to seventeen years old and is known for copying Kpop. The Thai pop group 7 Days, for example, is a facsimile of the popular South Korean group Girls' Generation. In 2009 Thai pop singer Sadoet had a hit with “Sao Kaoli” (Korean girl), about a Thai girl who idolizes Korean music, dramas, food, and sleeps with a cutout of a Korean singer. A common theme portrays rural girls who want to go to the big city or sometimes to Korea.

K-pop is commonly played in commercial spaces, such as shopping malls. Siriyuvasak and Shin (2007) report that in Thailand K-pop is primarily followed by young, middle-class girls. However, young gays (especially young feminine gay men known in Thailand as *tut* or
“sissies,” a sometimes derogatory term that is used for self-identification like “queer”) and lesbians (toms) are also avid fans. In Thai slang, K-pop is also known as “gay-pop.” Cross-gender performances of K-pop cover dance (the copying of choreographed movements from music videos) are popular among young girls, gays, and lesbians (Kang 2014). K-pop cover dance is a popular social activity and is often performed on television shows like Thailand’s Got Talent and on documentaries on Thai public television. There is a vibrant cover dance contest circuit in Thailand, and Thai sissies are among the most successful competitors in the international K-Pop Cover Dance Festival (see coverdance.org). In 2011 the first year of competition, a group of Thai boys placed third doing a girl group routine. Many Thai commentators claimed that the boys did not win because Koreans are homophobic and could not accept the cross-gender performance. The following two years, Thai boy groups who covered boy bands won the competition. Thais placed second in 2014 and won again in 2015. These Thai K-pop cover dance groups become minor celebrities in Thailand. The dancers are interviewed on national television and develop fan followings as if they were actual Korean idols (Kang 2018).

For young consumers, K-pop and other aspects of the K-wave, such as the popularity of
Korean cosmetics and electronics, signify cosmopolitan pan-Asian modernity and aspirations of participation in an ascending Asia, where Korea represents the most desirable model (Hoang 2015). “Asia,” in the minds of Thais, is often reduced to certain national ethnicities that have achieved global economic power and civilizational status (Kang 2017). This view is reinforced by the prevalence of desirable consumer media and goods from such nations as Korea and Japan. In Thailand, K-pop has come to represent “Asian” music, vastly dominating the occasional songs from Japan, Indonesia, and other nations on radio and television. If one watches Asian music video shows on Thai television, one is likely to see mostly K-pop, with a song from another country occasionally added to the mix. Ben Tausig (2013) notes that K-pop music has both influenced and stands in contrast to popular Thai music genres. “International” nightclubs play Western music (primarily American), while Thai nightclubs play Thai, Korean, and Western music. During the beginning of the twenty-first century, the majority of music heard in Thai gay bars was K-pop. Kpop’s dominance of the Thai soundscape peaked around 2010 in gay venues and 2012 in Bangkok more broadly. Since then, K-pop has become ubiquitous.

The most popular Thai musician of all time is Bird Thongchai, whose recording career has spanned more than thirty years. The video for Thongchai’s 2010 smash hit “Too Much, So Much, Very Much” visually mimicked K-pop. Following K-pop genre conventions of combining a simple signature move within a longer choreographic group sequence, Bird’s V-shaped fingers traversing the eyes was the local equivalent of popular Korean singer Psy’s horse dance. Thongchai’s music video even incorporated practice sessions for choreography to the song and a pseudo K-pop cover dance contest.

Thai Indigenization and Refashioning of K-Pop

The Thai indigenization of K-pop has also circulated to other parts of Asia. For example, the video for Thai pop group 3.2.1’s 2013 song “Rak Tong Poet (Naen Ok)” (“Splash Out”), featuring Baitoey, includes a chest pump signature move and group choreography that features numerous gay and trans performers. The signature move references a campy, salacious play on words in which love literally bursts out of the chest. One of the most popular songs for gay men at the time, it was played often at gay venues and during Songkran (Thai New Year) festivities. Because Bangkok is a major travel destination for Asian gay men, the song traveled back home with them. Thus, “Rak Tong Poet (Naen Ok)” became a broader gay dance song in the region, particularly in Taiwan. In 2014 gay Taiwanese men regularly cover danced to it in G*Star Club, one of Taipei’s most popular gay clubs, similar to the cover dancing by Thai men to K-pop in gay clubs.

The popularity of “soft” K-pop masculinity has molded Thai aesthetics of masculinity among queers and straight Thai men (Kang 2019). Thai men often state that Korean women are more beautiful than Thai women. Some of them also believe that donning K-style outfits will attract women (Cornwel-Smith 2013). But Kmimicry is most pronounced
among queer youth. Young *toms* and *gay-sao* (girly gays) model K-pop flower-boy masculinity (*Sinnott 2012*) so precisely that their sartorial style is often indistinguishable (*Kang 2018*). That is, butch lesbian and sissy style has converged on the same formulation of masculinity. Moreover, K-pop and K-drama masculinity have opened the space for Thai *toms* to perform and enact new gender and sexual identities, such as *tom-gay* (a butch lesbian in a relationship with another butch lesbian), a gender/sexuality category previously considered unimaginable (*Sinnott 2004*). Similarly, Kmasculinity in dialogue with boys love (BL), or homoeroticaesthetics, has allowed for new ways of being among Thai gays. Thus, K-pop is not only popular, but has shaped the lived experience of gender and sexuality in Thailand, especially among queer youth.

Thais have also been transforming K-pop. Thai performers, such as Nichkhun Buck Horvejkul of the South Korean group 2PM and BamBam (Kunpimook Bhuwakul) of Got7, have become popular K-pop stars and Thai brand ambassadors. Moreover, local producers have adopted K-pop aesthetics and conventions to such a degree that they are often presumed to be Thai. This indigenization and refashioning of K-pop and popular cultural genres, such as BL, has circulated in overlapping networks with the K-wave and Cool Japan and has produced its own fandoms in China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and other countries in the region. For example, the Wonder Gay, who cover the South Korean group Wonder Girls, are a Thai K-pop cover group that achieved national and international fame, inspiring Wonder Gay coverers across the globe (*Kang 2018*). Thus, Thailand acts as a critical node for K-pop, through its consumption, production, and recirculation.

**SEE ALSO** *Boys Love (Yaoi) Manga; The Lesbian Music Movement; New Media in Asia; Popular Music and Queer Identities*

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Central to queer theater and performance is its connections with gay theater and performance; often the terms gay and queer function as synonyms in this context. Likewise, in the Global North, queer theater and performance has emerged as a marketing term that covers both queer and gay theater performance. The differences and connections between queer and gay reflect their respective politics and histories in complex ways. In simple terms, however, gay theater has tended to represent dominant norms of gayness—the homonormative (Duggan 2003)—and queer theater tends to undermine and question those norms, especially around gender, sexuality, identity, parenthood, and marriage, for example. In the Anglo-American context, gay work, which encompasses representations of lesbian, bisexual, and trans people, has occupied main stages in dominant theaters, reflecting normative representational modes of performance, whereas queer work tends to happen in other spaces—nightclubs, galleries, festivals, streets, and protests, for example—and is more often experimental in form. Both queer and gay theater continue to use performance as protest. There is by no means a clear consensus around how they are defined and where they overlay each other.

Because gender and sexuality are socially constituted and controlled, it is important to note in a global context that queer theater functions differently depending on its location geographically and historically. Given the cultural, geographic, and historical specificity of queerness, the location of the performance in time and space is important to the title “queer theater.” As Alyson Campbell and Stephen Farrier (2015) argue, queer performance is located such that what may appear to be radically queer at one time and place, may not in another.

Recognizing that queer and gay theater work is context dependent and emerges in relation to geographical location is significant. Broadly speaking, for countries with a gay liberation narrative similar to the Anglo-American, the appearance of queer and gay theater may be charted alongside an acquisition of rights. It is important, however, not to expect that all queer and gay theater can be read in this way. For instance in relation to Singapore, Audrey Yue and Jun Zubillaga-Pow (2012) have demonstrated that LGBTQ identities are present...
less because of a liberation process matching an Anglo-American narrative but rather through “illiberal pragmatics,” though discourses of liberation persist in such contexts. There are many different ways that gay and queer materialize geographically (Altman 2001); likewise, the development of queer and gay theater is fluid and complex in each location. By dint of its subject matter, however, wherever queer and gay theater and performance develops, it does so in relation to the social politics of local conditions and histories, as well as to the global context. Both gay and queer theater have strong relations to social politics and are deeply connected with identity; in these politics, there is a constant questioning of what constitutes “gay” and “queer.” Queer and gay theater have strong connections with the women’s movement (French 2017; Case 2009), disability politics (McRuer 2006), race politics (Johnson and Rivera-Servera 2016), and the impact of AIDS (Juntunen 2016; Schulman 1998; Román 1998). As such, queer and gay theater developed in and around these and other social political movements and politics and is connected to theater and performance’s histories and lineages. Consequently, there are many ways in which queer and gay theater can be described: chronologically; thematically, in terms of form and traditions; or in relation to social politics and protest, such as appeals to tolerance or arguments for liberation (Fisher 2008).

**Dominant Narratives**

Given the complexity of definition, this entry articulates a connection from gay theater through the middle of the twentieth century, toward queer theater at the latter end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, with the understanding that this is a contested lineage and that it is more complex. But, even before gay as a term was commonplace, works of same-sex love and desire were present on the stage. Alan Sinfield (1999) has linked homosexuality on stage to the start of the twentieth century, which he sees as the period when the modern idea of homosexuality developed, noting the influence of the Irish playwright Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) and the English writer Radclyffe Hall (1880–1943) on the popularization of understanding homosexuality. Although not covered herein, others trace the relations of theater and performance to gayness beyond this period (Freccero 2006; Garber 1992).

Some collections of plays claim representations as gay and/or queer before the terms were understood as they are today; volume 1 of *Gay Plays* (Wilcox 1984), for instance, includes the English playwright Mordaunt Shairp’s *The Green Bay Tree* (1933), which played successfully in London and New York, as an early exemplar of this. Earlier than this, however, there were other plays. For instance, while Sholem Asch’s 1907 Yiddish play *The God of Vengeance* (English-language production in 1923 in New York) represents a lesbian relationship, its author was ambivalent about showing it in the United States (see Warren Hoffman 2009 and Paula Vogel’s play *Indecent* [2017], which is about the production’s history). In the same decade Mae West, writing under the name Jane Mast, produced *The
Drag in 1927, a play that was panned by critics and closed after two weeks because of its unguarded rendering of homosexuality. In 1926 The Captive opened in the United States; it was an English translation of La prisonnière (The [female] prisoner) by the French playwright Édouard Bourdet. Previously performed in Paris, the play included a depiction of lesbianism, which eventually caused it to be shut down based on obscenity laws after 160 Broadway performances. Other notable plays present in the period include the German Hungarian writer and artist Christa Winsloe's play Gestern und heute (1930; Yesterday and today), which had its first English-speaking production in London in 1932 and depicts a lesbian relationship forming in a girls’ school. The play appeared as a film in 1931 under the title Mädchen in Uniform (Girls in uniform; screenplay by Winsloe; directed by Leontine Sagan) with a different ending than the stage version; the play ends with one of the girls committing suicide, whereas the film ends by showing that the character wants to kill herself. Similarly, the American writer Lillian Hellman's (1905–1984) The Children’s Hour (1934) is also set in a girls’ school. The play depicts how two women’s lives are pulled apart because of an accusation of lesbianism. As the play progresses, it is revealed that one of the characters indeed has lesbian desires and at the end shoots herself.

The depiction of homosexuality on stage from the 1930s through the early 1960s most often depicted homosexuality as a problem—as degeneracy, sickness, or criminality. Neil Bartlett has called these “problem plays” (2002, 306) in which homosexual women and men are the problem. The common social discourses at the time in the United Kingdom and the United States mainly concurred with the characterization of homosexuality as problem, disorder, and disease. Yet, even though some forms of homosexuality were legislated against, its appearance on stage was consistent, if not direct. After the 1930s it appears on stage mostly through implication, via subtext, and as open secret. Thus, in some early works, which now can be read as gay plays, the subject is often dealt with indirectly. (The word homosexual does not appear in Shairp’s play, for instance.)

Perhaps because of the historical proximity of newly developing ideas of sexology and sexual identity alongside the ebb and flow of social and legislative attitudes toward homosexuality, some portrayals in the 1930s appear more open than later depictions in that they do not seem exploitative and are genuinely interested by the “problem”—though still extant were other works that do not directly engage with homosexuality by writers such as the English playwrights Noël Coward (1899–1973) and Terence Rattigan (1911–1977), for example, which may now be understood as containing gay themes. As such, indirect reference to homosexuality on stage proceeded into the 1950s. Writers across this period often did not directly reference homosexuality in strong terms but dealt with it by critiquing normative gender. The work of the American playwright Tennessee Williams (1911–1983) sits here along with that of his compatriot Eugene O’Neill (1888–1953) and works such as Rattigan’s The Deep Blue Sea (1952). Although the general trends of these plays are to hint at homosexuality, sometimes homosexuality appears as a problem and secret, as in Robert Anderson’s Tea and Sympathy (1953) or in Williams’s Suddenly Last
Summer (1958). The writers of these emblematic plays, staged in an increasingly conservative social context, used ambiguity to get around social, political, and legislative mores; in the British context, theater was subject to censorship until 1968 (though with some loopholes). Both formal and informal censorship has been a feature of the context in which gay and queer work has been produced and continues to exist across the world in relation to queer performance. In other parts of Europe, however, writers and works that are now considered queer and/or gay were present; particularly emblematic are the French writer Jean Genet’s (1910–1986) works The Maids (1947) and The Balcony (1957), which remain notably influential and are still performed. Work by an earlier Spanish playwright and poet, Federico García Lorca (1898–1936), is now read through a gay lens, although Lorca’s work for the theater deals less with gayness directly than with frustrated love in a conservative context; his poems, however, are more candidly about gay love.

In the 1960s, however, gays and lesbians became more visible, certainly in Anglo-American contexts, though, of course, not exclusively so. For instance, outside this context the Brazilian playwright Nelson Rodrigues’s O beijo no asfalto (1960; staged in English as The Asphalt Kiss) is unambiguously about homophobia and newspaper sensationalism rather than the representation of a gay person on stage. Instead of the guilt-ridden images of the 1950s, homosexuals emerged in new ways. In the West End of London and on Broadway, the English playwright Joe Orton (1933–1967) made explicit reference to homosexuality (with more success in London than New York) even when there was state censorship of theater in the United Kingdom. Focusing on a lesbian relationship, The Killing of Sister George, by Frank Marcus, appeared in the United Kingdom in 1965 and in New York a year later. In 1968 it was adapted into a popular film (screenplay by Lukas Heller; directed by Robert Aldrich) in which a lesbian sex scene appears. Although groundbreaking because it presents a lesbian relationship, the play also shows lesbians as maladapted, infantile, petty, and spiteful. The play’s presentation of gayness relies on the dysfunctional homosexual as a key trope.

Even where gayness is pondered openly by characters, it is relayed as dysfunctional. For instance, The Boys in the Band (1968), by the American playwright Mart Crowley, has been described as contributing to negative stereotypes about gay men (as noted by the writer and novelist Merle Miller in 1971). It can be considered that even as far back as Hellman, gays and lesbians seemed to appear on stage only if they were unhappy or died before the final curtain. However, The Boys in the Band introduces the “gay speak” of the time; consequently, the depictions appear more rounded and recognizably gay. Indeed, for some of the characters being gay is not the primary issue they deal with in the play. The play set off a long debate about whether it was a positive or negative representation; by the early twenty-first century, critics were making the point that negative readings of the play do not account for its progressive attitude to “effeminate-male courage” (Schiavi 2002, 307). Thus, there is a balance to be struck when studying such works because the representation of queers at this stage had a “cost”; to appear they, generally, could not be seen to be happy.
(though, with some exceptions, in Orton, for instance), but showing them to a wide audience meant that those who were queer spectators saw that they were not alone.

The Gays Appear

The late 1960s was a key time for gays in the West as it marked the beginning of the rolling back of legal prohibitions against male homosexuality. Further opportunities for gay and queer work opened because of the growth of liberal social attitudes in the Anglo-American context, the lifting of theater censorship in England in 1968, and the development of off-Broadway venues in New York and fringe venues in the United Kingdom. In both locations, there was a growth in performance and theater companies. Through the 1960s, there is not only a diversification of the kinds of work but also a broadening of the way that the work was made, particularly in relation to politics. Of course, the changes in legislation meant that not only did gay plays diversify and queer works, as now understood, started to emerge, but also gay and lesbian audiences became more visible in the theatrical landscape. Supported by gay audiences in New York’s Caffe Cino, for instance, the playwright Doric Wilson was nurtured and produced several of his early works in 1961 (this was followed by other writers).
In the 1970s there developed works that explore gayness in diverse ways other than as open secret or miserable existence, in part because the development of gay liberation began to complicate the social resonances of representations. There were gay play collections (William M. Hoffman 1979); the first gay companies in New York (TOSOS formed in part by Wilson in 1974 and The Glines, a gay arts center founded in 1976); works that began unearthing gay histories (Martin Sherman's Bent [1979]); and works that focused on stories less concerned with the psychological misery of the homosexual individual and that began to examine the social pressure to conform (Torch Song Trilogy, the first part of which was staged in New York at La MaMa in 1978). In the United Kingdom in 1974, Gay Sweatshop theater company formed, initially as a collective until 1978, and then as a company limited by guarantee; the organization of the company reflected the politics of the time because it was not driven by commercialism, although some of the plays and people with whom it worked did enjoy commercial and critical success. The company received state funding and toured extensively in the United Kingdom with productions that had explicitly gay content. At its heart, the company was founded to articulate and resist the politics of inequality. Likewise in the United Kingdom, the gay theater company Brixton Faeries was founded in 1974 at the South London Gay Community Centre. By 1979 Buddies in Bad Times had formed in Toronto, Canada; this company grew in influence throughout the 1980s and still produces work. Likewise, lesbian companies sprung up in the United Kingdom; Hormone Imbalance and Siren Theatre Company (the latter also being a punk band) were both formed in 1979, while Hard Corps was established in 1983, with many more created around this time. From the early 1980s onward, many of these UK companies played at the Drill Hall in London, a venue that developed queer work well into the first decade of the twenty-first century.

**AIDS and Its Impacts**

The works that appear in the 1960s and 1970s were the early point in formal experimentation in and around identity and performance, and it is at this point that queer theater began to grow from gay theater. Charles London (2002) sees queer theater developing from the work of Charles Ludlam's Theater of the Ridiculous in 1965. The experimentation with form that might be a clear index of queer theater began to be more visible in the 1980s. In the early 1980s, as the AIDS crisis began to hit the gay male population in the United States and United Kingdom, works emerged that dealt directly with the crisis, most notably Larry Kramer's The Normal Heart, produced at the Public Theater in New York in 1985. The play's set was simple, and present on it—and in the theater—were up-to-date figures of deaths from AIDS-related illness, figures kept updated by crossing out the old number, leaving it visible, and replacing it with the latest one. AIDS had a profound impact on queer theater, not only in terms of the number of plays written in response to it but also in terms of how the political arms of the queer community responded to the crisis with direct action. The defining play that deals with AIDS must be
Tony Kushner’s two-part epic *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* (1991 and 1992). Formally the work is complex, theatrical, and folds AIDS and HIV into ideas of American nationhood, history, and identity. Structurally, it is queer in that it does not function as realist narrative, as had much of the work from the 1920s through the 1950s. The work is so rich that it sustains much scholarship and often is revived. It has been performed around the world, including productions at the National Theatre in London in 1992, 1993, and 2017, a production in Rio de Janeiro in 1995, and another in the Philippines in 1995. However, right from the beginning of plays about AIDS, aesthetic and experimentation were present, notably in Robert Chesley’s extreme and dreamlike work *Night Sweat* (1984). Other notable plays that dealt with HIV and AIDS at this point include *The AIDS Show* in 1984 and 1985 at the Theatre Rhinoceros in San Francisco, William M. Hoffman’s *As Is* (1985), Harvey Fierstein’s *Safe Sex* and Neil Bartlett’s *A Vision of Love Revealed in Sleep* (both 1987), Paula Vogel’s *The Baltimore Waltz* (1990), Kramer’s *The Destiny of Me* (1992), Terrence McNally’s *Love! Valour! Compassion!* and Kevin Elyot's *My Night with Reg* (both 1994), and Jonathan Larson's musical *Rent* (first workshopped in 1993; produced in 1996). There were many more productions that responded to the AIDS crisis directly or indirectly through metaphor and embodied protest in performance (Román 1998).

Certainly, much of the early theater on AIDS chimed well with the radical position of queer, itself reflecting some of the energy of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) of the early 1970s, in that it was angry and in opposition to assimilation. As had been the bent of the GLF, queer work aimed at a wholesale rethink of the society that produces phobic responses to gender and sexual nonnormativity. However, some critics, such as Jacob Juntunen (2016), have argued that much mainstream theater about AIDS contributed to change because it played down its radicalism. Others, such as David Román (1998), have looked to queer performance work as the embodiment of queer politics, both in terms of content and form. Importantly, productions that hit the stage formally were often deeply related to community performance happening in nonbourgeois theater settings.

Prompted by the politics of the community, as queer work flourished it questioned its own internal prejudices, positions of privilege, and omissions. In 1990 Pomo Afro Homos was formed in San Francisco by Djola Bernard Branner, Brian Freeman, and Eric Gupton. The company aimed specifically to unabashedly present black gay men on stage. A key work, *Fierce Love* (1991), consists of thirteen sections of stories from black gay life. The structure of the work, adhering to the “pomo” (postmodern), resists any singular reading of the bodies on stage, demonstrating that queer performance work resists the regimented definitions of identity. Other performances addressed gay intersectional politics, which also has a long root, as can be seen in the late 1950s and 1960s with LeRoi Jones’ s (Amiri Baraka) *The Toilet* in 1964 and Shelagh Delaney’s *A Taste of Honey* in 1958 (Román 1998; Muñoz 1999; Johnson and Rivera-Servera 2016).
By the mid-1990s, queer work diversified further. Of note at this historical point is some of the experimental work of Reza Abdoh in the United States. Alongside this in the United Kingdom was Mark Ravenhill’s 1996 breakthrough play *Shopping and Fucking*, which along with other plays and writers, notably Sarah Kane’s *Blasted* (1995), formed what critics called “in-yer-face theater.” *Shopping and Fucking* and other works by Ravenhill (particularly *Some Explicit Polaroids* [1999] and *Mother Clap’s Molly House* [2001]) deal with how queers treat each other, both in terms of a community and as objects circulated in a market. The work, which is in part a playing out of the cost of the Ronald Reagan/Margaret Thatcher commitment to neoliberalism, is in turn violent, darkly humored, and stark in its portrayal of queerness. What these works (and others that fell within the in-yer-face theater classification) do is relate the state and social politics to gender, sexuality, and identity. In the United Kingdom across the 1990s, there was a strong showing of gay/queer plays. Other writers and producers of note in this era are Neil Bartlett, Jonathan Harvey, Tim Miller, Bryony Lavery, and Phyllis Nagy.

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*Scene from a National Theatre Production of Angels in America.* Tony Kushner’s two-part epic play about AIDS interweaves the topic with ideas of American nationhood, history, and identity.

In other places, gay work and companies also surfaced. OutCast Theatre, Australia’s longest-running theater collective, was established in 1997, though, of course, it was not the first. The Gay Theatre Company formed in 1979 and In the Pink Theatre Company formed in 1990, both in Sydney. According to Bruce Parr (1998), in the Australian context it was in the 1990s that gay characters started to appear on stages, though lesbian characters
had little visibility there; lesbians were more present in the subcultural performance scene. By the mid-1990s, according to Parr, works with gay themes (some of which were related to AIDS and HIV) were pervasive. And it is important to note that individual gay actors were influential in the production of work; of particular note is Jack Charles, who was instrumental in the development of Australia’s first aboriginal theater in 1972, although the company was not set up specifically in relation to gayness. Other academic work describes queer and gay theater related to HIV in other contexts, such as Severino J. Albuquerque’s 2004 book *Tentative Transgressions: Homosexuality, AIDS, and the Theater in Brazil*, which focuses on homosexuality on Brazilian stages; it proceeds from the standpoint that to understand queer Brazilian theater after 1970, an investigation of its historical lineage across the twentieth century is necessary.

From the mid-1990s into the new century, where treatment for managing HIV in the Global North was available (though not universally so), works became less engaged with AIDS as a death sentence and turned to examining other social systems that supported violence against queers. *The Laramie Project* (2000), for instance, is a play about the real-life homophobic killing of Matthew Shepard, a student at the University of Wyoming who died from his injuries after being beaten and tortured by two men in 1998. The play consists of a series of short scenes built from hundreds of interviews with community members about the murder. Although the production is about the narrative of homophobia, it also highlights the lack of legislation around hate crime.

As the AIDS crisis in the Global North began to come under control, other works emerged that engaged with HIV and AIDS from specific perspectives. *Positive/Negative: Women of Color and HIV/AIDS*, a collection of plays published in 2002 and edited by Imani Harrington and Chyrell D. Bellamy, exemplifies the kind of work that was taking place out of earshot of main stages. This kind of work is grassroots and functions in specific ways for specific communities. On some main stages this energy was present, too; although not directly depicting queers in relation to HIV and AIDS, debbie tucker green’s 2005 play *Stoning Mary* depicts an HIV-positive heterosexual couple arguing because they can afford only one prescription between them, and the Australian writer Lachlan Philpott’s 2009 play *Bison* catches a nuance of the time in that it deals with how the gay male community seems to have forgotten the AIDS crisis in the pursuit of pleasure.

**Other Forms and Narratives**

When laying out one dominant account of the lineage of gay and queer theater, it is clear that as the time line progresses, the connection with grassroots performance becomes key. From the late 1980s through the second decade of the twenty-first century, queer performance found one stable form in the figure of the single performer working on stages in nightclubs, studios, universities, and places where queer communities gather. Thus, much of the work that can claim the name “queer” might be underrecorded because the
production history is not present in dominant theater archives. Holly Hughes and David Román note in their 1998 book *O Solo Homo* that solo performance has been present as a queer form for a long time and connects to other forms of popular performance, such as drag. T. L. Cowan’s work (*2012, 2015*) on feminist and queer cabaret across the United States, Canada, and Mexico traces this kind of performance. Cabaret and nightclub settings have an international history commingled with the key issues explored above, notably including such performers as Paddy Chew in Singapore, one of the first people to publicly come out as living with HIV in that region; Chew worked for the Boom Boom Room, a drag cabaret venue, and in 1998 performed an autobiographical solo show titled *Completely With/Out Character*. This significant show was reimagined by the performance and moving image artist Loo Zihan as *With/Out* in 2015 and 2017. And, of course, cabaret dealing with nonnormative sexuality in content and audience was historically present throughout Europe, particularly in Berlin in the 1930s, where drag abounded (see *Whisnant 2016*).

Popular performance forms, such as cabaret, variety, musicals, and some comedy, can appeal to queer audiences even when the performance is not directly related to queer or gay concerns. For instance, all over the United Kingdom pantomimes play at theaters around the Christmas holidays, with the pantomime form—a family show with cross-gender casting and audience participation—presenting opportunities for queerness. Pantomime is risqué, full of comic set-pieces and double entendre, and ripe for queer performers to occupy. There are “alternative” pantomimes, many of which are populated almost entirely by queer and drag performers, featured at small-scale queer venues as part of their holiday offering. (In London, the Royal Vauxhall Tavern, an important site of queer performance year-round, has a notable pantomime.) In regular UK pantomimes (those not made directly for queer audiences), the key character of the Dame is almost always a man in drag played by a performer who is not normally a drag queen. Although pantomime might not be classed as a specifically queer or gay form, well-known drag and queer performers take to main stages to perform in them, such as in the West End of London at the London Palladium’s lavish productions.

This figure of the drag performer is vital to any narrative of queer theater. Drag performance is not often taken seriously but appears in important queer work. Drag might be missing in this history because it is lowbrow, popular, and working-class. Performance in general and drag in particular, both male and female, is intimately connected to LGBTQI subjectivity and history. Likewise, work in cabaret, burlesque, (some) performance art, (some) UK pantomimes, and nightclubs forms a strong vein of work that does not appear on main stages and as such goes unrecognized.

Given that drag is underresearched, there is still a lot of effort needed to unpack the relations between drag and nightclub work with regular queer histories of performance on main stages. Certainly, contemporary drag kinging has a lineage connected to the famous male impersonators of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such as Annie Hindle, Vesta
Tilley, Hetty King, and Ella Shields. Male impersonators onstage and off have a rich and underinvestigated history; likewise, drag queens' work is underexplored. Drag for the most part takes place in smaller venues, cabarets, and nightclubs; consequently, it is often unrecorded unless it breaks through into the mainstream. Yet, drag work is important to queer theater, has made an impact on some of its key works, and is a form of performance that is watched by many people who might not enter a bourgeois theater. Historically speaking, drag communities comprise a key place where trans identities formed in a relatively safe space, and for some trans people these spaces continue to serve as a base from which to gain rights (see Esther Newton’s 1979 groundbreaking study of drag queens and their relation to trans identity; Eve Shapiro’s 2007 exploration of the Santa Barbara kinging troupe Disposable Boy Toys; Marlon M. Bailey’s 2013 exploration of ballroom culture in Detroit; and more recently and independently, the South Asian nonbinary trans performance duo DarkMatter). Likewise, drag has been fundamental to queer protest (see Lucas 1994) and is particularly energetic in the activities around legislation and health; international groups, such as the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence, are key here.

However, not all the work that is done in drag appears only in nightclubs and on the streets. Important works appear in conventional theater buildings, too. Of note are the companies Bloolips and Split Britches, both of which have long histories. Split Britches, formed in 1980, exemplifies how lesbian performance deeply connects with feminism; the company, with others, founded the WOW café, a feminist performance space in New York. Its work as a company is highly influential in its relation to a politics of representation—it places the lesbian at the center of its work—and the work shakes up the conventional forms of normative “straight” theater. Bloolips (1977–2002) was a company of men in drag who purposefully set out with their productions to resist the far and religious right. In 1991 Split Britches and Bloolips produced a show at La MaMa in New York titled Belle Reprieve, which was a take on Tennessee Williams’s iconic play A Streetcar Named Desire (1947). In the production, the queer undertones of the original play are brought to the fore, and although the play is used as a point of departure, it critically says out loud things at which Williams only hinted.

Other narratives flourish around queer theater and performance in part because its relation to community is so vital, so there are many omissions in this overview entry. Given that queer performance at the grassroots level is deeply connected with the communities that perform it, the historical, temporal, and geographical specificity of the work is important to its politics and meanings. Although this entry focuses mainly on English-speaking work (and omits great swathes of work in other parts of the globe), it is important to note that there is a great deal of variety in the locations in which these performances take place. Accordingly, Canada has a specific relation to queer performance that is not wholly shared with Australia, for instance. Indeed, even within a small country such as the United Kingdom, there is a wide variety of specific, important local narratives around queer performance. Paying attention to specificity is important because, as the situation stands,
Anglo-American forms of gayness can appear as the hegemony. Because it looks for a reflection of these dominant narratives, the study of gay theater can have a tendency to overlook other forms of nonnormative sexuality that do not reflect this hegemony. Thus, in the impulse for inclusivity in a global context of theater, there must be close attention paid not only to the impositions of dominant norms of Western gayness, but also to dominant norms of theatrical tradition that are as diverse. Often work on gay and queer theater conforms to a “West and the rest” structure where the West comes first in considerations of theater and performance. Therefore, gay and queer theater as terms are always already inculcated with the concerns of the Global North and also represent a fluid area of study that is connected with both individuated senses of self and senses of nationhood and the national and local theatrical traditions. Hence, careful navigation of definitions is required, although there is still much work to be done on finding a way to articulate the complex diversity of forms that may be claimed as queer performance. The writer Eng-Beng Lim (2005, 2014) offers a structure of “glocalqueering” to read a performance in Singapore—a structure that does not pit the so-called West/Global North against histories and identities of the Global South/East. Likewise, Albuquerque (2004) has pointed out that, to understand Brazilian queer work, one must have a grasp of its antecedents, such as modernist representations in Brazil. Such work of definition is important not only to bring queer theater and performance to a place where it can be shared, but also to express that performance is fundamental to the exploration of community and identity; it is a vital place to discover what is possible and to make sense of what has passed.

SEE ALSO Bars and Cabarets in Europe; Cabaret Theater in Latin America and the Caribbean; HIV/AIDS in the United States; Homoeroticism in the Plays of Ibn Daniyal; Mädchen in Uniform (1931; Leontine Sagan); Tuqus al-Isharat wa-al-Tahawwulat (1994; Sa‘dallah Wannous)

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The term third gender accounts for how cultures from around the world have created spaces for gender variation in social institutions and traditions that allow for the expression of gender that differs from the anatomical sex of an individual at birth but that does not necessarily signify a transgender identity. To classify a person as a third gender is not to posit that there are three genders rather than two, but to break with gender bipolarity that has dominated Western thought and science until recently.

The indigenous meaning of third gender varies from culture to culture and must be understood in the context of the particular gender system in which it appears. Most cultures with third gender have their own autochthonous word or phrase to describe the person’s subjectivity, though many such words were lost, altered, or replaced through settler colonialism’s imposition of linguistic binaries and through colonial resemantization of indigenous concepts related to third gender. The spread of colonial religious traditions often eschewed gender variance and its concomitant relationship to indigenous modes of knowledge, ritual practices, and cultural norms. Thus, any study of third gender must take into consideration the colonial history that has shaped the disparate societies—and their gender cultures—where third gender has existed.

Scholars who employ the term third gender today attempt to provide a neutral word (versus the common colonial terms that are clearly biased and pejorative, such as berdache), though use of the culturally specific term is preferable when available in the original language. The term is not without controversy, both from the perspective of indigenous peoples who identify as third gender and their community members who may hold differing views on their place in the culture, and from those who see transgender allies as appropriating the history of the third gender into their own activist work for human rights without appreciating the differences between the subject positions that various gender-variant people hold in the complex gender cultures from around the globe and across time. Most recently, various states and countries have begun to legally recognize third gender, ushering in a new appreciation for this identity category and greater popular knowledge of its complex history.
History of the Term

The terms *third gender* and *third sex* first appeared in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, as sexual dimorphism was becoming increasingly naturalized and propagated through social Darwinism and the nascent field of sexology, with its emphasis on heteronormative reproduction and innate differences between "male" and "female." This tendency toward essentialist understandings of gender and sexuality solidified in both the scientific and popular imagination, despite ample examples of nonbinary genders and their contributions to both Western and non-Western ancient and early modern cultures (see, for example, Ringrose [1994] for the role of eunuchs in Byzantium).

As this theoretical consolidation around a biologically based understanding of binary gender systems evolved, European scholars sought to explain the cases of people in clinical and archival literature who did not conform to the normative reproductive paradigm of sexuality and who transgressed traditional gender roles, leading to the early theorization of homosexuality. As Gert Hekma (1994) explains, some early German sexologists began using terms such as "Uranians," understood as “a female psyche in a male body” (Karl Heinrich Ulrichs [1825–1895]), or “intermediate sexual types” (Magnus Hirschfeld [1868–1935]) to account for homosexuals as a third sex: that is, feminine men and masculine women who “inverted” the naturalized sexual dimorphism that shaped the scientific fields of the day.

One the earliest social reformers and advocates for Uranians was the British author Edward Carpenter (1844–1929). His 1908 manuscript *The Intermediate Sex* circulated ideas that promoted remarkably modern notions of human rights for men and women who were, he argued, instinctively behaving as third sexes like those in premodern societies. His notion of the intermediate sex brought into the discussion the emotional life of Uranians: Carpenter understood third-sex men as having female emotions and third-sex women as having male emotions. Although these various theorizations of the third sex had contemporary critics, this conflation of gender identity and sexual object choice has remained in the discourse on nonnormative gender and sexuality for decades and in the popular imagination to this day. These early observations and theorizations of variance from the binary gender paradigm have also shaped the way social scientists began to reconsider and discuss archival and contemporary examples of non-Western people's gender and sexuality.

The social sciences, as they became established and expanded in the early twentieth century, also adopted sexual dimorphism as the paradigm in social theory on topics related to sex and gender. Anthropology, the academic discipline most implicated in the history of outsiders’ representation of people characterized as third gender, employed sexual dimorphism as “an axiom of cultural classification” (Herdt 1994, 33) for the study of contemporary cultures and often projected it back to the past in studies of human history. Early ethnographies tended to apply the Western concepts discussed above to the objects
of their study around the world, including to those whose gender performance or sexual practices deviated from the Eurocentric norms informing the field and the popular imaginary. Those researchers relying on early descriptions of other cultures produced in the context of European exploration and colonization layered these biases on top of the medieval and early modern prejudices informing the representation of cultural “contact zones” (Pratt 1992), further obscuring aboriginal gender and sexual cultures that existed before contact (Horswell 2005) and influencing modern discourses on gender and sexuality (Bleys 1995).

By the late twentieth century, this textualization of the body began to be understood as part of colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial writings as gender and sexuality increasingly became theorized as discursive constructs. This move at the center of disciplinary transformations in the ways gender and sexuality were interpreted was inspired by the feminist and civil rights movements of the 1960s, poststructuralist theory, and more recently postmodern and postcolonial critiques, all of which led to a revision of assumptions about binary gender systems, in addition to a better understanding of sexuality.

Anthropologist Evelyn Blackwood’s pioneering work The Many Faces of Homosexuality (1986) shifted the focus from treating homosexual acts as deviant individual behavior to emphasizing institutional and cultural patterns of that comportment. Contributors to her volume avoided imposing Western prejudices that informed sexology and psychoanalysis on the non-Western cultures they studied. Thomas Laqueur (1990) contributed to the questioning of a traditional understanding of a dimorphic sex model by demonstrating that from the ancient Greeks to the eighteenth century, the West actually had a single-sex model and that the female body was culturally constructed as incomplete and inferior relative to a male point of reference, further opening scholars to the notion that both sex and gender are contingent constructs. Scholars began to reexamine passages in historical texts, material culture, and ethnographies to recognize a more diverse population of sexes and genders throughout the world without projecting on them social prejudices of earlier generations. From this scholarship emerged the contemporary meaning of the term third gender as it has been applied to many cultures throughout the world.

**Third Gender in North America**

From the earliest chronicles of the exploration and colonization of North America, Europeans recorded seeing men who dressed like and adopted the roles of women in the native societies they encountered, as well as occasionally documenting women who took on traditionally male roles. The fact that Western colonial chroniclers, nineteenth-century ethnographers, and, later, anthropologists did not have linguistic or cultural categories that corresponded to this third-gender subjectivity has resulted in misnomers, such as the term berdache, which was originally a Persian and Arabic word for the younger male partner in
a same-sex erotic relationship (Roscoe 1994). In the various sources mentioned previously, the third-gender subjects were also referred to as hermaphrodite, sodomite, effeminate, and, more recently, homosexual and transsexual. Each of these terms misrepresents the native North American third gender in its own way, some expressing bodily confusions, others inscribing the native subject in Christian or psychosexual discourses while ignoring the social and sacred roles these subjects performed in their communities. Walter Williams (1986) wrote the first booklength study that combined archival research with field investigations to reconstruct a more integral understanding of berdaches’ roles in native societies, though he sometimes romanticized them in utopian terms.

Anthropologist Will Roscoe (1991) followed Williams’s pan-American survey with a detailed ethnohistory of the Zuni berdache. Roscoe then researched the commonalities between the berdache in different North American native societies, based on the growing literature on the subject. He estimated that male berdache have been documented in nearly 150 North American societies, while female berdache (females who take on the lifeways of males) appear in half as many groups (Roscoe 1994). Roscoe's work provided a methodology for the analysis of gender diversity in a society, taking into consideration the sociocultural processes that construct gender positions, addressing the cultural meanings of their social relationships, considering power relationships among genders, and discerning how historical discourses have affected the subject positions studied.

Roscoe’s approach to determining third-gender status in a given culture has four principal components and can be applied to any culture while adjusting for cultural specificity. The first dimension to analyze is the role of third gender in their society, specifically, any possible “productive specialization” that they may typically undertake that sets them apart from other genders (Roscoe 1994, 334). There are abundant examples of these specialized roles in the cultures of the world in which third gender appears, such as providing childcare and education, tending to the dead, and safeguarding the culture's traditions. “Supernatural sanction” of the third-gender subject, often relating to their culture's mythology, ritual practices, and spiritual traditions, can also be an important marker of the subjectivity. These beliefs often determine if third-gender subjects are “accepted and integrated members of their communities” and can help understand their relationship to their culture, often in opposition to or in tension with both colonialism’s imposition of outside values and their own culture’s transculturation toward those prejudices introduced over time (Roscoe 1994, 335). “Gender variation” in relationship to the culture’s predominant gender norms can often signal the difference that the third gender represents in the society. Cross-dressing or dressing completely differently from other genders is often an example of how this variation manifests (Roscoe 1994). Finally, third-gender sexuality varies from individual to individual. It represents the range of human sexualities and may include shortterm as well as long-term relationships (Roscoe 1994).
By the end of the twentieth century, native North Americans, particularly those identifying as LGBTQ, had begun to research third gender as part of their heritage. Many were attracted to the spiritual and sacred dimensions of third-gender roles in many First Nation societies, while others assumed the roles of third genders in their communities and began to discuss and document their histories more openly. Such Native American writers as Paula Gunn Allen also began to recognize the value of the feminine in native cultures, while such feminist philosophers as María Lugones contributed to our understanding of the gendered nature of the coloniality of power at play in the writing of the history of gender and sexuality. The work of Native creative writers identifying as LGBTQ has been published and anthologized. *Living the Spirit: A Gay American Indian Anthology* (1988), for example, collects a variety of genres representing voices of native LGBTQ people. No longer would the third-gender experience be represented only by outsiders.

Some native words for third gender translate as “twospirit people,” and this became an attractive way for many to identify with the ancestral spiritual values represented by third-gender subjects. *Two-spirit* has been adopted by many First Nation groups from across North America as the preferred term in English to refer to third gender (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 1997). Sue-Ellen Jacobs, Wesley Thomas, and Sabine Lang’s edited collection,
“Two-Spirit People: Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality (1997), a unique collaborative effort between anthropologists and contemporary two-spirit-identified people, provided nuanced accounts of the third gender from diverse native traditions and opened the way for many more studies and anthologies produced by two-spirit authors.

Deborah Miranda’s recovery (2010) of the aqi or joya’s third-gender role and status in native and contemporary California is an exemplary study of what she considers the “gendercide” of the Chumash third gender. Miranda takes into account the process of acculturation common in most indigenous contexts where settler colonialism’s effects are felt, but her study concludes on the hopeful note that the joya is reemerging as two-spirit people reclaim their heritage.

Sovereign Erotics: A Collection of Two-Spirit Literature (Driskill, Justice, Tatonetti, and Miranda 2011) is the first collection since Living the Spirit to anthologize exclusively two-spirit literature. The collection was coordinated by editors who identify as two-spirit people from various First Nation heritages. Another important collection published the same year, Queer Indigenous Studies: Critical Interventions in Theory, Politics, and Literature (Driskill, Finley, Gilley, and Morgensen 2011), offers theoretical interventions on queer, indigenous-centered approaches to the LGBTQ2 (the 2 stands for “two-spirit”) movements and history emerging in the twenty-first century.

**Third Gender in Mesoamerica**

Pete Sigal’s groundbreaking work on the Maya and Nahua pre-Hispanic history of gender and sexuality has opened new avenues of research on more contemporary third gender in this region. Sigal argued that the pre-Hispanic Maya did not have an ongoing berdache subjectivity but that ritualized homosexuality and transsexualization existed as symbolic political and religious structures that maintained hierarchical power relations (Sigal 2000). In his studies of Nahua sexualities, Sigal continued his close readings of pre-Hispanic and colonial sources to reveal how homosexualities were performed in relation to changing understandings of native concepts of power, pleasure, rituals of fertility, and the balance between sexual moderation and excess (Sigal 2011). His findings in both traditions of ancient Mesoamerica report mixed-gender gods, cross-dressing priests, and same-sex sexuality.

One area of this region where third gender has emerged in contemporary times is Oaxaca, Mexico. Alfredo Mirandé (2017) provides a comprehensive understanding of the contemporary third-gender muxes in the Oaxaca community of Juchitán in southern Mexico. His combination of historical and ethnographic research, along with documented interviews with several muxes, reveals the complexity of this third gender and their relationship with what is generally considered to be a patriarchal society. Muxe, a Zapotec
The word said to be derived from *mujer*, the Spanish word for *woman*, is a role assigned to young males who begin to identify with female lifeways and whose family most often accepts them into this traditional role as caregiver for the family and as gifted artists and artisans. Their dress varies from typically female to more male-oriented clothes. The town of Juchitán celebrates with a *muxe* ball and beauty contest each November that community members of all walks of life attend. Shaul Schwarz’s short documentary film *Muxes* (2017) provides several first-person testimonials from *muxes* and their family members that reveal the complexities of assuming the *muxe* identity in Juchitán.

**Third Gender in the Andes of South America**

Several scholars have noted South American colonial sources that report the existence of berdache figures with characteristics similar to their North American counterparts. Richard Trexler’s *Sex and Conquest* (1995) is the most extensive analysis of the phenomenon throughout the hemisphere. Trexler theorized the berdache in terms of masculine power relationships within indigenous societies, understanding them as filling dependent, effeminized positions in the context of conquest expansions.

Michael Horswell (2005), concentrating on the South American Andean region once controlled by the Incas, explored how the colonial “tropes of sexuality” both obscured our understanding of South American gender variances and provided strategies for recuperating a more native understanding of third gender through interpreting sources from an indigenous paradigm of their own gender culture. Understanding third-gender ritual subjectivity as a symbolic position in culture-producing rituals made sense in the context of the Andean gender culture in which the feminine enjoyed autonomy, power, and respect. The feminine and the masculine were to be negotiated and mediated through signs of androgyny reminiscent of an originary, androgynous creator.

The evocation of gender liminality is consistent with a step in the native Andean philosophical process known as *yanantin*, the uniting of opposite forces. While the corporal manifestation of this in-between position varied in the distinct textual fragments of colonial discourse, the Andean third-gender subjectivity, sometimes referred to as the *quariwarmi* (man-woman) in Quechua, was often performed as a biologically sexed male, socially recognizable either through castration, cross-dressing, or both. They reportedly were sexually passive in ritual and perhaps profane occasions and fit into the Andean kinship system as *ipas*, one of the native names found in the sources, and often spoke “like women,” either in falsetto voice or by conforming with gendered linguistic rules. Their ritual roles were related to agriculture and to the channeling of ancestors’ voices in ceremonial contexts. In one example, they seem to embody a mythic founding mother of the Inca dynasty, and they enjoyed supernatural sanction through myths and supernatural protection from a stellar cult figure, the Chuquichinchay. Sigal’s edited collection, *Infamous Desire* (2003), provides a robust discussion of both Trexler’s and Horswell’s theses, as well
as his own on the Maya.

In their contemporary iterations, the ritualists and dancers who invoke the third gender are respected and integrated members of the community. They perform the role on ceremonial occasions, though transnational influences related to reactions to the LGBTQ movement have begun to introduce negative attitudes toward the performers. This historical third-gender role in the Andes has recently been recovered and employed by transgender rights activists in Peru and beyond to reclaim a space for gender-nonconforming people (Horswell 2016).

Ana Mariella Bacigalupo (2007) offered a transhistorical analysis of the “co-gendered” machi weye from the Mapuche in Chile, whose gender performance fluctuated between the masculine and the feminine in roles that involved both warfare and healing. Evidence from colonial times to the present suggests the machi weye's gender variance was respected by their communities and consistently performed in ritual contexts, though it was challenged by both early Spanish colonialists and more recent mainstream national discourses on normative gender and sexuality.

**Other Examples from around the World**

Among the most widely known of the third genders are the South Asian hijra, who are typically males, eunuchs, or intersex people who adopt feminine lifeways, leave their original families, and live in organized communities under the mentorship of a guru (Nanda 1994). Sanctioned by various gender-changing Hindu heroes and deities (Arjun, Siva, Bahuchara Mata, Vishnu, Krishna) and with a presence in sacred and profane texts dating to the epic narrative the Mahabharata, many hijras live ascetic-like lives and perform rituals at weddings and births (Nanda 1994). Some go through emasculation as part of their devotion to the mother goddess, which in turn affords them power as agents of fertility. This earns them respect, if not fear, from Hindus, who hire them to perform rituals at the two most important moments in a traditional family's life: marriage and birth (Nanda 1994).

Hijras tend to be receptive partners in sexual relationships with men, some of whom they consider "husbands," and many supplement their income through sex work. By 2014, Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan had passed laws acknowledging the hijra as a third gender with rights to self-determination and government-issued identification cards and other documents, as well as recognition for affirmative action and welfare benefits (Khaleeli 2014).

As Michael Peletz (2006, 2009) has shown, Southeast Asia has a long tradition of gender pluralism that is documented in early modern sources and in more recent anthropological literature. Peletz expansive research on the diverse and complex gender cultures of the
region examines the roles of “highly esteemed (and mostly male-bodied) transgendered ritual specialists” (2006, 310), who were integrated into their societies but who began to lose legitimacy and sanctity as successive waves of religious, political, and social transformations swept the region. One example of the many third-gender subjects of the region is the bissu, whom Peletz describes as,

*a class of ritual specialists among the Bugis of South Sulawesi, who, like many other Indonesians, have long identified with a highly syncretic variant of Islam heavily influenced both by pre-Islamic Hindu-Buddhist beliefs and practices and by the Austronesian ritual cults that predated Indic influences in the region. The male-bodied bissu assumed female attire and other accoutrements of femininity, safeguarded royal regalia and the sacred “white blood” of ruling families, engaged in sexual relations and marriage with same-sex (though different-gendered, i.e., male) partners, and were apparently accorded the status of nobility.

*(Peletz 2006, 312)*

By the late seventeenth and into the eighteenth centuries, the cultural and religious context in which the bissu operated began to change, with Islamic laws discrediting their “divine” status as heretical. By the twentieth century, Dutch colonialism and later modernist projects eroded the bissus’ royal patronage, and they were increasingly seen as “feudal” and anathema to the emerging Indonesian nationalist identity (Peletz 2006, 316).

In Polynesia, early ethnographers and, more recently, anthropologists have documented various culturally specific names, including the māhū in Tahiti and Hawaii, the fa’afāfine in Samoa, and the fakaleiiti in Tonga (Besnier 1994). The fa’afāfine are generally well-integrated into family and social structures in Samoa. They are usually assigned male at birth but are often socialized into a more gender-liminal role when the family has more boys than girls. The word fa’afāfine means “in the manner of woman,” and most fa’afāfine have sexual relationships with men, though sometimes with women. They have several active social organizations, including the Samoa Fa’afafine Association Incorporated and the Society of Fa’afafine in American Samoa. Johanna Schmidt (2001) has shown how the fa’afāfine gender category is undergoing change as a result of globalization and the influence of Western discourses on transgender identity and homosexuality.

The māhū are native to the cultures of Hawaii and Tahiti and are understood to embody both the male and female spirit, an attribute that makes them esteemed as healers, teachers, and caregivers. Hawaiian mythology includes the legend of Laka, the mixed-
gender god/goddess of hula. māhū; are known for passing traditions such as the hula along to the next generation. The 2014 documentary Kumu Hina follows the lives of two māhū; both of whom describe themselves as “in the middle” of the gender binary, taking advantage of both male and female “energies.” Though at times the filmmakers use the term transgender to refer to them, the characteristics of the māhū; seem to point toward a third-gender status.

In eighteenth-century Japan, adolescent males known as wakashu occupied a gender-liminal status, as documented in Edo-era woodblock prints that show them in cross-dressed attire and with a unique hairstyle. Scenes from private spaces such as brothels and bedchambers show wakashu pleasuring both men and women. Other prints depict them dancing in kabuki performances, selling items at markets, and playing musical instruments. Their cross-dressing and sexual pursuits generally ended once they officially entered adulthood, suggesting a temporary third-gender status.

© SAM PANTHAKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES
Indian Hijras Perform a Community Dance during a World Peace Magna Ritual, 2012. One of the most widely known of the third genders in the world are the South Asian hijra, who are typically males, eunuchs, or intersex people who adopt feminine lifeways, leave their original families, and live in organized communities together under the mentorship of a guru. Some go through emasculation as part of their devotion to the mother goddess, which in turn affords them power as agents of fertility. This earns them respect, if not fear,
from Hindus, who hire them to perform rituals.

Though commonly denied by contemporary African leaders, who often proclaim transgender identity and homosexuality to be foreign imports, gender and sexual diversity are common across the continent and there are examples of third gender throughout African history (Murray and Roscoe 1998). As in other parts of the world, the written sources representing this history are marked by both Islamic and Christian colonialist discourses and later emergent discourses of Eurocentric sexology (Bleys 1995). Many contemporary attitudes derive from this history, despite the widespread evidence of gender nonconformity (Collins 2017).

An example from the Swahili-speaking east coast of Africa that has many characteristics of a third gender are the mashoga, cross-dressing males with gendered markers (grammatical, sartorial, and professional, among others) that identify them as distinct from both males and females (Amory 1998). The Gabra nomadic people of East Africa have a temporary third-gender category, the d’abella, that accounts for “men who become women” late in life and take on roles as “ritual experts with feminine identities.” D’abella are regarded as highly prestigious members of Gabra society (Wood 1999, 5). The supernatural and mythological sanctions common to third gender appear in many African cultures. “In Mali, the Dogon tribe generally maintain that the perfect human being is androgynous; the tribe worships Nommo, ancestral spirits who are described as androgynous, intersex, and mystical creatures” and who are considered teachers (Collins 2017).

**Controversies and Debates**

*Third gender* can be a controversial term. Evan B. Towle and Lynn M. Morgan discuss the abuse of the term in its transference from anthropological literature to “popular American writing by and about transgendered people” (2002, 469). The title of their article, “Romancing the Transgender Native,” speaks to one of the principal pitfalls of the use of the term, given the difficulty of recovering a full accounting of third-gender experience from the past. Towle and Morgan advise that studies of third gender “should center on the meanings, ideologies, disputes, and practices that situate gender dynamics in specific historical and cultural contexts” (471), and they insightfully remind us of the potential “reductionism and exclusionism” (484–485) of the term that can erase the very difference some anthropologists wish to highlight. Others are concerned that the international transgender rights movement might erase traditional and distinct third-gender categories, such as Pakistan’s khwaja sera, that have existed for millennia. The tension between the more communal identification of the khwaja sera, organized much like India’s hijras, and the individual transgender woman or man is beginning to show (Azhar 2017).

**Recent State Sanction of Third Gender**
Nation-states from various parts of the world have recognized third gender during the first two decades of the twenty-first century, bringing official legal recognition to nonbinary gender categories. The result of human rights work and legal petitions brought by gender nonconforming individuals, this trend has spread from Australia to Southeast Asia to Europe and most recently to the United States, where several states, including Oregon and California, have adopted measures to allow people to identify as “nonbinary” (Mason 2017). The practical results of these changes to law include issuance of official documents, such as birth certificates, driver's licenses, passports, and identification cards, that conform to an individual's gender identity, without the requirement of a physician's report or recommendation. Some critics believe the state should eliminate all gender markers on official documents, given that this power to determine and register gender should not pertain to governments. Still, these legal advancements represent an affirmation to millions of human beings who do not identify with the historically dominant, normative binary gender system and who face daily harassment for simply living their lives with integrity, and in some cases, in harmony with age-old traditions as a third way, neither male nor female.

SEE ALSO Anthropology in Africa South of the Sahara; Bakla; Biological Essentialism; Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa; Hijras; Historical Sexes; Imperialism and Colonialism; Kathoey; Muxes; Pacific Island and Pacific Island Diaspora Identities; Psychopathia Sexualis (1886; Richard von Krafft-Ebing); Rituals and Same-Sex and Trans Experience; Transvestites/Transsexuals; Two-Spirit

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Thomas/Thomasine Hall Court Case (1629)

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The case against an English indentured servant accused of violating gender norms in the Colony of Virginia in the early seventeenth century.

The individual known as both Thomasine and Thomas Hall (b. circa 1603), a recently arrived English indentured servant, appeared in the colony of Virginia’s General Court in March 1629 for having exasperated neighbors and local officials by shifting the most visible expression of gender identity—gender-specific clothing. Two questions needed resolution by the General Court: Had Hall, as reported by a fellow servant, “layen with a mayd of Mr. Richard Bennetts” (McIlwaine 1979, 195), an illicit sexual act that to the justices and Hall’s neighbors signified presumptive male identity? Or was Hall, following recent public sightings wearing women’s clothes, actually a woman? This latter designation would contradict Hall’s contractual identity as a male servant.

Background on Warroskoyack and the Colony

The General Court’s judges included a medical doctor, but they did not conduct a physical examination of Hall’s body to answer these questions. Instead, they extracted lengthy testimony from the women and men of Hall’s community who purported to have examined Hall. All hailed from Warroskoyack, Virginia, a sparsely populated English settlement located on the south side of the James River. Established on the site of a former Native American village of that name, Warroskoyack was in 1629 a Puritan enclave anchored by substantial land grants to its two most prominent residents, Richard Bennett and Nathaniel Bass. Bennett’s uncle, Edward Bennett, a Puritan merchant from London who had served the Virginia Company as an auditor, received a land grant from the company for settling two hundred people. His plantation, Bennett’s Welcome, contributed to the displacement of the Warroskoyack tribe but subsequently suffered terrible losses during the Powhatan tribe’s attack on English settlements in March 1622. Bennett the younger arrived in the colony in 1628 and within a year was serving as an elected representative in the House of Burgesses. Bass, the other prominent settler in the community, owed his survival of the attack to the fact that he was back in England to secure his land patent, losing his house but not his life. Bass also served as a representative in the House of Burgesses.
At the time of Hall’s General Court appearance, Virginia was beginning its fifth year as a colony under the direct rule of the English Crown. The Virginia Company had folded in 1624 as news of the 1622 Powhatan attack on company settlements soured investors and forced the Crown takeover. During the intervening years, the colony's English population had recovered, and the tobacco economy had grown. Servants such as Hall were much sought after to provide the field labor needed for this commodity. Yet despite this uptick in the colony's fortunes, the material lives of even prosperous planters were spartan. Colonists’ household furnishings were limited compared to modern Western standards, with their wardrobes so basic that upon completing an indenture a servant would receive a new set of “freedom clothes” to begin his or her new life.

Bennett and Bass, the two most powerful men in Warroskoyack, were the faces of law, order, and morality for the community, and Hall managed to run afoul of both of them. Like most of the new colony’s counties, Warroskoyack lacked a local court or an Anglican parish. The absence of the latter was not simply a manifestation of the colony’s weak institutional life but was likely exacerbated by the Bennett family's Puritan faith and the cohort of Puritan settlers who had been attracted to the plantation. Once Hall emerged as someone whose very existence troubled the county’s presumptive gender binary, responsibility for dealing with the matter sat with Hall’s masters, neighbors, and the plantation commander, Bass.

Questions Arise about Hall's Identity

Hall attracted the attention of Warroskoyack neighbors by wearing clothes that contradicted what people believed they knew about Hall’s identity. When asked by several male neighbors to explain why a seemingly male Hall had been seen in women’s clothing, Hall replied, “I goe in weomen’s aparell to get a bit for my Catt” (McIlwaine 1979, 194), a likely reference to begging for scraps. Hall’s first recorded master, John Tyos, believed Hall was a woman and saw no discordance between wearing female clothing and Hall’s identity. Hall, in contrast, self-defined as both male and female to the plantation commander, Captain Bass, answering “hee was both man and woeman” (194). At least one other person, a Mr. Stacey, echoed this assessment, telling John Atkins, Hall’s second master, that Hall was both a man and a woman.

Uncertainty about Hall’s identity provoked local men and women to conduct a series of examinations of Hall’s person. Their responses revealed the stakes of the gender binary for people who lacked formally designated authority but enjoyed community standing based on marriage, household membership, and property ownership. Community regulations relied on categorizing people as male or female, even though there were examples in folk knowledge and historical memory of individuals who did not fit within a gender binary. Artists, writers, and classical scholars of Hall’s time fixated on “hermaphrodites,” individuals possessed of both male and female sex characteristics, seemingly fascinated by
what they considered to be nature’s trompe l’oeil, or visual trick. Even in the colony of Virginia, where the pressure to put all hands to cultivating tobacco meant sending women to work in the fields, women remained associated with and sometimes assigned to domestic tasks that men ordinarily avoided. Able-bodied men were automatically assigned to field labor, although young men sometimes found themselves relegated to domestic work because of a shortage of female labor. Assignments of men and women to specific tasks associated with gender in England was one part of the performance of the gender binary. Wearing gender-specific clothing, having sex with members of the opposite sex, and being subject to punishment for out-of-wedlock sexual activity and pregnancy were all part of heteronormative gender and sexuality.

Enforcing the gender binary and regulating the sexual and gendered behavior of community members was itself a source of authority for Warroskoyack’s “ordinary” (and normative) residents. Although they did not wield the formal political, legal, and medical authority of the plantation commander or the doctor who presided over the General Court, Warroskoyack locals did have influence over the daily lives of the people who lived in their community. This influence coalesced in same-sex collectives, including at least two groups of men and a very determined group of married women. Connected through marriage, employment, and gossip, these same-sex groups passed information about Hall and sparked new questions and investigations.

Court Testimony

The General Court record of the testimony of Hall’s Warroskoyack neighbors, although itself sparse, detailed community efforts to determine Hall’s sex through both interrogation and physical examination of genitalia. The first group to lay hands on Hall for the purposes of fact finding had been piqued by conflicting reports of Hall’s sex. Three married women investigated Hall’s body while gathered at the house of Nicholas Eyres, a relative of one of Hall’s masters, Robert Eyres. Whatever it was they saw led the married women to conclude that Hall was a man. But Hall’s other master, John Tyos, swore, for unknown reasons, that Hall was female. This disagreement about Hall’s sex was enough to send a party to plantation commander Bass requesting his intervention. Bass did not search Hall’s physical body but asked directly “whether he was man or woeman” (McIlwaine 1979, 194). Hall affirmed both identities and offered graphic details about “not having the use of the man’s parte” (195). This was sufficient for Bass to conclude that Hall should be wearing women’s clothing. He ordered Hall into women’s dress, but when Hall complied, it undermined the convictions of the married women. Perhaps it also undermined Hall’s relationship—or value—as a servant, for Eyres and Tyos transferred responsibility to John Atkins.

When the married women next had an opportunity to search Hall’s body it was at Atkins’s house. “Doub[ing] of what they had formerly affirmed” (195), they searched Hall’s body and again concluded that “he” was a man, but they ventured beyond this conclusion to ask
whether there were other anatomical clues. Hall informed Atkins of a bodily feature the 
searchers had not found initially, describing it as “a peece of an hole” (195). Atkins 
delegated the married women to search Hall’s person once more, and again they concluded 
that Hall was a man. Exasperated, Atkins contravened Captain Bass’s command and 
ordered Hall to dress like a man.

Wearing breeches and assuming the appearance of a man, Hall encountered yet another set 
of curious Warroskoyack neighbors. As Francis England testified, when he and Roger Rodes 
met Hall along the road, Rodes declared, “Hall thou has beene reported to be a woman and 
now thou are p[ro]ved to bee a man, I will see what thou carriest.” With help from England, 
Rodes threw Hall down and “felt the said Hall and pulled out his members,” finding him to 
be “a perfect man” (194).

Interleaved with their testimony about their investigations of Hall’s body, Hall’s neighbors 
and masters considered the rumor about Hall’s alleged sexual transgression with Bennett’s 
maid, “Great Besse.” England mentioned hearing the rumor, and Atkins reported that Hall 
had confronted Alice Long, one of the married women examiners, for spreading it. Long 
denied that she was the source of the gossip, however, and blamed a servant man belonging 
to a master named Tyos, most likely Hall’s former master John Tyos, for the story.

Hall’s experience with being examined revealed how little expectation there was of privacy 
of person when community welfare—defined as conformity with heteronormative 
marriages to produce children and devise property to heirs—was threatened. Hall’s claim 
to be both man and woman brought the community of Warroskoyack to attention. Various 
members of the community asserted the right to investigate Hall’s body for clues that 
would align Hall with the choices available to English settlers: male or female. In only one 
instance— when Atkins declined to search a female-clad and sleeping Hall—did the court 
record reflect hesitation about the violation of Hall’s privacy.

**Hall’s Autobiographical Account**

Following the reports of these contradictory findings, the judges asked Hall to provide a life 
history to make sense of seemingly irreconcilable facts: that dressed as a woman, Hall was 
found by female examiners to be a perfect man; that dressed as a man and vulnerable to a 
crude examination by two men, Hall was again found to be a man. Yet Hall’s self-reported 
incapacity as a man and questions about the apparent existence of a vagina-like orifice 
undermined the evidence of manhood for Bass, the plantation commander. Curiously, Bass 
did not view Hall’s body but accepted the reports of the men and women of the community. 
This was how Hall’s case ended up in Jamestown at the General Court.

Hall answered the judges’ implicit question “Who are you really and how did you come to 
be this person?” with an autobiographical account of shifting gender identities,
occupations, clothes, and abodes. Born around 1603 as Thomasine, Hall lived with their mother until the age of twelve. At that point, Hall moved to London where an aunt continued to raise them as a girl. With puberty and a brother’s impressment into the navy for the attack on Cádiz, Spain, in 1625, Hall “cut off[f] his heire and changed his apparel into the fashion of man” (McIlwaine 1979, 195), joining English troops in the disastrous assault on the Isle of Rhé in 1627. Lucky to have survived this debacle, Hall resumed life as Thomasine upon returning to Plymouth, England. There Hall earned a living making lace and sewing. Another life decision—travel across the Atlantic to the Colony of Virginia—coincided with yet another shift in Hall’s visible expression of gender identity. Hall traveled as Thomas, apparently under condition of indenture to provide several years of bound labor in exchange for the passage. Transported and sold as a male servant who would likely have worked in the tobacco fields, Hall entered the employ of Robert Eyres and John Tyos and moved into the household of the latter. Disputes about Hall’s identity and its expression subsequently stirred the community to search Hall’s body and eventually moved the case to the General Court.

The Court’s Punishment

After hearing Hall’s story, the judges decided to inflict a punishment out of sync with Hall’s own chosen presentation of self. It must have been demeaning and embarrassing, much as the entire ordeal of being subjected to forced physical examinations and forced changes of clothes had been. Hall was to wear clothing that no one wore in combination, male breeches topped with a woman’s apron and headdress. Anyone seeing the apron and head covering would have perceived Hall as female. Anyone seeing the breeches would have assumed Hall was male. To see both kinds of clothing together would have baffled the viewer and made Hall constantly vulnerable to being harassed, bullied, and ostracized. Worse still, Hall lost any self-determination of identity—the constant thread of self in their life story.

To protect “male” and “female” as distinct categories in their community, Warroskoyack locals and the General Court judges compelled Hall to relinquish membership in either category. Although Hall had self-defined as both a man and woman, never had they transgressed the categories by blending the dress of both together. Hall’s own self-description conforms to what seventeenth-century people would have described as a hermaphrodite, although no one involved in Hall’s case used that word. Categorizing Hall today, one might choose the term intersex, but that should be done advisedly. If, as the term intersex suggests, the truth about Hall’s identity resides in anatomy, the only evidence that exists on which to make a judgment is Hall’s fragmented testimony and the determined efforts of the men and women of Warroskoyack to protect the gender binary that supported their division of labor, their process of marriage and household formation, and their community coffers from the burden of raising illegitimate children. Whatever Hall’s
anatomical "truth," Hall's identity truth remains a mystery. Hall appears at times to be a transgender person who felt like both a man and a woman but chose to perform these identities sequentially and situationally, appearing at any given moment as someone who conformed to the conventions of manhood and womanhood. Hall's desires, to the degree they can be fathomed from the distance of nearly four centuries, might be more nearly described as queer in their disturbance of binary expectations for gender appearance, social belonging, and sexuality.

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A Thousand and One Nights

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The impact of the French and English versions of this collection of tales on Western views of Eastern sexuality, particularly the 1885–1886 edition by Richard Francis Burton.

*Alf layla wa layla* (A Thousand and One Nights or Arabian Nights in English) is a collection of stories with roots in ancient and medieval Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Indian literature and folklore, linked by a frame story about Scheherazade, a royal bride whose clever storytelling persuades her husband to postpone, and ultimately cancel, his plan to execute her. Different, overlapping configurations of *Alf layla wa layla* were compiled by authors, scholars, and translators from Asia, North Africa, and western Europe over hundreds of years, starting around the eighth century (*Ouyang and Horta 2014*).

From their introduction to the West in the early eighteenth century, versions of *Alf layla wa layla* situated it at the heart of Western knowledge about “Oriental” cultures, including their sexual practices. Western scholars framed the *Arabian Nights*’ portrayal of sexuality as proof of Middle Eastern peoples’ difference from white Europeans, as a challenge to Western attitudes about sex and as a basis for one of the first modern theories about the nature of homosexuality.

**Early Translations**

The first European adaptation of *Alf layla wa layla*, Antoine Galland’s *Les mille et une nuits, contes arabes traduits en français*, appeared in French between 1704 and 1717. In preparing his twelve-volume version, Galland freely changed the tales, embellishing, appending, and deleting material as he saw fit. He also incorporated some stories, such as “Aladdin’s Lamp” and “Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves,” that do not appear in Arabic versions of the collection (*Horta 2017*). Galland’s work became immensely popular across Europe, inspiring many translations, including the first English-language version, *The Arabian Nights’ Entertainment* (*1706*).

In the wake of Napoleon Bonaparte’s 1798–1801 military campaign against Egypt and Syria, and amid growing European fascination with the “Orient,” Western scholars began to
call for more accurate translations of Alf layla wa layla, prepared directly from Arabic texts. Drawing on versions compiled in Egypt in response to European demand for “complete” manuscripts, the resulting adaptations framed the collection as a stable anthropological artifact and often included informational notes on Arab customs (Marzolph 1998). The first of these versions, including Edward Lane’s well-known The Thousand and One Nights (1838–1841), censored sexual content amid concerns about its palatability for Western audiences. Unexpurgated versions of Alf layla wa layla became available in English and French only during the late nineteenth century. The first, prepared by John Payne, was published in 1882–1884 under the title The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night. Richard Francis Burton’s “plain and literal” translation, The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night, appeared a few years later, in 1885–1886. Joseph-Charles Mardrus’s unexpurgated French version, Les mille et une nuits, was published between 1899 and 1904.

Like Galland’s version, these adaptations were creative: although branded “full” translations, their authors reconfigured, added, and cut material from Arabic texts for European audiences (Ouyang and Horta 2014). Unexpurgated adaptations emphasized, and sometimes expanded, the tales’ sexual content, in addition to reproducing it. Although critics maintained that this material was unsuitable for public consumption, the adaptations’ authors and supporters argued that its utility justified its publication. Unexpurgated translations, they claimed, unveiled the secrets of a less civilized culture and could provide beneficial insights to those overseeing imperial rule in Muslim countries. Some also suggested that unexpurgated versions of Alf layla wa layla offered a useful vantage point from which to critique Western culture and correct problematic Western assumptions about sexuality.

Richard Francis Burton's Nights

Although it was not the first of its kind, Burton’s unexpurgated version became the most notorious. It used Alf layla wa layla as a platform for critiquing British attitudes about sexuality and for communicating Burton’s own theories about the nature of homosexuality. Burton (1821–1890) was already an experienced translator of Arabic, Hindu, Sanskrit, and Yoruba works for Western audiences when he published The Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night and famed in England for his varied career as an army officer, a British consul, and an explorer of the Muslim holy cities, Mecca and Medina. Like Payne’s before it, his ten-volume version advertised itself as a no-holds-barred translation of tales from the original Arabic. It was, therefore, similar to Payne’s version, much of which Burton plagiarized (Horta 2017).

What set Burton’s adaptation apart from previous ones is that it was deliberately provocative. The work’s foreword emphasized the explicit nature of some of the stories, declaring them a reflection of the “indecency which ... occurs throughout general
conversation” in the “East” (1: xiv). Burton’s language choices, which often emphasized the tales’ foreign origins, also struck many readers as unnecessarily coarse (Colligan 2002; Horta 2017). Moreover, as experts would later point out, Burton did more than simply render suggestive portions of the Arabic text into “plain” English: he embellished the tales to make them even more exotic and shocking to Western readers (Knipp 1974). For example, the man who cuckolds the king in the “Story of King Shahryar and his Brother,” described simply as a black slave in Arabic sources, becomes “a black cook of loathsome aspect and foul with kitchen grease and grime” in Burton’s version (1:4).

The Nights’ scholarly apparatus further emphasized and expanded the tales’ eroticism. Its many footnotes provided readers with observations about a variety of supposedly “Arab” sexual practices, including bestiality, sodomy, eunuchism, clitoridectomy, miscegenation, and pederasty, a term commonly used in the nineteenth century for sex between men. Burton’s notes also guided readers to places in the text where they could read more about these practices. One, for example, advises that “all but anthropological students … ‘skip’ over anecdotes in which [the character Abu Nowas’s (Abū Nuwās)] name and abominations occur” (5:64), ensuring that those interested in pederasty could find descriptions of the practice by looking for Nowas’s name in the text. The Nights’ “Terminal Essay” offered readers still more observations on sexuality, including a section devoted to pederasty.

**Sotadic Theory of Homosexuality**

The most provocative aspect of Burton’s Nights was arguably the section in the “Terminal Essay” on pederasty, which outlines a theory of homosexuality. Appearing at a time when sexuality was just beginning to be studied in a “scientific” manner, the essay was, notably, the first inquiry into the nature of homosexuality published in Britain for a public audience (Kennedy 2000). Burton argued for the existence of a “geographical and climatic, not racial” zone in which homosexuality is prevalent and celebrated among its inhabitants (10:207). He called this region the Sotadic Zone, after the classical Greek poet Sotades, whose verse deals with same-sex desire.

According to Burton’s description, the Sotadic Zone is a long geographical belt running through many of the warmer portions of the globe. Beginning at the Mediterranean, it encompasses the south of France, the Iberian Peninsula, Italy, Greece, and the coastal regions of North Africa, as well as Asia Minor, Afghanistan, the Punjab, and Kashmir. The zone then broadens, enveloping China, Japan, and Turkistan and finally the South Sea Islands and the Americas. Burton speculated that the climate in these places must produce “a blending of the masculine and feminine temperaments,” making their inhabitants susceptible to same-sex liaisons (10:208).

Burton referred to tales in the Nights to support parts of his theory: the “Terminal Essay” cites the “Tale of Kamar al-Zaman,” for example, as an illustration of “the funny form” of
pederasty, and the “Tale of Abu Nowas” as one that displays “the grimmest and most earnest phase of the perversion” (10:252–253). However, the essay's claims are largely supported with anecdotes from other literary, historical, and social-scientific sources, as well as stories from Burton’s own experiences abroad. The latter include the essay’s opening reference to a secret government report on a boy brothel in Karachi, in present-day Pakistan, allegedly written by Burton in 1845 and based on his own infiltration of the region’s “porneia,” disguised as a traveling merchant (10:205–206). Broadly hinting at sex between Western and native men in newly acquired British territory, this reference did not simply act as evidence of foreign affinities for pederasty: it also provocatively implicated white European men, and imperial power, in that activity (Arondekar 2009). One explanation for the fact that this portion of the “Terminal Essay” focuses so much on sources other than Alf layla wa layla is that it was not originally written for publication in the Nights. Instead, as Dane Kennedy (2000) has argued, content in the tales presented Burton with a convenient pretext for publishing work on pederasty that he had written years earlier.

**Aims and Influence**

In pointing to climate as a cause of pederasty, Burton sought to naturalize same-sex desire and convince readers that men who have sex with other men “deserve, not prosecution, but the pitiful care of the physician and the study of the psychologist” (10:209). A number of early sexologists shared this aim and drew on Burton's essay in their own work on homosexuality. John Addington Symonds's study of same-sex desire, A Problem in Modern Ethics (1896), cites Burton as an authority on Oriental pederasty, as do Edward Carpenter's The Intermediate Sex (1908) and Intermediate Types among Primitive Folk (1914), which defend homosexuality through cross-cultural comparison. Havelock Ellis’s Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion (1897), a textbook on homosexuality cowritten by Symonds, and Sigmund Freud's Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality (1905) also draw on Burton's “Terminal Essay” to argue that, in certain regions, people have a special proclivity toward same-sex desire.

**SAME-SEX RELATIONS IN ARABIC VERSIONS OF THE NIGHTS**

Stories involving same-sex relations between men are very common in classical Arabic literature, and almost all larger anecdote collections, such as Ibn Qutayba’s ‘Uyun al-akhbar (Choice narratives) and al-Abi’s Nathr al-durr (Scattering of pearls), contain a good number of these, whereas stories about female same-sex relations are clearly rarer, though occasionally attested. Homoerotic literature to some extent mirrors contemporary reality in Arab culture as well as in Turkish and Persian cultures, and it also reflects a society where slaves were readily available to wealthier social classes. Homosexuality also played a role in the high life of and around the courts, together
with wine and later also drugs. Although forbidden by Islamic law, homosexuality was often silently approved, especially between an adult male and a slave boy.

Same-sex stories belonged to commonly accepted mainstream literature and are mostly of a comic nature, involving risible situations arising from encounters between ardent elderly lovers and their unmoved young beloveds or from authoritative religious characters trying to hide their vices. Male same-sex relations are also prominent in love poetry.

The *Alf layla wa layla* (known as *Arabian Nights* in English) is no exception. The collection developed in mutual relation to anecdotal literature, with individual stories being borrowed in both directions, especially often from *adab* literature (the classical Islamic literature of medieval Asia) to the *Alf layla wa layla*. Sexuality in general is strongly present in the collection, beginning with the frame story, and individual stories present a large variety of sexual habits.

While the older layers of stories, which go back to Indian prototypes and often include a resourceful wife playing tricks on her husband, like many of the stories in the cycle *The Craft and Malice of Woman, or the Tale of the King, His Son, His Concubine and the Seven Viziers*, contain exclusively heterosexual stories, the homosexual ones are primarily of Arabic origin and relate to the overall acceptability of homosexuality in classical Arabic and Persian cultures, especially in literature. The majority of stories with same-sex content in the *Alf layla wa layla* derive from learned *adab* literature. The same-sex stories and references to male homosexuality in the *Alf layla wa layla* describe asymmetric love affairs between adult males and adolescents, which is also typical of classical Arabic literature in general, as well as classical Greek literature. Often their protagonist is the poet Abū Nuwās (d. 813; transliterated as “Abu Nowas” in Richard Burton’s famous 1885–1886 English translation), who was well-known for his homoerotic love poems and the anecdotes about his homosexual (as well as heterosexual) love affairs. “Hikayat Abi Nuwas” (“Abu Nowas with the Three Boys”) presents the poet in the company of three handsome boys drinking wine and is loosely patterned on a tenth-century anecdote in Ibn Abi ‘Awn’s (d. 934) *al-Ajwiba al-muskita* (Witty answers). “Wazir al-Yaman wa-akhuhu” (“The Wazir of Yemen and His Young Brother”) introduces a teacher who falls in love with his young pupil and has him climb over the wall to join him in a nocturnal lovers’ meeting. When the elder brother of the boy, the vizier, surprises the two sleeping together, he is first enraged but is later easily soothed by a poem. This story is already attested in Ibn Hijja al-Hamawi’s (d. 1434) *Thamarat al-awraq* (Fruits of the leaves) and other *adab* collections. In both tales there is an initial negative reaction to same-sex encounters, but this displeasure is easily surpassed, and the lovers escape without harm. “Munazarat al-rajul” (“The Man’s Dispute with the Learned Woman”) discusses the relative merits of men and women in love relations, following an old model already extant in ninth-century
literature (al-Jahiz, *Mufakharat al-jawari wa-al-ghilman* [Boasting match over maids and youths]). After al-Jahiz (d. 868), the theme was often discussed in both Arabic and Persian literature.

These stories, where the point of view is that of the adult lover, take asymmetric relations between males as a natural part of life in higher society, but other tales, such as “ʿAlaʾ al-Din Abu al-Shamat,” contain sinister characters, often magi, who try to seduce beautiful boys. These may also introduce fathers who try to prevent seduction by going to the extremity of keeping their sons in complete isolation from the outside world from birth, until something happens and sets the story going. The viewpoint of the victim of unwelcome sexual attention can be seen in “Qamar al-Zaman” (“Tale of Kamar al-Zaman”), where Princess Budur, disguised as a male and having become a king, threatens to force Qamar al-Zaman to have sex with her; the latter thinks that the king wants him to be the passive partner in a same-sex relation. In the same story, Princess Budur, as a man, also celebrates a wedding night with Hayat al-Nufus, and the text implies that their nightly encounter may have been sexual. A similar confusion caused by cross-dressing takes place in “Muhammad al-Dimashqi wa Saʿd al-Baghdadi” (“Muhammad of Damascus and Saʿd of Baghdad”), where the malicious, homosexual Saʿd falls in love with a woman disguised as a man. Usually, though, cross-dressing in the *Nights* is merely a necessity under duress, with no erotic connotations. It seems that the stories that take asymmetric male homosexuality as an acceptable feature of courtly life derive from literary sources, whereas those that see such relations from the boy's viewpoint and as something to be avoided tend to derive from more popular levels of narration.

Female same-sex relations are much rarer both in the *Nights* and in classical Arabic literature in general, and they are depicted in a much less favorable light. In at least two stories we encounter a wicked old witch who seeks out beautiful girls. In “al-Malik ʿUmar ibn al-Nuʿman wa waladayhi” (“The Tale of Omar bin al-Nu’man and His Sons”) she is Dhat al-Dawahi (Mistress of Misfortunes) and in “Qissat Hasan al-Basri” (“Hassan of Bassorah”) she is the ugly old Shawahi Umm al-Dawahi (Lusty, Mother of Misfortunes); the names themselves are revealing.

Of the stories mentioned above, only “Qamar al-Zaman” is found in the (partial) fourteenth-century Syrian edition of the *Alf layla wa layla* by Muhsin Mahdi, published in Arabic in 1984. This is mainly because same-sex stories tend to derive from *adab* literature, and the Galland manuscript, on which Mahdi’s edition is based, represents an earlier form of the text that was later patched with additional stories taken from *adab* literature. All the stories except for “Muhammad al-Dimashqi wa Saʿd al-Baghdadi,” which is found only in the Reinhardt manuscript, found their way into the more extensive editions of Bulaq (1835) and Calcutta II (1839–1842), going back to the eighteenth-century Egyptian prototype.
The stories that were included in the Arabic editions found their way also into English, French, and German translations of the *Alf layla wa layla* toward the end of the nineteenth century. Thus, John Payne (1882–1914), Burton (1885–1888), J. C. Mardrus (1899–1904), and Enno Littmann (1921–1928) translate them all, and they also form part of Malcolm C. Lyons's 2008 translation. In earlier editions, the blatantly homosexual stories were either left out or translated in a way that minimizes their erotic content.

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Ironically, Burton may not have found his theory as persuasive. Several parts of the “Terminal Essay,” such as the section where he claims that pederasty was uncommon among the Hindus of the Indian subcontinent, an area within the Sotadic Zone, contradict his presentation of pederasty as a climatic and geographic phenomenon, as did some of his personal experiences (Kennedy 2000). Burton’s annotations to a copy of the essay, and the interest he later expressed in writing a general history of pederasty with European examples, further indicate that his views on same-sex desire were far from fixed.

Nevertheless, even if he was not persuaded by his own theory, presenting pederasty as a phenomenon associated with the “Orient” suited Burton’s aims. Orientalist writing had long associated Arab culture with sexual exoticism and desire between men (Boone 2014; Massad 2007). Discussing it in this tradition, which distanced Western readers from
pederasty, could make them more receptive to Burton's argument that same-sex desire could be studied scientifically (Bleys 1995). There were also economic advantages to situating a shocking essay within a collection of tales already familiar (in censored forms) to British readers, as the Nights' publishing history suggests.

**Pornography or Social Critique?**

The publishing history of Burton's *Nights* reveals more about his aims for the work. Burton clearly knew that it would initiate public controversy after it was published, and to some extent incited it. His version was published through the Kama Shastra Society, an underground press that he founded with F. F. Arbuthnot and Richard Monckton-Milnes for the purpose of publishing erotic and semierotic translations. Prior publications issued through the society, such as *The Kama Sutra of Vatsyayana* (1883) and *The Perfumed Garden of the Cheikh Nefzaoui* (1886), were published anonymously and circulated only among subscribers to avoid public outcry and prosecution for distributing obscenity. Burton's *Nights* carried his name and was meant for a public audience. Between 24,000 and 30,000 advertising circulars were posted for the edition, boasting of its copious notes on Arab customs, beliefs, and practices and hinting at its explicit nature (Colligan 2002).

Partly because of this publishing strategy, Burton's *Nights* ignited debate about its suitability for public consumption. Critics considered its crude language and descriptions of sexuality "morally filthy" and "absolutely unfit for Christian populations" (quoted in Kennedy 2000, 325, 326). One even labeled it "pornography" (326). Burton defended his work against these charges, arguing that few members of the public would actually read his expensive, limited-edition book. However, the controversy arguably worked to his advantage. In addition to ensuring rapid sales for the *Nights*, as well as a market for Burton's subsequent collection of tales, *Supplemental Nights to the Book of the Thousand Nights and a Night* (1886–1888), it initiated a public debate about where and how sexuality should be discussed in which the *Nights* itself could intervene. Burton's foreword defends it on the grounds of cultural and historical relativism: what was considered indecent in England, it argues, was not considered offensive in Egypt; and although Western readers might consider parts of the *Nights* coarse, passages from the works of some of Britain's most celebrated writers were just as suggestive. For Burton, the latter exposed the "perfect hypocrisy" of Western society (1:xv). By showing that definitions of decency were socially constructed, the former suggested that Western attitudes about sex could change.

SEE ALSO Homoerotic Poetry of Abū Nunwâs; Orientalism in Gay Pornography about the Middle East; Pasolini's Cinematic Adaptation of A Thousand and One Nights; Religion and Same-Sex Behaviors: Islam

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Since Tibet’s “incorporation” into the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in the 1950s, the hegemony of the Han-dominated Chinese state has been a defining characteristic of Tibetan modernity. Beyond widespread socioeconomic disadvantage and political marginalization, Tibetans have also endured and continue to endure many restrictions on their cultural and religious practices under the Chinese state. This is often done in the name of “modernization” and “development,” and increasingly in the name of “social stability” and “state security.” Less explored to date, however, is the question of how the Chinese state has mobilized particular norms and configurations of gender and sexuality to undermine traditional sociocultural norms across Tibet and extend its own power base. As such, it is important to examine the ways in which the long shadow of the PRC has affected and detracted from traditional forms of gender and sexuality in Tibet, and sometimes even enabled their revival and the formation of new forms of queer identity. Such an examination has the potential not only to illuminate the spatial and temporal politics of gender and sexuality in Tibet, but also to raise broader questions about ethnic relations in contemporary Tibet.

**Historical Overview**

This entry begins by considering the various landscapes of gender and sexuality in Tibet from a historical perspective in order to better understand how they have changed since the Chinese occupation. With regard to “premodern” Tibet, a wide variety of sexual arrangements have been documented. Charlene E. Makley (1997) notes that the practice of polyandry (the taking of multiple husbands), as well as the relative premarital sexual freedom experienced by many Tibetan women in some classes and regions, signals the presence of a less restrictive system of sexuality than that of Tibet’s historical neighbors, China and India. Tsering Shakya has also asserted that sexual relationships between monks
were widespread in Tibetan monasteries (see Otton 1996). While some studies have focused on what have been characterized as “exotic practices,” closer examination has shown that these arrangements tended to result from “an ethic of fraternal solidarity and patrilocality” rather than from the exercise of sexual agency per se (Stein 1972, 98). Families arranged polyandrous marriages for their children, and it is unclear to what extent women or men were able to engage in polyandry without the approval of families.

A number of Tibetologists have also described indigenous and hybrid Indo-Tibetan Buddhist understandings of a “third sex.” Developed and defined by Buddhist thinkers based on Indian medicine (Gyatso 2003), the third sex, as described by Janet Gyatso, refers to “those whose sexuality changes every half month (in some versions from male to female and back again),” as well as intersex individuals and eunuchs (2003, 97). Based on her analysis of Tibetan literature, terminology, and medical systems, Gyatso argues that Buddhist conceptions of gender were not so much based on a particular conception of gender identity but rather on sex characteristics, and she also notes some degree of overlap between ideas of gender and sexuality in the idea of the third sex. Third sex is further expounded on in Buddhist literature, mostly for the purpose of excluding this category of people from taking monastic vows, receiving teachings, and giving donations. Yet, as in many cultures, these rules were not always strictly followed, and interpretations often varied across region, class, and era. It remains unclear to what extent third sex was ever a fully inhabitable identity for Tibetans. (For a thorough discussion of third sex in Tibetan literature, especially medical treatises, see Gyatso 2003, 2015; Gyatso and Havnevik 2005.)

It is important to note that “third gender” and Buddhist gender systems more generally do not map neatly onto current uses of the terms gender and sexuality. Indeed, to what extent “queer” even provides a helpful way of describing these practices is unclear. This raises broader questions as to how histories of sexuality and gender across different geographical areas can be translated in ways that would be understandable to readers in the contemporary era. In Tibet, because of the foundation of Vajrayana Buddhist epistemology and ontology, the inclusion of the “third sex” in standard medical discussions, and the normative status of polygamy, gender and sexuality are clearly conceived of and engaged with differently. This incommensurability of labels and concepts also compels one to consider how these practices relate to present-day practices of queerness and how far “queer” can go as a conceptual tool in understanding varied cultural expressions across different places and times (Domínguez Ruvalcaba 2016).

Following the Chinese Communist Party’s rise to power and the establishment of the PRC in 1949, a “scientific” model of monogamous heterosexuality was promoted that emphasized the reproductive needs of the socialist state. As Harriet Evans (1997) argues, women’s sexuality was particularly targeted during the Mao Zedong era, with official and popular press, women’s magazines, sex education publications, self-help guides, and medical advice pamphlets all variously propagating stringent ideological controls over sexual and social
conduct. New regulations and policies reflecting these norms and values were gradually rolled out across Tibet, resulting in widespread disruption to the various traditions and hierarchies of sexuality and gender that had long formed the bedrock of Tibetan societies. For instance, the regulation of sexual desire through the implementation of a strict heteronormative marital order, reinforced by household registration policies, formed a core part of the Chinese state's modernizing project across Tibet. Moreover, the state disbanded monasteries and nunneries, weakening local power structures by compelling Tibetans into conformity with the state’s norms of sexual morality and family values. Celibacy, the most fundamental vow for a Buddhist monk or nun, came under attack, with reports of nuns and monks forced to marry and violate their vows to prove their symbolic alignment with state values (Gyatso and Havnevik 2005). Furthermore, polygamous marital arrangements were banned by the state in the interests of promoting “respectable” domesticity.

In the late 1970s, following the death of Mao, the Chinese Communist Party embarked on a series of radical economic reforms designed to generate growth and investment. Moving from a planned economy to embracing many tenets of capitalism, these reforms quickly brought about widespread social changes. Media commercialization, a relative loosening up on control over cultural content, and greater exposure to the global cultural market all opened up new spaces for thinking about, challenging, and practicing social norms and values.

Since these landmark reforms were introduced, understandings of sexuality and gender have undergone immense transformation across the PRC. In 1997 the Chinese criminal code was revised to remove “hooliganism,” under which sexual relations between people of the same sex had been banned, while in 2001 homosexuality was removed from the Chinese Classification of Mental Disorders. Yet, while numerous surveys suggest that the general public has become tolerant of homosexuality and that queer culture has flourished, the state continues to informally maintain an ambiguous position often characterized as “the three nos”: no approval, no disapproval, and no promotion. This stands in contrast to the sizable strides that Taiwan made in relation to LGBTQ+ rights in the later years of the second decade of the twenty-first century. In May 2017, a top Taiwanese court ruled that discrimination against same-sex marriage is unconstitutional, while in January 2018 the country announced plans to add a third-gender option to passports.

**Importance of Online Spaces**

Online spaces represent a lively and cacophonous platform for exploring and discussing questions of sex, sexuality, and gender. Searching a combination of terms such as *gay*, *lesbian*, *bisexual*, *trans*, and *Tibet* reveal a number essays and comments, as well as details of LGBT-themed events in Tibet. Although queer desire and relationships are still sometimes considered a taboo topic, conversations about them on Weibo, WeChat, and
other social media are not uncommon among Tibetan netizens, often embracing a mix of Tibetan, Chinese, and English terms.

An important part of online discussions about queer issues among Tibetans are stories by and about Tibetans outside of Tibet. For instance, one of the most popularly circulated articles on queer Tibet is a 2007 interview published by Phayul, a popular exile Tibetan web portal that has published a number of stories about LGBTQ+ issues in Tibetan communities. The interview tells the story of a young Tibetan man who grew up in India and identifies as gay (Jigdel 2007a). Translated into Chinese as “Homosexuality in Tibet: We Are No Different” (Jigdel 2007b), it was widely circulated among Tibetans in Chinese cyberspace. More recently, feature articles on Tenzin Mariko (Gurung 2017), an India-based Tibetan trans woman who made her first public appearance as a performer at the 2015 Miss Tibet pageant in Dharamsala, were also shared and discussed among Tibetans across Tibet, with many expressing support. However, contemporary Tibetan ideals and norms concerning gender and sexuality are far from homogenous across Tibet and the Tibetan diaspora. As Emily T. Yeh has noted, despite a shared cultural identity across written language, religion, and history, Tibetan identity formation is “varied and deeply inflected by national location and transnational trajectories” (2007, 648). Across Tibet, China, India, Nepal, Switzerland, and elsewhere, Tibetans navigate a wide range of social, cultural, and political frameworks about gender and sexuality, while also responding to pressures and expectations to perform an authentic “Tibetanness” (Harris 1999). Along with age, class, and social status, these geopolitical frictions variously play out between Tibetans in Tibet and those in exile. Yet, while online spaces can provide a space for negotiating such questions, internet censorship across the PRC can also affect the possibilities for discussion between Tibetans outside of Tibet. For example, while the Dalai Lama voiced his support for same-sex marriage in 2014, it is unclear what impact this had within Tibet, as almost all public discussion of the Dalai Lama, viewed as a “separatist” by the Chinese state, is strictly censored.

Online sites have become an important meeting space for queer Tibetans. While a number of gay bars and a cruising scene in Lhasa once meant a vibrant though small and low-key queer scene, tighter security across the city has made physical gatherings increasingly difficult. This has pushed many toward the use of dating apps, of which there are many in contemporary China (Cook and Young 2013).

**Literature and Popular Media**

Beyond online spaces, Tibetan literature has also been an important place for public discussions about sex and sexuality. In 2011 the Tibetan writer Pema Tsering (pen name: Tian Yong) published Zhuoma de hunli (Drolma’s wedding), a novel that explores love, loss, and faith in contemporary Tibet. The plot centers on the protagonist, also named Pema Tsering, who has moved to Tibet to end his own life after an accident on his wedding day in
which his wife-to-be was killed. There, his encounters with love and relationships, including that of two queer Tibetan women who plan to marry, rekindle his sense of purpose in life. Nonetheless, Lama Jabb has argued that references to same-sex relations remain fairly rare in modern Tibetan literature. Although a few examples can be found, Jabb notes that these tend to center on lesbian sex and are generally more indicative of “the persistence of a heterosexual, masculine conception of carnal passion” that characterizes the male gaze in contemporary literature rather than support for LGBTQ+ rights (2015, 197).

In popular media, references to queer relations in Tibet are similarly rare. One exception is the well-known Tibetan singer and songwriter Han Hong, who is often referenced in China’s official state media and rarely without some speculation as to her sexuality. Celebrated for her high-pitched and versatile singing style and songs about Tibet, Han is the daughter of a Tibetan mother and a Han father. She is one of the most famous singers in the People’s Liberation Army, where she entertained troops for close to thirty years before retiring in 2015. Typically performing smartly dressed in a colorful tuxedo, Han has never publicly disclosed her sexuality. Since the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, state media have repeatedly referred to her being a lesbian as an “open secret” (Chinese: gongkai de mimi), while tabloid magazines often post images of her with a person they claim to be her girlfriend of the moment.
Differences and Relationship between Han Chinese and Tibetans

In many ways, the discussions happening around queer issues in Tibet mirror many of those also taking place among Han Chinese. In other ways, however, these discussions are more specific to the Tibetan context. For instance, conversations about queerness in Tibet are often met with the response that LGBTQ+ individuals do not represent “our values” and are “against our religion.” As in many societies living under occupation, for some, LGBTQ+ identities are seen as part and parcel of broader trends of modernity imposed on Tibet from the outside rather than as something occurring organically in Tibetan culture and society. Others are interested in learning about the histories of gender and sexuality in Tibet. Essays examining what Buddhism says about sexuality and gender constitute a core part of Tibetan discussions on queer Tibet. Moreover, some essays demonstrate a keen sense of interest in the revival of polyandry as a means of promoting and preserving Tibetan tradition, tending to reflect wider anxieties about the survival of Tibetan culture, language, identity, and national unity under the pressures of assimilation (see Brox and Bellér-Hann 2014; Topgyal 2013; Kolas and Thowsen 2005).

At the same time, however, numerous heavy crackdowns on queer communities have taken place across the PRC under the president Xi Jinping, who came to power in 2012. A push for “family values” and traditional gender roles form a core part of the state’s revival of certain Confucian values. As part of this, queer content on television, in film, and online has been met with heavy censorship. Moreover, restrictions on queer activism as part of the broader crackdown on civil society are also proving to be major challenges for queer visibility and rights advocacy work across the PRC. Combined with the already heightened state surveillance in Tibet since the 2008 unrest, LGBTQ+ groups there are even more vulnerable.

In the context of broader interethnic relations and widespread prejudice against Tibetans, there are many other questions to ask about how Han-Tibetan relationships play out in queer spaces. Many have written about how ethnicity has long been a highly gendered construct in contemporary China (Schein 1997; Jinba 2014). Although many see ethnic minorities characterized in popular and official media as highly eroticized and feminized, Ben Hillman and Lee-Anne Henfry (2006) have argued that Tibetans are instead routinely masculinized. Similarly, Makley argues that Tibetan men are represented as rugged, valiant, and wild, possessing a “virile, brutish sexuality” (2002, 629). While some of these stereotypes are certainly propagated by gay Han men in online forums, to what extent this hypermasculinization of Tibetan men manifests itself in terms of gender expression, sexual
roles, and fetishization in Han-Tibetan dating scenes and relationships requires more research.

Queer Tibet is, and indeed always has been, deeply transnational. Today, Tibetans negotiate between various notions of sexuality and gender coming from “the West,” the Tibetan diaspora, and Han Chinese LGBTQ communities, as well as from their own rich indigenous histories and traditions. However, under the shadow of a state that continues to oscillate between tolerating and cracking down on LGBTQ communities, the politics of queer Tibet are set to remain intricately entangled in debates and discussions about the past, present, and future of Tibet and its people.

SEE ALSO *Third Genders*

**BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Tom of Finland (1920–1991)

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Finnish artist whose work portrayed strong, masculine gay men.

Tom of Finland, born Touko Laaksonen in Kaarina, Finland, is one of the best-known gay erotic artists in the Western world. He drew strong, masculine gay men at a time when gays were considered to be effeminate and weak. He created the prototypical "leather stud." The manly men in his drawings have become archetypes for generations of gay men, influencing a variety of artists, including Robert Mapplethorpe (1946–1989), Bruce Weber (1946–), Rainer Werner Fassbinder (1945–1982), and Freddie Mercury (1946–1991).

Inspiration for His Art

Laaksonen was a self-taught artist who never received any formal training in the visual arts; he did receive training in music (piano) and advertising, the latter of which influenced his art. He started drawing at a young age, eventually becoming a world-class illustrator of the male body. That being said, the scope of his mastery was narrow, being limited to the male physique. From childhood on, Laaksonen was attracted to masculine men, leather, and uniforms. In the documentary Daddy and the Muscle Academy (1991), he describes how he received his first leather boots at age five and wanted to wear them to bed. He admired the muscular farmhands working in the fields around his home and the uniformed bus drivers he saw during his daily commute to his secondary school in Turku. He drew his secret fantasies of these men, but he had to destroy his early erotic and fetishist drawings for fear of discovery.
Laaksonen was drafted into military service in the spring of 1940, following the Soviet Union's invasion of Finland the previous November. Finland reached out to Germany for help against the invaders, which resulted in more than 200,000 German soldiers being stationed in Finland between 1940 and 1945. Laaksonen admired the Germans' formfitting uniforms and engaged in sex with German soldiers in the gay cruising parks of Helsinki. He never supported Nazi ideology, but his later inclusion of SS and Wehrmacht uniforms and swastikas in a few of his erotic pictures drew accusations that he was a Nazi or sympathized with Nazism. After these accusations, he developed his own uniform, the uniform of Tom's men. The resemblance with the German, tight-fitting black uniforms remained, however, and continued to generate controversy around Laaksonen and his illustrations. Another source of inspiration for Tom's men was the rising American youth culture, especially the leather jacket and denim jeans worn by silver-screen biker rebels such as Marlon Brando in the movie *The Wild One* (1953) and James Dean in *Rebel without a Cause* (1955).
Tom's Men

The postwar gay subculture of Helsinki came as a shock to Laaksonen, as the uniformed men in leather boots vanished, replaced by effeminate queers. Lacking manly men to admire and have sex with, Laaksonen renewed his earlier hobby of drawing his sexual fantasies. During the war, he could not draw erotic pictures, given the lack of privacy. At first, drawing served as a private sexual release, but when he showed his drawings to other gay men, he received positive responses, as well as sex.

Encouraged by an acquaintance, Laaksonen sent some drawings to Physique Pictorial, an American bodybuilding magazine, in 1956. These “beefcake magazines,” which typically featured photographs and drawings depicting manly, muscular men, were gay magazines in disguise. Physique Pictorial published Laaksonen’s pictures of laughing lumberjacks. He had signed them as “Tom”; the editor and owner of the magazine, Bob Mizer (1922–1992), added “of Finland,” and the pseudonym was born. In addition to publishing in the United States, Tom also published his work in gay magazines in Denmark and Sweden.

The men in Tom’s drawings are typically working-class. Another characteristic feature of Tom’s works is gaze; the men depicted in his drawings focus their gaze on the viewer, or meet the gaze of another man. Tom’s men also smile and laugh. Sex is fun; Tom’s men display no inhibitions or shame about their sexuality. Big or huge penises are a characteristic trademark of Tom’s work.

Tom had strict limits on what he was willing to draw. Occasionally he would receive commissions asking him to draw pictures of sex with children, which he refused. He also refused to draw on themes of mutilation and genuine sadism. His sadomasochistic pictures may look wild, but Tom was always careful to depict sadomasochistic sex as consensual play and to see that the “victim” was also portrayed as enjoying the situation. In his comics, Tom delighted in showing role reversals, in which the man who started from a position of strength—a policeman, for example—might end up the underdog, suffering humiliation and shame, although he would eventually enjoy this new role. Tom’s humor was black but always benevolent.

Tom drew in times when homosexual acts between adults were illegal in many parts of the world, which was the case in Finland until 1971. Pornography was also illegal both in Europe and in the United States, although laws on pornography started to relax in the 1960s and 1970s. Pirated versions of Tom’s pictures appeared in many countries, which Tom was unable to combat since his drawings were considered pornography and were therefore illegal themselves.

Impact of Tom's Work
The first exhibition of Tom’s art took place in the back room of a sex shop in Hamburg in 1976. Exhibitions followed in 1978 in small galleries in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Amsterdam. In 1978 Tom went to the United States for the first time to be present at the openings of his exhibitions. There he became friends with a devoted fan, Durk Dehner, who took over sales and management of Tom’s work. Together, they set up the Tom of Finland Company to print and sell Tom’s art and to safeguard his rights. In 1984 the Tom of Finland Foundation was set up to protect, preserve, and promote erotic art.

The Tom of Finland Foundation has cataloged nearly 4,000 works by Tom (finished and preparatory), and there is an unknown number of works that have been lost or destroyed. Tom’s art is exceptional in the sense that it has been consumed mostly by ordinary gay men, rather than the artworld elite. His works were first published as magazine illustrations, comic strips, and posters, and only later appeared in art books and galleries. Tom’s work had a defining impact on the way gay men throughout the world were perceived and, more importantly, how they perceived themselves. Tom’s pictures of laughing, gay men having fun portrayed the homosexual liberation movement long before the new wave of gay liberation started in the 1960s (building on previous movements that extended back to the 1890s).

Tom’s work has also penetrated to the dominant straight culture and influenced fashion, design, and art. His pictures are nowadays seen on everyday objects, such as postage stamps, bedsheets, and towels. Tom’s art occupies a conflicting field in the space between art and pornography, which has made it difficult to get it displayed in art galleries and museums. Tom himself thought of his art thus: “I know my little ‘dirty drawings’ are never going to hang in the main salons of the Louvre, but it would be nice if—I would like to say ‘when,’ but I better say ‘if’—our world learns to accept all the different ways of loving. Then maybe I could have a place in one of the smaller side rooms” (quoted in Hooven, Dehner, and Sharp 2011, 204).

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The development and usage of the Chinese word tongzhi, an umbrella term for people with nonnormative genders and sexualities in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China.

Often translated as “comrade” by English writers, the Chinese dictionary and encyclopedia Cihai defines tongzhi as “people sharing a common will.” Its first appearance in the Chinese lexicon is believed to date back more than 2,700 years, in the ancient Chinese text Guoyu of the Spring and Autumn historical period (771–476 BCE): “when people share the same moral character, they share the same heart; when they share the same heart, they share the same will.”

The term first took on political and militaristic overtones amid the revolutionary efforts led by Sun Yatsen (1866–1925; usually referred to as the father of the modern Chinese nation) against the imperialist regime of the late Qing dynasty (1636–1912), when members of the revolutionary force would address each other as tongzhi. Sun's Triple Demism philosophy called on his followers, or comrades, to fight against imperialism: “As the revolution is not yet completed, all my followers must endeavor to carry it out” (quoted in Fang and Heng 1983, 496). Shortly after the Communist Party of China stepped onto the political stage and founded the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the use of tongzhi extended beyond the narrow circles of political parties and reached the masses, alongside the introduction of nationwide socialist programs that aimed to collectivize agricultural land, nationalize industries, redistribute wealth, and bridge class divides.

While still indicative of revolutionary passion, the term shed some of its official and formal associations and found its way into everyday, casual conversations of the general populace.
This shift in usage reflected the state’s project to equalize and homogenize social relations throughout the nation, as one’s parents, relatives, neighbors, and coworkers turned into one big collective: everyone was now a tongzhi. However, the popularization of the term came to a halt upon the outbreak of the Cultural Revolution in 1966 (Fang 2007). Spearheaded by the state and executed by the Red Guards, public criticism and violent persecution seemed relentless and omnipresent. Naturally, people refrained from calling each other tongzhi for fear of associating themselves with someone who might soon be branded as a “capitalist roader” or an enemy of the state, reflecting a larger trend of the breakdown of kinship ties and the antagonization of social relations. Use of the term, therefore, sharply declined. Its popular usage continued to wane during the reform era, when China witnessed the rise of new conceptions of individualism and the resurfacing of class differences as a result of the marketization of the economy, the privatization of enterprises, and the consumerization of society (Fang 2007).

The Relationship between Tongzhi and Homosexuality

Given this brief genealogy of the term, what is the relationship between tongzhi and homosexuality? The term homosexuality was translated first from Western sexology through the Japanese translation doseiai into Chinese tongxing'ai (tongxing lian'ai, or tongxing lian) in the Republican period (1919–1949). It is a gender-neutral term, referring to both male and female homosexuality (Sang 2003; Chiang 2010). Since then, the terms tongxing lian or tongxing'ai have been widely used to refer to homosexuality in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

It is believed that it was in 1989, when the first Hong Kong Lesbian and Gay Film Festival used “Hong Kong Tongzhi Film Festival” as its Chinese title, that the word tongzhi suddenly became a synonym for gays and lesbians and, shortly after, an umbrella term for all people with nonnormative genders and sexualities, such as LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer). The queer appropriation of the term became popular in both the LGBTQ and straight communities first in Hong Kong and then in Taiwan. The Taipei Golden Horse International Film Festival in 1992 featured a section on lesbian and gay films titled “New Queer Cinema,” which was translated as xin tongzhi dianying, equating tongzhi with “gays and lesbians,” or “queer” (Lim 2008). The term became popular within LGBTQ communities in China in the late 1990s.

The Emergence of Tongzhi Identities and Communities

It should be noted that tongxinglian subcultures have always been present and even seemed to flourish in the post–World War II period (e.g., in Hong Kong, see Kong 2014; in Taiwan, see Huang 2011 and Chiang and Wang 2017; in China, see Chiang 2012). However, the blooming of visible and explicitly queer cultural production, commercial venues, and political activism, together with a more distinctive “gay,” “lesbian,” or “tongzhi” identity,
among other self-identified labels, emerged in Hong Kong and Taiwan in the late 1980s and in China in the late 1990s. *Tongzhi* identities and communities slowly emerged, along with vigorous social, legal, economic, and cultural developments. The most prominent developments are legal reforms, such as the decriminalization of homosexuality (1991) in Hong Kong, the lifting of martial law (1987) and the abolishment of police offence law (1991) in Taiwan, and the deletion of hooliganism from criminal law (1997) and the removal of homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses (2001) in China. Other salient developments include the rise of gender and sexuality studies as academic disciplines, the emergence of a substantial infrastructure of *tongzhi* consumer markets, the burgeoning of visible online and offline communities, and the development of *tongzhi* activism (for Hong Kong and China, see Kong 2011, Kong 2017, and Jeffrey and Yu 2015; for Taiwan, see Wang 1999).

Hong Kong *tongzhi* identities and communities that emerged around the 1980s were heavily influenced by Western queer cultures, partly due to Hong Kong’s British colonial context. And the most discernable form of same-sex expression in contemporary Taiwan since the early 1980s has been local literary production (Lim 2008; Chi 2017). Mainland Chinese *tongzhi* identities and communities emerged almost ten years later, were heavily concentrated in urban centers, such as Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Beijing, and were shaped not so much by Western but by Hong Kong and Taiwanese *tongzhi* identities, communities, and cultures. Influences included terminology (e.g., the use of *tongzhi*), the decor and design of entertainment venues, and the style of cultural production (e.g., film festivals). For example, many gay businesses, such as gay bars and saunas, in Shenzhen in the early twenty-first century were set up or run by Hong Kong gay men.

**Diverse Terminology**

Since the 1990s, being homosexual has ceased to be perceived as a crime, deviancy, or mental illness; instead, homosexuality has become acceptable as a distinct sexual identity. Apart from *tongzhi*, many specific terms have been created, such as *membə* (member) for gay men, and *lesi* (lesbian), TB (tomboy), or TBG (tomboy girl) for lesbians in Hong Kong; gay (gay men) and *lala* (lesbian) in China; *gaizu* (gai as gay and zu as tribe) and *guaitai* (freak) or *ku'er* (cool child) (both translations of the term queer) in Taiwan. The term *tongzhi* has replaced *tongxinglian* or *tongxing'ai*, which has strong clinical connotations, as the dominant discourse for nonnormative genders and sexualities.

Although *tongzhi* serves as an umbrella term for LGBTQ, it should be noted that gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and other queer communities have their own specific terms and may not use (or may even resist) *tongzhi* as self-identification. Therefore, the term is sometimes used strategically by queer collectivities, activists, or academics as an umbrella term, especially when facing the general public. For example, the Taiwan Pride Walk is called Tongzhi Youxing, but in English “Taiwan LGBT Pride.” In this sense, *tongzhi* is a
conceptualization of the term *queer* itself and a tactic of “strategic essentialism.” Nevertheless, *tongzhi*’s popularity may be due to its erasure of sexual connotation and its affirmation of a "positive" rather than a "negative" identity. As argued by Wah-Shan Chou, the term contains “positive cultural references, gender neutrality, desexualization of the stigma of homosexuality, politics beyond the homo-hetero binarism, and indigenous cultural identity for integrating the sexual into the social” (2001, 28). Echoing the shifts in the politics of identity in the West since the 1970s, *tongzhi* gestures to a variegated identity for cultural production, academic focus, consumption, policy advocacy, and social activism in Chinese societies.

**Use of the Term by Activists and within Social Movements**

*Tongzhi* movements in the three Chinese locales—Hong Kong, Taiwan, and China—have their own distinctive paths of development due to their different social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. Briefly put, the state plays a key role that at once enables and constrains the development of *tongzhi* culture and sexual citizenship in these Chinese societies. Religious (Christian/Catholic) nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) shape social and moral developments in Hong Kong and Taiwan (less so in China because of its state Marxism), which has a profound impact on gender and sexual politics in the two locales. Next comes the family, widely seen as the most powerful institution in Chinese societies that circumscribes *tongzhi* lives. The circulation of goods and services consciously developed for and marketed at *tongzhi*, known as the pink economy, also serves as an important platform for identity building and solidarity but at the same time demarcates *tongzhi* along the lines of class, age, gender, ethnicity, and other social and cultural belongings. *Tongzhi* movements have been working along the parameters of these “sites of governance” (for Hong Kong, see Kong 2011 and Kong, Lau, and Li 2015; for China, see Engebretsen and Schroeder 2015; for Taiwan, see Gofyy 2015 and Lee 2017).

**Hong Kong** In Hong Kong, *tongzhi* groups have emerged since the early 1990s, and a few observations can be made about their use of the term. First, *tongzhi* is not so often used in their names, as is the case with Xianggang Shifenyi Hui (Hong Kong Ten Percent Club), the first *tongzhi* group in Hong Kong, founded in 1986 and formally registered in 1992; Xing Quan Hui (Civil Rights for Sexual Diversities), founded in 1999; and Xianggang Caihong (Hong Kong Rainbow), founded in 1998. Second, *tongzhi* appears more in Chinese but not in the English titles, such as Tongzhi Jiankang Cujin Hui (*Satsanga*, 1993) or Zimei Tongzhi (*Queer Sisters*, 1995). Third, *tong* (or *tung* in Cantonese), which signifies “sameness,” has been widely used: Qi Tong Fuwu She (*Horizons*, 1991), Lui Tung Yuen (*Cantonese*, 1996), Xianggang Nu Tong Meng Hui (*Women’s Coalition of HKSAR*, 2003), Nutong Xueshe (2005), Da Tong (*Gay Harmony*, 2009), and Da’ai Tongmeng (*Big Love Alliance*, 2012).

The early *tongzhi* movement of the 1990s strongly emphasized identity building. Activists tried hard to dissociate homosexuality from pathology, to play down the “sexual” aspect of
tongzhi identity, to stress the similarities between heterosexuals and homosexuals, and to emphasize the harmonious nature of Chinese society in stark contrast with the confrontational politics in the West (Kong 2011). The tongzhi movement in the twenty-first century has been more vocal and proactive in fighting for various tongzhi sexual citizenship rights, ranging from conduct-based claims to identity-based and relationship-based claims (Richardson 2000), hallmarked by IDAHO (International Day against Homophobia, 2005–) and Pride Walk (2008–). Activists have sought the right to disclose their sexual identity without being penalized, the right not to have to hide their sexual identity, the right to same-sex marriages or domestic relationships, and the right to access social and legal benefits. From identity building in the 1990s to sexual citizenship since the first decade of the twenty-first century, the term tongzhi has been used mostly in academic writings and social activism as an umbrella term to fight for the rights and benefits of the LGBTQ community in Hong Kong (Kong, Lau, and Li 2015).

Taiwan In 1990 Taiwan's first tongzhi group, Wo Men Zhi Jian (Between Us), a lesbian organization, was formed and thus started the institutionalization of the tongzhi movement in Taiwan. In 1993 Gay Chat became the first officially registered and recognized gay student organization on a Taiwanese university campus (Han 1995). The subsequent formation of student-based tongzhi organizations gave the gay and lesbian movement in Taiwan a distinctively youthful character (Erni and Spires 2001). From 1990 to 1997, there was an explosion of tongzhi-themed publications, including novels, documentaries, gender discourses, biographies, scripts, and HIV/AIDS stories, which led the Taiwanese public to begin to understand the real-life situations of tongzhi (Gofyy 2015). In the meantime, the vibrant growth of new media, the internet, and interuniversity networks created opportunities for BBS (bulletin board system) chat sites or online tongzhi discussion forums targeted to and supported by gays and lesbians, which initiated an unrestricted, diffusive, powerful, and consciousness-provoking cyber mobilization. Furthermore, social activist groups, such as the Taiwan Tongzhi Zixun Rexian Xiehui (Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association, 1998), the Taiwan Xingbie Renquan Xiehui (Gender Sexuality Rights Association Taiwan, 1999), and the 2001 Gay and Lesbian Campaign Taskforce, argued that tongzhi rights needed to be considered an inalienable part of Taiwan’s emerging human rights regime (Wong 2003).

The first glossy lifestyle magazine, G&L (1996–2001), catering to young Chinese gay and lesbian readers called itself the Chinese tongzhi magazine. The magazine’s title had multiple meanings, such as Glory & Liberty, Gentlemen & Ladies, and Gay & Lesbian (Lim 2008). It signified consumerist and cultural citizenship and projected a notion of “tongzhi cosmopolitanism” in Taiwan (Erni and Spires 2001, 30). In 2003 Taiwan successfully organized not just the first Taiwan LGBT Pride parade (Taiwan Tongzhi Youxing), but also the first pride parade in Chinese society. By 2017, this annual parade had become the biggest LGBT pride event in Asia. And more importantly, Taiwan’s top judges in 2017 ruled
in favor of same-sex marriage, leading it to become the first place in Asia to legalize same-sex unions.

In sum, the term *tongzhi* has become, since its arrival in Taiwan from Hong Kong in the early 1990s, the linguistic icon most commonly used to refer to nonnormative genders and sexualities, appearing frequently in academic studies, popular culture, and the names and events of activist organizations (Martin 2000).

**China** In China, while a handful of scattered *tongzhi* websites operated in the 1990s, it was not until the next decade that *tongzhi* nonprofit organizations begin to flourish, with the establishment of community centers (Beijing Tongzhi Zhongxin [Beijing LGBT Center], 2008; Kuaxingbie Zhongxin [Trans Center], 2016), online media outlets (Tongzhi Yi Fanren [Queer Comrades], 2007), family support and counseling groups (Tongxinglian Qinyou Hui [Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, or PFLAG], 2008), cultural festivities (Beijing Kuer Yingzhan [Beijing Queer Film Festival], 2001), and business networks (Tongzhi Shangwu [WorkForLGBT], 2013). Not all organizations explicitly include *tongzhi* in their official names. PFLAG even uses the traditional and clinical term *tongxinglian*, possibly because it makes more immediate sense to parents of *tongzhi*, who are its target audience.

What is common among these NGOs, though, is that oppositional politics and in-your-face tactics always take a back seat, a phenomenon that has to be understood within the broader sociopolitical circumstances. Organizing or unionizing anybody in China is illegal without the government’s approval. This makes the fight for *tongzhi* rights in any collective sense difficult. To avoid sanctions and crackdowns and ensure longer-term sustainability, NGOs must register with the state, so activists tend to adopt a nonconfrontational and nonradical approach, steering clear of tactics perceived as undermining state authority, such as street demonstrations (Chua and Hildebrandt 2014). Most often, such groups have to camouflage themselves as public-health organizations and thus emphasize risk factors and HIV infection at the expense of identity building, sexual rights, and activism (Kong 2011; Engebretsen and Schroeder 2015). This has stripped *tongzhi* activism in China of any militant potential it might have had and has rechanneled it through cultural and corporate arenas, where *tongzhi* are repackaged as morally upright consumer-citizens deserving tolerance and respect.

Another major development is the emergence of PFLAG, whose membership is largely made up of parents of gay and lesbian children instead of gays and lesbians themselves. Appealing to Confucian notions of parental love and care, PFLAG advocates for social acceptance and public tolerance, again avoiding emphasis on sexual and human rights.

The third main development is the rise of the *tongzhi* market, or pink economy, whose discourse and operating mechanisms have had the effect of coupling *tongzhi* visibility with *tongzhi* consumption. A report in 2015 sampled 18,647 *tongzhi* and claimed that they
earned an average of 10,298 renminbi (approximately $1,610) per month, five times the national average (F. Zhu 2015). As observed by Geng Le, founder of the gay dating app Blued, in a 2015 interview: “what I want to do is to show everyone the enormous economic power of the tongzhi community, so that people will no longer look down on us, and the government will know where our value lies” (X. Zhu 2015; translation by Travis S. K. Kong, Sky H. L. Lau, and Amory H. W. Hui).

**The Rise of Transgender-Focused Activism** In the twenty-first century, there has been a gradual rise of a transgender-focused activism within the tongzhi movement across all three locales—Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China. In Hong Kong, there are a few organized groups for transgender people and their supporters, such as Hong Kong Transgender Equality and Acceptance Movement (TEAM, 2002) and the Transgender Resource Center (2008). There are no visible and established transgender entertainment, beauty, or sex industries in Hong Kong, as there are in Thailand. Transgender individuals have been more invisible than gays and lesbians, and they mainly appear as part of negative news stories or as the objects of ridicule in movies. The situation has begun to change, notably with the inclusion of transphobia in the 2012 International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia, thus raising awareness about transgender people within the tongzhi community. Another notable development was the victory of the plaintiff known as “W” in the court case W v. Registrar of Marriages in 2013, in which the Court of Final Appeal overturned the registrar’s decision and held that W, a transgender woman, could marry her boyfriend (Cheung 2012).

In Taiwan, transgender subjectivities and discourses were neglected in the early stages of the local tongzhi movement. In response to the 1999 debate on quasi-transgenderism arising from butch lesbians and feminine gay men within the tongzhi community, the Gender Sexuality Rights Association Taiwan and the Center for the Study of Sexualities started a series of actions, including translations and academic seminars, to develop (extra)medical understanding and public awareness about transgenderism. They thus paved the way for the subsequent establishment of the first transgender activist group in Taiwan, Taiwan TG Dieyuan, in 2000. This group aimed to recognize the intensifying solidarity among transgender people via information provision and hotline consultation services, highlighting the transgender meanings of social and political events, and striving for the rights of transgender individuals (Ho 2003, 2017).

In 2003 the Taipei government subsidized the efforts of local tongzhi NGOs to publish a manual for understanding tongzhi in which the narratives of transgender people were documented by linking them with the global discourse of gender diversity and the gender spectrum. The term transgender was mentioned collectively with lesbian, gay, and bisexual under the category of tongzhi (Chen 2016). In addition, Xingbie Buming Xingdong Lianmeng (Alliance of Trans Action) was set up in 2009 to focus on public education, rights advocacy, antidiscrimination, and counseling and caring services. It was renamed Taiwan
Xingbei Buming Guanhuai Xiehui (Beyond Gender) in 2013 to extend its services to intersex persons and thus make the transgender community more inclusive.

China has a long and rich transgender tradition, ranging from myths, folklore, and the performing arts to imperial court culture (Chiang 2012). Contemporary transgender activism has taken the form of cultural representations, such as documentaries on the lives of transgender people, as well as direct action against transphobia and discriminatory practices. NGOs and community centers have dealt with the hardships faced by transgender individuals on a daily basis and have leveraged the widely used microblogging platform weibo to roll out awareness campaigns. The Beijing Gender Health Education Institute, for example, launched an advocacy campaign for unisex toilets in 2016, supported by over thirty establishments across Beijing. In July 2017, a court in Guiyang ruled that Ciming Health Exam Center had violated the rights of a twenty-nine-year-old trans man in firing him. Nevertheless, uncertainty continues to hover over the impact and prospects of cultural production, online campaigning, and offline organizing for transgender individuals in China, given the state’s tightening censorship of media content and stringent regulation of charities and social organizations in recent years (Bernotaitė 2017).

“Good” and “Bad” Tongzhi

Tongzhi have successfully transformed from mental patients and social outcasts to responsible and respectable citizens since the 1990s. Economic participation and possibly marital and familial connections among tongzhi as consumers have been key means for social inclusion (Richardson 2005). However, it is precisely because of this reconstruction that the tongzhi community is said to endorse a “demobilized gay constituency and a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption” (Duggan 2002, 179). If heteronormativity functions to create a hierarchy of “good” and “bad” citizens by privileging heterosexuals and stigmatizing homosexuals, new homonormativity also differentiates “good,” “normal,” and “healthy” tongzhi, who support dominant heteronormative values, from “bad,” “radical,” and “dangerous” tongzhi, who fail to achieve these ideals (e.g., working class, rural migrant), who engage in outlawed sexualities (e.g., prostitution, public sex, chemsex), or who subvert sexual norms and values (e.g., polyamory, open relationships). These individuals remain (or become further) closeted, stigmatized, and disenfranchised.

A few examples can illustrate this dilemma. In Hong Kong, an activist organization known as Rainbow Action threw leaflets in a shopping mall in 2001 to protest against Red Cross blood-donation guidelines that banned male homosexuals from giving blood. In 2002 activists wearing sadomasochistic outfits tied themselves to the front gate of a police station to support a BDSM couple under prosecution. In 2003 activists staged a kiss-in at a Catholic church to denounce the bishop for his opposition to same-sex marriage. All these actions were largely disapproved of by both the general public and the tongzhi community,
as they were perceived to “bring shame to the tongzhi community” (Kong, Lau, and Li 2015, 197).

In Taiwan, the proposed theme of the Eleventh Taiwan LGBT Pride parade in 2013 was “Make LGBT Visible 2.0—The Voice of Sexual Sufferer.” The “sexual sufferer” included HIV carriers, BDSM practitioners, sex workers, and chemsex/chem-fun (i.e., an intoxicated eroticism that combines gay sex and drugs such as ecstasy, ketamine, or crystal meth) tongzhi. The inclusion of these marginalized groups drew severe criticism within the tongzhi community, and the term sexual sufferer was deemed too harsh, negative, or stigmatizing for “normal/good” tongzhi. It seemed to threaten the respectability of Taiwan’s tongzhi community, especially when Taiwan was debating amendments to the civil code that sought to incorporate same-sex marriage and other citizenship rights. In China, PFLAG operates a chat group on Blued and shares HIV-related information and other updates, but the administrator prohibits members from discussing political and sexual topics, openly soliciting hookups, or exchanging erotic texts and images. Such top-down “netiquette” ensures that there is literally no room for political campaigning or flirtatious exchanges.

These incidents point to important larger questions concerning the future of tongzhi: How can a tongzhi be radical but at the same time a good citizen? To what extent is the tongzhi movement fighting for inclusion into the mainstream but at the same time offering a subversive challenge to the heterosexualization of intimate life? What real transformations are possible for sexual and gender norms within tongzhi movements and the wider society? These questions echo the international debate between assimilation politics and the gay shame discourse (Dangerous Bedfellows 1996; Warner 1999; Halperin and Traub 2009). Assimilation politics often create “good,” “normal,” and “healthy” sexual citizens, who are “expected to be gender conventional, link sex to love and a marriage-like relationship, defend family values, personify economic individualism, and display national pride” (Seidman 2002, 133). This conception of “good” sexual citizens contrasts sharply with “bad,” “perverted,” and “dangerous” queers, or the “queer unwanted,” who do not ask for inclusion in the mainstream nor perform as “good” citizens by following conventional gender and sexual practices. Instead, they “shamelessly” challenge existing heteronormative and even homonormative practices and views by creating alternative and transient “counterpublics.”

A Transnational Study of Tongzhi

This short entry has traced the history of the origin of the term tongzhi and its queer appropriation first in Hong Kong and then in Taiwan and China in the 1990s. It has also examined how the term has been mobilized within activist groups and social movements, and has pointed out its usage, as well as limitations, mainly through the “good/bad” homosexual debate in the three Chinese societies. Such a transnational history of the term
is often neglected in the international and global study of sexuality. The dominant model for understanding contemporary non-Western and nonnormative identities has always been drawn from the theorization of Western queer identities, cultures, and communities (Martin et al. 2008). Globalization is usually viewed as a binary process of the interflows between the global and the local (Altman 1997); what is often missing is an examination of the queer flows of circulation among and within Asian societies that constitute, inform, and shape queer identities, practices, and desires (Kong 2011; see Chiang and Heinrich 2014; Martin 2015; and Chiang and Wong 2016 for their discussions of queer Sinophone cultures). Tongzhi therefore serves as an excellent vantage point to contemplate these transnational and interregional queer flows and rethink the meaning of non-Western and nonnormative genders and sexualities.

SEE ALSO Kathoey; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Taiwan; Tongzhi Literature, Taiwan; Transgender Organizations in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan; W v. Registrar of Marriages (2013)

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Tongzhi Literature, Taiwan

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A genre of Chinese-language literature featuring homosexuality that flourished in Taiwan starting in the 1960s.

Whereas LGBTQ histories in some countries are often documented through oral history, twentieth-century LGBTQ history in Taiwan can be traced particularly through tongzhi literature—a genre consisting of literary works featuring homosexuality, some of which have been translated into English. Throughout the twentieth century in Taiwan there was a tendency to sociopolitical dissidence, such as criticism of authoritarianism and advocacy for women's rights, to materialize discreetly in literature before it progressed to overt activism. Tongzhi literature was thus a main platform for LGBTQ representation, especially during the period of martial law (1949–1987), when homosexuality was taboo and any activism was forbidden.

The Impact via Hong Kong

The term tongzhi literature emerged in the early 1990s, when Anglo-American “new queer cinema” was introduced to Taiwan via Hong Kong. The activists and writers in Hong Kong interpreted new queer cinema as “tongzhi cinema,” suggesting that the term tongzhi (the same will) is evocative of the politics of Anglo-American gay rights movements during the AIDS crisis, as well as more politically energizing than the prevalent term tongxinglian (homosexual). Effectively convinced by these Hong Kong advocates, Taiwanese society quickly adopted tongzhi in lieu of tongxinglian.

Eager to present its post-martial law image to the post-Cold War world, Taiwan was not yet ready to offer a Taiwanese version of tongzhi cinema, but it became evident that a literary version of the Taiwanese tongzhi legacy—namely, locally created tongzhi literature—might bring the nation into line with the First World countries that registered renewed interest in LGBTQ rights and representations. Tongzhi literature was expected to reclaim an elided history of local literature about homosexuality, which had been stigmatized since at least the early decades of the Cold War. The flourishing of Taiwanese tongzhi cinema, including such works as Ang Lee’s Xi yan (1993; The Wedding Banquet), did not occur until after Taiwanese tongzhi literature had become popular.
Scholars of tongzhi literature focus not only on the literature produced after the appearance of the term *tongzhi literature* but also retrospectively on the often-forgotten works predating this conceptualization. The retrospective efforts were mobilized by the lexical replacement of *tongxinglian* with *tongzhi*, with *tongxinglian* connoting homosexuality as something shameful to be forgotten, but *tongzhi* confirming homosexuality as a pride to be remembered. When labeled “tongxinglian literature,” LGBTQ literature during the era of martial law was commonly ignored, but once renamed “tongzhi literature,” it became an asset that was gladly salvaged in post–martial law Taiwan.

**An Imagined Community of Readers**

Textual representations of LGBTQ people appeared throughout the twentieth century. During Japanese colonial rule before World War II, Japanese-language newspapers in Taiwan often mentioned suicides of homosexual women. However, the 1950s was the crucial period when modern tongzhi literature started to take shape. According to Chi (2017), an imagined community of readers of tongzhi literature emerged during that decade as Cold War–period newspapers increasingly published news and literature relating to homosexuality. In the early 1950s, in the wake of the Korean War (1950–1953), these newspapers were urgently pedagogical in at least two aspects: they imposed modern Chinese language on Taiwanese readers, further marginalizing the Japanese-language readers educated in the Japanese colonial period; and, strongly influenced by the US press, they bombarded readers with homophobic McCarthyism (a vociferous campaign against alleged communists in the US government and other institutions, conducted by US senator Joseph McCarthy), which viewed gay people in the United States as potential allies of communists and thus advocated for their suppression.

Chi’s history of tongzhi literature looks similar to the histories presented by Tze-lan Deborah Sang and Wai Siam Hee, which examine Chinese-language cultural representations of homosexuality in the twentieth century. Owing to her emphasis on China in the first half of the twentieth century, Sang does not discuss the newly interpreted term *tongzhi* and the critical role played by Hong Kong writers in the reevaluation of homosexuality by the end of the twentieth century. Focusing on narratives of men (but not women) in China, Hee observes that modern tongzhi literature did not emerge in China until the end of the twentieth century and then was ignored in literary and academic circles. Unlike Chi, Sang and Hee do not focus on the 1950s because China was not exposed to American values during the period, whereas Taiwan was open to, and influenced by, the anti-Communist and homophobic ideologies of the 1950s United States.

**The 1950s**

In the 1950s newspapers in Taiwan diligently introduced homosexual-related materials
from the United States such as reports on the persecution of gay men in Washington, DC, and literary works exposing homosexuals’ secret lives. Among such literary works was Hazel Lin’s novel *Moon Vow* (1958), in which a female psychotherapist converts the members of a lurid lesbian sex club into husband-loving wives. resembling typical lesbian pulp fiction, *Moon Vow* was serialized over several months in a major newspaper in Taiwan in 1958, as soon as it was published in the United States. Thus, despite the apparent absence of any local writer of tongzhi literature in the 1950s, a readership emerged that would be taught what homosexuality is in newspapers filled with American discussions of nonconforming sexuality. These newspapers also fed readers sensational reports on Taiwanese homosexuals that seemed to support the reports from the United States.

**The 1960s**

Probably in response to the rampant homophobia of the 1950s, writers discussing homosexuality since the 1960s have tended to show more sympathy than disdain for sexual nonconformity. Hsien-yung Pai (1937–), author of the 1983 novel *Nietzu* (Crystal Boys [1989]), the most famous work on homosexuality from Taiwan, appealed to his readers to sympathize with homosexuals. In the 1960s Pai began to publish short stories about forbidden desires—for example, between a senior physician and his dying patient, between an aging painter and his young male nude model, and among men cruising in the Taipei New Park, the best-known cruising spot during the period of martial law.

Pai was not the only contributor to tongzhi literature in the 1960s. Kuei Chiang (1908–1980) and Liang-hui Kuo (1926–2013) were established writers a generation before Pai. Chiang’s colossal *Chongyang* (1961; Double suns), set in the pre–World War II era, presents the sexual exploits of its antihero protagonist, a member of the Communist Party in China. In line with anti-Communist propaganda, the whimsically depraved protagonist sexually corrupts both women and men. Discounted by some scholars as a negative and thus dismissible representation of gay men, the novel’s playful scenario of the protagonist’s sodomy is a product of the McCarthyist mentality that allied homosexuality with Communism. *Chongyang*’s contribution to tongzhi literature is less as a realistic depiction of male homosexuality than as an example of 1960s homophobic propaganda inspired by Cold War paranoia. Kuo published *Qingcao qingqing* (1963; Green is the grass), whose protagonist, Ming-ming, an effeminate male student in his early teens, is infatuated with his classmate Lei, a more masculine boy. The two boys play a prank in the school washroom and touch each other’s genitals, but end up parting company when Lei shows interest in dating girls. Because of Ming-ming’s immaturity, this novel is not so much about desire as it is an interrogation of heteronormativity, embodied by the militaristic environment of the school.

**The 1970s**
The 1970s was a turning point for women characters in tongzhi literature as Taiwan's economic boom prompted women to leave their rural hometowns to work in sweatshop factories. With relatively more economic independence than before, working-class women began consuming romance pulp fiction that depicted female characters in a variety of relationships, including with other women. In essence, women's increased presence in the labor force enabled them to view other women as subjects of desire. Before the 1970s, such representations had been scarce at best. *Moon Vow*, which depicts a heterotopia of lesbians, was a 1950s US import that showed no sympathy for women-loving women. One of the few texts in the 1960s that depict women's same-sex love is Pai's short story “Gulian hua” (*1970; Love's lone flower*), in which a retiring madam cohabitates with the bar girls who work for her.

The theme of financial pressure markedly differentiates 1970s tongzhi literature about women from the works about men. Women-loving women must earn money not only to maintain their independence from men but also to build homes with the women they love. In these scenarios, sexual gratification is not a priority. In contrast, the male protagonists from this decade are not concerned with similar financial pressures because, generally, they seek not to settle down with the men they love but to enjoy transient sexual encounters. In 1976 Hsiao-fo Xuan (1951–) published *Yuan zhi wai* (Outside the circle), which centers on a butch teenage lesbian. Cut off financially from her family, she vows to succeed in a profitable career and in winning the heart of the woman she loves. Having attained financial prestige, she dates a couple of impoverished cabaret singers without finding the right woman for herself. The aforementioned Kuo, whose 1960s novel *Qingcao qingqing* concerns a teenage boy’s desire, published *Liangzhong yiwai de* (*Beyond the two genders*), whose title reflects the notion that lesbians are a third gender. In this novel, set in the underground lesbian community in Taipei, a “tomboy” (an English word widely adopted in Taiwan, similar to “butch” in US lesbian culture) in her thirties pursues, with money and sex, a passive-aggressive married “woman” (similar to “femme”) in her forties. This novel’s “tomboy-woman” pair debunks the common impression that lesbian characters in tongzhi literature are generally young girls attracted to other girl students, possibly the result of the popularity of the works of Tien-hsin Chu (1958–), known for exalting platonic love between high school girls.
Fran Martin (2010) has observed in Chu’s works a conflict between energetic teenage girls and bored, aging women who were once teenage girls. These older women, now stuck in heterosexual marriages, once studied in elite schools and enjoyed infatuations with other girls. It is important to note, however, that Xuan's and Kuo's works, although less popular than Chu's, may be seen as more insightful about the lives of 1970s Taiwanese lesbians, many of whom gained more sexual freedom with their increased participation in the workforce. In Xuan's and Kuo’s works, the older female characters confront financial pressures not felt by the youthful girl students admired in Chu's works.

The 1970s tongzhi literature about women envisions a Taiwan that accommodates women-loving women, whereas works on men tend to focus more on the repressive environment of Taiwan. The contrast between the stories of women and men is illustrated, on the one hand, by the theme of financial burden evident in the texts about women (where money secures a home so the couple can settle down), and on the other hand by the lure of the United States, imagined as a promised land for gay men, in the texts about men. In some works, Taiwanese men are lucky enough to experience American life. In 1972, renowned poet Mu Yang (1940–) published “1972,” an essay on what he saw in the Bay Area and Seattle. Enlightened by activism in general in Berkeley, California, Yang, hitherto unfamiliar with homosexuality, found that (white) gay scholars also deserved his understanding and
sympathy. In 1977 Pai published in an elite journal sample chapters of *Nietzu*, in which a Taiwanese man who has killed his gay lover is smuggled to New York City. In pre-AIDS-crisis Manhattan, the fugitive enjoys an endless feast of eye-opening sexual adventures with men of different races that is therapeutic for his mind and body. In many other 1970s works, however, Taiwanese men find the American life out of reach. Wittingly or unwittingly, they turn to local proxies of US culture, such as a legendary coffee bar that flaunts a supposedly American lifestyle and attracts youthful clients who might be nonheteronormative; a movie theater adjacent to Taipei’s New Park, where gay men cruise after watching the handsome white actors in Hollywood movies; and a psychiatrist’s clinic that purports to determine whether gay men are normal according to supposedly American standards.

Despite the differences between women and men in 1970s tongzhi literature, they are similarly rendered minorities in a heteronormative society. This is not pronounced in the works of the 1960s, in which characters, often thrown into unspecified social settings, keep their secrets to themselves without unsettling anybody else, let alone the larger society. In contrast, in 1970s tongzhi literature women-loving women and men-desiring men begin to feel obligated to justify themselves to the larger society, whose knowledge of homosexuality is minimal. In *Yuan zi wai*, the butch protagonist loses financial support from her family precisely because she decides to come out to her father. *Liangzhong yiwai de* provides insight into the lesbian protagonist’s nagging anxiety over how society regards lesbians; she is exhausted not only by having to persuade heterosexual busybodies that lesbian relationships are viable but also by having to reassure her femme lover that they need not worry about onlookers’ comments.

**The 1980s**

Tongzhi literature from the 1980s is relatively better-known to domestic and international readers, who generally subscribe to two assumptions: first, that Pai’s *Nietzu* is the earliest work on homosexuality in Taiwan; and second, that the lifting of martial law in 1987 marked the break point before which tongzhi literature was suppressed (the Dark Ages) and after which tongzhi literature started to bloom (the Renaissance). Both assumptions are inaccurate. A longtime best-selling work with monumental status in modern Taiwanese literature, *Nietzu* was preceded by many earlier works of tongzhi literature, such as Pai’s own short stories in the 1960s, *Chongyang* in the 1960s, *Qingcao qingqing* in the 1960s, and *Yuan zi wai* and *Liangzhong yiwai de* in the 1970s. The flowering of tongzhi literature by the end of the twentieth century, in terms of quality and quantity, owes less to the end of martial law in the late 1980s than to the often-underestimated impact of AIDS, which was detailed in Taiwan via US media in the early 1980s. Indeed, some writers were so stunned by the AIDS crisis that they dared to discuss it in tongzhi literature in the intensely homophobic environment of the early to mid-1980s.
It is fair to esteem Pai’s *Nietzu*, though not as the earliest work of tongzhi literature but more precisely as a pioneering work dramatizing the conflict between homosexuals and their parents. It is seldom understood that this opposition is relatively new in this literature. Before *Nietzu*, or before the 1980s, tongzhi literature paid little attention to this intergenerational conflict; earlier works scarcely mentioned homosexual characters’ parents or families, who were often absent or too distant to intervene in the sexual dissenters’ lives. According to Chi (2017), whereas tongzhi literature was not concerned with heteronormative society until the 1970s, it was not interested in parents’ acceptance of their homosexual children until the 1980s, when the nuclear family—newly established as a normative social unit in Taiwan—became a new hegemony. The conflict between homosexuals (cast as rebellious children) and their heartbroken parents, found in *Nietzu* and later works, was due in part to the emerging ideology that revered the nuclear family and held that parents are supposed to monitor their children closely. A more pronounced lament for the transformation of the Taiwanese familial structure can be found in *Nan-dung Chao* (1987) by Ying-chen Chen (1937–2016), one of Taiwan’s best-known Marxist writers. Portrayed as a handsome man addicted to drugs, having sex with both women and men, the titular character embodies the vices of post–Cold War capitalism deplored by the author. The elders of Chao’s family believe in preserving the more traditional, larger household in which solidarity across classes is admired, but Chao, made indulgent by selfish individualism, can barely maintain a bourgeois nuclear family.

**The 1990s**

The 1990s are commonly considered the golden age of tongzhi literature, characterized by such award-winning, acclaimed novels as Tien-wen Chu’s (1956–) *Huangren shouji* (1994; *Notes of a Desolate Man* [2000]), Miaojin Qiu’s (1969–1995) *Eryu shouji* (1994; *Notes of a Crocodile* [2017]) and *Monmate yishu* (1996; *Last Words from Montmartre* [2014]), and Chen Xue’s (1970–) short story “Xunzao tianshi yishi de chibang” (1995; “Searching for the Lost Wings of the Angel” [2003]). Chu’s novel is a confessional recollection of a gay man in his forties mourning his gay friend who was energized by queer activism and killed by AIDS, and expecting his union with his boyfriend to be as sacrosanct as a heterosexual marriage. Qiu, who killed herself in Montmartre, Paris, at the age of twenty-six, is a butch lesbian icon. Her *Notes of a Crocodile* alternates between story lines about a butch college student heartbroken over failed affairs with girls and about a cartoonish crocodile who plays ventriloquist for the protagonist. The posthumously published *Last Words from Montmartre* presents a butch lesbian student who bids farewell to her lovers and dreams of being a dedicated artist. Also popular among lesbian readers in Taiwan and beyond are Chen Xue’s portrayals of femme or bisexual women who thrive on unblessed, allegedly immoral, love affairs with other women, in contrast to Qiu’s butch characters, who are incessantly lured by death. The success of 1990s tongzhi literature paved the way for the emergence of LGBTQ activism in Taiwan, which has inspired more and more citizens to
interrogate the status quo of heteronormativity.

**SOURCE:** SHIBAO (TAPEI)

**Cover of Eryu Shouji (1994) by Miaojin Qiu.** The story line of Eryu shouji (published in English as Notes of a Crocodile) alternates between a butch lesbian heartbroken over her failed affairs and a cartoonish crocodile who virtually serves as the protagonist’s mouthpiece.

**The Twenty-First Century**

Tongzhi literature was more popular during the twentieth century than in the new millennium. The private, discreet acts of reading and writing tongzhi literature were more central to the twentieth century, when coming out was a rare act of courage in a society inhospitable to nonnormative sexual expression. The genre lost its monopoly over the cultural expressions of the LGBTQ community as more Taiwanese citizens engaged in public representations of LGBTQ identity and became openly critical of the status quo, and as more public forms such as theatrical productions, documentary showings, and poetry readings on LGBTQ themes became fashionable.

**SEE ALSO** Literary Discourses in the Ottoman Middle East (1500–1900); Literature, African (Anglophone); Literature, African (Francophone); Literature, Caribbean (Anglophone and Creole); Literature, Caribbean (Francophone); Tongzhi


Hee, Wai Siam. *Cong yanshi dao xingshi: tongzhi shuxie yu jindangdai Zhongguo de nanxing jiangou* [From amorous histories to sexual histories: tongzhi writings and the construction of masculinities in late Qing and modern China]. Taoyuan, Taiwan: National Central University, 2015.


Trans Issues in Africa

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The state of trans people in several different African countries as well as the work of activists to advance trans rights.

As is the case in the rest of the world, there is no singular “trans” definition or experience in African countries. Sexual orientation is composed of various identities, and trans, gender-nonconforming, and other queer identities are part of a spectrum of identification. Before colonization, African cultures tended to acknowledge that spectrum, often in terms that suggested “man/woman.” Such people might be regarded an amusing quirk explained by the inscrutable ways that spirits sometimes embodied themselves in living people or how they take on respected ritual roles. Examples of such effeminate males include the gorjigeen among the Wolof of Senegal, the ‘yan daudu among the Hausa of northern Nigeria,) and the ashtime among the Maale of southern Ethiopia. Rudi C. Bleys (1995), Stephen O. Murray and Will Roscoe (1998), and John K. Thornton (1998) discuss dozens of other historical accounts from across the continent that attest to a great diversity of gender expression, sometimes but not always manifest in sexual relationships.

European colonialism brought two important influences: a scientific paradigm that demanded clear categorization and new forms of Christianity that judged sexual and gender diversity in moralistic, often highly stigmatizing terms. Modernization under these conditions introduced widespread intolerance of many aspects of traditional society, including African culture’s varied gender expressions. A fluid definition of gender identity is thus now at odds with most contemporary African societies that are, by and large, perceived as socially conservative or, at best, ignorant. The conflation of gender identity and sexual orientation within contemporary African societies is very rigid and is enforced by the state, religion, and the media, resulting in social institutions based on a dualistic binary concept of gender, with no in-between (Theron and Kgositau 2015). For this reason, gender-nonconforming and trans people who do not fit into this binary concept of gender have been singled out as targets of systematic and institutionalized homophobia and transphobia throughout the continent.

Cases of Persecution

One of the most widely publicized cases of the persecution of trans individuals and how
gender identity is conflated with sexual orientation is that of Tiwonge Chimbalanga, a transgender woman in Malawi. In 2009 she participated in a traditional engagement ceremony known as a *chinkhoswe* with a man named Steven Monjeza, and a reporter for the *Nation* (Blantyre, Malawi) who witnessed the event, held at her workplace, announced it as the first gay marriage in Malawi. The engagement was a crime in the eyes of the law, given that homosexuality is illegal in Malawi. Two days after the published report, the couple was arrested on charges of gross indecency. Chimbalanga was confused by the charges, as she related to reporter Mark Gevisser for a 2014 *Guardian* (London) article: “I am a woman…. They told me I was gay when they arrested me…. They told me that I was paid to do my chinkhoswe by the LGBTs from overseas. But the first time I heard the word ‘gay’ was when I saw it next to my photograph in the newspaper.” In May 2010 Chimbalanga and Monjeza were both sentenced to fourteen years in prison with hard labor as a penalty designed to deter others from engaging in homosexual activity. The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC), the Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa, Amnesty International, and many other African and international organizations advocated on the couple’s behalf and wrote letters to the Malawian government to drop the charges. Malawian president Bingu wa Mutharika pardoned the couple after a meeting with Ban Ki-moon, the United Nations secretary-general. As a result of the publicity surrounding the case, Chimbalanga become one of the first known refugees to be granted asylum in South Africa on the basis of discrimination because of sexuality or gender identity.

There are other notable cases of trans individuals forced to flee their countries because of persecution. Alexandra Rubera from Burundi, who self-defined as a transgender woman, was repeatedly harassed and humiliated because of pervasive homophobic hatred that culminated with her arrest under the penal code and sodomy laws in that country. The charges against her were typically based on claims that she was a “public nuisance,” a “fraud,” or “imposter identity.” Rubera fled to South Africa in 2006 and filed for refugee status there, seeking protection against Burundi’s homophobic laws.

Other African trans individuals have not been so fortunate. On 2 June 2008 South Africa trans individual Daisy Dube was shot and killed outside a Johannesburg nightclub after being accosted by men who called her and her friends *izitabane*, a derogatory term widely used in South Africa to refer to an LGBTQI person. The first openly identified transgender woman in Tanzania, named Auntie Victoria, likewise met a sad end in 2009. Auntie Victoria had undergone gender-affirming surgery in Europe and returned to Tanzania to earn a living as a tavern owner. There, she experienced constant persecution until finally she committed suicide by ingesting poison, ironically on the International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia. Following her death in a local hospital, an unknown person released pictures of her naked body online. When her family refused to identify her body at the hospital morgue, the hospital exposed her body for public viewing under the guise of identifying her. With the support of the IGLHRC and Gender DynamiX, activists in Tanzania
eventually succeeded in convincing the hospital to stop the public viewing. The final dishonor to Auntie Victoria was that, because of religious customs, her family insisted on burying her in her “original form,” removing her breasts and surgically affirmed genitalia. The IGLHRC appealed to the United Republic of Tanzania to include this incident as part of its fourth periodic report (July 2009) to the United Nations Human Rights Committee.

**SIGNS OF PROGRESS FOR TRANS INDIVIDUALS IN AFRICA**

**1980:**
South African–born trans model Lauren Foster appears in *Vogue Mexico*, post-sexual reassignment surgery and is subsequently outed as a man. Despite bad publicity, Foster embraces her role as a transgender model, later becoming the first transgender woman to regularly appear on the American reality TV franchise *Real Housewives* (*The Real Housewives of Miami, 2011–2013*).

**2003:**
Senegalese-born model Barbara Diop achieves notoriety when it is revealed after she represented the country of Zimbabwe at the opening ceremony of the Cricket World Cup hosted by South Africa that she is a trans woman. Although Diop initially denies it, she later corroborates the news. Three years later she moves to North America and finds success as a transgender model and designer.

**August 2010:**
South Africa’s Labour Court rules in favor of Christine Ehlers’s reinstatement after she takes her employer, Bohler Uddeholm, to court for dismissing her based on her transition.

**24 November 2012:**
The first trans and intersex pride event on the continent of Africa takes place in Gaborone, Botswana, initiated by the Rainbow Identity Association, which hosts various trans and intersex activists from other African countries.

**December 2012:**
A trans man makes history when he participates in the third Mr. SA (South Africa) Leather contest and comes out as trans on stage during his speech. At the time of the contest, SA Leather’s constitution stipulated that only cisgender and gay or bisexual men are allowed to participate. Subsequently, SA Leather’s board decides to add this to the next annual meeting’s agenda as a discussion point, and members vote to amend the constitution to include all sexual orientations, as well as all genders and gender identities.

**October 2013:**
Angolan transgender musician Titica is named a goodwill ambassador for the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). Titica is a pioneer in the local music genre called *kuduro* and has performed for the Angolan president José Eduardo dos Santos. Her appointment as UNAIDS goodwill ambassador comes at
a time when many acknowledge Angola being at a tipping point from a rigid anti-LGBTI state to one where there is social recognition and acceptance of the presence of transgender persons, although the state’s penal code still outlaws homosexuality.

**June 2014:**
A photography exhibition by the Somali photographer Abdi Osman features a trans woman from Somalia called Sumaya. Somalia has long remained one of the countries in Africa with no known trans voice. This exhibit thus dramatically reveals the existence of trans persons in Somalia.

**2015:**
Cloe Gair, a trans woman from Despatch, Eastern Cape, a remote and often overlooked geographical area of South Africa, runs her own visibility campaign for trans sensitization by hiring an advertisement agency to post her photo with a positive message on the back window of a municipal bus. The quoted message —“Hi, I am Cloe Caylen Gair,” with this quote from Nelson Mandela: “Do not judge me by my successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again”—is accompanied by her Facebook and YouTube addresses. The ad runs for a year, until November 2016.

**10 March 2017:**
South African trans woman Nare Mphela wins her case against the Limpopo Department of Education, which is ordered by the court to pay her 60,000 rand in damages for violating the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act. Mphela had endured physical and verbal abuse in school at the direction of the school’s principal because of her gender identity.

**September 2017:**
The Western Cape High Court in South Africa rules that individuals in heterosexual marriages have the right to change their gender without dissolving their unions.

**December 2017:**
A court ruling orders the government of Botswana to recognize a transgender woman's identity for the first time after trans woman Tshepo Ricki Kgositau successfully sues the government for its refusal to legally recognize her gender as female.

**Early Organizations**

In 1996, years before any known trans activism or the existence of any movement, Barbara—who chose to never use her surname in public to protect her and her family's privacy—and some of her friends set up an association for transgender and lesbian gays in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. The association was called the Côte d’Ivoire Transvestites Association, and
Barbara served as president. She participated in the production of the 1998 documentary film *Woubi chéri*, directed by Laurent Bocahut and Philip Brooks. In Côte d’Ivoire, the term *woubi* refers to a man who is the effeminate partner in a relationship, while the term *yossi* refers to the more masculine partner or husband. In later years, Barbara founded Woubi International (*Barbara 2014*).

In 1992, a few years before Barbara and her friends started their group in Côte d'Ivoire, the South African social group Phoenix Society faded away into nonexistence after being around for thirteen years. The Phoenix Society was possibly the continent’s first well-documented (*GALA 2017*) social group catering to trans women and cross-dressers (*Morgan, Marais, and Wellbeloved 2009*). Also among the Phoenix Society’s members was one trans man. The exact reason for the dissolving of the Phoenix Society is unclear. There was speculation that threats (to investigate the Phoenix Society) were made to the founder by the former apartheid government’s Special Branch of the police forces.

**Apartheid-Era Policies and Their Reversal**

Also during apartheid rule, the South African Defence Force (SADF) engaged in efforts to police gender and censor citizens. Studies point to the SADF being the apartheid government’s agent to ensure that sexuality and gender were being policed. The notorious Aversion Project aimed to condition gay and lesbian military conscripts and uniformed (and unconsented) soldiers to heteronormativity through chemical castration, the administration of cross-gender hormones, and shock therapy, in an ongoing, and ultimately failed, effort to change their behavior. Evidence surfaced years after the end of apartheid that the SADF conducted forced sex-change operations on gay and lesbian military conscripts (*Swarr 2012*).

In 1992, around the same time that the Phoenix Society faded out of existence, the National Party government in South Africa changed the law so that transsexual people from that date forward would no longer be able to apply to the Department of Home Affairs to change their gender on the national birth register. A window was provided, however: if a person could provide proof that they were in their transition process prior to 1992, then they could still apply (*Swarr 2012; Klein 2008; Morgan, Marais, and Wellbeloved 2009*). Intersex and trans people in South Africa lived in limbo for the next twelve years. In 2002 Sally Gross, Simone Heradien, and Estian Smit made oral presentations to the South African parliament to advocate for an amendment to the Births and Deaths Registration Act of 1992, allowing trans and intersex people to have their legal documentation reflect their gender identity, even if they have not had genital surgery (*Klein 2008*). This amendment, known as the Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act of 2003, was enacted in 2004. The implementation of this amendment was still in dispute as of 2017, and advocates have continued to work toward satisfying its full implementation.
While trans and gender-diverse people in South Africa were repressed into silence and censorship during the 1990s, progress was made in other regions in Africa. Besides Barbara in Côte d’Ivoire, another individual grappled with his gender and identity for years and, as a result, the first (known) book on the continent to address gender from a personal point of view was published in 1997: *From Juliet to Julius* by Julius Kaggwa, a Ugandan intersex person. Although Kaggwa is not trans per se, this book is worth mentioning given when it was published and the anguish of isolation revealed by Kaggwa.

**The African Trans Movement in the Twenty-First Century**

A movement cannot exist without the individuals that form part of that movement (and create organizations along the way)—the persons who walked the path before the movement is acknowledged as such. Most of the historical record has remained silent about trans people, viewing them as being either nonexistent or underrepresented in many of the existing narratives. With the exception of scandalized portraits (e.g., Chimbalanga), trans women are, according to the media in many African countries, “female imposters” committing fraud (e.g., Rubera) or reduced to spectacle and to be ridiculed (e.g., Auntie Victoria). Since the emergence of a trans movement, combined efforts in advocacy and sensitization have led to an increase of individuals coming out publicly, both in their private lives and on public platforms.

The emergence of a trans movement on the African continent started as early as the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century. In July 2005, for example, Gender DynamiX was established in South Africa by ciswoman Liesl Theron and her trans partner, Lex Kirsten. Theron became the face of the organization during its formative years so that Kirsten’s job would not be jeopardized by her association with it. Gender DynamiX was the first registered organization in Africa advocating specifically for trans people, focusing on social outreach, health issues, and rights for trans people in South Africa and elsewhere on the continent.

In subsequent years, advocacy, movement building, and trans organizations developed quickly around the continent. On an organizational level, great strides were made in a number of countries, while individuals continued to effect change without organizational support in other nations. As recently as 2010, nearly no trans organization talked about or advocated for the depathologization of transgender identity or the removal of “gender identity disorders” from the World Health Organization’s International Classification of Diseases. A mere five years later the trans movement’s advocacy strategies had become refined, and on a regular basis trans organizations and leaders were hosting meetings on thematic topics and engaging in joint efforts in such areas as advocacy for gender recognition, health access, and the formation of regional networks.
PHOTO COURTESY OF CLOE GAIR.

Poster of South African Trans Woman Cloe Gair on the Back of a Bus in Eastern Cape, South Africa. Gair embarked on a trans visibility campaign in her native Eastern Cape between 2015 and 2016. Like many other African trans individuals, Gair struggled to find employment for years before she established a successful perfume business in 2015.

South Africa is known for its constitution and several liberal laws in favor of LGBTQI rights. Yet the experience of LGBTQI individuals on the ground is still marred by discrimination and hostility. There are fewer than five hospitals in South Africa that include gender-affirming procedures as part of their health care. The best-known gender clinic is at the Grootte Schuur Hospital in Cape Town, which has a waiting list for surgery longer than twenty years. Health care and the implementation of Act 49 of 2003, the aforementioned Alteration of Sex Description and Sex Status Act, are some of the most pertinent advocacy areas for trans organizations in South Africa.

Trans organizations struggle to receive legal recognition by means of registration in most African countries, with the exception of the positive outcomes in Botswana (2010) and Kenya (2014). A good example of the strides being made in regard to legal gender self-determination is the case of Transgender Education and Advocacy (TEA), a transgender rights organization in Kenya that engaged in a lengthy legal battle to register the organization and individual members. The group had been denied permission by Kenya's Nongovernmental Organizations Co-ordination Board on the grounds that three transgender women listed in the application—Audrey Mbugua, Maureen Muia, and Annet Jennifer—did not have names that “reflected their gender” (Okoth 2014). In a historic court battle initiated in 2011, TEA received a landmark victory in Kenya's high court in 2014 when Justice George Odunga ruled that the NGO Co-ordination Board had acted in a manner that was “unfair, unreasonable, unjustified and in breach of rules of natural justice”
The NGO Co-ordination Board was ordered to register TEA with immediate effect from this date. In many countries, trans organizations remain unregistered, with organizational statuses varying from underground and/or illegal to relying on the protection of host organizations. In February 2017, after years of advocacy, the high court in Kenya ordered the state to alter the names on identity documents for five trans persons.

### KEY DATES IN TRANS ACTIVISM IN UGANDA

**2002:**
Victor Juliet Mukasa, a Ugandan human rights defender and activist who identifies as a transgender lesbian, starts speaking publicly in the local media about the oppression of LGBTI persons in Uganda.

**2004:**
Mukasa helps found the LGBTI rights group Sexual Minorities Uganda.

**2005:**
After Mukasa conducts an interview on the radio regarding LGBTI issues, the station is heavily fined and Mukasa's house is raided by the police for documents and information. Mukasa sues the Ugandan government for violation of privacy and flees to South Africa. Three years later, a Ugandan court rules in Mukasa's favor, but the government's stance against homosexuality remains unchanged, and in February 2014 the Anti-Homosexuality Act is signed into law, criminalizing any sexual acts and relations between people of the same sex. (This law is ruled invalid on procedural grounds later that year.) In 2013 Mukasa was granted asylum in the United States out of fear of persecution in Uganda.

**January 2008:**
Transgender, Intersex, and Transsexuals Uganda is established by Nikilas Mawanda, a trans man and Ugandan activist, with a focus on advocating for the rights of transgender, intersex, and transsexual persons in Uganda.

**September 2008:**
Julius Kaggwa starts the first informal support group in Uganda for intersex persons, which is hosted by a coalition of Christian children's rights organizations. In July 2009 the group is formalized under the name Support Initiative for People with Atypical Sex Development.

**April 2011:**
Transgender Equality Uganda is founded by Beyonce Amooti Karungi to create a safe space for trans women in Uganda.

**3 October 2014:**
Mawanda is granted LGBTI asylum status in the United States months after fleeing his Ugandan home as a result of state-sanctioned violence from the Anti-Homosexuality Act signed into law earlier in the year.

**April 2016:**
The documentary *The Pearl of Africa* is released, featuring a trans woman, Cleo Kambugu, and her partner, Nelson Kasaija. The couple had been forced to flee Uganda in 2014, shortly after Uganda enacted the Anti-Homosexuality Act, when Kambugu was outed as trans by the Ugandan tabloid *Red Pepper*.

The early years of southern and eastern African trans organizing were trans masculine–led. Around 2010, tension had emerged between trans women and trans men, as there were no or limited leadership opportunities for trans women. A crucial moment came at a meeting in Uganda in May 2010 during a highly emotional debate between trans feminists and the trans men. This meeting was the catalyst for an organizing movement led by trans feminist activists. They formed the Social, Health and Empowerment Feminist Collective of Transgender and Intersex Women of Africa (S.H.E), which developed various projects in the eastern and southern African region such as leadership institutes and research and media workshops. In 2014 trans feminists launched the African Trans Feminist Charter (*van der Merwe 2016*). More visible discussions about trans women sex workers and the intersection of trans people and HIV have since emerged.

In its current form, what is known today as the African trans movement is documented in various formats within organizational documents and reports. The archives of Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) in Johannesburg includes a large collection of LGBTQ organizational information. Furthermore, South African–specific archival material dating from the 1980s can be found online at the Digital Transgender Archive (*2017*).

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Transfeminism

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The intersections of feminism and trans activism.

Transfeminism is a form of intersectional feminism founded on the understanding that sexism and transphobia are interlocking and mutually reinforcing systems of oppression. It functions as an application of feminist analyses and methods toward the advancement of trans liberation and empowerment. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, transfeminism took shape as a transnational social movement through a network that combined political activism, scholarship, artistic expression, and radical sex subcultures. This network was established and strengthened through several feminist scholarly and activist conferences, on the internet and other forms of digital media communications, and within the circuits of migration and travel to and from Europe and the Americas.

Origins

The term *transfeminism*, or *transfeminismo* in Spanish, was first articulated in Spain in the late 1980s during a series of feminist working group meetings, or *jornadas feministas*, which called for the inclusion of trans women into feminist politics (Fernández Garrido and Araneta 2017). Since those early years, *transfeminismo* has become part of a broader subculture that encompasses resistance to capitalism and austerity measures; anti-racist, postcolonial, and pro-migrant critiques of state policies; antiinstitutional and leaderless social movements; and a *posporno* (i.e., post-pornographic or “post-porn”) performance art scene that appropriates and subverts the medium of pornography.

In the United States, the term was coined by Diana Courvant and Emi Koyama in 1992 “in the context of their intersectional work on trans, intersex, disability, and survivorship of sexual violence” (Stryker and Bettcher 2016, 11). Koyama published her “Transfeminist Manifesto” online in 2001, and this work was instrumental to the expansion of transfeminism in and outside the United States. The manifesto described transfeminism as “a movement by and for trans women who view their liberation to be intrinsically linked to the liberation of all women and beyond” (Koyama 2003, 245). Transfeminism in the United States is often associated with “thirdwave” feminism because both these political standpoints share a commitment to not prioritize any one subject position or form of oppression over others (Currah 2016). Third-wave feminism is also known for being “sex
positive” because it opposes “slut shaming,” supports nontraditional sexual practices, and espouses “affirming attitudes toward stigmatized body types” (Stryker and Bettcher 2016, 12).

Transfeminist activism often develops in close relation to advocacy for sex-worker decriminalization and empowerment on account of the widespread labor discrimination faced by trans women that pigeonholes them into sex work. For example, in Ecuador, transfeminism emerged in 2002 through a grassroots organization called Patrulla Legal (Legal Patrol), which brought together a coalition of trans sex workers, law students, feminists, and LGBT activists in order to document and combat police abuse against trans sex workers in the capital city of Quito. Since its inception, several trans men have also been a part of Patrulla Legal, and their integration into this work significantly increased trans men’s visibility within the LGBT community in Ecuador and prompted activists to include trans men in their analysis of the intersections of sexism and transphobia (Garriga-López 2016).

Organizing Efforts

One of the first organizing efforts of transfeminist activists in Spain was a call to eliminate “transgender” or “gender dysphoria” as a diagnostic category within the field of psychiatry. This campaign to “depathologize” trans identities, which started in 2006, was the impetus for the formation of a network of activists and organizations throughout Spain, with close ties to allied groups in France and Italy (Fernández Garrido and Araneta 2017). The rejection of psychiatry as an institution where trans people are pathologized and controlled led to the articulation of a broader anti-institutional position that rejects party politics and rights discourse as a source for empowerment. As a result, transfeminist activists often strategize within a micropolitical framework, one that prioritizes grassroots activism and cultural and aesthetic practices, as well as interpersonal or community mediations of conflicts, over and above government interventions or legal reforms. Furthermore, the demand for bodily and gender self-determination for trans people, as it relates to the freedom to access hormone replacement therapy and surgical interventions without oversight from psychiatric institutions, prompted an analogous call for the abolition of surgical interventions that are often imposed on infants and children with ambiguous sex characteristics. In 2009 the Red por la Despatologización de las Identidades Trans del Estado Español (Spanish Network for Depathologization of Trans Identities) established five central organizing objectives that would later, in 2012, be developed into a global campaign named “Red Internacional por las Despatologización de las Identidades Trans” (“Stop Trans Pathologization”) (Araneta and Fernández Garrido 2016). This same network also developed the first series of Trans October events, which “grew from being held in only three cities in 2007 (Paris, Barcelona, and Madrid) to taking place in more than fifty cities on several continents by 2012, with more than eighty organized groups participating”
Transfeminism congealed as a transnational social movement beginning in 2009 with the Conferencia Feminista (Feminist Conference) held in Grenada, Spain. During this conference the attendees collectively drafted the “Manifiesto para la Insurrección Transfeminista” (Manifesto for the transfeminist insurrection), which was read aloud at the end of the conference and published simultaneously on multiple online platforms throughout Europe and the Americas on 1 January 2010 as a call to action (Araneta and Fernández Garrido 2016). This manifesto represented the formalization of principles that came into being as an integral part of a Spanish political subculture of post-pornography and anti-capitalism. Lucía Egaña and Miriam Solá describe how, following this pivotal conference,

\[
\text{little by little, transfeminism has woven a network between groups both within and beyond Catalonia, working through such questions as pornography and sex work; trans depathologization; squatting; migrant resistance; economic precarity; the critique of state feminism; the institutionalization of the LGBT movement; open-source software, copyleft, creative-commons licensing, antisurveillance and data obfuscation strategies; self-training and peer-to-peer education that allows more access to technology for more kinds of people who have been excluded from it; and performance and the body.}
\]

(2016, 75)

Transfeminism as Epistemology

In this respect, transfeminism encompasses much more than the inclusion of trans people in feminist politics or their depathologization in the field of psychiatry. It is an epistemology—a theory of knowledge and power—that guides a diverse array of transfeminist activist political practices. Sayak Valencia (2014), a Mexican transfeminist scholar and activist, identifies four central lines of influence within transfeminism as a global network: US women of color feminisms; post-pornographic and anti-capitalist subcultures from Spain; the global movement to end the pathologization of trans and intersex people; and a sustained commitment to the empowerment of migrants and people living in conditions of poverty or social marginalization. This last connection is less obvious but highly significant because migration is a recurring feature in the lived experiences of sex workers. As Laura Agustín’s (2005) research demonstrates, feminist debates regarding the criminalization versus legalization of sex work are often limited by their lack of attention to migration policy as a source of systemic disenfranchisement for sex workers. These different points of inflection within transfeminism each speak to the material
conditions of trans people's lives and their means of daily survival, as migrants and sex workers, as ethnic and racial minorities in their home and host countries, and as people whose marginalization within capitalist economies leads them to form micropolitical networks of mutual support, empowerment, and self-directed action, or *autogestión* in Spanish. The developmental arc, from transfeminism as a politics focused primarily on trans inclusion within feminism to a transfeminism that organizes around a much wider range of political issues, is what Aren Aizura refers to as a move to turn the prefix “trans” in an “antiidentitarian direction” (2012, 135). Another way to conceptualize this expansion of transfeminist praxis beyond trans identity is to attend to the “tremendous worldwide effect of ‘intersectional’ feminisms promulgated by US feminists of color in the 1980s” (Stryker and Bettcher 2016, 8).

US women of color feminists from the 1980s onward set important ideological and methodological precedents for transfeminism. Their writings problematized the category “woman” as the central subject of feminism by focusing on the different experiences of women across the categories of race, sexuality, and class. Black feminists in particular emphasized their history of shared oppression with Black men, as well as the relative privilege of White women over Black men, in order to deconstruct essentialist stereotypes that represent women as always being the victims of men. Kimberlé Crenshaw, a worldrenowned legal scholar and Black feminist theorist from the United States, elaborated the concept of intersectionality in 1989 as an analytic method that demands a careful attention to the interplay between different systems of oppression. Transfeminism represents an expansion and deepening of intersectional feminism through a critique of the gender essentialism and unacknowledged transphobia within mainstream feminist discourses on sex.

Just as Crenshaw's foundational writings on intersectionality invite her readers to imagine how policy makers could design antidiscrimination legislation in more effective and comprehensive ways if Black women were the starting point of their analysis (Crenshaw 1989), Vic Muñoz, a diasporic Puerto Rican transfeminist scholar and activist, poses the following question: “What happens to feminist pedagogy [and activist interventions] when feminist trans-people of color name the world?” (2012, 23). In other words, how does attention to, and commitment toward, the empowerment and liberation of profoundly marginalized people transform one's fundamental understanding of society and social justice practices? Transfeminism espouses a coalitional politics that operates under the assumption that “changes that would be good for trans women will ultimately be beneficial for everyone” (Halberstam 2018).

### Historical Coalitions and Connections

Contentious debates about trans exclusion from feminist social movements often lead to a misconception that feminists of the past resoundingly rejected and excluded trans people
from participation in feminist struggles and that it is only recently that feminists have
started to embrace trans leadership and participation in the movement. However, a
number of scholars offer more nuanced, historically grounded analyses to better
understand these conflicts within feminisms. Finn Enke’s “Collective Memory and the
Transfeminist 1970s” (2018) provides an alternative account of several of the most
prominent controversies of the 1970s regarding trans exclusion within second-wave
feminism and argues that these instances reveal how several trans women were fully
integrated into prominent feminist organizations during that period. The debate regarding
the inclusion or exclusion of trans people within feminist praxis has been a subject of
recurring conflict between different groups of feminists who do not comprise the totality of
second-wave or third-wave feminist politics. As the Brazilian transfeminist scholar and
activist Hailey Kaas notes, “Even if we are able to label some part of feminism as being trans
excluding, it does not therefore follow that the rest of feminism is free from reproducing
cissexism” (2016, 146). Rather than reduce one's understanding of this conflict into an
“overly simplistic dichotomy often drawn between an exclusionary transphobic feminism
and an inclusive trans-affirming feminism,” Susan Stryker and Talia M. Bettcher suggest
that one should instead focus on “the range and complexity of trans/feminist relationships”
(2016, 7).

To that end, there is a growing body of scholarship that documents trans and feminist
collectives in other historical periods and geographic locations that came about
independently of the transnational networks mentioned above (Stryker and Bettcher
2016). In 2016 TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly published a special issue titled
“Trans/Feminisms” that documented transfeminist politics across seventeen countries,
including Brazil, Ecuador, England, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Spain, and the United
States. As an epistemology, transfeminism serves as a magnifying lens that identifies
instances of, and possibilities for, solidarity and coalitional practices across a wide
spectrum of political subjects. For example, the Chilean trans artist Hija de Perra (Daughter
of a Bitch) served as the master of ceremony for the annual Chilean women’s festival called
Femfest for seven years, beginning in 2007. Even though neither she nor the conference
organizers explicitly identified as transfeminist during that time, this collaboration was
based on an understanding of the shared political commitments between cisgender and
trans feminists in Chile. As such, transfeminism gives name to a set of feminist principles
and practices that precedes its formal articulation as a mode of politics (Garriga-López
2016).

connection between women of color feminism and transfeminism through the writing of
Pauli Murray (1910–1985), an African American activist, journalist, and lawyer. Murray,
who published under the pseudonym of Peter Panic, coined the term Jane Crow in 1944 to
describe how “White supremacy and male supremacy operated in tandem” (Fisher 2016,
101). This concept was central to Crenshaw’s formulation of the theories and methods of
intersectionality and her observations about the ways in which racist and sexist systems of oppression operate in conjunction with one another. Transfeminism necessarily attends to questions of race and ethnicity because “antitransgender discrimination and violence are often accompanied by racial and ethnic discriminations, and conversely, situations interpreted as instances of racial and ethnic injustice often also involve a policing of gender and sexual boundaries” (Juang 2006, 706). Enke argues that “while most scholars fast forward this insight to the Black feminism articulated by the Combahee River Collective” Fisher’s research provides important insights into the origins of intersectionality by “stay[ing] with Murray in the 1930s and 1940s long enough to comprehend Murray’s biracial and transing experience” (2018, 13). Echoing Fisher, Enke further describes how “Murray wrote plenty about persistently longing to be known as male and had from the late 1930s through the 1940s implored endocrinologists for testosterone treatment, only to be repeatedly recommended ‘female’ hormones instead” (2018, 13). Although ultimately unable to access hormone treatments to physically transition, Murray is nevertheless recognizable as trans in the modern sense and was a foundational figure for contemporary intersectional and transfeminist praxis. Micha Cárdenas’s use of the term trans of color feminism in her scholarship (2016) likewise draws attention to these genealogical connections.

These varied examples make evident that transfeminism does not conform to a single ideology or practice; instead, its political dynamism lies in its function as a contingent and context-specific epistemology. It is both a transnational and micropolitical mode of politics, intimately tied to the specific material needs of trans people and also capacious enough to include broader struggles for social justice. Consistent with the Latin origin of the word trans, which means “to cross” (A. Enke 2012, 5), transfeminism can be thought of as a feminism in motion, a movement that is continuously “transforming margins into centers” (López 1994, 130).

See also Combahee River Collective; Feminism, African; Grupo Gay da Bahia; Human Rights and Activism in Latin America; Pornoterrorismo and Post-Porn; Sex Tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean; Travesti and Trans Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean

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Transgender Identity in Iranian Cinema

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Examines the portrayals of female-to-male (FTM) and male-to-female (MTF) cross-dressing and transsexuality in Iranian cinema.

Iran's long history of cross-dressing entertainments has involved male-to-female (MTF) performers and the gender substitutions in Shi’a passion plays (ta’zieh). Gender ambiguity also plays a unique role in miniature paintings and Persian poetry, where poets take advantage of Persian’s gender-neutral pronouns in their love poems. In the late 1950s and 1960s, Iranian cinema became a site of transgender discourse. Transgender identity, as discussed here, ranges from gender masquerading to transsexuality, which is separate from, though related to, homosexuality.

Cross-Dressing in Iranian Cinema

Most of the cross-dressing in Iranian cinema, especially for MTF roles, is in the genre of comedy and involves stereotypical scenarios making the transgender characters objects of ridicule and laughter. The reason for cross-dressing is always external and a means to an end. Often, a male character decides to pass as a woman to trick someone, while a female character is coerced into taking the role of a man in order to get a job. Their exaggerated performances seem credible to other characters who are not “in the know” but appear farcical to viewers aware of the masquerading. The differences between sexes is a frequent topic of conversation, where heteronormativity and the gender binary are promoted. Audiences are expected to identify with the heterosexual side of the transgender character. In the end, the transgender identities are exposed, and the characters return to their earlier roles for a happy ending.

Cross-dressing in Iranian films can be discussed from two different perspectives. On the one hand, it can be seen as subversive and liberating, "putting in question the very notion of the ‘original’ and of stable identity" (Garber 1992, 16). The films foreground the gender anxieties brought about by modern social transformations in Iran. Transgender characters problematize the strict gender rules and customs of Iranian society. They mimic and destabilize archetypical constructions of masculinity and femininity, while providing a space for homoeroticism. They create ambiguity, plurality, and gender indeterminacy. In Iranian cinema after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, transgender characters allow directors
to transgress the strict censorship of male and female intimacy, such as touching and the requirements of the veil. (Such restrictions did not exist before the revolution.)

On the other hand, the films can be seen to “ridicule and hence domesticate a transvestism that might otherwise prove threatening” (Phillips 2006, 81). Revealing the characters’ transgender identities and returning them to their “original” gender encourages heteronormativity and gender conformity. In the films, heterosexual subjectivity and the male gaze remain the sources of power and authority. The comedies reinforce negative stereotypes of transgender people as deceitful and manipulative. The transgender identity is portrayed as inauthentic, as something that can be laughed at and should be discarded.

**MTF Characters**

*Madmazel Khaleh* (1957; Mademoiselle Aunty), directed by Amin Amini (1930–2004), is a key early cross-dressing film in Iranian cinema. It was based on a Persian theater adaptation of the English playwright Brandon Thomas’s popular *Charley’s Aunt* (1892). The actor Ali Tabesh (1925–1997) had already performed the role of the aunt in the play. The success of the film made Tabesh a popular female impersonator, and he continued to play the role in a number of films through the 1960s. Another important MTF film from before the revolution is *Shahbaji Khanom* (1958; Mrs. Shahbaji), directed by Sadegh Bahrami (1909–1988). The film’s title character was played by the actor Mohammad Ali Zarandi (1925–1988), who was already well known for impersonating a nagging, uncouth older woman on Friday morning radio shows. The two characters—Shahbaji Khanom and Madmazel Khaleh, with their plebeian and foreignized names, respectively—are two stock characters that continue to be exploited in Iranian cinema: an old, unrefined, rural woman and a younger, Westernized, urban woman. (After the revolution, the modern woman was also marked by wearing a hat or a loose scarf while showing some hair.) These characters lay bare the contentions between modernity and tradition in Iran.

During the strict and sober early years following the revolution, MTF characters faded from the screen. They returned with the liberalization and reforms brought about by Mohammad Khatami’s presidency (1997–2005). *Adam barfi* (1995; Snowman), directed by Davood Mir-Bagheri (1959–), was the first movie after the revolution to have an acknowledged cross-dressing character. The film was shown at the 1995 Fajr International Film Festival in Tehran before the female impersonation of Akbar Abdi (1958–) prompted its ban. In the film, the masquerading Abbas as Dorna, without a hijab, is able to transgress the rules of censorship. Dorna even kisses a man to get him to fetch some food. Dorna’s passing as a woman to obtain a visa for the United States is a source of shame and humiliation. In a scene imagined by the character, Dorna’s beloved female friend describes a cross-dresser as “abnormal” and a “murderer.” In the end, cross-dressing Abbas decides to be a man again and return to Iran with his beloved. The conclusion reiterates the message that abandoning one’s home, like losing one’s masculinity, results in an
inauthentic and deprived identity. *Adam barfi* was finally released publicly in 1998 and subsequently set a box-office record. Abdi has gone on to play a number of female and MTF roles. He even won a best supporting actor award at the 2012 Fajr International Film Festival for his role in *Khabam miad* (2012; I feel sleepy), where, like Zarandi, he plays a female character throughout the film.

The success of *Adam barfi* resulted in renewed interest in MTF characters, who began to appear often in minor plot twists as a comedic gimmick. The characters temporarily adopt transgender identities for trickery and crime or for a good cause, such as exposing a criminal. With the exception of *Mozahem* (2002; Intruder), the popular genre of transgender thriller does not exist in Iranian cinema. MTF films are usually comedies or melodramas.

**Female-to-Male Characters**

The roles of female-to-male (FTM) characters are different than those of the MTF characters in Iranian cinema. While MTF cross-dressers are routinely associated with comedic entertainment, criminality, and trickery, FTM cross-dressers are typically coerced into adapting to another gender, often as an act of necessity to gain employment. The FTM
films champion women’s rights and problematize the constructs of masculinity. Moreover, given that men have more rights and authority, posing as a man is socially understandable. It also reaffirms the established patriarchy. In a few instances, as in Dokhtari be nam-e Tondar (2000; A girl named Tondar) or Qahremane qahremanan (1965; The champion of champions), the female protagonists, even before cross-dressing, behave like a man or want to be one. The representation of FTM characters has also evolved in post-revolution movies, adding new complexity and insight.

Released a few months after the popular Madmazel Khaleh, the movie Zalem bala (1958; The naughty girl), directed by Siamak Yasami (1925–1994), is an early key example of a FTM film in Iranian cinema. In Zalem bala, a celebrated singer known as Delkash (1925–2004), with her low voice, becomes the first female actress to don the clothing of the popular tough-guy archetype (jahel), speaking and behaving in a macho style. She sings a vernacular song while wearing a mustache, a velvet hat, a black suit, and a white shirt. The popularity of Delkash’s performance made women’s jahel impersonation the most popular transgender role in prerevolution cinema. Yasami continued to use FTM jahels in a number of films in the 1960s, including Qahremane qahremanan and Shamsi pahlevoon (1966; Shamsi, the champion).

In Iranian commercial cinema, a jahel is a recognizable example of the performative acts and gestures that define masculinity. With his prescribed dress code, speech, and behavior, he is typically a rowdy street-smart manifestation of the traditional chivalrous hero. Judith Butler argues that gender is “a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance” (1990, 43–44). What these acts “express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporal signs and other discursive means” (173). Iranian movies take advantage of the fabricated jahel as a discernible construction of dominant masculinity to easily convert dandies to “real” men and females to males. All a woman has to do is to put on the right clothes and start behaving like a jahel to become a man and gain employment, authority, and access to power. Furthermore, the exaggerated mimicry satirizes the masculine identity. The films ridicule the false appearance of masculinity in jahels, in contrast to the true inner nature of a chivalrous, heroic man. By subverting the heroic performance of jahels, these FTM characters also critique hegemonic masculinity.

In these comedies, the FTM characters foreground the force of modernity by becoming active agents and pursuing their partners. Their love takes precedence over a traditionally arranged marriage decided by a father. Moreover, the female heroines transgress not only gender but also class. As in many Iranian commercial films of the time, the love of a rich, modern, and spoiled member of the upper class for a traditional, genuine, honest, and lower-class character brings integrity and generosity to the rich while solving the financial troubles of the poor. But these films do not probe the social problems and class struggles, or the real concerns, of a transgender individual. Ultimately, the FTM character is publicly
revealed and returns to the more passive female gender—reestablishing the primacy of the heteronormative identity. The upper class is redeemed, and the idealized poor are content. The films end happily with what Afsaneh Najmabadi has called the “marriage imperative” in Iranian society (2014, 7).

After fading from cinema in the late 1970s, FTM characters surfaced again, like the MTF cross-dressers, during Khatami’s presidency, in films such as the awardwinning Dokhtaran-e khorshid (2000; Daughters of the sun), directed by Maryam Shahriar (1966–), and Baran (2001), directed by Majid Majidi (1959–). These films, however, are dramas, dealing with gender and social oppression. FTM films before the revolution were part of the popular cinema patronized mainly by lower-class audiences, whereas these post-revolution films often catered to art-house and middle-class viewers.

In post-revolution cinema, crude jahels are no longer permissible role models. Female characters typically do not mimic tough-guy heroes. The common FTM character in these films is derived from the known figure in Persian culture of the amrad, the young man without facial hair who is beautiful, androgynous, quiet, and sensitive. Masculinity is not satirized by exaggeration but feminized. This passing character also recalls the idolized self-sacrificing innocent martyr of the Iran-Iraq War (1980–1988). Unlike in the prerevolution films, the sympathetic transgender characters become objects of love and desire. The plight of women and the poor are highlighted in these critical dramas, but there are no happy endings even if characters return to their female gender. There is no transgression of class or relief from patriarchy or poverty. Usually, the father’s wish to have a son or his inability to be the family’s breadwinner compels the daughter to become a man. Similar to much of classical Persian poetry, love triggers a character’s internal awakening but is not consummated. For example, in Baran, the love of FTM Rahmat sets the young man Lateef on his spiritual journey.

**Transsexuals in Iranian Cinema**

The cross-dressing movies discussed so far are not about transsexuals’ internal desires to have their body match their gender identity. They do not speak to prejudices transgender subjects experience nor to the challenges of transitioning. The actors masquerading in Iranian cinema do not identify as transgender. By the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century, however, a number of documentaries on Iranian transsexuals were produced by local and Iranian diaspora directors. They were shown at film festivals and on television in different parts of the world. Najmabadi (2014) identifies 2003 to 2008 as the years when the discussion of transsexuality in Iran was most prominent in Iran and the Western media.

The first Iranian transsexual documentary was Juste une femme (2002; Just a woman) by Mitra Farahani (1975–), who lives in Paris. The film, which won the Teddy Award at the
Berlin International Film Festival, follows the post-op MTF Morvarid’s overcoming of fear to venture outside with a veil. By 2005 documentary reports about transsexuals in Iran were being made for television broadcast. For example, Amir Amirani (1967–), living in England, made Trans-sexuality in Iran (2005) for BBC World’s Newsnight program. Hamid Naficy calls it “highly engaging and informative both in terms of what it reveals about the religious and legal status of transsexuality and about what it is like to be a transsexual in a sexually restrictive society” (2011–2012, 4:435). Faramarz Amini produced a three-part special, Farzand-i bimar-i tabiʿat (2005; Nature’s sick child), for Omid-e-Iran, a Los Angeles–based satellite television channel. Najmabadi’s transgender interviewees mention that Amini’s documentary had an important part in “their self-cognition” (2014, 35). Maria (2006), directed by Abbas Burhan (1984–), shown at the Fajr International Film Festival in 2006, was the “first documentary screened in Iran” (Najmabadi 2014, 206). It is about the struggle of a father and former truck driver who has gone through the MTF operation. The Iranian director Mohammad Ahmadi (1962–) did six years of research to make Shokhi-e tabiat (2007; Nature’s humor). Elhum Shakerifar writes that Ahmadi used his film for the purpose of “lobbying members of parliament” in Iran for “laws to be put in place to protect the social rights of transgenders” (2014, 332). Iranian transgender films have continued to win international awards. For example, Be Like Others (2008), directed by Tanaz Eshaghian (1974–), won three awards at the Berlin International Film Festival. In 2016 a short documentary made by Vahid Zare Soheili was even broadcast on Iranian national television.

These documentaries usually consist of interviews with transsexuals about their dreams and difficulties, their struggles with their families, their experiences of prejudice and abuse, and the process of transition. The films also include interviews with friends and family, as well as therapists, doctors, and clerics. As in the films of Eshaghian and Amirani, they may include interviews with the Islamic scholar Hujjat al-Islam Karimi-nia, who advocates for transsexual rights to sex reassignment surgery (SRS). Karimi-nia notes that the Qur’an does not forbid SRS. He argues that transsexuals are individuals who feel their soul is trapped in the wrong body, a condition that can be healed. As he reasons, there is nothing wrong with doctors correcting their abnormal condition, as many human changes to nature are not sinful. Some films also cover the story of Maryam Khatoon Molkara (1950–2012), a transgender activist who had contacted Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–1989) for guidance and an SRS approval. Khomeini’s letter of support in the mid-1980s become a fatwa—an edict—for legalizing SRS for transsexuals.

While raising awareness about the plight of transgender individuals, the documentaries have been the subject of criticism. Many films continue to exotify Iran and Iranian transsexuals for an assumed Western audience. None has been made by the members of the Iranian transsexual community. They also do not provide a deeper investigation of the history of transsexuality in Iran. For example, they do not address the close historical ties between transsexuality, intersex, and SRS. Instead, they may simplistically conflate
transsexuality with homosexuality. Najmabadi writes, “International media coverage of
transsexuality in Iran increasingly has emphasized that sex reassignment surgery (SRS)
was being performed coercively on Iranian homosexuals by a fundamentalist Islamic
government” (2014, 2). Shakerifar writes that Be Like Others sees transsexuality “as a cure
for homosexuality” and that “techniques such as directed questions, selective translation,
lack of contextualization and the use of stereotypical images all serve the purpose of
manipulation of the film’s message” (2011, 333). Be Like Others begins with the titles: “In
the Islamic Republic of Iran, sex change operations are legal,” followed with,
“Homosexuality is punishable by death.” Shakerifar argues that “the idea that
transsexuality in Iran is paradoxical is also a media construct, a product of Western
representations of Iran” (2011, 333). In this context, the representation and discussion of
transsexuality can be seen in light of the “discourse of the Gay International that ...
produces homosexuals, as well as gays and lesbians, where they do not exist” (Massad
2002, 363). (Joseph A. Massad coined the term Gay International to refer to “organizations
dominated by white Western males ... [that] sprang up to defend the rights of ‘gays and
lesbians’ all over the world” [2002, 361].)

From late in the first decade of the twenty-first century forward, Iranian transsexuals have
also been the subject of feature films and have started acting in movies. Aynehaye rooberoo
(2011; Facing mirrors) by Negar Azarbayjani (1973–) is the first feature film released in
Iran that openly discusses the struggles of an Iranian transsexual. Shayesteh Irani (1979–),
who had earlier played a FTM cross-dresser in Offside (2006), plays Edi, a young pre-op
FTM character. Edi runs away from home to escape their father’s plans for an arranged
marriage. Anna Vanzan writes that the movie even “triggered a discussion about
transgenderism held at the Mofid University in the ultraconservative town of Qom” (2014,
53). After their operation, Saman Arastoo (1967–), once a respected actress in Iran under
their birth name Farzaneh Arastoo, has been able to work in television and cinema, this
time as a trans man. In Anahita (2010), Arastoo plays both a female and a male character.
Arastoo’s transition experience is the subject of a documentary directed by Milad Bahar
(1983–), Hamatoon manno meshnasin (2009; You all know me). Arastoo has also written
and directed a play about their experience with the same title.

In summary, transgender characters began appearing as temporary cross-dressers in
Iranian cinema in the late 1950s. While providing a slippage in heterosexual boundaries, as
well as ambiguity and homoeroticism, these films ultimately reinforced heteronormativity.
MTF and FTM characters perform different roles in Iranian cinema. Iranian FTM films
champion women’s rights and expose both the strictures of tradition and the repression
experienced under patriarchy and class barriers. More recently, beginning in the first years
of the twenty-first century, Iranian documentaries have overtly addressed transgender and
transsexual identities, dealing with real life struggles of the community. These films opened
up opportunities for transgender performers and feature films to address transgender
subjectivity. Meanwhile, the cinema continues to demarcate a gender binary while
homosexuality remains unacceptable.

SEE ALSO Masculinity in Iranian Cinema; Sex Reassignment Surgery in Iran; Shifting Sexual Norms in Nineteenth-Century Iran; Transgendered Subjectivities in Contemporary Iran

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The status of transgender Muslims can be partially understood on the basis of the canonical sources of Islamic law: the Qur’an (the central text of Islamic belief) and the hadith (narratives on the practices of the prophet Muhammad as the basis for religious practice). This partiality, however, follows from the vast geographical and cultural variations in the practice of Islam across centuries and continents. This entry is divided along the historical contrast between premodern figures and controversies of gender plurality and their remnants and reformulations in the contemporary period.

Premodern Views

The Qur’an’s view of gender dimorphism is a familiar one insofar as men and women are addressed in their gendered specificity. The status of men and women is not the same, however, as reflected in the various kinship-based laws and aspirations ascribed to each in the holy text. A closer reading of the Qur’anic text reveals that the situation is not simply of men being superior to women, but that women and men are in close proximity to each other in the created universe. The fourth chapter (titled “The Women”) opens with this verse: “O mankind! reverence your Guardian-Lord, who created you from a single person, created, of like nature, His mate.” As the verse indicates, men and women, created from the same person (nafs in the original could also mean “soul” or “spirit”), may even be so similar to each other that the Qur’anic law lays down clear lines of demarcation between them in terms of dress, comportment, and social roles (Bouhdiba 1985).

The hadith literature mentions at several instances the mukhannathin (effeminate men; singular mukhannath) and the mutarajjilat (mannish women; singular mutarajjila) who are seen as a class of people whose status needs to be fixed among the new community of believers of Islam (see Rowson 1991). As Everett K. Rowson shows in a 1991 article, while they pose a threat to the morals of the new community, they seem to be embedded in the social life of early Islamic society in Arabia. And although several of these references pertain to types of transvestism alone, the transgression of these named groups results from their inhabiting a gender presentation contrary to their genital gender. Therefore,
contrary to modern prejudices, there seems to be little condemnation of these gender transgressors for upending their “natural” gender at birth. While “mannish women” are rarely mentioned, the hadith literature refers to the “effeminates” several times. It is also notable that homosexuality is not ascribed to these personages. Their social roles are specified as artists, singers, musicians, and, in particular, go-betweens, especially because of their access to women’s segregated quarters.

With the spread of Islamic culture and civilization over the last millennium, these rules and their underlying views on gender dimorphism traveled to places as far apart as Spain and Indonesia. One recurring figure of gender transgression, significantly, is the eunuch, which was a male captured in war, but sometimes raised as a slave, too, and castrated for the purpose of guarding women’s quarters and providing important skills in statecraft in various Muslim polities. While Islamic law forbids castration in lands under its realm, the eunuch, who was often taken from foreign lands and was born outside the faith, is a constant presence in Islamic history. They are named variously in the Islamic lands as khadim or khasi (in Arabic), agha (Turkish), khwaja sara (Persian), hijra (in modern India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan), and sida-sida (Malay). Some eunuchs rose to become important military commanders, showing that castration was not simply seen as demasculinization in terms of social roles. Scott Siraj al-Haqq Kugle (2014, 17) notes that the legal status of such people was outside the gender binary and seen as an “in-between position.” (This could be one genealogical source of the modern notion of the “third gender” in Islamic societies in Pakistan and Bangladesh.) Before the formation of Saudi Arabia under its present Wahhabi regime, the prophet Muhammad’s tomb in Medina was guarded by a posse of eunuch guards (Hathaway 2015). This attests to the ritual and symbolic value of the eunuch in Islamic history and societies.

Modern Lives

The spread of Islam to societies east of the Arabian Peninsula involved the spelling out of social and sexual identities in the idiom of Islamic norms and practices. But this idiom does not simply translate into local terms, practices, and worldviews. The idiom of transgenderism exists in Islamic societies, for example, of the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia, but it needs to be understood in light of both the premodern worldviews (derived from the Islamic canon) and the local practices that are influenced not just by Islam but by the West, too, primarily through colonial contact in the nineteenth century.

Indonesia has the largest Muslim population in the world. It also has a colonial past and before that centuries of contact with the Arab world through trade and religious conversion. Consequently, anthropologists have presented a definitive picture of transgender practices and lives in this country existing at the intersection of various histories, influences, and idioms from the religious and secular contexts. The warias (male-to-female transgenders; literally “womanman”) and tombois (female-to-male transgenders)
are two main categories that characterize Indonesian transgenderism. The anthropologist Tom Boellstorff (2005) has chronicled the overlap between homosexuality and transgenderism within these categories and how it is difficult to separate the two strands of identity and self-identification. For example, while warias may be seen as homosexually inclined men, some also choose to undergo sex reassignment surgery (Safitri 2013). Another identity name, bissu, is socially recognized and corresponds with the premodern figure of the mukhannath. The bissu performs ritualistic functions and is an androgynous (born male or female) figure tolerated by the Islamic orthodoxy (Boellstorff 2005) and considered to be part of the social universe (Peletz 2009).

As transgender Muslims, the people classed under these local names are socially more visible than the Western-inspired categories of “gay” and “lesbian” in Indonesia. However, this visibility cannot be taken to mean open social acceptance or equality with the normative genders. Transgender Muslims have struggled to assimilate their inner life with the codes of Islamic practice and piety. For example, Dian Maya Safitri (2013) has documented a piety movement initiated by some warias in contemporary Indonesia involving religious preaching, veiling, and dress codes in consonance with Islamic practice, which are seen by the practitioners as fulfilling their lives as transgenders and as Muslims.

In Malaysia the male-to-female transgender identity of the warias exists as mak nyah (used by trans women to identify themselves). In a 2002 study on the mak nyah, Yik Koon Teh points to the existence of four classes of gendered persons in Malaysia: men, women, hermaphrodites (khunsa), and mukhannas (effeminate males). Sex reassignment surgery is allowed only for the khunsa and forbidden especially to the mukhannas. The designations and prejudices against the transgender category are reminiscent of a strict interpretation of certain views within Islamic law. The neglect of male-to-female transgender positions in scholarly literature is conspicuous. The mak nyahs are increasingly subject to violent crime (including murder), and this can be related to their belonging to the Malay majority whose relation to Islam is strictly defined by the state. Teh (2002) suggests that other non-Malay transgenders may have assimilated into society through successful sex reassignment surgery.
Most of the scholars of Southeast Asian transgender lives cited above argue that the category “third gender” cannot be applied to these societies. This is in marked contrast with the circulation of this term in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India. The hijra (whose ancestor is the eunuch of the Islamic courts in the region) is often translated as the third gender, especially in the language of the state. In mid-2017 Pakistan officially recognized the third gender by issuing passports with that designation. Yet a sole focus on the third gender has meant the invisibilization and judicial and social harassment of transgender people who do not see themselves in the more traditional role of the hijra.

The case of Shumail Raj, a Pakistani trans man who underwent surgery to transition to a masculine identity, reveals the fault line not only between traditional transgender figures and modern trans lives but also between trans sexualities and homosexualities. Around 2006, Raj married his female cousin Shahzina Tariq, but the marriage was annulled by the courts based on the legal injunction against same-sex marriage in the country. Raj’s transgender identity was set aside in the name of preserving the state-sanctioned—and by implication Islamic—definition of marriage (Dawn 2007). The couple were also fined and imprisoned as part of their conviction. However, the law used to convict them was the
British colonial law of the Indian penal code (Section 377), which outlaws “unnatural offenses,” although Islamic law was cited in a general way. This shows that in so-called Islamic contexts the categories and institutions of colonial (i.e., Western) provenance support a more “traditional” regime of laws and sexual mores. It therefore becomes difficult for activism and scholarship to work with a simplistic category of “Islam” as the ruling ideology of societies in which Islam is the majority religion. It is possible that the dissolution of transgender unions, like that of Raj and Tariq, is fueled by the fear that transgender identities put in question legal categories that are more starkly defined under modern colonial law, even more than in customary usage as derived from Islamic practice. The role of the modern state in determining the realm of transgender existence and survival cannot be ignored in predominantly Islamic countries.

The conjuncture of Islamic practice and transgender identity can be witnessed most strongly in contemporary Iran, where the Islamic state’s policy recognizes transgender lives through legal and medical categories. This situation is comparable with the state’s intervention in transgender lives in other Muslim-majority countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia, but its salience is partly a result of geopolitical interests in reporting on the region. Around 2003, the world media reported widely on the state sponsorship of sex reassignment surgery in Iran, which is often directed at homosexual men and women as a legal “option” to “convert” to their “real” gender, along with transgender people who benefit from such a policy. In her 2014 ethnography of transgender practices in Iran, Afsaneh Najmabadi notes that in 1964, well before the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–1989) had expressed his legal opinion that sex change was permissible in Islam in an Arabic treatise written by him. The official support for transgender identification (and medical intervention), according to Najmabadi, exists “at the intersection of medicine, the law, fiqh [Islamic jurisprudence], psychology/psychiatry, and several institutions of the Islamic Republic of Iran” (2014, 30). She has carefully tabulated the official hierarchy that oversees the “certification” process to determine a person’s official transgender identification, which then not only allows for hormonal treatment and sex reassignment surgery but also provides basic health insurance, financial assistance, and exemption from military service (20).

The example from Iran shows the difficulty of keeping issues of sexual identity separate from questions of transgender selfhood. Najmabadi highlights other domains of transgender existence that cannot be subsumed under governmental recognition and control, especially in the performative traditions of theater and music. While sexuality activists, focusing mostly on state policy, might see official Iranian policy as curtailing the freedom of gay and lesbian lives, the situation is complicated by the official recognition of a realm of bodily experience that may touch on homosexuality but may articulate itself through the trans category. It also becomes difficult to cast “official” Islamic doctrine as a blanket prohibition against sexual and gender variations in the name of a God-given, “natural” order of gender and sexuality. Transgender lives are lived in Islamic societies
under the gaze of the state, against traditional taboos and drawing on partial social
tolerance and on the legal institution, which offers both recognition and installs strict
definitions for the trans experience.

SEE ALSO Eunuchs; Hijras; Homosexual Acts in Shariʿa; Malaysia; Mukhannath; Section 377 and
Section 377A; Section 377 in South Asia; Sex Reassignment Surgery in Asia; Sex Reassignment
Surgery in Iran; Third Genders; Waria

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Transgender Organizations in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

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The most significant transgender organizations to emerge in these areas since the 1990s.

In the period since the 1990s, the LGBTQ movement in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan has developed and become increasingly visible. The internet and other new information and communication technologies have played significant roles and created new opportunities for self-identification in the LGBTQ community, extending the public spaces available to them and promoting the online visibility of the LGBTQ community in society (Cao and Lu 2014; Sun 2010). This entry introduces the transgender recognition laws and some of the most significant transgender organizations that have emerged in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan since the 1990s.

Mainland China

As of 2018, mainland China had not passed any antidiscrimination laws regarding gender recognition or gender expression, which leaves gender-nonconforming persons vulnerable to prejudice and abuse in schools, workplaces, and hospitals, as well as within their own families. Compared to other Chinese LGBTQ communities, the mainland Chinese transgender community has less visibility. Mainland China's Ministry of Health has strict rules for people who want sex-reassignment surgeries, requiring them to meet the following criteria:

- obtain the informed consent of family members;
- obtain police certification that they have not perpetrated any crimes;
- be over twenty years old;
- be unmarried;
- be under a doctor’s care for transsexualism and have demonstrated a consistent desire to change their sex for more than five years;
- have undergone psychotherapy for more than one year, with the result that such therapy was ineffective; and
- obtain a psychologist’s verification that they will be heterosexual after the surgeries.
Furthermore, the mainland Chinese government allows transsexuals to make gender changes on their hukou (residency) and identity cards in their birthplaces only after sex-reassignment surgery, and they cannot change their gender on their degree certificates and diplomas, which exposes them to possible discrimination in their further education and employment (Karen 2014).

Given the difficulties experienced by transgender persons in mainland China, the importance of support from online sources cannot be understated. Established in August 1998, xiasl.net is the first comprehensive website on transsexuality and cross-dressing in China. It includes information on sex-reassignment surgery and transsexuality both inside and outside China, as well as netizens' autobiographies, stories, poems, novels, photos, and cross-dressing cosplay. When xiasl.net was founded it was the personal website of Ms. Shu Qian. It was in simplified Chinese language, making it different from all other Chinese websites on transsexuality and cross-dressing—such as Taiwan's Wenny Mei Li Xin Shi Jie (Wenny's Beautiful New World), Juliana Mi Mi Hua Yuan (Juliana's Secret Garden), and Hong Kong's Kaimin Rou Qing Wang Ye (Kaimin Gentle Website)—which were in traditional Chinese language. The arrival of xiasl.net attracted attention immediately and visits to the website increased dramatically; netizens interested in transsexuality and cross-dressing were ecstatic because they finally had a place to express their feelings and gender confusion. After years of development, xiasl.net has gradually become a comprehensive website on transsexuality and cross-dressing.

The development of xiasl.net was a long and difficult process. At first, transsexuals and cross-dressers could connect with each other only rarely due to limited internet access. Among netizens, connections were mostly by email, on electronic bulletin boards, and on free online guestbooks. After xiasl.net was established, a large number of netizens sent emails and messages sharing their stories and hitherto repressed feelings, turning xiasl.net into a welcoming virtual space for cross-dressers and transsexuals. With the growth of the internet, xiasl.net expanded from a personal website to a comprehensive website for these communities. Users consulted the site for psychological counseling recommendations and information about surgery and postoperative care, in addition to using it to connect with and encourage each other.

With the development of the online community Baidu Tieba, most xiasl.net users moved over to Yao Niang Ba. Developed by the Chinese search engine company Baidu, Baidu Tieba allows users to search for or create a bar (forum) by typing a keyword; Yao Niang Ba is a forum about yao niang (male-to-female transsexuals who transition by taking medicines or injecting hormones). In 2014 Baidu Tieba’s anti-pornography campaign affected Yao Niang Ba, and afterward the visibility of yao niang decreased dramatically on the internet.

In contrast to xiasl.net, Kua Xing Bie Sheng Huo (Trans Life) functions more like an alternative media organization, publishing articles about transgendered persons' daily
problems and needs. Founded in May 2015 almost exclusively by transgender people, Kua Xing Bie Sheng Huo positions itself as a “toolbox” rather than a “treasure chest” because it works to spread knowledge and share experiences to help others on social media platforms such as WeChat and Sina Weibo. Its articles offer tips for transgendered people on college entrance exams, college or major selection, life planning, coming out, dressing, and sex-reassignment surgery, among other topics. Kua Xing Bie Sheng Huo is also developing its own website and supporting facilities to offer most of the information and services that transgender persons require.

One year after the establishment of Kua Xing Bie Sheng Huo, a trans lesbian, a genderqueer, and a gender-nonconforming person, founded Kua Er Zhong Xin (Trans Center; known as Kua Xing Bie Zhong Xin before 2018) in Guangzhou, though its work covers most provinces and cities in mainland China. Kua Er Zhong Xin has a broad and inclusive definition of trans that includes not only trans women and trans men, but also individuals who identify as gender-nonbinary, gender-nonconforming, and genderqueer, among others. The group promotes equal rights for the trans community as well as equal access to social resources and freedom from gender discrimination and violence. Kua Er Zhong Xin’s work consists of three parts: service, activity, and advocacy. The service group provides care, resources, and intervention to the trans community, their relatives, and friends. One of its main focuses is domestic violence. It has established a domestic violence hotline for the trans community that advises callers on how to stay safe and connects them with a trans community network, a nationwide LGBT organizations’ network, lawyers, social work organizations, shelters, and anti–domestic violence organizations, as needed. As of 2017, Kua Er Zhong Xin had dealt with twenty-three cases of domestic violence in the trans community; of these, eleven involved underage trans individuals targeted by domestic violence, eight involved trans persons who were suicidal, three gave support to trans persons who were threatened with murder by their parents, and one involved the attempted murder of a trans child by their parent. The activity group aims to connect and eliminate the gap between the trans community and the cisgender community to advance a future without discrimination. The advocacy group aims to increase the visibility of Kua Er Zhong Xin, the trans community, and transgender issues in order to accelerate improvements in culture, the legal system, and the living and working conditions of the trans community. As of 2017, Kua Er Zhong Xin had held events to disseminate transgender information in Guangzhou, Ningbo, Chengdu, Wuhan, Dongguan, and Changsha. Its main advocacy methods include media promotion, offline activities, story documentation and dissemination, consulting on reports, investigative reporting, research, and conference participation.

Among all the Chinese transgender organizations, Kua Xing Bie Wei Ji Yuan Zhu Yu Zi Xun (Transgender Crisis Assistance and Consulting), founded in 2017, is the only group that offers transgender people in crisis temporary accommodation in a shelter (located in Nanjing). In addition, the group also provides transgender-friendly medical resources, a counseling service, and offline activities for transgender individuals.
Hong Kong

As in mainland China, in Hong Kong transgender people have to be diagnosed by a psychiatrist before they undergo sex-reassignment surgeries. Genders and names on identity cards can be changed, but birth certificates cannot be changed. The Hong Kong Sex Discrimination Ordinance protects equal rights in employment, education, public space, and services, but there have been no cases to test whether such antidiscrimination regulations apply to transsexuals. Notably, although in both mainland China and Hong Kong transgender people can enter into heterosexual marriage after surgery and change their gender on (some) certificates, these rights are rooted in discourses that pathologize transgenderism and privilege heteronormativity.

Pui Kei Eleanor Cheung, who has conducted fieldwork with Hong Kong gender-variant communities, concluded that transgender subjectivity in Hong Kong changed from shame to self-acceptance to pride (2012). In 2002 Jessica Park, a trans woman, and her colleagues (both Westerners and Chinese) established Transgender Equality and Acceptance Movement (TEAM), the first organization serving the transgender community and fighting for transgender rights in Hong Kong (Cheung 2012). In September 2004, the suicides of two trans women, Louise Chan and Sasha Moon, shocked the Hong Kong transgender community and spurred efforts to build solidarity; TEAM was prompted to engage in political activism, making its first press announcement as a group and participating in the government’s Sexual Minorities Forum (Cheung 2012).

According to Cheung (2012), the gradual increase in awareness of transgendered persons in Hong Kong and their inclusion in LGBTQ communities and in curricula of gender/sexuality courses is partly due to TEAM’s political activism. Hong Kong transgendered individuals (most of whom had participated in TEAM) have shared their personal experiences in university classes, community workshops/seminars, and media interviews (Cheung 2012). One of these individuals and a key figure in promoting the transgender movement in Hong Kong, is Joanne Leung, a male-to-female transgender and LGBTQ activist, who in 2008 founded Hong Kong Transgender Resource Center (TGR), which advocates for and provides resources to the transgender community both off- and online. Leung has appeared at Hong Kong and Taipei LGBT Pride several times since 2007. She also has devoted herself to promoting queerology, which is seen as an effective tool for queer theologians to deconstruct heteronormative Christianity culture and help LGBTQ Christians to come to terms with their identity. According to Ka Chan (2015), convener of the Hong Kong Queer Affirming Fellowship, queer theologians use queer experiences to construct the meanings of theology or use queer theory to deconstruct theology. Leung also assisted in the establishment of Hong Kong’s Indonesian lesbian group, most of whose members were domestic workers. In March 2014 Leung became the first transgender person from Hong Kong to speak before the United Nations Committee on the Elimination
of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and won the HER Fund Award, which honors women activists who promote human rights and gender equality.

TGR’s mission ranges from education to advocacy in its aim to provide information and resources to the transgender community and the general public to support trans rights and equality. Through hundreds of seminars conducted in colleges in Hong Kong and mainland China, as well as through a media campaign of interviews, articles, and a radio program, TGR works to educate trans persons and the general public and to promote a positive view of transgender identity. In addition to its promotional activities, TGR sponsors a monthly gathering, conducts advocacy on health and legal issues (including HIV/AIDS prevention and promotion of equality in the workplace), and provides a counseling service, a support group/parents group, a hotline service, and online outreach. TGR also publishes the Chinese-language series Shi fei nan nv (Gossip boys and girls), which consists of three books: Shi fei nan nv: ben tu kua xing bie yue du shou Ce (Gossip boys and girls: Domestic transgender reading manual–Hong Kong version), a handbook about Hong Kong’s transgender community; Shi fei nan nv: kua xing bie jia zhang shou ce (Gossip boys and girls: A handbook for parents of trans people), which answers common questions from parents of trans kids and deals with how to build trusting parent-child relationships; and Shi fei nan nv: kua xing bie tong meng shou ce (Gossip boys and girls: A handbook for trans allies), which deals with how society can accept transgendered persons and treat them equally. An English version that consolidates the Chinese booklets, Gossip Boys & Girls: The Book of Transgender in Hong Kong (2017), is available from the TGR.

Taiwan

LGBTQ rights in Taiwan are better than in other areas in Asia. Taiwan passed the Gender Equity Education Act in 2004 and the Act of Gender Equality in Employment in 2002, which ban discrimination based on gender or sexual orientation in education and the workplace, respectively. An amendment to the Gender Equity Education Act in 2011 calls for more instruction in schools on the topics of gender equality and respect for gender diversity. In 2013 the Taiwan Ministry of the Interior recognized for the first time the registration of a transgender marriage. Yet, Taiwan’s transgender people still have a long fight against discrimination ahead of them. For example, persons who want to undergo sex-reassignment surgeries have to be evaluated by two psychiatrists and secure the support of their parents or partners, which may make it impossible for them change their genders; even after undergoing evaluations, they are required to have a “real-life experience,” a stage in which transgender persons live full time in their preferred gender roles (Wang 2016), which is a prerequisite for sex-reassignment surgeries.

Founded on 8 November 2008, Organization Intersex International Chinese (OiI-Chinese) is an information platform for Chinese-speaking intersex persons to communicate with international intersex communities. It is the first website in the Chinese-speaking world
that provides information on intersex issues. Hiker Chiu, a human rights activist, established the organization as a tribute to the fourth annual Intersex Awareness Day. By increasing the visibility of intersex, Oii-Chinese has steadily improved public knowledge of intersexuality and assisted intersex persons in achieving self-acceptance as well as social acceptance.

Like Oii-Chinese, Intersex, Transgender and Transsexual People Care Association promotes the visibility and rights of intersex; it is the first Taiwanese organization to cater to transsexuals, transgender, and intersex. The association grew out of Beyond Gender, a cooperative group of transsexuals founded in 2009; with the expanding participation of intersex people and an increased desire to bring about greater change in society, the group formally registered with the government and began work as an association. The association believes that the existence of diverse gendered communities makes the world more beautiful. Its work includes hosting gender education lectures, leading antidiscrimination efforts, and promoting rights such as those associated with gender change in law.

Gay and lesbian organizations in Taiwan also realized the urgent needs of the transgender community. In 2010 Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association, the first gay and lesbian organization in Taiwan, established its Transgender Group to receive calls from transgender persons, with the goal of improving engagement with transgender issues and enhancing mutual understanding within the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities. The group has hosted talks and activities on transgender issues and sought to mitigate family conflicts by inviting family members of transgender persons to share their anxieties and worries.

Two years later, Wei-Jhen Chen, a graduate student at the Department of Philosophy of National Chengchi University, established Taipei’s Transgender Punk Activist, which focuses on promoting transgender issues and related policies. Transgender Punk Activist’s work projects include promoting public discussions on gender changes on certificates and telling the stories of transgender persons. Chen has presented conference papers on transsexuality and cross-dressing and worked as an online transgender forum moderator.

In conclusion, although transgender communities have not gained full recognition in mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan, organizations striving for transgender rights have gradually emerged in these areas since the late 1990s. These organizations have played significant roles in the personal and public lives of members of the transgender community and have worked extensively online and offline, sharing information and resources, leading public advocacy efforts, and providing community services. It is because of their work that Chinese transgender communities have been able to enter the public domain, triggering more profound social, cultural, and legal changes in terms of transgender rights.

SEE ALSO Conversion Therapy in China; Marriage, Same-Sex, in Taiwan; New Media in Asia


According to extant historiographies of gender and sexuality in modern Iran, around a century ago the country’s gender order—that is, the dominant definitions of masculinity and femininity and the normative patterns of gender relations between, and among, women and men at the level of a whole society (Connell 1987)—began undergoing significant transformations (Najmabadi 2005; Afary 2009). In Women with Mustaches and Men without Beards (2005), the Iran historian Afsaneh Najmabadi rewrites Iranian modernity as a process inevitably interlinked with issues of gender and sexuality. She argues that during the late Qajar dynasty (1797–1925) era, primarily as a result of Iranians’ increasing contact with the West, notions of gender and sexuality in Iran started to shift noticeably, from a previous legitimacy of a mixture of homo- and heteroerotic relations toward a fairly heteronormative matrix. While the extent to which nonnormative genders and sexualities were tolerated among premodern Iranians remains debatable, it is known that, similar to many other premodern Muslim societies, Iranians were also well familiar with more than one manifestation of sexuality and gender ambiguity, including the figures of khontha/mokhannath (intersex), amrad (young male adolescent object of desire for adult men) (Najmabadi 2005; Afary 2009; Alipour 2017), and zanan-e hakkeh (women who desire other women), as well as acts and practices such as sigheh-ye khahar-khandegi (sisterhood vows) and musaheqeh (same-sex acts between women) (Babayan 2008; Afary 2009). As Najmabadi puts it regarding the above historical shift, “In the nineteenth century, homoeroticism and same-sex practices came to mark Iran as backward; heteronormalization of eros and sex became a condition of ‘achieving modernity,’ a project that called for heterosocialization of public space and a reconfiguration of family life” (2005, 3). This collective, shame-driven self-consciousness regarding certain sexual acts and desires resulted in the gradual abjection and erasure of cultural figures such as amrad and in the stigmatization of homosexuality in Iran.

The Transsexual Category

As if to fill a gap in that narrative, Najmabadi’s 2014 book Professing Selves: Transsexuality
and Same-Sex Desire in Contemporary Iran rendered a historiographical account of the formation of the category of transsexuality and how it has become intertwined with the already stigmatized category of “homosexuality” over the past century in Iran. From current “psycho-medical and jurisprudential discourses within which practices and procedures of changing sex have operated in Iran since the 1990s” (38), Najmabadi goes back in time to map the trajectory of the formation of the category of “transsexual” and its “intersecting discursive sites, including medicine, religious doctrine, psychology, criminology, the family, trans activism, and practices of everyday life” (3). In 1930s and 1940s Iran, intersex emerged as an instance of intriguing marvels and spectacles of nature, while sex-change and intersex transformations in turn appeared as examples of national pride-inducing scientific marvel and progress. Over the next three decades, however, the above trends converged with a concurrent discourse of national concern with “the exceptional and the marvelous” as a matter related to “the health of the nation, the progress of its educational system, and the reform of family norms,” to help bring about a seminal shift in the conceptualization of transsexuality, due to which it was disaffiliated from the intersex and associated with sexual deviancy. Or, as Najmabadi puts it, “[transsexuality] shifted from the physical body onto the psychosexual” (39).

Professing Selves helps to complicate transsexuality in modern Iran at a time when in mainstream Western media Iranian transsexuals are recurrently linked with the Iranian state’s ban on homosexuality. Emphasizing the interplay of transsexuality with the categories of intersex, criminality, pathology, and homosexuality over the past century, Najmabadi shows how, despite current public and official notions of transsexuality and homosexuality, they have never been received neutrally or positively in modern Iranian history. Indeed, well in advance of the Islamic Revolution of 1979, by the 1970s, transsexuality was linked with criminality and homosexuality. Yet, there were also ruptures within certain social spheres. For instance, while “in the 1970s, ‘woman-presenting males’ (mard-i zan-numa) had carved themselves a space of relative acceptance in particular [especially entertainment] sites and professions,” after the revolution, such “males not only carried the stigma of homosexuality, but they also transgressed the newly imposed regulations of gendered dressing in public” (Najmabadi 2014, 6). Yet, this hazardous sphere under the Islamic Republic state still echoed traces of familiar notions toward gender and transgender during the Qajar dynasty and the Pahlavi eras (1925–1941; 1941–1979), particularly as manifested in the zanpush (cross-dressing male performer), bachcheh-raqqas (transvestite male adolescent dancer), and even fokoli (Westernized dandy) figures.

Dancing Boys and Westernized Dandies

Whereas in Islam, gendered tashabboh (cross-dressing or transvestism) is strongly censured or deemed haram (that which is considered sinful, and thus forbidden, by Islamic
law)—depending on the jurisprudential school—transvestism, at least for presentational or strategic purposes (rather than for eroticism or self-fulfillment), abounds in Iranian history and culture (Milani 2011). Within certain temporal ghettos, but also as means to achieving otherwise culturally problematic ends, men and women have often cross-dressed. The well-known figures of zanpush men and bachchehraqqas are prominent cases in point, particularly during the Qajar dynasty and the early Pahlavi eras when, as a result of cultural restrictions regarding women’s public display, young men would often perform as female characters in religious and nonreligious plays or within motrebi (minstrel) troupes—a performance form involving music, dancing, and acting (Meftahi 2016). After Reza Shah’s ban on veiling in 1936, such impersonating dancing boys were often replaced by women (Meftahi 2016). The figure of the male performer and dancer was revived, especially in films, in the 1940s and 1950s, but as a laughingstock (Najmabadi 2014), a phenomenon not incomparable to the contemporaneous, widespread derision of the fokoli social type within Iranian literature, pop culture, and film (Naficy 2011). Standing for, among other things, excessive bodily performativity and effeminacy, fokolis were perceived as “figures of modernity who threatened the Islamic, patriarchal, secular, and heteronormative orders” (Naficy 2011, 277). In his best-known work of nonfiction, Gharbzadegi (1962; Occidentosis: A Plague from the West [1984]), the renowned Iranian writer and social critic Jalal Al-i Ahmad (1923–1969) describes his gharbzadeh figure (translated as “Westoxificated” and “Weststruck”) in this way: “The Occidentotic is effete [qerti]. He is effeminate [zan-sefat; efféminé]. He attends to his grooming a great deal. He spends much time sprucing himself up. Sometimes he even plucks his eyelashes” (1984, 96).

Given the previously established association of the dancing boy with passive homosexuality and with Westernized dandies (Najmabadi 2005), the derisive revival of the cross-dressing male performer figure had in part to do with the aforementioned heteronormative shift in the Iranian gender order, serving as an explicit example of the disciplinary function of gendered humor (Abedinifard 2016). Yet, it also reflected a historical moment in the formation of the category of transsexuality in Iran, as the country's anxieties about the unfamiliar issues of intersex and sex change were unfolding (Najmabadi 2014). An abject figure, the male dancer is to this day often associated with unmanliness, particularly gayness, in Iranian culture (Papan-Matin 2009).

In post–1979 revolution Iran, cross-dressing is officially banned, sometimes even on the screen, as seen in cases such as Davood Mir-Bagheri’s film Adam barfi (1995; Snowman), featuring a male character (Abbas, played by Akbar Abdi) who disguises himself as a woman to receive a visa to the United States, and Ja’far Panahi’s Afsayd (2006; Offside), which depicts teenage females who impersonate men to watch a match in an officially male-only space—that is, a soccer stadium. Adam barfi was censored and banned for three years before it was publicly viewed in Iran; Afsayd has never been screened publicly there. However, the Islamic Republic proved to be a paradoxical moment for trans people, who were later allowed to pursue a sex change—and even supported in that pursuit.
Maryam Khatoon (née Fereydoon) Molkara in 2010. Molkara, an Iranian woman-presenting male, secured Ayatollah Khomeini's permission to undergo a sex change in 1987. The resulting religious decree affirmed the use of sex reassignment surgery for transgendered persons in Iran even while homosexuality continued to be outlawed.

**Khomeini's Fatwa and Cultural Attitudes**

When mainstream Western media outlets address the topic of transsexuality in contemporary Iran, they typically position its acceptance in terms of its alleged contradiction of the Islamic Republic's strong ban on homosexuality. Far from being inconsistent, however, current Iranian official policies regarding transsexuality—which resulted from a combination of events, particularly a trans woman's valor and a powerful religious leader's leniency on the subject—are, while generative of social spaces for transgendered subjectivities, ultimately supportive of a heteronormative gender order. Several years after the 1979 Iranian Revolution, a woman-presenting male, Maryam Khatoon (née Fereydoon) Molkara (1950–2012), met with the revolutionary leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini (1902–1989) to obtain a religious solution to her transsexual situation. The meeting resulted in Khomeini's renowned fatwa (a legal decree issued by an Islamic religious leader) regarding sex change: “In the Name of God. Sex change is not religiously problematic [i.e., it is permissible] if authorized by reliable physicians. God willing, you will be safe and hopefully the people you mentioned will be mindful of your particular situation” (translation by Mostafa Abedinifard). Khomeini had previously issued
a similar edict in his master treatise *Tahrir al-wasilah* (1965); yet the fact that he was the supreme leader of the Islamic Republic at the time Molkara approached him in 1987 was enough reason for his second proclamation to gain universal value later, even though it had been customized to Molkara’s situation.

Khomeini’s fatwa has certainly facilitated the road to sex reassignment surgery and opened previously nonexistent spaces for many trans people. Yet, significant changes, especially in grassroots attitudes toward trans persons within Iranian society and culture have yet to occur. Current nonlenient official policies and social taboos regarding nonheteronormative performances and subjectivities in general, as well as substantial legal and jurisprudential gaps regarding transsexuality in particular (see Saeidzadeh 2016), especially need attention. Indeed, the fatwa, as fulfilled by the medical discourse, can serve as a permit for directing abnormal bodies into a heteronormative matrix, but at worst can also be “[misused to push] sexual minorities who do not belong to the transgender group, such as homosexual or bisexual people, to undergo SRS [sex reassignment surgery]” (Alipour 2017, 101).

Autobiographical, documentary, and fictional narratives of Iranian trans persons—whether cross-dressers or pre- or post-operation transsexuals—abound with painful experiences of social ostracization and various forms of trans- and homophobic violence, whether in closed circles of peers, family, and the workplace or by strangers and the police. As evidenced in several accounts of transgender and transsexual people in Iran, such as in Tanaz Eshaghian’s documentary *Transsexual in Iran* (2008; also known as *Be Like Others*), pre- and post-operation trans people often become subject to various social control strategies, ranging from such soft options as ridicule and verbal abuse to hard options such as social exclusion, physical abuse, and violence. The transgender person’s concomitant subjection to violence and ridiculing laughter is masterfully captured in Mahsa Mohebali’s short story “Nesf sefid, nesf banafsh” (Half white, half violet; published in *Asheqiyat dar pavaragi* [2004; Lovemaking in the footnotes), in which the first-person narrator, while allowing the pains and misery of her transgender guest/partner to be narrated, cannot help but ironically reveal to the reader that she herself finds her/his situation to be ludicrous. As *Transsexual in Iran* shows, some trans people—especially those who are diagnosed as “really homosexual” through a “filtering” process (Najmabadi 2014, 15)—are forced to undergo surgery; still others who willingly accept the surgery might not necessarily lead a successful life afterward, sometimes ending in poverty, isolation, or forms of prostitution.

**Hegemonic Masculinity**

Despite the public regulating forces against transgendered subjectivities in contemporary Iranian culture, strong evidence exists in narratives of Iranian trans people that foregrounds the determining role of a hegemonic configuration of Iranian masculinity in policing transgenderism. Being enacted by many men and boys as brothers, fathers,
husbands, friends, lovers, and relatives, this primarily honor-based masculinity tends to rigorously oppose trans people’s struggle for agency through threats, or implementation, of violence. Heeding this juncture seems crucial to filling the current gap in Iranian transgender studies of how trans people’s issues interplay with those of other gender and sexual minorities, particularly women (Connell 2015). As the culturally ascendant form of being a man in a society, hegemonic masculinity is defined by its distancing from and othering of women, as well as from other sexually or racially marginalized and subordinated masculinities (Connell 1987; Connell 2005b). Seen through the lens of hegemonic masculinity, real men avoid the abjection of feminized masculinities as much as they shun the incongruity and freakishness of masculine femininities.

As a case in point, transgenderism is linked to the forceful demands of hegemonic masculinity in Abdolreza Kahani’s film Asb heyvan-e najibi ast (2011; Absolutely tame is a horse), which features Ramin, a genderqueer character who has apparent homosexual tendencies, as revealed through his dialogues with, and emotional attachment to, another male character, Mas’ud. Because of strong cultural pressure regarding accepted norms of masculinity, Ramin’s male body has turned into a site for culturally contradictory enactments of gender. Thus, while his visibly unmanly voice and behaviors often draw other characters’ curious or teasing attention, he frequently struggles to maintain a façade of hypermasculinity by growing a mustache and engaging in risky, masculine behaviors such as smoking cigarettes and driving too fast. At one point, Mas’ud objects to Ramin’s driving, shouting, “Would you drive properly if I said ‘Ok, you’re a man!’” Later, a sympathetic female acquaintance shares with Ramin the story of a relative who had “similar demeanors” and who eventually left Iran for Denmark, thus leaving Ramin preoccupied with a similar solution to his problem.

Women’s empathy with trans people in the face of threats of hegemonic masculinity is also featured in Negar Azarbayjani’s Aynehaye rooberoo (2011; Facing mirrors), which can be read as a coming-of-age narrative of Ra’na, a traditional and religious, cisgender, married woman, whose friendship with a trans woman, Eddie (née Adineh)—who has escaped his father’s and brother’s threats—leads to a transformation in Ra’na’s attitude toward trans people, as well as toward her own heterosexual marriage. Having spent weeks with a gender-ambiguous person while her husband was in prison, Ra’na feels distressed about the consequences for her own relationship when the husband is released. The film ends on a hopeful note regarding gender politics, as Eddie’s brother eventually helps her escape from a forced marriage, a reminder of R. W. Connell’s argument that, ultimately, “men and boys are in significant ways gatekeepers for gender equality” (2005a, 1802).

**Research, Activism, and the Future**

Any significant, positive change in mainstream cultural attitudes toward transgenderism within Iranian society and culture requires persistent, meaningful conversations among
Iranians regarding sexual minorities, including transsexuals. Given the hegemony of the official religious and medical discourses on transsexuality in Iran, engendering effective dialogues beyond those discourses, particularly carving out a space to debate homosexuality openly, seems challenging, if not impossible, especially because of official repression and censorship. Yet, efficient struggles are ongoing at least on three fronts.

Currently, state-approved organizations such as GID ([Iranian Society for Supporting Individuals with] Gender Identity Disorder) and Mahtaa (an acronym for Markaz-e Hemayat az Tarajensiyyati-ha-ye Irani [Support Center for Transgender Iranians]) are opening up unprecedented forums for Iranian transgendered people while also urging further visibility of transsexuals in Iran. While such organizations can hardly discuss the full range of LGBTQ issues openly, they cannot help but induce such topics among their members and audiences. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, queer movements and communities have strived, even if silently (Ganji 2015), toward equality for the LGBTQ population inside Iran, although sometimes difficulties have pushed them outside the country to work more freely (Parsi 2015). Nevertheless, for the LGBTQ population within Iran, the internet and online social media have often also provided promising spaces and sources for constructive debates, consciousness-raising, collective identity construction, support seeking, and connection making with the outside world. Noteworthy organizations and virtual spaces operating outside Iran include the Iranian Queer Organization, the Iranian Lesbian and Transgender Network, and the Iranian Railroad for Queer Refugees.

In the face of persistent stigmatization of gender ambiguity in modern Iranian culture, alternative literary and cinematic representations of transsexuals are also emerging within Iran, which can incite substantial rethinking of transgenderism and transsexuality, thus also serving to complicate the official religious and medical discourses. This trend is visible in cinema. For instance, in contrast with the superficial and facetious treatment of medicalized transsexuality in Tahmineh Milani’s Atash bas (2006; Cease Fire), where a transsexual character is inserted as comic filler and disallowed any meaningful voice, Alireza Raisian’s Dorane asheghi (2015; Time to love) embeds a similar transgendered character who is treated respectfully and granted due voice. Full-length coverage of transgendered characters in films such as the aforementioned Transsexual in Iran and Aynehaye rooberoo is also increasingly emerging. Also in the works as of early 2018 were another feature film, Fatemeh Saqafi’s Biography, and a documentary codirected by the renowned Iranian actress Behnoosh Bakhtiari. Finally, serious literary interventions in cultural attitudes toward transgenderism are gradually appearing. A pioneer was Farkhondeh Aqaee’s novel Nimeh-ye gomshodeh (2000; Lost gender), whose attention to transgenderism was addressed by several short story writers afterward. A relevant novella, A (2018), was also set to be published by the acclaimed postmodernist poet and fiction writer Leila Sadeghi. The connecting thread in all these texts is a serious concern with, and thus critical intervention in, grassroots cultural attitudes toward gender and sexuality in general, and transsexuality in particular. Some also effectively link women and sexual
Finally, during the second decade of the twenty-first century, academic research on the Iranian LGBTQ population, often by Iranian scholars in the diaspora, has flourished. Alongside Najmabadi’s single historiography of transgenderism in Iran, an increasing number of scholarly articles are being published in peer-reviewed journals. Heeding the importance of the effect that religious and juridical discourses have on the lives of sexual minorities, some scholars pose vital legal, jurisprudential, and exegetical questions and offer alternative interpretations and possibilities for redress (see, e.g., Alipour 2017; Saeidzadeh 2016; Naraghi 2018). As implied by such research, just as Khomeini’s fatwa remains unconventional within Islamic jurisprudence, it would be unhelpful to hold Islam accountable for the current hegemonic attitude toward sexual minorities in Iran. Thus, revisionist readings of Islam and the Qur’an with regard to the rights of women and LGBTQ individuals, as initiated by some Iranian Muslim scholars associated with “religious intellectualism,” can be especially rewarding. The Iranian Shi’ite philosopher and religious studies scholar Arash Naraghi (2018), for instance, explores both scientific and religious sources, including the Qur’an (particularly the Qur’anic story of Lot) and the Shi’ite fiqh (tradition of Islamic jurisprudence) to argue that homosexuality is not unnatural or incompatible with Shi’a Islam.

As invisible as they have often been within Iran, Iranian queer movements might eventually bring unique insights to Iranian feminist and women’s rights activism. Given the oft-trodden path toward Iranian democracy, what one queer activist imagined as the perspective of the Jonbesh-e sabz (Green Movement) might as well provide an effective prospect for gender and sexuality activism in Iran: “a ‘united chain’ of the oppressed, bringing together women, LGBTQs, workers and students against social oppression” (Ganji 2015, 112). (A nonviolent civil rights movement, the Iranian Green Movement refers to a series of organized mass protests by many Iranians after the contested 2009 presidential election in Iran, which began with the motto “Where is my vote?” and gradually expanded into further quests for democratic rights. The word green contained ritual and religious connotations only.) While this might look like too ideal an aim to begin with, a starting place for feminist scholars and women’s rights activists is a serious attempt to welcome queer studies and activism. As far as feminist historiography is concerned, Najmabadi argues that it genuinely needs to heed sexual orientation. To articulate this necessity, she draws attention to “historical amnesia” about the figure of amrad in modern Iranian culture, which began with a shift in Iranians’ “aesthetic sensibilities” toward women’s beauty. While “Qajar women sported a thin mustache, or more accurately a soft down, as a sign of beauty” (Najmabadi 2005, 233), by the end of the Qajar era this sign of women’s beauty had turned into a “troubling sign of undesirability” (233) and one of “masculine ugliness” (235). Prior to that in the Qajar period, however, “the single most important visual marker of manhood ... was not a mustache but a full beard” (233). The woman’s soft down, more than anything else, was a reminder of an amrad’s khatt (the first trace of a
mustache on an amrad’s face), which modern Iranians have long forgotten. The erasure of homoeroticism, Najmabadi maintains, “became a contingent birthmark of the Iranian women’s movement for parity at the end of the nineteenth century” (235). Ever since, feminist critiques of Iranian modernity have been actively, though inadvertently, involved in the production of heterosexuality and the disavowal of homoerotism. Given that today, more than feminism itself, particular kinds of it such as lesbian feminism, as well as homoeroticism and same-sex sexuality, are under attack inside Iran, the essential task of feminist historiography of Iranian modernity, Najmabadi concludes, is to “re-member” the above eroded figures of the past and “to reenvisage affinities with male homosexuality and same-sex affectivity” (243). This is the case not least because, as she warns, “it would be tragic if the opening of a publicly acceptable cultural and political space for feminism in Iran is officiated by a national consensus against queer subjectivities” (243).

Developing alliances between Iranian feminism and queer studies can also be justified because, as noted earlier, women’s and queer subjectivities’ marginalization within current Iranian society and culture appears to be strongly linked to the undeniable cultural and political power of a heterosexual, hegemonic masculinity. Therefore, getting involved in studies that aim to critique and challenge the subordinating control and common harms of this prevailing masculinity—for both women and queer subjects—would be an equally essential task for Iranian gender studies, which could subsequently also provide promising grounds for shared activism (Abedinifard 2015).

SEE ALSO Masculinity in Iranian Cinema; Sex Reassignment Surgery in Iran; Shifting Sexual Norms in Nineteenth-Century Iran; Transgender Identity in Iranian Cinema

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Transvestites/Transsexuals

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The Euro-American development of labels for those who choose to dress in the clothing of the opposite gender and those who feel they are in the wrong body for their gender.

Late nineteenth-century Germany witnessed both the birth of the organized self-articulation of sexual minorities (who were inspired by activists such as Karl Heinrich Ulrichs [1825–1895] and Magnus Hirschfeld [1868–1935]) and the growing influence of the field of psychiatric sexual pathology, which set the terms of public discourse about sexual difference. In a dialogue between sexual researchers and the subjects they researched, sexual categories were developed for those who did not conform to heteronormative gender roles and whose behavior was considered pathological. In 1870 the German psychiatrist Carl Westphal (1833–1890) developed the category of “contrary sexual feeling,” which encompassed same-sex desire, cross-dressing, and the wish to be considered a member of the opposite sex. The Austro-German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902), author of the book Psychopathia sexualis (1886; Sexual psychopathy), labeled this desire metamorphosis sexualis paranoica, or a delusional desire to transform one’s gender. Although the list of individuals who have temporarily or permanently lived in the role of the other gender is long, it was only in 1910 that Hirschfeld coined the word transvestites to describe these people in order to distinguish them from homosexuals. Given prevailing stigmas, male transvestites did not want to be categorized as homosexual, and homosexual men did not want to be considered transvestites.

International Influence of German Theorists

International networks of German émigré cross-dressers helped to internationalize these categories and identities. For example, in 1913, the German-trained physician Bernard S. Talmey (1862–1926) helped introduce American sexology to the concept of transvestitism after having met fellow German immigrant and cross-dresser Otto Spengler in New York,
and in 1914 the British sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859–1939) coined the term *Sexoästhetische Inversion* or Deonism to describe British cross-dressers. Recognition of this identity was, however, particularly advanced in Germany. In 1909 Hirschfeld negotiated with Berlin’s chief of police (*Polizeipräsident*) to institute the use of medical certificates for transvestites, a practice that protected individuals from arrest under public nuisance laws and that was later adopted across Germany. After 1920, individuals were able to legally change their given names. Transvestite bars, organizations, and periodicals flourished up until the beginning of the Nazi seizure of power in 1933.

Those labeled “transvestites” included not only women and men who were interested in wearing the clothing of the other sex but also those who felt themselves to entirely belong to that sex, a desire that Harry Benjamin (1885–1986), a German-American endocrinologist and sexologist and Hirschfeld disciple, classified using the now controversial (i.e., entirely medicalized) term *transsexual*. Until that point, Hirschfeld had categorized these individuals as “extreme” or “total transvestites.” (Hirschfeld had used the term *psychological transsexualism* [*seelischer Transsexualismus*] earlier in 1923, but with a broader meaning.) In using these categories, Hirschfeld described individuals whose desire to take on the social role of the other gender was not necessarily intertwined with discomfort about their bodies or a wish for physical transformation. But developments in the natural and social sciences along with the growth of various social reform movements around 1900 led to a rehabilitation, new definition, and glorification of the natural body, physical beauty, and asexual nudity. Collectively known as *Lebensreform* (life reform), these movements praised the virtues of harmonizing “healthy” nature with body and soul. Viewing the body as an expression of the soul, reformers believed that it needed to be modeled and disciplined to conform to the ideals of masculinity and femininity. These arguments likely motivated those who wanted to belong to the other gender to start seeking physical transformation. The necessary surgical techniques were simultaneously being developed, because the trend of aesthetic normalization of bodily beauty had encouraged the development of cosmetic surgery, which promised to correct physical deficits. However, this contextualization can provide only general background; it cannot convey the psychological suffering that motivated individuals to seek and undergo irreversible transformation of their bodies through invasive surgical interventions such as castration, amputation, and transplantation.
Transvestite Rudolf Richter in Male and Female Attire. Born in Bohemia in present-day Germany in 1892, Rudolf Richter, known as Dorchen, considered themselves a transvestite and was recognized by others under this historical term. Motivated by the Steinach Film depicting experimental sex change operations on animals (1922), Dorchen sought out Magnus Hirschfeld’s Institut für Sexualwissenschaft and requested a surgical transformation of their genitals. Dorchen was then castrated in 1923, followed by an amputation of the penis in 1929, and the formation of a vagina at the beginning of 1931 in Berlin.

Development of Gender Transformation Surgeries

In a 1914 publication, Ellis was the first to divide individuals into those who wanted to wear the clothing of the other sex and those who felt they belonged to another sex. In 1916 German sexologist Max Marcuse (1877–1963) described for the first time individuals who hoped for complete physical transformation. But surgical realization was prevented by doctors’ ethical concerns. The first surgical bodily transformations did not necessarily involve the surgical creation of the genitals of the other sex. These individuals sought to remove the physical signs of the gender they rejected. For women this meant mastectomy, ovariectomy, and hysterectomy—operations that were performed by the Berlin-based surgeon Richard Mühsam (1872–1938) as early as 1912. Men sought castration, which some individuals performed on themselves. Those seeking hormonal conformity with the desired sex started seeking implantation of gonadal tissue, a technique inspired by the Austrian physiologist Eugen Steinach’s (1861–1944) experiments with the transplantation of gonads from castrated laboratory animals starting in 1910. Press reports and a popular film depicting Steinach’s technique (1922) had prompted some “transvestites” to demand these procedures. Testicle tissue was transplanted into those seeking masculinization, and those seeking feminization were prescribed ovarian extracts. By 1920 German surgeons were conducting transplantations of ovaries and testicles. After World War I (1914–1918), castrations that were medically indicated by the threat of suicide were undertaken as
“emergency surgery” at the Institut für Sexualwissenschaft (Institute for Sexual Science) in Berlin. In 1920 the first surgical creation of a vagina for the purposes of sexual transition from male to female was carried out; rather than amputating the penis, surgeons sewed it under the intestines. Techniques to create a vagina had been developed around the turn of the century to treat cancer and were employed by the surgeon Erwin Gohrbandt (1890–1965) in 1930 and by Kurt Warnekros (1882–1949) in Dresden. There is further evidence that the first penectomies were carried out in the late 1920s. Surgical techniques to build breasts deployed vacuum pumps and injections of paraffin, while beards were removed with epilation and X-rays.

Between 1910 and 1930, in other words, various surgical techniques that had been developed for other purposes were put to use in gender transformation surgeries, and there was no inevitability to the choice of techniques; many individuals sought only castration. The key criteria for access to surgery was the individual’s urgently articulated desires and needs—the suffering of the person—along with the medical expertise and understanding of the doctors. These incrementally executed gender transformations were the first tentative searches for a practical medical solution to an entirely new but pressing problem, whose consequences were impossible to measure.

**United States: Medicalization, Political Movements, Gender Identity**

With little attention to this earlier German history, a new but once again medically focused interest in the phenomenon arose in the United States in the 1940s and 1950s. In a lecture delivered at the symposium of the Association for the Advancement of Psychotherapy on 18 December 1953, Benjamin claimed to have developed the concept of transsexuality, even though David O. Cauldwell (1897–1959) had already used the term in its present-day meaning in 1949. Benjamin published the first monograph on the subject of transsexuality in 1964 and a more widely, popularly received book, *The Transsexual Phenomenon*, in 1966. Continuing practices that characterized the work of Hirschfeld, whom Benjamin knew and had visited in Germany before the plundering of Hirschfeld's Institut für Sexualwissenschaft in May 1933, Benjamin based his account on his interviews with individuals who belonged to a small but tight-knit social network across the United States and abroad. Indeed, in the 1920s, Benjamin’s practice as an endocrinologist in New York put him into contact with the aforementioned Spengler, who successfully persuaded Benjamin to administer hormone treatments. Like many individuals who contacted Hirschfeld, Benjamin’s patients often sought him out, advocated for themselves, and exerted significant influence over the shape of his theories. The famous American sexologist Alfred Kinsey (1894–1956) later turned to Benjamin as an expert and point of entry for meeting these individuals and gathering materials for his archive, and Kinsey's work in turn expanded Benjamin's engagement with the community.
Before this popular medicalization in the 1960s, representations of “transsexualism” in the United States (to use Benjamin’s term) were dominated by sensationalistic journalism. Yet even this publicity had a profound effect on gender-nonconforming individuals. Many of the persons who sought out Benjamin’s help had been inspired by the story of the former soldier and Danish American Christine Jorgensen (1926–1989), who in 1952 became the second transgender individual, after Lili Elbe (1882–1931), to experience intense media coverage. Jorgensen’s autobiography was published in 1967 and was turned into a film in 1970. Like the publications and media attention about Elbe, Jorgensen’s biography contributed to identity formation within the trans movement. The first political movements for gender-nonconforming individuals were, however, quickly eclipsed by movements for women’s rights and gay rights that were often openly hostile to transgender identities. As in Germany before the war, the role and visibility of gender-nonconforming individuals within political and social movements in the United States was often erased or subsumed into narratives of other identity categories— notably, for example, in the role that Marsha P. Johnson (1945–1992) and Sylvia Rivera (1951–2002) played in the Stonewall riots of 1969. Nevertheless, both private and openly political groups continued to organize: Virginia Prince (1912–2009) began publishing the magazine Transvestia in 1960; the International Imperial Court System was founded in 1965 in San Francisco (eventually growing into a network of local nonprofits that raise money for charitable causes through gala state dinners, which gave cross-dressing and transgender communities important visibility and a forum for social and political activism); and clubs or retreats for cross-dressers offered places of refuge, community, and self-expression. Reed Erickson (1917–1992), a wealthy heir and businessman who transitioned to male in the 1960s, quietly but significantly supported activism, research, and treatment of “transsexualism” through the Erickson Educational Foundation, which was founded in 1964.

Among the recipients of this support was Benjamin, who used it to organize a series of symposia on gender identity beginning in 1969 that proved influential in changes to diagnostic categories and treatment paradigms beginning in the 1980s. Benjamin’s work reflected a wider wave of medicalization in the 1960s that also saw the founding of gender identity clinics in the United States— first, in 1965, at Johns Hopkins University and then at many other universities and hospitals, as many as forty within ten years. Academic and medical interest in gender identity increased rapidly, producing theories about gender identity formation that were themselves controversial; the academics and scientists also displayed open animus toward gender-nonconforming identities, and this was particularly true of John Money (1921–2006), a psychologist and sexologist associated with the Hopkins clinic. This visibility sparked a popular and professional backlash in the 1970s that led, most famously, to the closing of the Johns Hopkins clinic in 1979. While the third edition of the psychiatric Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (1980) was the first to appear without “homosexuality” as a diagnosis, it also marked the introduction of “transsexualism” as distinct from “transvestic fetishism (cross-dressing for purposes of
sexual excitement)" (Rudacille 2005, 195). Later editions of the DSM evince a shift in perspective away from a desire to change sex toward cross-gender identification, distress at perceived gender, and impairment in functioning.

**Standards of Care**

The year 1979 also marked the founding of the Harry Benjamin International Gender Dysphoria Association, which published the so-called Benjamin Standards of Care. Revised twice before Benjamin’s death in 1986, and four times thereafter, these standards established a process of treatment for transitioning from one gender to the other. Originally intended as a “consensus opinion on transsexual treatment by medical and psychological experts,” the seventh edition of the guidelines were issued in 2011 with a new name, Standards of Care for the Health of Transsexual, Transgender, and Gender Nonconforming People and under the auspices of the similarly renamed World Professional Association for Transgender Health. Motivated by desire to relieve psychological distress or suffering, the standards outlined what they considered to be a progression of treatment requiring psychosocial support and a period of living in the new gender as necessary first steps for accessing physical interventions such as hormone therapy or surgical procedures; they also placed medical professionals in the position of gatekeepers authorizing each step of the process. Both these aspects of the standards have provoked criticism. The evolution of the standards in the United States nevertheless also reflects the wave of activism beginning in the 1990s that effected a decisive shift away from the medical category of “transsexual” toward concepts of transgender identity, as well as away from medical models of relieving distress toward broader models that actively affirm a range of individual gender identities.

**SEE ALSO** Chevalier d’Éon or Mademoiselle Beaumont (1728–1810); Cross-Dressing in the West; Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM); Elbe, Lili (1882–1931); Erauso, Catalina de (1592–1650); Institut für Sexualwissenschaft; Psychopathia Sexualis (1886; Richard von Krafft-Ebing); Trans Issues in Africa; Transgender Identity in Iranian Cinema; Transgendered Subjectivities in Contemporary Iran; Travesti and Trans Activism in Latin America and the Caribbean

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The Middle East has been associated historically with male homosexuality by scores of Western travelers, historians, writers, and artists for well over 400 years (Boone 2015). Discourses across Middle Eastern and Western cultures have evolved since Elizabethan commerce opened the Mediterranean world, particularly the Ottoman and Levantine area, to trade during the sixteenth century. It was then that the West castigated the Middle East as a hotbed of sexual and sinful perversities that could contaminate the virtuous Europeans (Boone 2015). And as fundamentalist cultures have been established in many areas in the Middle East, the same claim is made about the West—what was once the puritanical West is now a hotbed of sexual perversions and immorality that might contaminate Middle Eastern cultures. Thus, there is a need to ward off that same threat that is now coming from the West rather than vice versa (Boone 2015). Western interest in homosexual men in the Middle East has changed over time and taken the shape of an industry that controls access to the “Gay Orient.” The tourism industry sells the Western traveler an image of the homosexual Middle Eastern man that reflects Anglo-European fantasies of sexual taboo. This image is both a rhetorical strategy and a common by-product of Orientalist writing (Boone 2015).

The Tourism Industry's Manufactured Image of the Middle East

Gay tourism has become a significant contributor to the income of the tourism industry since the late twentieth century. The image of the homosexual Arab that is manufactured and sold to the Western gay traveler today is reliant on the postcolonial legacy, which, in itself, is primarily a reaction to, and analysis of, the global colonial legacy. This image is consistent with the image presented during the nineteenth century in Gustave Flaubert’s writings, which is addressed and analyzed in Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978). It consistently establishes the Middle East as a setting of “sexual promise [and] untiring sensuality” and the Arab man as a dominating and hypersexualized figure (Macfie 2009, 109). Striking examples of this eroticization continue to appear in modern travel literature,
on the shelves of travel agencies, in electronic brochures, and on Middle Eastern gay travel websites. These depictions of the Arab man as a masculine yet sexualized figure sell the idea of an exotic land, and it becomes apparent that most representations rely on an idealized exoticism wherein the tourist and the indigenous population are constructed as oppositional.

Gay trips to the Arab world, promoted using such names as the “Bear Arabia Summer Trip” and “Nyle in Style,” promise the traveler visits to historical and cultural sites as well as contact with Arab men, and ensure the tourist will have a safe experience with a group of friendly, likeminded gay individuals. Homosexuality and sexual desire are employed as an incentive for the Western tourist to embark on an experience that he once thought was out of reach: the gay Arab world. Since around 2010, there has been a growing demand for conspicuous gay consumption in the Middle East, with Beirut as the focus (McCormick 2011, 72). Entrepreneurs capitalizing on this demand have created an organized gay tourism as an option for Western travelers to gain access to the gay scenes in certain Arab countries. These travelers, in turn, often write about their unique experiences.

Gay travel writing on the Middle East is mostly produced by Western white men who have constructed an image and concept of the Arab world for Westerners who read about it in brochures and gay travelogues (Pratt 1992). There is some progress in the production of gay travel writing on Arab sexuality by Arab authors. Such writings distract readers from trends in international LGBT publishing that provide a platform to Western narrators giving accounts of their sexual encounters in the “lands of Islam” (Mack 2014, 326; also see Bowles 1963; Schmitt and Sofer 1992; Luongo 2007). Mary Pratt, in her book Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation, speaks of “the contact zone” as a result of such tourism, which creates social spaces where “disparate cultures meet, clash and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination” (1992, 4). The physical spaces where individuals separated by geography encounter one another involve relations of radical inequality, oppression, and conflict between the Western traveler and the Arab native. One of the common factors among travel writings on the Arab world is the Western tourist’s construction of himself in his writing as a vulnerable individual without a sense of authority in the Arab country. These “anti-conquest writings” share a strategy of portraying Western tourists as men seeking to secure their innocence while, at the same time, asserting European hegemony (Pratt 1992). This innocent traveler, however, plays a significant role in the production of knowledge and the perpetuation of stereotypes of the oversexualized, savage, male Arab queer.

**Gay Tourism as a Reflection of Colonialist and Orientalist Desires**

The booming gay tourism industry in the Arab world is often framed as mere
reinforcement of colonialist and Orientalist desires, where "the polymorphous perversion" (Freud 1953–1974, 7:234) of the Arab queer within Orientalist discourse also provides the Western traveler with the opportunity to "free himself" from the rules and restrictions of his civilized society by gaining access to the primitive Orient (Anderson 2016). Therefore, the Western traveler projects his sexual desires and "polymorphous perversity" into the Arab queer and must, then, leave "civilization" (as this step is part of the fantasy of the savage sex) and go to a faraway place seeking to fulfill his sexual desires and fantasies, positioning himself as the vulnerable individual and the Arab man as the oversexualized savage queer. The position of certain countries, such as Lebanon, as the most liberal of the Arabic-speaking countries enables them to take part in selling this image to the Western traveler in exchange for profit generated from gay tourism.

Gay tourism in the Arab world is angled at times toward "social, political and economic inequalities with very deep roots in ... colonialism" (Murray 2007, 50). The 2009 Lebanese tour package called "Bear Arabia," for instance, intentionally misemploys Arabia not as a reference to Arabian Gulf countries, since Lebanon is in the Levant, but to evoke an image of the Arab world that the Western person might have seen in Hollywood films (see Shaheen 2009)—a mystical and dangerous place that further reinforces the image of a larger exotic Middle East. The tourists' lack of sustained depth in their encounters with Arab men and their "fantasies of sexual fluidity of preidentity, precapitalist, premodern times conjoin nicely with the tourist agenda" (Puar 2007, 113).

It is important to point out that, with a few exceptions, most gay travel writings on the Arab world are produced by men. However, despite gay tourism in the Middle East being targeted and defined by male homosexual relations, there seems to be a significant number of Western lesbian tourists visiting Arab countries. However, these data are insufficiently theorized.

**Representations of Gay Travel in Arab Cities**

Many Arab cities have been investing in efforts to attract consumers of diverse sexual orientations and marketing themselves as among the most "tolerant" cities in the world (Jordan 2012, 10). Such initiatives include providing gay tourism, establishing gay bars and pubs, and displaying the rainbow flag around the city, as well as providing legal rights and protections for LGBT individuals and same-sex marriage and civil unions. However, this "progress" must be questioned, for the tolerance discourse toward a certain people validates the categorization of and discrimination against another (see Butler 2008; Puar 2007; Ritchie 2010). This tolerance is established around sexuality and sexual dissidents, which enables homosexuality to be both a way to show a nation's modernity and progress and a means to distinguish the Arab nations that have managed to embody Western values from those who have not. Calls for and claims of homosexual liberation have been relocated from the sidelines of the counterculture to the center of many countries' national
discourses and have become a principal constituent in the fashioning of these nations as progressive and human-rights oriented. The homonormativity employed here “anesthetizes queer communities into passively accepting alternative forms of inequality in return for domestic privacy and the freedom to consume” (Manalansan 2005, 142). Islamophobic rhetoric is employed to attain credibility and normalize “gay and lesbian human rights, which produce ... gay-friendly and not-gay-friendly nations” (Puar 2007, xiv). This does not indicate progress in gender and sexuality politics but a regression in racial politics (Haritaworn, Tauqir, and Erdem 2008).

In successfully marketing a conservative Arab country as a gay-friendly tourist destination, racist and Islamophobic rhetoric are employed to establish credibility. Gayfriendly cities are thus placed in contrast with other Muslim Middle Eastern cities and countries where homosexuality is illegal and whose people are hostile toward nontraditional sexualities (Fassihi 2007). As a result, the few travel agents working in the Middle Eastern gay tourism industry can control the market (e.g., in 2007 the US-based International Gay and Lesbian Travel Association named Bertho Makso, a Lebanese travel-services promoter, its sole representative in the Arab Middle East) and only a handful of Arab cities serve as safe gay travel destinations in the Arab world (Fassihi 2007; McCormick 2011).

**Gay-Friendly Lebanon** In 2007 the United Nations World Tourism Organization reported that tourism in the Middle East, a region highly susceptible to political turbulence, was growing at an average yearly rate of 10.6 percent (UNWTO 2007). Lebanon, and specifically its capital, Beirut, are often portrayed by popular Western newspapers and magazines as a top tourist destination and as the most gay-friendly Arab city. Lebanese homosexual male bodies are construed as oversexualized sites of polymorphous perversity, as discussed previously, but also as yardsticks of civilization and modernity. In Lebanon, queerness is conflated with modernity, in which Lebanon and its neighboring country Israel compete, a competition that includes attracting the most Western gay tourists (McCormick 2011; Anderson 2016). For instance, Lebanese travel agencies organize tourist packages that market masculine Lebanese men and promise beautiful sites, nightlife outings, and bathhouse visits (McCormick 2011). Publicity is accomplished via the internet, with many nationalities targeted: French, American, British, Scottish, Australian, Spanish, Italian, Cypriot, Venezuelan, Jordanian, Saudi, Qatari, Norwegian, Swedish, and Canadian. This usage of gay Lebanese bodies to promote Lebanon as an Orientalist gay paradise is almost always countered by Israeli gay tourism promotions, in which the discourse combines *pinkwashing* (positioning Israel as a progressive democratic state that is tolerant of LGBT rights, adopting Western liberal queer discourses, and shaming Arab states for their oppressive behaviors toward their LGBT communities), far-right Israeli politics, and gay freedom in Israel. Such promotions describe Israel as a more gay-friendly country than its neighbor and remind Western tourists that Israel remains the only country in the Middle East that protects gay rights (Anderson 2016).
Gay tourism in Lebanon is romanticized in gay travelogues and portrayed as countering the political, religious, and social barriers that keep nations at war, with gay connections between tourists and gay natives capable of overcoming boundaries and stereotypes (Luongo 2007). Beirut’s Annual Arab Tourism and Transportation Fair promotes this image of gay tourism as a bridge between nations and a way to overcome war and prejudice. And while gay tourism is not promoted in a provocative manner, it is nonetheless emphasized for its profit potential (Fassihi 2007). Many argue that this acceptance of gay tourism and the lucrative gay scene in Lebanon by the government and mainstream society is strongly linked to the money that Western gay tourists bring into the country (McCormick 2011). And many LGBT and human rights activists in Beirut note that the reason the government is not suppressing the gay spaces that have arisen due to gay tourism is because of the large amounts of money at stake on the national level, which ultimately forms the driving force of the economy (McCormick 2011).

Jordan, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates Other select Arab cities and countries, such as Jordan, Dubai, and Cairo, are also portrayed as modern gay paradises for the Western traveler. Jordan is depicted as an Americanized version of an Arab country; with its Islamic style and architecture and international brands, stores, and restaurants, Jordan is promoted as the perfect merging of otherwise opposing worlds (Luongo 2007). To the Western outsider, Jordan’s Queen Rania represents the values of Jordan, which are shared with the United States (Macleod 2007). She is often seen on Western television, unveiled and dressed in stylish Western clothing, speaking about women’s rights in the Arab world. Although many Westerners mistake the Jordanian queen as the country’s leader, gay travelogues make it clear that once the traveler enters the country, her image is replaced with that of her husband, King Abdullah II (Luongo 2007). And while Amman, Jordan’s capital, is promoted as progressive and tolerant of alternative sexualities, the frequent crackdowns on gay spaces call this image into question (CRS 2009). However, the country’s international character and its position as a base for America’s involvement in the Middle East and especially Iraq indicate that most interactions between locals and gay foreigners take place through this military channel (Luongo 2007).

Gay travel in Cairo and Dubai is framed as “terrifying and thrilling,” depending on location, that is, where the tourist is staying (whether in a big city like Cairo or in the countryside) and the neighborhoods and places the tourist frequents in the capital cities themselves (Senzee 2015). In the case of Egypt, the government launched more frequent crackdowns on public gay gatherings after Mohamed Morsi’s rise to power in 2012, and gay people in Egypt are reportedly facing harassment and arrest (Gerstler-Holton 2012). Both Egypt and the United Arab Emirates are infamous for the considerable effort their police invest in seeking out same-sex events and arresting participants for indecent behavior (Carreiro 2018). The thrilling aspect of the gay tourism experience, however, concerns gaining access to the secret network of the large local gay communities in both countries. In Cairo, for instance, gay social networks and hookup apps, which have thousands of Egyptian
members and users, facilitate connections between gay individuals (Gerstler-Holton 2012). Dubai, which has been dubbed “the landscape of desire” (Bell and Valentine 1995), is a city advertised for its limited access; even European and American citizens are only granted a one-month tourist visa. Gay tourism websites promote this exclusive city’s underground gay scene as a “gyrating sea of bulging biceps and tank tops” (Richardson and Ewart 2016).

**The Views of Locals, Governments, and LGBT Groups** These cities, seen as the most gay-friendly spaces in the Arab world, have managed to support an intricate system akin to turning a blind eye to homosexual tourism and activities. This does not create an ideal life for homosexual Arabs in these countries, as acceptance of gay tourism among governments and locals is not so much acceptance of gay identities or behaviors as acceptance of gay travelers’ money. However, gay tourism does provide an outlet and a space to address homosexuality and debate it in relation to these countries’ laws. Aside from the money made from gay tourists, these governments’ acceptance of gay tourism and their utilization of gay presence as confirmation of their countries’ progressiveness are essential factors in defining them as modern, liberal civil societies (McCormick 2011).

The gravity of emergent tourist narratives and the way they shape larger conceptions of certain Arab countries have produced international support and interest in gay tourism to the Middle East, as well as objection and condescension within LGBT communities in these countries (Healy 2009). In Lebanon, for instance, LGBT organizations, such as Helem, have often spoken out against travel writing and articles that categorize Beirut as a mere tourist stop for travelers wealthy enough to frequent commercialized locations. LGBT organizations have also argued against strengthening the city’s tourist industry by positioning its narrative within globalized conceptions of sexual identity and orientation through the use of such terms as *liberated, out*, and *gay* (McCormick 2011).

**Gay Tourism and Issues of Social Justice**

Gay Arab individuals have been politicized, romanticized, stigmatized, and widely assumed by many to conflict with one another. Homosexual Arabs embody contradictions: being Arab and queer; being a lesbian and wearing a hijab; living between worlds and not belonging anywhere. Yet scholars and LGBT activists and organizations in Arab countries have presented important arguments concerning gay tourism in the Middle East that must be addressed and taken into consideration, as they will ultimately play a major role in shaping the future of the region’s gay communities.

Many in the Middle East, for instance, consider gay tourism as “selling out” their countries and communities for money (McCormick 2011). The intersecting influences of national and transnational forms of capitalism have created a “global queering” (Jackson 2009, 387) that has forever altered the perception of Arab homosexuality. Gay Arab tourism has also commodified notions of Arab male beauty and gender norms. Displays of sexuality have
become linked closely to the market, and consumption has reached new heights (McCormick 2011). As such, the pressure to tolerate and accept gay tourism, and ultimately homosexuality, in the Middle East is tied to economic profit and has the potential to incite discourse or dampen ideological appeals against homosexuality. It is also unclear whether the money from the gay tourism market can bring LGBT rights to these regions, for such a development could be regarded as a provocation and as another attempt by Western countries and Western nongovernmental organizations to force the initiation of discussions on gay rights (Massad 2002).

Gay tourism can do little to advance sexual rights in the Middle East, for the economy privileges gay individuals in transit and not gay locals. On many occasions, Arab LGBT rights organizations have questioned the relation of gay tourism to inequality and social justice (Makarem 2011). The discourse surrounding Beirut, Amman, Dubai, and similar cities as being gay-friendly is only relevant and true to the tourist, those who hold another nationality or more particularly those who hold a Western nationality, and wealthy individuals who use money as an incentive to be left alone (McCormick 2011). This image of select Arab cities and countries as gay utopias also marginalizes and silences the many gay Arab men who are not permitted a liberal environment and tolerance of homosexual activities in their own countries.

One must also question the assumption that the gay tourism industry and international business associations in the Middle East can assist the local gay communities and individuals, for the industry’s interests revolve around business connections as opposed to local communities (Makarem 2011). This assumption stems from the concept of visibility, in this case brought on by the tourism industry, as positive and necessary. Dominant Western LGBT discourses describe countries that do not provide their mainstream LGBT communities with public visibility as repressive, “nonmodern,” and in need of Western intervention (Long 2005). Visibility is also assumed to be a goal for gay tourism in the Middle East, along with the need for Arab LGBT communities to address their countries’ lack of gay rights and claim validation in the region. The ways in which money made from gay tourism has become a method to demand rights versus obscuring concerns of inequality must thus be counterbalanced. This can be achieved by addressing tourism beyond a mere definition of avariciousness (McCormick 2011).

SEE ALSO Coming-Out/Coming-In Discourses in the Middle East; Gay European Tourism Association; The Gay International and Mideast LGBTQI Organizations; Orientalism in Gay Pornography about the Middle East; Pinkwashing; Resorts; Sex Tourism in Asia; Sex Tourism in Latin America and the Caribbean; Sex Tourism in the Middle East; Sex Work in Asia; Sex Work/Sex Tourism/Sex Trafficking in Africa

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Indigenous peoples across the Americas have long understood gender to be multiple and mutable. West African and South Asian cultures brought to Latin America and the Caribbean during the slave trade and colonial period also included gender identities outside the binary logic of the colonial/modern gender system. Despite the hegemony of sexual and gender dimorphism that is central to—and mutually constitutive of—heternormativity, coloniality, and modernity in Latin America and the Caribbean today, traces of precolonial gender complexity persist, often alongside more “modern” articulations of gender identity. The greatest continuity with precolonial, colonial, and slave-era Latin American and Caribbean gender complexity appears in indigenous communities with third- and fourth-gender positions, such as the Zapotec and the Maya, and through Afro-Caribbean religions that often overlap with LGBTQI communities, as for example in Haiti where Vodou houngan and mambo (priests and priestesses) welcome the travesti and trans persons who are often part of their communities. Like their West African predecessors, many Afro-Caribbean lwas (spirits) and beings are gender diverse: the rainbow god Dambala is both female and male, and both male and female devotees of Ezili (or Erzuli) are feminine. Afro-Caribbean religions such as Condomblé, Vodou, Santeria, and Obeah feature shifting, porous, and fluid genders and gender identifications in their religious ceremonies, as well as throughout the lives of religious persons.

The historical realities of trans existence and experiences in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially in the colonial period, are complicated by the more modern-day focus on trans as carnivalesque transvestism. Latin American and Caribbean gender complexity has been most visible and perhaps best documented since the onset of the nineteenth century in Carnival, predominantly through transvestite mas (masquerades or “characters” performed in the Carnival celebrations every year), such as the Baby Doll, Dame Lorraine, Pisse-en-lit, Mother Sally, Roba la Gallina, and Jamette. These figures represent the “symbolic form [that] dominates the symbolism of the festival,” as the scholar Richard G. Parker writes (2009, 162). As Rosamond S. King (2014) notes, however, because the
socially sanctioned space it provides for transvestism is spatiotemporally delineated, Carnival—especially from the nineteenth century to the present—simultaneously reinforces the binary gender system its performance nonetheless unsettles. As it has become ever more commercial and touristic in the twenty-first century, Carnival (throughout Latin America and the Caribbean) has also increasingly served as a space for public manifestations of both local and internationalized travesti, trans, and LGBTQI activism.

Definitions and Terms

These overlaps render the grouping of persons, and the terms used to identify those groupings, deeply fraught. Initialisms such as LGBTQI often lump together gender-complex people and practices with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer persons. This is not always an easy or a good fit. As Yolanda Martínez-San Miguel and Sara Tobias point out, the “understandings of ‘homo, hetero, and bi’ that underpin LGB identities ‘are all predicated on congruent conceptions of what it means to be a woman or a man,’” whereas “trans activists challenge the necessity for trans people to define themselves against hetero/homo norms” (2016a, 238). Yet grouping people under various versions of LGBTQI also has benefits, both facilitating coalitional activism in the difficult political and social climates that trans and LGBTQI individuals face and serving to include and acknowledge the many overlaps and intersections between gender complexity and sexual diversity. The term trans (which includes self-defined transsexual, transgender, and other nonbinary gendered identities) provides a more delineated umbrella category for gender-complex persons. Although its origin in Euro-American terminology and activism also relates it to the colonial and neocolonial traditions that impose Euro-American conceptions of gender and “progress,” activists use it for the international intelligibility and the openness to broad-based activism it offers as an umbrella term.
A wealth of regional and local terms abound, many of which appropriate and reconfigure colonial languages for local uses. Throughout the Spanish- and Portuguese-speaking areas of the Caribbean and Latin America, *travesti* refers both to superficial practices of cross-dressing—impermanent gender change undertaken for work performance and personal fulfillment—and to persons who identify as travesti, understanding *travestura* (transvestism) as a regular or integral part of their lives accomplished through everything from clothing and makeup to hormones and silicone injections. In parts of South America, as the anthropologist Marcia Ochoa has shown, *transformista* “refer[s] to people assigned male sex at birth and who present themselves in their everyday lives as women. The word has associations with the sex work performed by many *transformistas*” (2008, 150). Other common Spanish-language terms include *draga*, someone who performs on stage in drag or travesti; *loca*, a fabulously effeminate gay man, transgender woman, transformista, travesti, or draga; and *marimacha*, a lesbian or male woman. Less specific terms such as *de ambiente* and *entendido* demonstrate the mobile, variable, and inclusive—perhaps because not always clearly defined—nature of the communities and terminologies.

In the francophone areas of the Caribbean, *masisi* is a Haitian Kreyòl term for feminine-presenting male-born homosexuals, whereas *madivine* refers to lesbians across gender presentation. (Haitian Creole, referred to locally as Kreyòl, is one of Haiti’s two official languages.) In Guadeloupe and Martinique, *macomère* refers to a man who dresses as a
woman and can also mean “sissy” or “faggot”; fè zanmi designates a lesbian but also has
gender implications; mal-fanm indicates male-woman, often an insult for strong-willed
women who do not “know their place.” While all these terms can be, and frequently are,
used pejoratively, they are not insults that have been reclaimed by activists but instead
have positive and self-designating origins.

In the anglophone areas of the Caribbean, transgender and transsexual are widely used, but
Creole terms, such as the Jamaican man royal, referring to a biological woman who exhibits
masculinity, are also common. Some anglophone Caribbean organizations use the term all-
sexuals to, as noted on the website of the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals, and Gays
(J-FLAG), “reflect a continuum in sexual identity, which captures the consensual bisexual
and transgender experiences of sexual minorities more so than any sexual activities or
behaviours.”

This entry’s titular grouping—travesti and trans—calls attention to the hypervisibility of
feminine and female men and trans women and the relative invisibility of masculine and
male women and trans men in political, academic, and artistic discourses. King argues that
the “dearth of representations of ‘female to male’ Caribbean trans experiences ... points to
the insidiousness of androcentrism and patriarchy; even in a supposedly radical realm that
troubles gender, the focus remains on biological men. This absence also points to the threat
that biological women who exhibit trans identities pose to the stability of patriarchy”
(2014, 23). Omise’ke Natasha Tinsley (2011), one of the few academics who focuses on
female masculinities in Latin America and the Caribbean, argues that female masculinities
appear more in transgressive women’s activism than in “trans” activism. Gender-complex
women in Latin America and the Caribbean are as likely to be the mothers the Jamaican
anthropologist Edith Clarke refers to in her landmark My Mother Who Fathered Me (1957)
as they are to be male-presenting trans organizers or performers.

Nonetheless, there are Latin American and Caribbean organizations, such as Jamaica’s
TransWave and Mexico’s Centro de Apoyo a las Identidades Trans (Center for the Support
of Trans Identities), that actively include male women and persons who identify as trans
men, and a few trans men organizations, such as the Generación de Hombres Trans de El
Salvador (Generation of Trans Men of El Salvador), are emerging. Other organizations, such
as the Federación Argentina de Lesbianas, Gays, Bisexuales y Trans (FALGBT; Argentine
Federation of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Trans) and the Asociación de Travestis,
Transsexuales y Transgéneros de Argentina (ATTTA; Association of Transvestites,
Transsexuals, and Transgenders of Argentina), replace the gender-identifying o/a Spanish
noun and adjective endings with the more recently popular x—as in “lxs compañerxs” or
“ciudadanxs” (ungendered forms of las/los compañeras/compañeros [the companions], and
ciudadanos/ciudadanas [citizens])—to refuse both the gender binary and the
predominance of trans womanhood created by the common use of all feminine language in
much travesti and trans activism.
Activist Agendas and Practices

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, outside of Carnival and Afro-Caribbean religious practices, travesti and trans activism is documented primarily through a combination of fictional depictions, judicial records, and newspaper articles that tend to focus on crimes and scandals such as the 1901 Baile de los 41, which centered on forty-one men arrested in Mexico City at a “scandalous” party involving, among other things, several of the men dressed elegantly as women. In the mid-twentieth century, travesti and trans activism was largely restricted to, but rarely distinguished from, gay and lesbian activism. Visible, vocal, and self-identified travesti and trans organizations and individuals began to emerge in the 1990s and grew significantly in the first decades of the twenty-first century, focusing on a cluster of key concerns that emerged out of the intersection of revolutionary independence movements, human rights work, and the sexual revolution. As outlined in the following sections, contemporary activist organizations focus on legal and legislative rights activism, antiviolence activism, sex-work activism, and health-care activism. More diffuse but no less important are the social groupings that emerge out of and practice social activism.

Legal and Legislative Rights Activism Legal and legislative rights activism targets national laws and their implementation. While homosexuality remains criminalized in much of the Caribbean and parts of Latin America, resulting in activism focused on decriminalization, gender identity and presentation largely go unmentioned in criminal codes, with the important exception of laws outlawing cross-dressing for “improper purposes,” as for example in Guyana. The relative historical legal and legislative silence on gender identity and expression has resulted in twenty-first-century travesti and trans activism focusing on legislative efforts to pass gender identity bills allowing changes of name, gender, and sex on identity cards and other official documents that are used to access legal work, health care, and social security. Gender identity laws thus affect not only sense of self but also economic opportunity and physical safety and security.

Argentina and Cuba stand at the vanguard of travesti and trans legal and legislative rights. Thanks largely to the activism of the FALGBT and the ATTTA, in 2009 Argentina proposed one of the first gender identity laws in Latin America and in 2012 passed into law one of the most comprehensive gender identity laws in the world. Cuba’s government-sponsored Centro Nacional de Educación Sexual (CENESEX; National Center for Sex Education), founded in 1977 and now under the leadership of Mariela Castro Espín (1962–; daughter of Raúl Castro, the nation’s president), has ensured full political and legal rights for transgender individuals and, in 2008, instituted the most comprehensive state-funded trans medical support in the world.

Brazil’s large and visible travesti and trans organizations, including Rede Trans Brasil (Trans Brazil Network) and the Associação Brasileira de Gays, Lésbicas, Bissexuais,
Travestis e Transexuals (Brazilian Association of Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, Transvestites, and Transsexuals), and important regional groups such as the Associação das Travestis e Transexuais do Estado do RJ (Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals of the State of Rio de Janeiro) have secured national and international recognition, hosting in 2009 the world’s largest LGBT pride celebration and, with the support of the presidency from 2000 to 2013, undertaking numerous political and social initiatives to ensure travesti and trans rights. However, without legislative support and with the conservative Brazilian Democratic Movement’s Michel Temer in the presidency as of 2017, Brazil’s Gender Identity Bill, proposed in 2013, languished in parliament.

Activist groups in many other South American countries have secured the passage of gender identity decrees and laws: the Asociación Trans del Uruguay (Trans Association of Uruguay) in 2009, Aquelarre Trans (Trans Coven) and Colombia Diversa (Diverse Colombia) in 2015, and Bolivia’s Red Trebol (Clover Network) in 2016. In the same year, Peru’s Red Trans (Trans Network) helped introduce a gender identity bill in the Peruvian Congress, and in Paraguay, Panambi organized an effort that led to the Ministry of Health passing a resolution allowing trans people to use their “social name” in health-care situations. In Chile, the Movimiento de Integración y Liberación Homosexual (Movement for Homosexual Integration and Liberation) and the Movimiento por la Diversidad Sexual (Movement for Sexual Diversity) are working toward allowing for legal gender identity change in the nation’s civil code.

Central America and the Caribbean are often earmarked by international human rights organizations and media as disastrously transphobic and void of local organizing. Yet, while legal and legislative protections continue to be elusive and transphobic violence remains a significant problem, travesti and trans activism has been steadily increasing since 2001. Some countries have strong traditions of legal and legislative activism despite the lack of rights and judicial protections. In 2017 Transvida, the first trans group recognized as a nongovernmental organization in Costa Rica, worked to secure the introduction of Expediente 19.841, a measure that would allow name and gender changes on identity cards. TransWave, founded in 2015 in Jamaica, is working in partnership with J-FLAG and other LGB groups to protect gender identity from discrimination in penal codes. In the Dominican Republic, Trans Siempre Amigas (Trans Always Friends) runs a publicity and education program to inform travesti and trans Dominicans about their legal rights and to organize the denunciation of human and civil rights violations. Since March 2016, Guatemala’s Organización Trans Reinas de la Noche (Trans Queens of the Night Organization) has been instrumental in ensuring that trans persons can select their gender identity on the National Registry of Persons and on the Personal Identity Document.

In Barbados, Antigua, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, and Suriname, where the criminalization of travesti and trans practices persists and few if any legal and legislative rights or judicial protections have been extended to travesti and trans individuals, activism
often remains nascent, frequently taking the form of individual court cases claiming the right for gender and name changes on identity cards or prosecuting those responsible for transphobic crimes. In Belize, Guyana, Saint Lucia, and Dominica, such individual activism led to the formation of national organizations in the second decade of the twenty-first century.

Looking beyond national borders, the well-developed regional coalition Red Latinoamericanay del Caribe de Personas Trans (REDLACTRANS; Latin American and Caribbean Network of Trans Persons) supports both new and established national organizations by facilitating cooperation among them, hosting regional conferences, producing regional studies, coproducing trans art projects and films such as the 2010 documentary Translatina, and working with regional groups such as the Organization of American States and the Caribbean Court of Justice. Indeed, even without the support of REDLACTRANS, activists often, when national activism falters, turn to regional bodies such as the Caribbean Court of Justice, as in a case in Guyana in which a 2017 appeals court both maintained a 2010 ruling upholding a section of the nation's law that made public cross-dressing “for any improper purpose” illegal and refused to define “improper purpose,” effectively giving local law enforcement and courts the discretion to arbitrarily open criminal proceedings.

Legal and rights-based activism can be life changing, not only extending legal protections but also changing public opinion. As Martínez-San Miguel and Tobias point out, however, granting legal status and rights “enables governments to rebrand themselves as the protectors of marginalized people” and to cover over “the violent realities of life confronted by trans people” (2016b, 12). All too often, trans people who use antidiscrimination laws to report violence give their names and addresses or places of work to the police only to be arrested on charges that they engaged in sex work or be assaulted by off-duty police shortly thereafter.

**Antiviolence Activism** Latin American and Caribbean travesti and trans activism takes place in a context of significant and deadly violence. Transrespect versus Transphobia Worldwide reported in 2017 that of the 2,343 worldwide killings of trans and gender-diverse people between 2008 and 2015, more than half (1,834) occurred in Latin America and the Caribbean. Nearly half of those (938) occurred in Brazil, with Mexico, Colombia, and Venezuela also reporting high numbers of murders, followed by Honduras and Argentina. The absolute numbers become starker as percentages in some places, such as Honduras with a rate of 10.77 reported trans and gender-diverse murders per million inhabitants (compared to Mexico with a rate of 2.37 and the United States where the rate is 0.50). Of course, these are only the reported numbers; the actual numbers certainly exceed these, given the combination of lack of opportunities to report, failure of authorities to recognize reports, fear of retaliation for reporting, experience of retaliation for reporting, and of course all the material and symbolic violence that prevents survivors from even
considering reporting.

Trans Activists Participate in a March against Homophobia in El Salvador, 2016. A translation of the sign held by a trans woman at the front of a march against homophobia is “We Are Not Dangerous. We Are in Danger.” Latin American and Caribbean travesti and trans activism takes place in a context of significant and deadly violence, with more than half of the world’s reported killings of trans individuals occurring in that region in 2016.

The comparative tracking of violence against trans people, particularly by organizations active in Latin America and the Caribbean but seated, run, and funded primarily in Europe and North America, is too easily wrapped up in a narrative about the dangerous Global South and the wonderful Global North, which in turn feeds, as Vanessa Agard-Jones writes, “a narrative whereby metropolitan queers are mobilized to ‘save’ local (Antillean) queers from local (Antillean) people” (2011, 188). This is not to deny the importance of publicity and advocacy by international human rights organizations such as the United Nations and regional organizations such as the Organization of American States, not to mention national governments, presses, and publics; such publicity and advocacy certainly aids Latin American and Caribbean-based travesti and trans activists working to document, respond to, and prevent transphobic violence. Yet the increasingly vocal response of travesti and trans activism to transphobic violence manifest in public protests, in social and traditional media, and in mounting public and legal pressure for the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of those responsible is in large part the product of local activists and organizations who are able to identify and address specific causes of antitrans-violence—including the lack of protection for sex workers, inadequate training of and support for
police, and extremist evangelical rhetoric—and to provide protective spaces and support for travesti and trans people that are integral to antiviolence activism.

**Sex-Work, Health-Care, and HIV/AIDS Activism** Plagued by legal and social barriers to other fields and occupations, travesti and trans persons are particularly likely to turn to sex work, where they are especially at risk of violence and sexually transmitted diseases. As social communities form around travesti and trans sex work, its accessibility and appeal as a career can increase. In conjunction, much travesti and trans activism works to ensure legal protections for sex workers and to offer travesti and trans sex workers pathways to other careers. Linked to REDLACTRANS, the Red de Mujeres Trabajadores Sexuales de Latinoamérica y el Caribe (Network of Latin American and Caribbean Sex Workers) often serves as the coordinating body for more local organizations such as the Comunidad de Trans-Travestis Trabajadoras Sexuales Dominicanas (Community of Dominican Trans-Transvestite Sex Workers) or the Chilean Sindicato Nacional Independiente de Trabajadoras Sexuales Transgéneras, Travestis y Otros (National Independent Trade Union of Transgender, Transvestite, and Other Sex Workers). Given the high risk of sexually transmitted diseases and the institutional difficulties of accessing medical care for travesti and trans sex workers, HIV/AIDS prevention and care activism have traditionally been points of emphasis for trans activism and points of collaboration with local, national, and international health initiatives. The disease-specific focus of HIV/AIDS activism has, however, also limited its capacity to address the many other health and wellness needs of travesti and trans individuals and communities.

Access to medical care is a particularly salient issue, both in terms of questions of safety, respect, and adequate care in health-care situations, in terms of mental health care and the diagnosing of gender identity disorders, and in terms of access to hormones and surgical procedures, the most visible and delineated of travesti and trans health-care concerns. While many travesti or trans persons never seek hormonal or surgical interventions, the ability to access them should they so desire represents tremendous opportunity and freedom.

A full range of surgical options are available only in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, and Mexico; more limited surgical procedures, such as breast augmentation, liposuction, chest reconstruction, hair removal, and mastectomy are available to travesti and trans persons in Ecuador, Peru, and Puerto Rico. While hormones and hormone therapy are available directly from pharmacies or on the black market throughout most of Latin America and the Caribbean, only in Cuba and Argentina can medical supervision be accessed without a psychiatric diagnosis, and only in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Puerto Rico is medically supervised hormone therapy even an option. The disparity between the availability of hormones and the availability of medical supervision puts travesti and trans persons at high risk of health complications resulting from un- or undersupervised use of hormones, another reason that access to
safety and respect in any medical care situation is tantamount.

**EL TEJE**

*El Teje: Primer Periódico Travesti Latinoamericano*, the self-proclaimed first Latin American *travesti* (transvestite) newspaper, launched its debut issue in 2007 in Buenos Aires, Argentina, under the editorship of the trans activist Marlene Wayar. The idea for a newspaper written by and about travestis originated in a workshop on chronicle writing delivered by the contemporary Argentine writer María Moreno at the Centro Cultural Rector Ricardo Rojas, a center associated with the University of Buenos Aires that is renowned for innovative cultural and educational initiatives. Moreno, working within the Communications Division of the center, along with the feminist lawyer Paula Viturro from the Technologies of Gender Division, enlisted Wayar in an effort to craft a creative space that, while providing Argentine travestis a way out of prostitution, would constitute a means for members of the travesti community to express themselves and self-reflectively document their history. As Josefina Fernández summarizes in *Cuerpos desobedientes* (2004)—the first study of Argentine travestis—the vast majority of travestis residing in Buenos Aires live off prostitution, with only a tiny minority enjoying other forms of employment. The large majority also come from very poor households in the interior of the country and have had only a couple of years of formal education.

*Teje* itself is a word used to describe the act of sharing information among travestis without anyone else noticing—for instance, alerting others to the presence of police, someone with a record of abusive or violent behavior, or an opportunity to score drugs. Wayar herself traces the origin of the word to *carrilche*, an argot originating largely within prisons and associated with the world of prostitution. *El Teje* was freely distributed throughout the city of Buenos Aires, and it was hard to miss. Professionally printed on bright, glossy paper at the Centro Cultural Rector Ricardo Rojas, located in one of the busiest areas in the city, this unusual publication resembled in its design a magazine rather than a newspaper. In 2011 the city's legislature declared *El Teje* to be of cultural interest, and, that same year, the Dirección General de la Mujer de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires awarded the publication the prestigious prize Lola Mora, which recognizes media that disrupts gender stereotypes in order to promote equality and inclusivity.

*El Teje* appeared twice a year until 2009, when the fifth issue was released. The sixth issue would appear about a year later, and a seventh, and final, issue was published in July 2012. Although it is uncertain why publication of *El Teje* ceased in 2012, the magazine is still featured as one of the main publications of Centro Cultural Ricardo Rojas on the center's website, where the first six issues are easily accessible online. Among the list of regular contributors are the names of several Argentine trans
activists: Wayar, the cofounder of the Trans Network for Latin America and the Caribbean “Silvia Rivera”; Diana Sacayán, an activist in the Movimiento Antidiscriminatorio de Liberación (Antidiscrimination Liberation Movement); and Lohana Berkins, the founder of the Asociación de Lucha por la Identidad Travesti y Transsexual (Association for the Fight for Transvestite and Transexual Identity) and one of the most vocal proponents of the 2012 Gender Identity Law, which was repeatedly discussed in *El Teje*. Sacayán’s successful campaign for legal recognition of trans patients’ name of choice in public hospitals by the government of the province of Buenos Aires also featured prominently in the publication. Alongside these political pieces, *El Teje* contained graphic erotic humor, art, and entertainment, lists of desired male partners, medical and legal advice, queer theory, interviews with celebrities, and personal stories shared by readers. Throughout its publication history, *El Teje* played an active role in debates and campaigns surrounding the Gender Identity Law and became a powerful platform for denouncing police brutality and other forms of violence suffered by the travesti population. It remains particularly important historically and culturally as the first magazine dedicated to travesti politics and issues that was entirely produced by travestis with no previous experience in the press. Most of its contributors have remained iconic figures in the fight for LGBTQI rights in Argentina and the rest of Latin America.

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Large clinics devoted to travesti and trans persons are rare: Mexico has one, the Clínica Especializada Condesa (Condesa Specialized Clinic) in Mexico City, which offers specialized services for trans persons; and in 2005 Cuba’s CENESEX created the Estrategia Nacional de Atención Integral a Personas Transexuales (National Strategy for Comprehensive Care of Transsexual Persons), which, since 2008, has guided the national health-care system’s
delivery of hormone therapy, sex reassignment surgery, and other medical services to travesti and trans persons. Travesti and trans persons in other parts of Latin America and the Caribbean often find the most competent and understanding care in HIV/AIDS clinics, which are increasingly accessible even if they do not always offer full medical services.

International organizations such as the World Professional Association for Transgender Health advocate at the level of the World Health Organization, but on the ground in Latin America and the Caribbean they have few affiliates. Thus, information about good general medical care, as well as specific services, for travesti and trans persons tends to come through personal recommendations and social connections.

**Social Activism** The political activities generally understood as activism, and even the concept of speaking out, are not always available or effective for travesti and trans persons. Silent forms of social activism play an important role, as well as what Ochoa calls “bodily and imaginative responses to marginalization” (2008, 147), including delineating gathering places, holding pageants and shows, and creating artistic expressions.

The acquisition and defense of public and semipublic spaces is central to travesti and trans individuals and communities and is often carried out by individual entrepreneurs, performers, and community members who might consider themselves more survivors than political activists. As exemplified in the 2014 Puerto Rican documentary _Mala Mala_, performance spaces, street corners, and beauty salons not only provide social spaces that allow for a sense of belonging and safety and the exchange of vital information, they also provide job opportunities, housing, and distribution sites for healthcare information and materials.

Travesti and trans participation in Carnival, as well as in other performances, shows, and pageants, sometimes gaining public approbation through links to Carnival, can be understood in the context of such social activism and provides essential spaces for gathering, celebrating, and connecting. As one participant in Brazil’s first transgender beauty pageant, in 2012, told the _Huffington Post_, “This contest is key for the visibility of us. We transgender women suffer a lot from prejudice and discrimination, whether we are pretty or not, rich or poor” (“Brazil Hosts” 2012). Not only does the visibility and acclaim that contestants gain in their own community provide a sense of pride and belonging, beauty pageants often garner positive national and international media coverage and draw attention to the lives and the activist agendas of travesti and trans individuals. The links between political activism and work in shows are multiple: many who are unable or unready to face the vocalization and publicity often linked to political activism are able to share space and knowledge across social and political affiliations at performances, shows, and pageants; many, such as the Honduran activist and Miss Rainbow Honduras Ruby Ferreira, openly participate in both pageants and political activism, explicitly bringing the platforms together.
Bars, clubs, bookstores, beauty salons, and street corners serve a similar purpose. As gathering sites for friends, dates, or work, they serve as essential spaces for sharing information—from gossip (which feminist and queer scholars have long documented as a critical and subversive organizing tool and channel for sharing lifesaving information such as which potential client may be an undercover police officer or an abuser, or which clinics or pharmacies can offer safe health care) to bulletin boards announcing events and job information—and providing a sense of belonging that travesti and trans individuals might not always find in their families and communities of origin.

Since their appearance in the 1990s, online travesti and trans social spaces have proven as significant as they are fleeting. The relative ease of creating online groups, pages, and sites and the minimal investment required to operate them mean that many are short lived, but the proliferation of new social media groups and online spaces demonstrates their continued importance. Social media groups have become the most common. That they are often difficult to find and/or restrict access is indicative of the safety they provide and the threats under which their members continue to live. These pages and sites serve as spaces for social and sexual connections and for the diffusion of event information, as electronic bulletin boards, and as forums for debate and the safe exchange of information.

Rather than substituting for face-to-face organizing, online social spaces complement and grow in parallel to it. In Brazil, for example, there are over eighty LGBTQI Facebook groups and over 300 nonelectronic groups; Panama’s four on-the-ground organizations are matched with ten Facebook groups; Haiti has four Facebook groups and two face-to-face organizations. Countries with one or no public face-to-face organizations, such as Suriname, Saint Lucia, Antigua and Barbuda, and Paraguay, also have no recognizable Facebook groups. The relatively larger numbers of nonelectronic groups in most South American nations are matched by relatively larger numbers of Facebook groups, generally over twenty and often over forty; the relatively smaller numbers of nonelectronic groups throughout Central America and the Caribbean are similarly matched with generally fewer than ten and often only one or two Facebook groups. Online activism offers a new tool that Latin American and Caribbean travesti and trans persons and groups use as they also continue activism in other public and private spaces.

Artistic work also belongs to social activism. Whether or not an activist impulse propels it, the production of literature, film, visual art, and performing art that represents and showcases travesti and trans characters and artists functions as social activism. Already in the late nineteenth century, novels such as José Martí’s (1853–1895) Amistad funesta (1885; Fatal friendship), which portrays masculine women and effeminate men as deeply flawed, documented and provided virtual spaces for gender complexity. In the 1960s authors such as the Cuban Severo Sarduy (1937–1993) were celebrated for their avant-garde depictions of drag queens and gender transformations in artistic circuits, making a name for Latin America and the Caribbean as an incubator for gender complexity.
In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, many more Latin American and Caribbean novels, films, paintings, and plays have represented travesti and trans persons in ways that have rendered their presence and work more visible. Works such as the short stories and novels of the Trinidadian author Shani Mootoo (1957–) recognize both the long history of gender complexity and the ongoing struggle for trans legal, medical, and social acceptance in the Caribbean. Novels such as Sirena Selena vestida de pena (2000; Sirena Selena [2000]), by the Puerto Rican writer Mayra Santos-Febres (1966–), and films such as Una mujer fantástica (2017; A fantastic woman), by the Chilean filmmaker Sebastián Lelio (1974–), also work to bridge what has been a gap between upper-class academic and intellectual integration and popular exclusion of travesti and trans individuals and communities in Latin America and the Caribbean.

**Documenting, Studying, and Historicizing Travesti and Trans Activism**

Historical documentation and academic investigation lag behind travesti and trans political and social activism. Academic studies of HIV/AIDS and sex work pay significant attention to travesti and trans sex workers, albeit almost exclusively to those who present and live as women (Infante, Sosa-Rubi, and Cuadra 2009; Kulick 1998; Ochoa 2008; Prieur 1998; Tucker et al. 2014). While these provide a key space of documentary and investigative inclusion, they also run the risk of reinforcing the association of travesti and trans individuals and communities with sex work and illness, especially insofar as they focus on travesti and trans individuals as bearers of HIV/AIDS, rather than as persons working to prevent, treat, and cure disease.

In the introduction to his 2003 edited collection *The Culture of Gender and Sexuality in the Caribbean*, Linden Lewis observes that “transgendered identity formation is also essentially off limits for researchers, or, to be generous, constitutes an area of neglect” (5), and Hilbourne Watson comments, in the same volume, that “research on bisexuality and transgendering is absent from most Caribbean scholarship, and even though such issues and practices are present in Caribbean life … they are not located at the center of theoretical consciousness and explication” (55). Important exceptions and newer developments include the work of King, Ochoa, Lawrence La Fountain-Stokes (2008), Tinsley and Matt Richardson (2014), and Christian Flaugh (2013), although the slow pace of change can be seen in the conspicuous absence of the mention of any variation of trans in Lorena García and Lourdes Torres’s 2009 article “New Directions in Latina Sexualities Studies.”

Historical and academic investigations require data. As activists continue to produce those data in increasingly visible ways, and as archival research questions and methods make previously hidden data increasingly available, the study of travesti and trans activism in
Latin America and the Caribbean will also grow. New work on precolonial conceptions of gender and sexuality in Latin America and the Caribbean can help to bring out the decoloniality of travesti and trans activism and to further challenge the places of Euro-American involvement in Latin American and Caribbean travesti and trans communities and organizations. Greater attention to travesti and trans men can both further reveal the intersections of sexism and the hegemony of binary gender and enable more exploration of the ways that travesti and trans activism challenges the colonial/modern gender system. New work on the spaces and places of social activism can open new understandings of how travesti and trans individuals and communities negotiate such forces as the market economy, zoning laws, the publishing industry, and social media. And as the rights-based work of much travesti and trans activism garners more legal and legislative equality and protection, and as antiviolence, sex work, medical, and AIDS activism saves more lives, attention can turn to the ways that travesti and trans persons and groups challenge enlightenment notions of liberal subjectivity and citizenship.

SEE ALSO Argentina’s Gender Identity Law; Asia Pacific Transgender Network; El Baile de los 41; Grupo Gay da Bahia; Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays (J-FLAG); Trans Issues in Africa; Transfeminism; Transgender Muslims; Transgender Organizations in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan; Transgendered Subjectivities in Contemporary Iran

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In the Christian West—the cultural tradition examined in this entry—nonnormative sexual behavior has been associated since the Middle Ages with disloyalty to, or crimes against, the body politic. In popular understanding and political and religious rhetoric, as well as more covertly in legal matters, the idea that sexual “deviance” is related to, or indeed a form of, political treason has long been robust. In the twelfth-century French romance *Eneas* Queen Amata denounces Aeneas as “a traitor and a sodomite” (Yunck 1974, 226). Eight hundred years later, novelist Marcel Proust equated homosexual propositions with “treasonable proposals from the enemy” (*Proust* 1927, 132). How did this association arise, and what have been some of its consequences?

**Treason and Sodomy in Law**

Since at least the Crusades and possibly earlier, European peoples had described various sexual aberrations as “sodomy” or “buggery”—categories that might include bestiality or anal intercourse between a man and a woman as well as same-sex relations—and characterized them as foreign customs introduced through either conquest or trade. Many Christian countries claimed these behaviors originated in the Islamic world, but they also blamed them on each other so that the English were likely to say that sodomy came from Italy, while the French identified it with the English (Frantzen 1998; Pepys 1983; Rosenstock 2003). Regardless of its source, if sodomy was by definition foreign, then any native subject who practiced it was indulging in an alien vice, betraying the customs and norms of his own culture.

Furthermore, in Europe, heresy, sodomy, and other mortal sins on the one hand, and treason or sedition on the other, were closely related offenses against the monarch, who was God’s earthly representative (Bray 1982). In judicial writings or legal cases, this relationship is not treated as causal or one of exact equivalence, but rather as a matter of proximity. Thus the medieval legal treatise *Miroir des justices* (Mirror of justices), a fourteenth-century Anglo-Norman document, classifies sodomy as a crime of *lèsemajesté* (injury to the sovereign) along with treason. Later legal documents, such as Edward Coke’s
The Third Part of the Institutes of the Laws of England: Concerning High Treason (1640) and the various legal codes instituted in North America by British colonists, tend to follow this classificatory system: sodomy and treason are not the same crime, but they are of similar seriousness, treated in adjacent segments of the penal code, and subject to the same punishment, often death by hanging or burning.

As absolute monarchs increasingly saw their powers limited and secularized, treason was reconceived of as an offense against the national collectivity rather than against an individual embodying both church and state. Laws governing treason were restricted so that fewer offenses were considered treasonable and fewer people were executed for treason (Mcfarlane 1997). By the nineteenth century, legal convictions for treason, on any grounds, had become comparatively rare, partly because as democratic forms of government replaced monarchies throughout western Europe, the legal definitions of treason narrowed even further, and the evidentiary requirements for proving it grew quite stringent. Yet the rhetorical concept of “treason” and its association with sexual deviance have continued to resonate in the modern era.

Homosexuality as a Foreign Threat

In the late nineteenth century, the sodomite—now often renamed the invert or Urning—emerged as a distinctive, medically pathologized type. At a time when women were not full participants in public life, female inversion was of concern largely because of its potential implications for family stability or, in the case of cross-dressing women, for the maintenance of visible gender distinctions. But the male invert’s sexual conduct threatened both family life and the political, public realm. His sexual behavior no longer constituted a betrayal of the monarch, but it indicated a diseased physiology and psychology that rendered him untrustworthy. François Carlier, chief of the morals police in Paris in the 1880s, said that “The pederastic passion ... extinguishes, in those whom it possesses, the noblest sentiments, those of patriotism and of the family; it makes of them creatures useless to society” (Carlier [1887] 1981, 92–93; translation by Erin G. Carlston). In addition, because so much of the scientific work on homosexuality was being published by German scholars, and because Germany was the birthplace of the homosexual emancipation movement, non-Germans were beginning to identify homosexuality as a particularly German, and thus foreign, vice.

Several notable scandals in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries both reflected and reinforced the idea that there was a connection between treason, Germany or German-ness, and sexual deviance. The Dreyfus affair in France marks the first time in modern European history that the crime of treason was linked to homosexuality, albeit indirectly and only within a small circle of military personnel and politicians. In 1894 a Jewish officer in the French army, Captain Alfred Dreyfus (1859–1935), was accused and convicted by a court-martial of treason, originally on the shaky basis of a single piece of paper that French
intelligence found discarded in the wastepaper basket of a German military attaché which suggested that an artillery expert was selling military secrets to the Germans. Knowing their case against Dreyfus was weak, army officials padded the file of evidence against him with huge amounts of extraneous material, including some of the other contents of the wastepaper basket—sexually graphic notes exchanged between the German attaché and his Italian counterpart, with whom he was having an affair.

Private, consensual same-sex relations between adults were not technically against the law in France. No explicit connection was drawn between the two men's sexual relationship and Dreyfus's alleged acts of espionage and treason, nor was Dreyfus himself ever accused of homosexuality. It is unclear, therefore, just how these additional documents were meant to incriminate him. Possibly they were simply intended to trigger an already-existing association between sexual deviance and political treachery in the minds of the legal and political authorities who had access to this file. Or perhaps, as one general later claimed, the obviously uncensored nature of the correspondence between the attachés was meant to persuade the readers of Dreyfus's file that all its contents were similarly uncensored and unfalsified (Carlston 2013). In any case, while the otherwise unexplained proximity of male homosexuality and treasonous acts within Dreyfus's file certainly suggests that a connection between the two was already in place, the limited readership of the file and the fact that the attachés' affair did not become general knowledge mean that the case probably did not significantly reinforce that idea in the public imagination.

In contrast, male inversion erupted into public consciousness in Europe with the trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895, and achieved even greater visibility during the Eulenburg scandal in Germany that began in late 1906. Wilde’s case had nothing to do with treason, but it brought to attention a series of associations with sodomy that had not previously been so widely recognized: henceforth, male homosexuality would be strongly connected with both upper-class effeminacy and cross-class sexual relationships. Effeminacy posed an implicit threat to the strength of a nation that depended on virile, masculine men to defend it, while cross-class fraternization challenged established social hierarchies; both of these themes would resurface in later scandals that explicitly linked sexual deviance and treason.

**Espionage in the Twentieth Century**

In the early years of the twentieth century, the German journalist Maximilian Harden (1861–1927) undertook, for political reasons, to ruin Philipp, Prince of Eulenburg (1847–1921). Beginning in 1906, he ran articles charging that Eulenburg and his friends formed a pacifist, homosexual cabal around Kaiser Wilhelm (1859–1941), committing treason by giving him advice that undermined German interests. The libel cases and countercases that ensued dragged on for years, destroyed the lives and friendships of many of those close to the kaiser, and also confirmed for non-Germans the idea that homosexuality was a peculiarly German vice.
Another early twentieth-century scandal that rattled the German-speaking world is especially significant because of the frequency with which it was cited later: the case of Colonel Alfred Redl (1864–1913), a counterintelligence specialist for the Austro-Hungarian Empire. By the time he was caught in 1913, Redl had already been working for more than ten years as a double agent for czarist Russia. He was apparently blackmailed into turning traitor after the Russians discovered his homosexuality, although he seems also to have enjoyed generous payments (some of which he spent on lavishly supporting his lovers) for the information he shared. Apprehended and confronted by his colleagues, Colonel Redl shot himself. The information he leaked to Russia may ultimately have had devastating consequences for Austria-Hungary in World War I (Asprey 1959; MacMillan 2013).

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Irish Nationalist Roger Casement. Casement was sentenced to death in 1916 for his support of Irish nationalists rebelling against British rule, sparking an outcry from supporters because of his strong humanitarian record. British intelligence agents were able to silence this support by leaking excerpts from Casement’s diary, which detailed his sexual encounters with other men.

Even more publicized at the time than Colonel Redl’s treachery was that of Roger Casement (1864–1916), a humanitarian and Irish nationalist who had been knighted in 1911 for uncovering human rights abuses on rubber plantations in South America. In 1916 he was arrested because of his involvement with the planned Easter Rising and his efforts to get Germany—with which Britain was by then at war—to supply arms to Irish nationalists and support their rebellion against British rule. Quickly convicted of treason and sentenced to death, he might still have had his sentence reduced when supporters around the world protested that his long and distinguished record of humanitarian work militated against putting him to death. British intelligence agents, however, had obtained what were
purported to be Casement’s private diaries, which recorded in explicit detail his sexual encounters with other men. (There has been a long debate about whether these so-called Black Diaries were forged by the British; most scholars now believe them to be authentic.) By circulating excerpts from the diaries to journalists, politicians, leaders of humanitarian organizations, and even Casement’s own defense lawyers, the British government was able to discredit Casement, portray him as a moral degenerate, and silence his supporters. In August 1916, Casement was hanged for treason. As in Dreyfus’s case, documents about homosexuality were used in a treason case not to prove or explain the treasonous acts but simply to prejudice opinion against the accused (Conrad 2010; Daly 2005).

World War I bred nationalist fervor and anxiety about betrayal as well as intense anti-German sentiment in the countries of the Triple Entente (Russia, France, and Great Britain). In England, the view that Germany was using homosexuality as a weapon of war surfaced in media reports that warned, “Men are willing to die for their homes, but if the conception of home life is replaced by the Kultur of urnings, the spirit of the Anglo-Saxon world wilts and perishes…. Espionage is punished by death at the Tower of London, but there is a form of invasion which is as deadly as espionage: the systematic seduction of young British soldiers by the German urnings and their agents” (White 1918, 451). Building on this fear, conservative member of parliament Noel Pemberton Billing (1881–1948) deliberately created a scandal to draw attention to what he, too, believed was a campaign of infiltration and conspiracy by the Germans: he published an article in his paper the Imperialist implying that actress Maud Allan (1873–1956) was a lesbian, and that she was one of 47,000 Britons guilty of sexual perversion whose names the Germans allegedly kept in a “Black Book” for purposes of blackmail. As Billing hoped she would, Allan sued for libel, and the British public was riveted by the resulting trial, which very unusually singled out female homosexuality—something many people did not even know existed—as a threat to national security. The article in the Imperialist claimed that “in lesbian ecstasy the most sacred secrets of the state were betrayed.” During the trial, Prime Minister Herbert Asquith’s wife, Margot, was named as one of Allan’s alleged lovers (Bland 1998, 184).

The legend of the Germans’ Black Book never entirely died and was revived during and after World War II. First, Nazis were supposed to be in possession of the book and to be using it to obtain classified information; then, in a new twist on the tale inspired by anticommunist fervor, the book was supposed to have fallen into the Soviets’ hands after they occupied Germany at the end of the war. This story was promoted in the United States by a German-born writer who had immigrated to the United States, R. G. Waldeck (1898–1982). In 1952 Waldeck responded to the investigations into homosexuals in government employment that were then underway with an article titled “Homosexual International” that was eventually read, in its entirety, into the Congressional Record by Republican congresswoman Katharine St. George (1894–1983). When introducing the article, St. George emphasized that the Countess van Waldeck’s German origins gave her particular experience with homosexual scandals, and reminded her congressional colleagues about
the Eulenburg affair. Waldeck argued in her article that homosexuals form an international conspiracy with a more-than-coincidental relationship to communism: “Homosexuals,” she wrote, “make natural secret agents and natural traitors” (Waldeck 1952, 140).

Waldeck's prime example of this alleged phenomenon was Redl. It was by now commonplace for US politicians, intelligence agencies, and journalists to assert that homosexuals were security risks both because they were morally weak and because they were subject to blackmail and could be pressured into espionage. A Senate subcommittee, known as the Hoey Committee, formed to investigate the “problem” of homosexuals in government and asserted in 1950 that “perverts are frequently victimized by blackmailers who threaten to expose their sexual deviations…. The lack of emotional stability which is found in most sex perverts and the weakness of their moral fiber, makes them susceptible to the blandishments of the foreign espionage agent” (US Congress 1950, 5). The journalist Max Lerner (1902–1992) wrote that during his research for an exposé he was doing on the Hoey Committee’s investigation, every government figure he interviewed reiterated this point. Yet the only case anyone could point to of a homosexual who had actually been blackmailed into committing treason was that of the Austrian Captain Redl, almost forty years earlier; this was repeatedly offered as definitive proof of an American epidemic (Lerner 1950).

The US government’s hunt for homosexual traitors was also spurred by a scandal unfolding in the United Kingdom in the early 1950s, the so-called Case of the Missing Diplomats. Guy Burgess (1911–1963) and Donald Maclean (1913–1983) were both career civil servants working for the British Foreign Office when they suddenly went missing in 1951. As word began to circulate in intelligence agencies and the yellow press that both men were homosexuals, speculation grew that they had run off to pursue a sexual relationship and/or that they had been communist spies who had now defected. Only the latter surmise was correct; the Soviet Union confirmed their defection in 1955. Although Burgess and Maclean were never formally charged with treason, since they had already permanently fled the West before they could be apprehended, there is little doubt that they had committed treasonous acts over many years of spying for the Soviet Union, and the news of their defection solidly cemented the view that “perverts” were traitors by nature.

It is somewhat ironic that, although (William) John Vassall (1924–1996), a low-ranking British Admiralty official, was not unmasked as a Russian spy until 1962, he was actually blackmailed into committing espionage in 1954, just at the time the British and US governments and intelligence services were most stridently insisting, as grounds for denying homosexuals government jobs, that blackmail was stock-in-trade for the Soviets. In fact, while working in Moscow, Vassall was lured to a party by KGB agents who got him drunk and then photographed him in compromising positions with other men. Soviet intelligence then threatened to circulate the indecent photos unless he agreed to start passing them classified information, which he did for the next seven years until he was
caught. It seems, therefore, that Soviet intelligence may indeed have felt that blackmailing Western homosexuals to obtain intelligence was a valuable weapon in the Cold War; nonetheless, Vassall remains the only known instance of this happening. (Despite rumors to the contrary, Burgess and Maclean were never blackmailed; they went to work for the Communist cause out of ideological conviction.)

Vassall's arrest for spying obviously confirmed entrenched beliefs about the unreliability of homosexuals and the inadvisability of allowing them to participate in national institutions. Yet the wider social framework within which that narrative had been sustained was already shifting. Already in 1957, the Wolfenden Report—issued by a commission set up after a number of prominent and well-respected British men had been arrested for homosexual offenses—had recommended the decriminalization of consensual same-sex relations between adults, indicating a changing climate of opinion. Then in 1963, just a year after Vassall's arrest, the Profumo affair created an even noisier scandal than Vassall had—but this one involved heterosexuals. The revelation that the Conservative secretary of state for war, John Profumo (1915–2006), was having an affair with a call girl who was simultaneously seeing a Soviet naval attaché impressed upon the British public the idea that heterosexual misconduct could pose at least as much of a security risk as same-sex relations did.

In 1967 the recommendation of the Wolfenden Report was implemented, and the laws under which Wilde, Alan Turing, and thousands of other British men had been prosecuted were abolished. Germany and the United States took longer than Great Britain to overturn their sodomy laws, decriminalizing male homosexuality in 1994 and (at the federal level) 2003, respectively. Even before these legal changes, gay liberation movements around the world had already encouraged many gay people to live openly and greatly reduced the stigma of homosexuality in many places. Once same-sex conduct was no longer illegal, or widely considered unspeakably shameful, it became harder to argue that blackmailability was a sufficient reason for excluding homosexuals from sensitive positions. Thus, one notable feature of gay life in industrialized nations since the last quarter of the twentieth century has been increasing inclusion in national institutions including diplomatic service, military service, and electoral politics.
The Twenty-First Century

And yet the ideological correlation between homosexuality and treason has still not died. In 2013 Chelsea Manning (1987–), who was then known as PFC Bradley Manning, was convicted by a court-martial of violations of the Espionage Act for leaking classified information in 2010 while she was working as an army intelligence analyst. Manning had lived as a gay man for several years—discreetly while on duty, since the policy of nondisclosure popularly known as “don't ask, don't tell” was still in force, but openly elsewhere. The day after she was sentenced, she issued a statement explaining that her gender identity was female, changing her name to Chelsea, and expressing her wish to begin transitioning medically. Manning’s own lawyers and Manning herself alluded to her untreated gender dysphoria as the cause of the acute depression and conflict she experienced before deciding to send hundreds of thousands of classified documents to WikiLeaks, implying that psychic distress might have impaired her judgment.

A few liberal commentators seized on these claims to suggest that Manning had been seeking attention or “acting out” in posting to WikiLeaks, rather than being a conscientious whistle-blower as she and her supporters affirmed. This analysis was rejected by some LGBTQ people, especially conservatives and those in the military, who resented the implication that sexual minorities or gender-variant people are too psychologically unstable to be trusted with state secrets, which was, unsurprisingly, the conclusion drawn
by pundits on the right and far right. For them, Manning’s sexual orientation or gender identity— which they typically collapsed together into “effeminacy” or “perversion”— confirmed the wisdom of excluding gay people from military service and raised questions about why Manning had been allowed to stay enlisted long enough to commit espionage, given her frequent pro-gay postings on social media. In a 2011 article, antigay activist Cliff Kincaid asked “whether [Manning] was part of a secret homosexual network in the military” and quoted a passage from the 1950 Hoey Committee report on the vulnerability of “sex perverts” to blackmail (Kincaid 2011). In online discussion forums and blogs, alt-right posters demanded the death penalty for Manning as a “sodomite traitor,” demonstrating the extraordinary consistency of this strain of homophobic rhetoric over the centuries.

SEE ALSO Blackmail; Lavender Scare; Military Law and Policy in the United States; Military/Navy in the United Kingdom; Nationalism and Sexuality in Europe; Scandals in Europe; Wilde Trials. International Significance of; The Wolfenden Report

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ROBERT MYERS
Professor, Department of English
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A modern Syrian play set in nineteenth-century Damascus that includes the first overt and serious dramatization of homosexuality in Arab theater.

Saʿdallah Wannous (1941–1997), Syria's most prominent playwright and one of its most important contemporary intellectuals, is credited with reinventing the forms and themes of contemporary Arab theater by dramatizing the ills of traditional societies and authoritarian political systems. Tuqus al-isharat wa-al-tahawwulat (Rituals of signs and transformations), his most celebrated and multifaceted play, addresses themes such as clerical corruption, male homosexuality, male and female prostitution, suicide, and honor killing. Published in 1994, the printed edition of the play was freely available in Syria. However, when the play was first produced in Damascus in 2005 by a German-Syrian theater company, directed by Friederike Felbeck, the scenes about homosexuality were removed by censors.

Tuqus was first performed in Beirut in 1996 in a groundbreaking staging by the celebrated Lebanese actress and director Nidal al-Ashqar, who employed an idiosyncratic dramaturgical structure in which she placed the play's plotlines of psychological, spiritual, and sexual transformations side by side. In 2011 the play was performed at the American University in Cairo as a response to the sociopolitical turmoil in post–Hosni Mubarak Egypt after the so-called Arab Spring. In 2013 the Anglo-Kuwaiti playwright and director Sulayman Al Bassam directed the first French-language performance of the play at the Comédie-Française in Paris. Later that same year, Tuqus received its first English-language production by the American University of Beirut, directed by Sahar Assaf, which was followed by staged readings in New York and Chicago in 2014.

Wannous's Life and Works

Wannous was born to an Alawite (a branch of Shiʿa Islam) family of peasants in a small village in northeastern Syria. At an early age, and contrary to his modest upbringing, he began to pursue an interest in literature, theater, culture, philosophy, and politics. He moved to Cairo at age nineteen to study journalism and graduated in 1963. After returning to Syria, he began writing short philosophical plays that were heavily influenced by existentialism and designed more for the page than the stage. These plays treated the
tensions between the individual and society, especially the authoritarian state, a theme that continued to be a central concern of his work.

In the late 1960s he studied theater at the Sorbonne in Paris under the mentorship of Jean-Marie Serreau, a follower of Bertolt Brecht who directed plays by Luigi Pirandello, Jean Genet, Eugène Ionesco, and the Algerian playwright Kateb Yacine. After the disastrous Arab defeat by Israel in the June 1967 war, Wannous returned to Syria to join other intellectuals and artists who reacted strongly to the postwar government’s censorship and manipulation of facts concerning the role of Arab governments in the defeat. His groundbreaking play Haflat samar min ajl al-khamis min huzyran (1968; An evening party for the fifth of June), strongly influenced by Peter Weiss’s Marat/Sade, was a manifesto for his new “theater of politicization,” which he believed would be a powerful tool to expose corrupt Arab regimes, engage the audience, and promote political change. “Theater of politicization” consisted of interactive plays that combined Brechtian techniques and elements of Arab folk culture such as the figure of the hakawati (storyteller), live music, and traditional songs. Mughamarat ras al-Mamluk Jabir (1970; The adventure of the head of Mamluk Jabir), a play about personal ambition and treason, is arguably the most powerful of his political dramas from the 1960s and 1970s. Other significant plays from this period include the Brechtian fables Al-Fil ya malik al-zaman (1969; The King’s elephant) and Al-Malik huwa al-malik (1977; The King is the king).

The peace process with Israel that led to the Camp David Accords, signed in 1978, which was supported by Egyptian president Anwar Sadat, marked a turning point in the Arab world and in Wannous’s life and career. Like many Arab intellectuals, he viewed the peace process with Israel as another political capitulation by an Arab leader and a betrayal of the Palestinians. In part because of what he perceived as Sadat’s treachery in visiting Jerusalem, Wannous sank into a depression and attempted suicide. Although he continued to work in the theater, founding and directing the High Dramatic Institute in Damascus, he stopped writing plays for more than ten years.

The second phase of Wannous’s career began soon after he received a diagnosis of terminal cancer in the early 1990s. His response to the disease was to write “frenziedly for the theatre” (quoted and translated in al-Anezi 2006, 219), and he adopted a new approach to playwriting in which he shifted from his earlier overtly political and programmatic Brechtian style to one more focused on personal psychology and individual suffering. In a 1992 interview, he admitted that before his diagnosis he had thought “that individual strife or personal idiosyncrasies were inessential, shallow bourgeois matters that should be set aside” (quoted and translated in Wannous 2019). He also stated that although he continued to see the role of the intellectual as primarily critical, he believed the new approach he had adopted was “more beneficial than my miserable attempts to struggle and immerse myself in political affairs on a daily basis, or to disseminate readymade ideas, definitive theories and flamboyant slogans” (quoted and translated in Wannous 2019).
"Tuqus al-isharat wa-al-tahawwulat," more than any of the half-dozen works Wannous wrote between 1992 and 1997, represents a clear shift in his theatrical language from the political to the personal. In the play Wannous introduces themes he had previously ignored, such as mysticism, female sexual freedom, sexual abuse, and male homosexual love. The play celebrates individual liberation and transformation—whether in the form of mystic fervor, sexual pleasure, or publicly assuming one's gay identity—while at the same time serving as a cautionary tale about the terrible price one pays for acting on one's deepest desires in traditional and corrupt authoritarian societies.

**Plot and Themes**

The prominence of the theme of self-actualization and transformation in *Tuqus* is best characterized by Wannous’s note for the play’s Beirut production. In it he writes that while writing *Tuqus* “a spring of feelings suddenly welled up inside me” that “overwhelmed me,” adding that “the characters’ choices and transformations were not merely actions I created ... according to a specific scheme; they and I were connected in an electrical field” (quoted and translated in al-Anezi 2006, 250–251). Wannous’s identification with the “frightful and [intoxicating] ... nakedness” (251) of his characters in *Tuqus* marks a rupture with his previous ubiquitous authorial voice and his preoccupation with human experience defined principally in terms of political power and economic forces.

Although *Tuqus* was inspired by a historical incident in nineteenth-century Damascus and is set in that period, the play is generally seen as an allegory dramatizing the dilemmas of Syria and the Arab world in the 1990s. The play’s structural division into two parts, “Conspiracies” and “Outcomes,” evokes both Greek and Shakespearean tragedies, in which the actions of the characters in the first part determine their fate in the second. *Tuqus* begins with the police chief, ʿIzzat, surprising ʿAbdallah, the *naqib* (head of the city’s nobility) and a descendant of the prophet Muhammad, frolicking in his private garden with his mistress, the prostitute Warda, who is wearing his clerical attire and riding on his back. ʿIzzat proceeds to arrest the couple and parade them through the streets of Damascus to expose ʿAbdallah’s immoral behavior. ʿAbbas and ʿAfsa, bodyguards of the Mufti, the highest local religious authority and a rival of ʿAbdallah, inform the Mufti of his enemy’s public humiliation. Although he secretly enjoys the news, the Mufti pretends to the bodyguards to be dismayed by their mocking account of the shaming of a fellow religious official. He concocts a scheme to replace Warda, who occupies the same prison cell as ʿAbdallah, with his wife, Muʾmina, and arrest the police chief for his arrest of ʿAbdallah for making love with his own wife. Muʾmina, herself the daughter of an influential cleric and a sophisticated, well-read woman, agrees to the Mufti’s theatrical scheme in exchange for his agreeing to grant her a divorce from ʿAbdallah. The women are exchanged for one another in the prison cell, Warda is ushered out in Muʾmina’s clothing, and the police chief is soon arrested. As happens repeatedly in the play, the change of characters’ costumes and appearance augurs
radical changes in their lives as latent desires are made manifest.

Mu’mina’s choice and transformation are transgressive and extreme. She changes her name to Almasa (meaning “diamond”), becomes a celebrated, high-end prostitute, and enjoys the power and sensuality her sexual freedom confers on her. After her liberation, which arouses the city’s males—including the professedly pious Mufti who, having issued a fatwa (a ruling based on Islamic law issued by a clerical authority) calling for her death, falls in love with her—she lends her name to perfumes, jewelry, and teas. Her ex-husband, ‘Abdallah, converts to Sufism and fancies himself a Sufi saint, while officials and business leaders fight to regain control of the city from the frenzy of immorality unleashed by Almasa’s transformation. Her father chastises her for her lascivious conduct, but she defiantly rebuffs him, reminding him that he molested young women in their house, including Warda. He renounces Almasa/Mu’mina, and her younger brother, Safwan, attempting to prove his manhood by restoring the family’s honor, stabs her, but as she dies she tells him his act is futile: “I am a tale, Safwan, and a tale can’t be killed” (Myers and Saab 2014, 392).

Although ‘Afsa, one of the Mufti’s two bodyguards, appears at first glance to be a secondary character, he is arguably Wannous’s most “astonishing creation” (al-Anezi 2006, 257). His actions and transformation echo and surpass those of Mu’mina. Although he has a reputation as one of the strongest men in Damascus, he enters into a sexual relationship with his fellow bodyguard, ‘Abbas, and upon being rejected, commits suicide. The story of the relationship of ‘Afsa and ‘Abbas is the first overt and serious dramatization of homosexuality in Arab theater. While the play’s rendering of these two characters draws on many aspects of social reality in Syria and other parts of the contemporary Arab world, such as the pervasive erotic relationships between men who may officially be heterosexual, it directly challenges traditional social practices in which overt acknowledgment or acceptance of nontraditional sexual practices or gender roles is generally met with swift social censure.

In ‘Afsa, Wannous creates an entirely new kind of character, a hypermasculine yet “passive” homosexual who is transformed by his desire to become completely submissive to and openly proclaim his affection for his lover, ‘Abbas. ‘Afsa’s desire to publicly embrace what he desires erotically and who he sees himself to be stands in stark defiance of a homoerotic culture frequently marked by stealth, in which homosexuals are either “dominant” bisexuals or seen as “passive,” feminized, lewd, and perverse. In scene 3 of part 1, in which ‘Afsa and ‘Abbas are interrupted by Simsim, an effeminate male prostitute, Wannous—whose political theater promoted vigorous interaction with the audience—forces the spectators to look at eroticized male bodies and listen to charged, titillating language about sex between men. Simsim tries to seduce the manly ‘Abbas by saying he is not interested in “lion’s milk”—that is, a proffered glass of araq—but rather desires ‘Abbas’s “milk,” Arabic slang for “semen.” Simsim, who is apparently a former sexual partner of ‘Afsa, also suggests
to ‘Abbas that there is no difference between Simsim and ‘Afsa, who, infuriated at being
outed, violently attacks Simsim, forcing ‘Abbas to intervene. ‘Abbas warns Simsim to keep
silent about what he has revealed, and after he has left, ‘Abbas tells ‘Afsa that they will now
have a new relationship, which will remain secret, in which ‘Afsa will be like one of his
women whom he will protect. “We will,” says ‘Abbas, “have our appearance and our reality”
(Myers and Saab 2014, 292).

‘Afsa, who is relieved that ‘Abbas does not reproach him and pleased that he is willing to
accept ‘Afsa’s affection, initially agrees to ‘Abbas’s condition that they remain secret lovers,
but as ‘Afsa’s love for ‘Abbas deepens, he refuses to live a life of appearances and enacts his
own transformation. He reveals what he asserts is his true self by stripping his body of the
signs of masculinity in Arab cultures—he moustache and body hair. Scene 3 of part 2 is
perhaps the play’s most poignant and cruel. ‘Afsa assumes a feminized posture as he walks
intently toward ‘Abbas, offering him his shaved moustache, a sign of his sexual
transformation, and his depilated body, which he believes will please his lover. ‘Abbas
harshly rejects him: “You disgust me. You’re nothing but a lecherous leech who’s attached
himself to me” (Myers and Saab 2014, 337). He had, he says, desired ‘Afsa’s masculine
appearance and asserts that there is “no such thing as love between men…. What was
between us was lust that fades when satisfied. It gives me pleasure to mount someone so
strong, to see his body break between my thighs. But what pleasure can I get now from
mounting a shameless swish?” (Myers and Saab 2014, 339). ‘Abbas, who enjoys same-
gender sex as a means to assert his power and physically dominate another male, is,
however, promptly challenged. In place of a goodbye, ‘Afsa demands that the two men
engage in a final arm wrestling contest, which ends in a draw, an outcome that infuriates
‘Abbas. In part 2, scene 7, the play’s shortest, the tragic results of quests for authentic self-
expression in Tuqus and in traditional societies are crystallized in ‘Afsa’s final monologue
as he prepares to kill himself: “What a wicked world this is in which only forgers and liars
thrive” (Myers and Saab, 2014, 358).

‘Afsa is a tragic hero who is prepared to be publicly humiliated and endure abuse to
become his true self. Unlike Almasa, however, he does not wield the power of seduction. His
struggle is seemingly in vain, and his story ends in self-annihilation, but it is dramatized in
crude, raw language whose effect on the audience is far more profound than the poetic
language used by Almasa, which suggests that she is “partly a symbolic figure, a goddess of
... sexuality” (al-Anezi 2006, 258).

**Criticism**

Prior to its first English translation in 2013, studies of Tuqus were conducted by Syrian
scholars who interviewed Wannous and later traveled to England to pursue doctoral
degrees. Although their English-language dissertations offer valuable documentation of and
insights about the playwright’s career and works, they have remained unpublished in book
form. One of the first analyses of the play that focuses on Wannous's dramatization of male homosexuality is Ali al-Souleman's 2005 Oxford University dissertation. He notes that Arab reviewers largely avoided discussing the scenes featuring 'Afsa and 'Abbas and asserts that Tuqus was written during a period of transition in Arab societies that was marked by instability, the decline of traditional institutions such as tribe and family, and the emergence of the modern state. This transition provided the social and historical context for Wannous's vivid portrayals of individuals trapped between traditional and emerging orders as they struggled to actualize their impulses, desires, and choices.

Ali Ali 'Ajil Naji al-Anezi's 2006 dissertation offers a detailed and eloquent reading of 'Afsa and 'Abbas's scenes, in which he emphasizes the centrality of 'Afsa's story to the play and fiercely challenges accepted notions of homosexuality prevalent in Arab societies. He criticizes a moral code that tolerates undisclosed homosexuality and causes same-gender relationships to be fleeting, clandestine, abusive, and defined by power. In Tuqus, the dominant and abusive figure is obviously 'Abbas, who takes pleasure in controlling 'Afsa's submissive masculine body. Al-Anezi sees 'Afsa's transformation—his willingness to give up the signs of his masculine identity—as a challenge to social hypocrisy and an assertion of the nature of his love and his body. He describes the scene in which 'Afsa offers his moustache to 'Abbas as "one of the most touching Wannous ever wrote" and one in which the prejudices of the audience are openly confronted (258).

An opposing and polemical analysis of Wannous's dramatization of homosexuality is offered by Joseph A. Massad in his 2007 book Desiring Arabs. Although Massad points to the fluidity of gender and sexuality in the Arab world, particularly as portrayed by medieval writers, as a powerful rebuke to hegemonic Western sexual norms, he rejects as essentialist and colonialized the notion that sexual mores and practices construct identity. He does admit that the putative Arab tolerance of homosexuality is exaggerated, but he chastises Arab artists and intellectuals for being either moralistic in their treatment of same-gender sex or replicating Westernized notions of gay identity and rights. In his critique of Tuqus, Massad incisively points to the Shakespearean echoes in the play's plot and structure, such as the reversals of roles, the disguising of characters, and "the centrality of desire and public sexual conduct" (353). His insight into Wannous's dramaturgy is, however, complicated by his indictment of the playwright for using "ready-made and uninterrogated Western formulae"—that is, feminism, gay liberation, and sexual identity—to critique the Arab world (375).

In a 2013 article on the representation of homosexuality in modern Arab literature, Khalid Hadeed counters Massad's assumption that Arab homosexuality is part of culturally specific sexual codes and endorses the "right to enjoy wide-scale social visibility and legitimacy" and "the freedom to choose a person of the same sex as a life partner" (272). He also critiques, however, what he identifies as Wannous's faulty "representational logic," which, he asserts, correlates homosexual identity with male dominance (274). For Hadeed, 'Afsa's
transformation “via the language of interiority and essence he deploys to express himself” paradoxically establishes “masculinity as the natural outcome of male sexual development” (274).

A distinct approach to the tragedy of ‘Afsa is offered in two studies of Tuqus published in Theatre Research International in 2013. The first is by Margaret Litvin, who discusses the significance of the Cairo performance of Tuqus in late 2011 after the fall of Mubarak. Litvin attributes the play’s relevance in times of political instability and anxiety to its “spectacular pessimism” (120). She sees ‘Afsa’s suicide after “performatively disclosing his homosexual love for his colleague” (121) as the result of the pervasive political and gender domination in patriarchal societies.

In the second study, Robert Myers and Nada Saab enlarge on Massad’s insights about the Shakespearean elements of Tuqus, further map the evolution of Wannous’s drama, and explore a neglected but prominent component of the play, Sufism, including its role in political dissent and its mystic theology of revelation and sacrifice. The authors see ‘Afsa’s failed attempt to reconcile his inner and outer selves as a metonymic, “profane” transformation that mirrors various Sufi rituals.

Despite the contrasting approaches used in the English-language studies of Wannous, critics and scholars view the radical and tragic metamorphoses the characters undergo in Tuqus in their struggle to defy a corrupt and oppressive order as prefiguring the collapse of Wannous’s own nation and as a testament to his profound belief in theater as both a manifestation of civil society and a mechanism for its transformation (Saab 2014).

SEE ALSO Halat Shaghaf (1998; Nihad Sirees); Homoeroticism in the Plays of Ibn Dаниyal; Theater, Queer

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Written and directed by Ferzan Özpetek, the film *Hamam* (1997; Bath; titled in English as *Steam: The Turkish Bath*), about male homoerotic encounters in Turkish baths, accounts for the current renaissance of these largely abandoned spaces as part of an emerging gay subculture in Istanbul and other Middle Eastern cities, including Beirut, Damascus, Cairo, and Tehran. The film’s visual and sensual fascination with the labyrinthine topography, intricate design, and steamy interior of such nearly ruined Ottoman buildings partakes in a long history of (homo) erotic projection and fantasy of Western travelers and artists from descriptions of Turkish baths by the English writer Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689–1762) and the French novelist Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880), to the Orientalist paintings of the French artists Jean-Auguste-Dominique Ingres (1780–1867) and Jean-Léon Gérôme (1824–1904), to the gay porn films of the French director Jean-Daniel Cadinot (1944–2008) that were set in Maghrebi bathhouses.

Same-sex eroticism ascribed to Turkish baths is not just a Western fantasy, because many Middle Eastern miniature paintings and written documents such as the seventeenth-century *Dellakname-i Dilkuşa* (Pleasuring tellak) attest to at least occasional male same-sex acts between the *tellak* (the attendant who provides scrubs and massages) and paying customers. Dating back to the Roman Empire, bathhouses spread across Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, but they were especially popular in the Ottoman Empire, where they became gender-segregated, semipublic places serving both religious and therapeutic and hygienic purposes. Bathhouses were located near mosques, and for a devout Muslim they have been a transitional space, linking the profane quotidian sexual activity and the religious worship through the act of physical and mental cleansing. The *hamam* is a place not for reading the Qur’an but rather for relaxing the body—and possibly releasing sexual tension—and preparing for the ensuing prayer. For a young Muslim male, the first visit to a bathhouse has served as rite of passage marking his entry into an all-male community. Meanwhile, for women in Muslim-Arabic countries, bathhouses have been one of the few social spaces where they can be among themselves, beyond paternal and spousal governance.
The Cemberlitas Turkish Bath in Istanbul, Turkey, Built in 1584. While gender-segregated Turkish baths served religious as well as therapeutic and hygienic purposes in the Ottoman Empire, they saw a revival in the twentieth century as queer spaces.

Whereas modern-day Turkey's founding father Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881–1938) declared bathhouses to be old-fashioned and traditionalist quasi-religious institutions attesting to decadent Ottoman cultural habits and thus standing against the republican ideals of secularism and modernization, other post-Ottoman countries such as Hungary maintained a secularized bathhouse culture of their own throughout the twentieth century. In tourism in the late twentieth century, interest in searching for erotic exoticism led tourists—many gay tourists among them—to again turn to the old Ottoman bathhouses, triggering a boom for the Turkish bath industry. Many shabby and almost defunct locales have since been restored to their former splendor, which in turn has resulted in a reinvigorated public interest in the Ottoman cultural past. Although the gay tourist habit of cruising based on an identification with queer sexual desire hardly recalls the former transitional moment of Muslim cleansing practices, this revival has also brought back homoerotic customs inherent in the hamam experience. With a secularized understanding of bathhouse attendance, both tourists and locals are part of new LGBT generations who embrace their queerness and reinvent the mythicized space of the Turkish bath with recoded potentials for cross-cultural queer encounters.

SEE ALSO Cruising and Cruising Grounds; Gay European Tourism Association; Resorts; Travel/Travelogues on the Middle East
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Two-Spirit

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A term used by North American Indigenous peoples to refer to nonnormative sexual or gender identities.

In the summer of 1990 Indigenous LGBTQ people from across North America traveled to a wilderness site near Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. Along the banks of the Brokenhead River, they gathered to attend the Third Annual Intertribal Native American/First Nations Gay and Lesbian Conference. At this historic event, participants discussed, debated, and ultimately embraced two-spirit as a new identity that linked contemporary LGBTQ experiences with Indigenous traditions, histories, and worldviews (Anguksuar 1997; McLeod 2003). In the months and years that followed, two-spirit rapidly spread and circulated as a novel mode of pan-Indigenous identification. By the close of the twentieth century, two-spirit organizations had been established across Canada and the United States.

Attempts to impose a narrow meaning on the term two-spirit are bound to fail. For some, the term literally denotes a spirit imbued by the Creator with male and female elements. Others play down the term’s metaphysical aspects and regard two-spirit as an identity that is uniquely modern, postmodern, and/or postcolonial. Some Indigenous people have articulated two-spirit primarily with respect to sexual orientation. Others suggest that it is not actually about sexuality but nonbinary gender roles with deep roots in Indigenous cultures. Although two-spirit is sometimes experienced as an exclusive identity, many Indigenous people employ the term in ways that coexist and overlap with additional LGBTQ+ identities (Driskill 2004; Wilson 1996). The Cherokee scholar Qwo-Li Driskill suggests that, like queer, two-spirit is “intentionally complex” and “meant to be inclusive, ambiguous, and fluid” (Driskill 2010, 72). Driskill asserts that two-spirit is an umbrella term intended to strategically foster transnational, pan-Indigenous interconnections.

While a straightforward definition is evasive, two-spirit must be understood in relation to three main elements. The first is self-determination. Selected by Indigenous people themselves, two-spirit asserts self-determination in terms of language and discourse (Lyons 2000). Simply put, two-spirit proclaims the right of Indigenous people to define themselves and describe their worlds. The second element is decolonization. Two-spirit not only casts off colonial labels such as berdache but also recalls the gender and sexual diversity of
traditional Indigenous cultures and reclaims this diversity in a decolonizing fashion. Healing is the third element. Two-spirit is part of a broad process of healing that involves rediscovering and celebrating Indigenous traditions and worldviews that were criminalized and suppressed by Euro-American authorities for many centuries (McLeod 2003; Hunt 2016; Wilson 2008).

**Precolonization**

There are hundreds of Indigenous nations in North America, and they have distinct cultures, histories, and languages. However, the worldviews of these nations tend to have much in common. As two-spirit scholar Alex Wilson notes, Indigenous worldviews are not structured by the binary oppositions of Western thought; they typically value balance with nature and harmony among community members (Wilson 1996). The notion that sexuality could form the basis of a social identity separate from—or antithetical to—the general life of the community makes little sense within Indigenous worldviews.

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**We’wba, a Zuni Two-Spirit, c. 1871.** We’wha was a famous lhamana, or male-bodied individual who adopted the stylizations and labor roles of women.
There are hundreds of Indigenous languages in North America, and most possess terms that describe individuals who combine both male and female characteristics and roles (Hunt 2016). To provide a few examples, in the Cree language there are multiple terms for men and women who dress, behave, or live as members of the opposite sex, including napêw iskwêwisêhot, Iskwêw ka napêwayat, Înahpikasot, ayahkwêw, napêhkân, and iskwêhkân (Pruden and Edmo 2016). Navajo culture traditionally recognizes four different genders: asdzaan (feminine women), hastiin (masculine men), nádleehi (feminine men), and dilbaa (masculine women) (Raymond 2016). The Lakota Sioux traditionally referred to male-bodied persons who performed female social roles as winkte. Often living in same-sex relationships, winkte were regarded as endowed with spiritual gifts, and they fulfilled important functions in religious ceremonies (Roscoe 1998; Raymond 2016). In traditional Zuni culture, male-bodied individuals called lhamana adopted the stylizations and labor roles of women and often acted as social mediators. The most famous lhamana was We’wha, the subject of extensive anthropological and historical study by the LGBTQ community–based scholar Will Roscoe (Roscoe 1991).

These diverse terms and social roles defy most attempts at generalization, as there are profound differences with respect to their spiritual significance, labor implications, cultural meanings, and erotic dimensions. It is necessary to avoid romanticizing Indigenous cultures as uniformly accepting of all forms of gender and sexual diversity because there were often strict regulations and taboos (Towle and Morgan 2002). Suffice it to say that the gendered and sexual lives of precolonial Indigenous North Americans did not mirror Western constructions of femininity, masculinity, homosexuality, and heterosexuality. For example, the life of Osh-Tisch (1854–1929), a Crow badé (a male-bodied individual who performed male and female social roles), refuses Western binaries. A renowned warrior in late-nineteenth-century battles against the US military, Osh-Tisch was also known for wearing women’s clothing and crafting jewelery (Roscoe 1998). More generally, Indigenous peoples recognized as blurring the lines between male and female often had important responsibilities as knowledge-keepers, healers, child-rearers, spiritual leaders, interpreters, social mediators, and artists (Hunt 2016).

**Waves of Colonialism**

From the late fifteenth century, successive waves of European explorers, missionaries, soldiers, and settlers often reacted with disgust and aggression when they encountered Indigenous modalities of gender and sexuality. Perhaps most infamously, Spanish conquistadors ordered the torture and public execution of Indigenous men they variously regarded as sodomites, hermaphrodites, or transvestites (Roscoe 1991; Trexler 1995). Deploying images of hellfire and eternal suffering, Catholic and Protestant missionaries worked to convert Indigenous peoples to Christianity and impose Christian modes of gender embodiment and sexual conduct (Williams 1986; Roscoe 1998). Nevertheless,
colonial efforts to reorganize the intimate lives of Indigenous peoples were relatively scattered and inconsistent prior to the nineteenth century, especially in central and western North America.

With the consolidation of settler colonial states in the nineteenth century, Indigenous peoples were increasingly subjected to a microphysics of colonial power. As Canada and the United States extended their territorial claims, legal jurisdiction, and police powers, Indigenous sovereignty was supplanted in such areas as marriage, family life, and child-rearing. For example, in the late nineteenth century Canada and the United States enacted laws that restricted and criminalized Indigenous forms of marriage and enforced Euro-American ideals of monogamous Christian matrimony and nuclear family domesticity (Barker 2006; Gilley 2006; Carter 2008). Both settler colonial states also sought to extinguish the transmission and reproduction of Indigenous cultures by removing children from their families and resocializing them in residential and boarding schools. Although rife with sexual abuse, these schools strove to inculcate Euro-American values regarding gender and sexual normality. Indigenous students were molded in accordance with Euro-American standards of masculinity and femininity, and youth who displayed queer desire or nonbinary forms of gender expression were correctively punished (Roscoe 1998; Gilley 2006). Mark Rifkin has influentially argued that imposing Euro-American forms of domesticity, intimacy, gender, and sexuality upon Indigenous peoples was central to the overall projection of settler colonial power across North America (Rifkin 2011).

By the early to mid-twentieth century, Indigenous modalities of gender and sexual diversity had generally gone underground or completely disappeared (Driskill 2008). For example, as mentioned previously, a wellknown badé named Osh-Tisch achieved great renown in Crow culture as both a warrior and a maker of jewelery and clothing. For much of Osh-Tisch’s life, he and other Crow badés were respected members of their communities. However, in the late nineteenth century US Indian agents demanded that Osh-Tisch and other badés cut their hair, dress in male clothing, and conform to Euro-American gender norms or face imprisonment (Roscoe 1998; Gilley 2006). There was strong and partially successful opposition on the part of Crow leaders, who argued that such measures contravened the social status and personal nature of Osh-Tisch and those like him. Nevertheless, Osh-Tisch was the last known badé when he died in 1929, as the role had virtually disappeared from Crow culture in the face of government regulation and Christian condemnation.

**Indigenous LGBTQ Organizing**

In the final decades of the twentieth century there were expansive efforts to recover and reclaim Indigenous traditions of gender and sexual diversity, and the formation of Indigenous LGBTQ organizations. The red power and gay liberation movements were important catalysts. Red power crystallized in the late 1960s to demand sovereignty and
self-determination for Indigenous peoples. The movement staged militant protests against North American colonialism, occupied land deemed stolen, asserted pride in Indigeneity, and embraced pan-Indigenous forms of collective action (Shreve 2010; Rutherford 2011). Also emerging at the close of the 1960s, gay liberation politicized the importance of sexuality in relation to struggles against capitalism, imperialism, and other systems of oppression. Challenging homophobia and heteronormativity, gay liberation affirmed the value of homosexuality and encouraged gay people to come out of the closet en masse (Hobson 2016; Downs 2016).

Indigenous LGBTQ activists were greatly influenced by gay liberation and red power. However, there were also points of tension. Indigenous LGBTQ activists were often discouraged by gay liberation's white normativity and tendency to critique Western imperialism abroad while ignoring settler colonialism at home (Gilley 2006; Morgensen 2011). In red power circles, Indigenous LGBTQ people were frequently alienated by homophobia and macho gender dynamics (Burns 1988; Gilley 2006). Consequently, LGBTQ Indigenous activists increasingly elected to create independent organizations that would more effectively address their unique sociopolitical concerns and priorities.

The first of these groups, Gay American Indians of San Francisco, was founded in 1975. Organizations subsequently established included American Indian Gays and Lesbians (Minneapolis), Gays and Lesbians of the First Nations (Toronto), WeWah and BarCheeAmpe (New York City), and Nichiwakan (Winnipeg) (Roscoe 1998; Morgensen 2011). For all their differences, these groups had similar goals. Oriented toward a broad range of socioeconomic issues, they helped Indigenous LGBTQ people access housing, employment, and education. They organized dances and other social gatherings at which Indigenous LGBTQ people were free to be themselves, build community, and discuss the meaning of Indigeneity from queer perspectives. Especially as the HIV/AIDS crisis unfolded, these groups addressed issues of health care and culturally appropriate prevention and community education strategies (Burns 1988; Roscoe 1998; Gilley 2006).

Also important were their efforts to reclaim lost knowledge of sexual and gender diversity in precolonial Indigenous cultures. For example, Gay American Indians of San Francisco devoted considerable time and energy to producing Living the Spirit, the first anthology of LGBTQ historical and creative writing produced by Indigenous people themselves. This anthology contained critical reflections, historical and anthropological scholarship, and poetry (Burns 1988; Morgensen 2011).

**Two-Spirit's Emergence and Spread**

By the late 1980s Indigenous LGBTQ organizations existed in a number of Canadian and US cities. Discerning a need for greater communication and coordination among these groups, American Indian Gays and Lesbians of Minneapolis decided to create an annual, transnational forum. In 1988 the organization held the first Intertribal Native
American/First Nations Gay and Lesbian Conference in Minneapolis; in 1989 a second conference was held in Wilderness Way, Wisconsin. These events brought together Indigenous LGBTQ people from across Canada and the United States to socialize in drug- and alcohol-free environments, share their experiences, and learn from one another. Workshops addressed such topics as substance abuse, mixed-race relationships, HIV/AIDS, and Indigenous history (Roscoe 1998; McLeod 2003). A growing dissatisfaction with Euro-American terms for Indigenous gender and sexual diversity was palpable. The European term *berdache* was especially critiqued, given its history of denoting various forms of “passive” male homosexuality, male prostitution, and intergenerational sex (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang 1997).

A third Intertribal Native American/First Nations Gay and Lesbian Conference was sponsored by Nichiwakan of Winnipeg and held in 1990 at a wilderness site along the Brokenhead River near Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. While the conference addressed many of the same themes of previous gatherings, there was a new emphasis on finding a new term for Indigenous gender and sexual diversity (Anguksuar 1997; Thomas and Jacobs 1999). In this regard, a Winnipeg-based Cree and Metis activist named Myra Laramee shared a recent dream: while sleeping inside a tepee that had been erected on the Manitoba legislative grounds, Laramee dreamt of seven ancestral spirits. Shifting between male and female forms, two of these spirits declared that Laramee was *niizh manidoowag*—an Ojibwe term that translates into English as two-spirited or two-spirit (Albert McLeod interview by Scott de Groot, 18 December 2017; Laramee 2017). Conference participants discussed and debated Laramee’s term and ultimately adopted it as an Indigenous-centered, English-language alternative to Euro-American categories such as berdache and third gender. Two-spirit was originally defined in a fashion that expansively encapsulated “gay, lesbian, transvestite, transsexual, transgender, drag queens, and butches, as well as winkte, nadleeh, and other appropriate tribal terms” (Thomas and Jacobs 1999, 92). However, conference participants did not suggest that two-spirit—itself a calque translation—should be translated back into Indigenous languages or employed in ways that would supplant culturally specific terms and concepts. Rather, two-spirit was a term intended to foster pan-Indigenous alliances and transnational decolonization (Anguksuar 1997; Morgensen 2011).

After 1990, International Two-Spirit Gatherings were annually held in wilderness settings across North America. Two-spirit people and their supporters travel from far and wide to attend these gatherings, learn about the culture and traditions of host groups, and enjoy safe spaces “where people can share, laugh, and heal together” (McLeod 2003, 33). Throughout the 1990s many Indigenous LGBTQ groups changed their names to include the term *two-spirit,* and entirely new groups also adopted it. By the twenty-first century, two-spirit organizations existed from California to Ontario and British Columbia to Texas. The rapid, remarkable spread of two-spirit as a concept and identity was facilitated by periodicals such as *Buffalo Hide* (New York City), *Two-Eagles* (Minneapolis), *Sacred Fire*
Relatively inexpensive to produce and distribute by mail across vast distances, these periodicals allowed two-spirit people to advertise local and regional events; collectively address issues of health and healing; communicate research on Indigenous history; share creative writing and artwork; and discuss issues of Indigenous sovereignty, self-determination, and decolonization.

**HIV/AIDS and Community Acceptance**

Two-spirit is bound up with the broad, decolonial process of recovering long-suppressed Indigenous traditions, histories, and worldviews. But as two-spirit as a social identity crystallized in the 1990s, it was not embraced by some Indigenous elders and community members who regarded queer sexuality and nonbinary gender expression with hostility or embarrassment. The reasons for this are complex and generally tied to colonialism. Many Indigenous Christians regarded two-spirit people as sinful and denied traditions of gender and sexual diversity (Gilley 2006). There was also a general reluctance to discuss issues of sexuality in some Indigenous communities given the traumatic legacies of Indian boarding and residential schools (Finley 2011). Usually operated by Christian churches, these schools were rife with sexual abuse, which was often perpetrated by adult staff.

Patriarchal power was (and is) another obstacle to two-spirit acceptance. In both Canada and the United States, Indigenous systems of governance and social organization were systematically dismantled by settler colonial governments. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries Indian status was structured along patrilineal lines, and formerly powerful women were often excluded from band and tribal councils (Driskill 2004; Barker 2006; Carter 2008). Consequently, toxic formations of masculinity and male political power emerged in many Indigenous nations and communities. These power formations were frequently hostile to late-twentieth-century projects of reclaiming Indigenous gender and sexual diversity.

Nevertheless, two-spirit people have made major progress in terms of community acceptance and recognition. The HIV/AIDS crisis was an important catalyst for this. As HIV/AIDS expanded as a biomedical emergency in the 1980s and 1990s, Indigenous communities were severely and disproportionately affected as a result of inadequate access to health care and health disparities stemming from colonialism (Vernon 2001; Hunt 2016). While critical of slow and culturally inappropriate governmental responses to the epidemic, two-spirit organizations strategically accepted resources made available by federal, provincial, state, and local governments. With these funds, and with funds raised at the community level, two-spirit activists and their allies produced research on the scope of HIV/AIDS in Indigenous communities and provided such vital social services as food preparation and assisting with hospital visits (McLeod 2003; Gilley 2006). Moreover, two-spirit activists spearheaded public education campaigns that communicated with
Indigenous people about the epidemiology of HIV/AIDS, dispelled harmful myths, and addressed safe sex in an Indigenous-centered fashion. For example, these campaigns debunked widespread notions that HIV/AIDS was an urban, white gay male problem and emphasized that the disease was present everywhere, including on reserves and reservations (Roscoe 1998; Morgensen 2011).

Also important were two-spirit efforts to communicate with Indigenous people in culturally appropriate ways, specifically through community presentations, pamphlets, posters, videos, and other educational materials that employed themes of multigenerational interconnection and holistic wellness. Two-spirit activists likewise demanded Indigenous-centered approaches to HIV/AIDS treatment that incorporated—or at least permitted—traditional medicines and spiritual practices such as smudging (a practice involving the burning of sacred herbs to produce a cleansing, purifying smoke). As Scott Morgensen puts it, “Native people in the United States and Canada responded to HIV/AIDS by creating new knowledge and services in urban and rural contexts and on reservations and reserves that answered health disparities by asserting native control over health” (Morgensen 2011, 198). By assuming a leading role in Indigenous responses to HIV/AIDS, two-spirit people have increasingly gained respect and recognition in Indigenous communities and nations (Albert McLeod interview by Scott de Groot, 18 December 2017).

Two-Spirit Luminaries

Despite continuing to face challenges such as health disparities, homophobia, and racism, in the twenty-first century two-spirit people are ever-more empowered and visible. Advancing this process are a number of eminent two-spirit artists, writers, scholars, and community leaders based in Canada or the United States. To give just a few examples, the Cree and Metis artist Kent Monkman (1965–) has created a body of work that subverts binaries between “artist and model, colonial explorer and colonized subject, gazer and gazed upon, male and female, straight and queer, past and present, real and imaginary” (Rayter 2012, xxiv). Originally from Manitoba but now based in Toronto, Monkman in his paintings, performances, installations, and video pieces playfully celebrates Indigenous gender and sexual diversity while critiquing the colonial power structures that suppressed this diversity for so long.

There has been an outpouring of two-spirit creative writing. At the forefront of this work is the Cherokee poet and scholar Driskill, originally from Colorado and now a professor at Oregon State University. Driskill’s writings challenge anachronistic projections of heterosexuality and homosexuality onto Indigenous pasts and explore interrelationships between sovereignty and eroticism, decolonization and the body, and historical trauma and healing. Driskill’s poetry confronts the painful and haunting legacies of land theft, genocide, and forced removal of Cherokees from their homelands, but also celebrates the erotic
pleasure and sensuality of Indigenous embodiment and place (Rifkin 2012).

The Mohawk and Metis writer Beth Brant (1941–2015) is another important two-spirit literary figure. A member of the Tyendinaga Mohawk Reserve in Ontario, Brandt was born in Detroit, Michigan. Inspired by a spiritual encounter with an eagle, she began writing professionally in her forties. Encouraged and promoted by Adrienne Rich, in 1984 Brandt published the first anthology of poetry and prose penned by North American Indigenous women, *A Gathering of Spirit*, featuring the diverse voices and experiences of Indigenous women from across Canada and the United States. Brant went on to edit and author many more books, including *Mohawk Trail* (1985) and *Testimony from the Faithful* (2003). An influential educator and mentor, she lectured at the University of British Columbia and the University of Toronto, supported creative writing workshops and conferences, and was a vocal HIV/AIDS activist who facilitated Indigenous-centered AIDS education (Cullum 2004).

An Ojibwa-Cree community leader in northwestern Ontario, Ma-Nee Chacaby (1952–) has published an important autobiography that recounts her remarkable two-spirit journey. Raised north of Lake Nipigon, Ontario, Chacaby experienced physical and sexual abuse in Indigenous communities reeling from colonial displacement. She was also nurtured and encouraged by her elderly grandmother, who quickly identified Chacaby's two-spiritedness. After years of alcoholism and abusive relationships, Chacaby achieved sobriety and domestic stability. Over several decades, she became a two-spirit community leader and acknowledged elder in Thunder Bay and northwestern Ontario, given her work on issues of addiction, domestic violence, adoption and foster care, and HIV/AIDS education and advocacy. In 2013 Chacaby led Thunder Bay's first gay pride parade (Chacaby 2016).
All of the luminaries profiled here have articulated somewhat different understandings and definitions of two-spirit as a concept and identity. For example, they have variously placed different emphases on the term’s spiritual dimensions, historicity, and sexual meanings. However, they and other two-spirit people fundamentally concur that two-spirit is bound up with Indigenous self-determination, decolonization, and healing. An affirming identity that reconnects with the queerness of precolonial Indigeneity, two-spirit combats the imposition of Euro-American norms regarding gender and sexuality and rejects the universality of these norms.

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The debate on sexuality in Africa has elicited various responses. As a result of the influence of missionary religions, especially conservative Christianity, some individuals and institutions insist that sexuality belongs to the private sphere and should never be debated in public. In particular, there has been disquiet over the visibility and even vibrancy of organizations that stand for the rights of LGBTQI individuals. This has generated diametrically opposed views regarding how to respond to sexual difference and gender variance. Some African politicians, such as presidents Robert Mugabe (1924–), Yoweri Museveni (1944–), and Uhuru Kenyatta (1961–), have, with varying degrees of diplomacy or crudeness, maintained that Africa has more pressing problems than reflecting on the rights of the LGBTQI community. They have been joined by some church leaders who contend that God has ordained heterosexuality as the only legitimate form of sexuality. In some African contexts, such as in Nigeria, Christian and Muslim leaders have joined forces to denounce LGBTQI individuals and communities.

The religious resistance to LGBTQI rights in Africa has also been supported by some African intellectuals. For example, although Emmanuel Katongole (2016), a Catholic theologian, is quite outspoken in challenging governance in Africa, on LGBTQI rights he is less forthcoming. Ever keen to contest cultural imperialism, these scholars have latched on to the argument that the LGBTQI movement is part of the West’s effort to consolidate its hegemony over Africa. Some African intellectuals find the appeals by African political leaders quite convincing. They contend that the West wants to impose its very specific approach to human sexuality on the entire human population. In this regard, they regard globalization as a process by which indigenous values and cultures are trampled on by the dominant cultures with impunity. Furthermore, they claim that the insistence on human rights is a ploy by those with power to impose their own interpretation of reality on others. If not analyzed critically, these arguments can be quite appealing, especially to people in the Global South who feel that the dividend of globalization has not been forthcoming.

In the politics of sexual and reproductive health and rights in Africa, conservative religious
leaders (Christian, Muslim, and traditional) have joined forces with politicians to resist the call for LGBTQI rights. They make an ideological appeal to “African culture and traditions.” These conservative religious leaders, with their African intellectual/political allies, charge that Africa does not need to be lectured to about human rights by the West. Furthermore, they seek to propagate the idea that such notions as LGBTQI rights for Africans are sponsored by foreigners. Nebila Abdulmelik, an African feminist, expressed these dynamics as follows:

> These right-wing groups often use “African” culture and tradition to justify resistance to [sexual and reproductive health and rights]. They frame it, and women's human rights in general, as “un-African,” and the civil society organisations advocating for sexual and reproductive justice as pushing a “Western” agenda. These arguments appeal to many African policymakers, as they resonate with their “anti-imperialist” and “antineocolonial” agenda. The irony is that these (Western) proponents of preserving “African” culture are essentialising and instrumentalising what they deem as “African culture” to further their own agendas.

(2015,35)

Investigating the Traditional Approach to Sexuality in Africa

The past is itself very much contested in debates on sexuality in Africa. The challenges associated with retrieving the past continue to characterize efforts to determine how traditional African cultures negotiated sexual diversity. Critically, ideological reconstructions of the African past tend to project the image of a “pure and unadulterated” African culture. In reality, however, African cultures have never stood still at any given point in time. Like all other human cultures, they have been open and have always undergone change. In the specific case of responding to sexual diversity, however, one can argue that African traditional cultures have been characterized by remarkable levels of tolerance and accommodation of diversity. Perhaps this was made possible by the fact that the guiding religious ideology in African traditional religions has never been a codified set of beliefs to which every adherent has had to subscribe, but a loose system of beliefs and practices that could vary from one place to another.

One of the most dominant philosophies that guided African traditional communities was that of ubuntu (with its variants across most parts of Africa south of the Sahara). While a longer study is required to unpack the nuances of this key concept, it can be summarized as
placing emphasis on communal solidarity. It expresses the idea that to exist is to belong to
the larger social group. Essentially, ubuntu is the idea that the integrity of a human being is
inextricably linked to her or his membership in the community. One is linked to others in
an intricate web of relationships. Although some would like to illustrate this point by trying
to create tension between individualism and collectivism (Matolino 2008), this does not
logically emerge from ubuntu. The concept succeeds in holding both individual rights and
collective responsibilities in creative tension.

It is the concept of ubuntu that provides the context for talking about the rights of
individuals in all their diversity. The idea of inalienable rights is central to ubuntu. By dint
of being umntu (a human being), one is entitled to dignified treatment in all aspects of life.
Among the Shona people of Zimbabwe, for example, there was a profound saying,
“murombo munhu” (a poor person remains/is still a person). Such a proverb sought to
eliminate discrimination on the basis of social class. Here, the insistence is that all members
of society must be accorded their rights. As noted by the South African scholars Mluleki
Munyaka and Mokgethi Motlhabi:

*Every individual in African society values being recognised and treated as an
equal and with respect. The requirement to show respect becomes evident
should someone undermine or ill-treat another. Others may intervene by simply
asserting and reminding the perpetrator that the victim ungumntu (is a
person). The victim may also intervene directly by asserting ndingumntu nam
(I, too, am a human being or a person). If the perpetrator has a conscience, he
or she will immediately refrain from adverse actions. People are conscious of
their common humanity, which has a certain dignity, integrity and value to be
acknowledged, respected and valued.*

*(2009,66)*

Without romanticizing traditional Africa—it had its fair share of bigotry, violence, and
discrimination against various types of people—it can be argued that in general the
intrinsic value of every person was respected. On the few occasions that some individuals’
actions were deemed antisocial, they could be ostracized and encouraged to form their own
community. Thus, those who were accused of witchcraft, for example, could be expelled to
form their own community. This was far more humane than the hanging of alleged witches
in Europe, for example.

It is significant to note that individuals who had a different sexual orientation or gender
identity were not among those who were expelled from their communities. Traditional
communities were far more tolerant and sophisticated in their responses to sexual diversity. Unlike the homophobia that characterizes the contemporary period—mostly fueled by colonial pieces of legislation, Victorian ideals, and conservative religious ideologies—traditional African communities were quite adept at accommodating differences in sexual orientation and gender identities. By interpreting these through a religious idiom, they facilitated acceptance and respect for difference in relation to sex and sexuality.

One of the most strategic dimensions of African traditional religions and ubuntu is the openness and tolerance of multiple approaches to the sacred. Unlike missionary religions that suggest the existence of only one, exclusive, and decisive access point to the sacred, African traditional religions concede that there are many, divergent ways. As a result, individuals who did not conform to the expected heterosexual ideal of getting married and raising families were accommodated under alternative spiritual explanations. In many instances, it was suggested that such individuals were hosts of particular spirits that set them apart for particular tasks. In other settings, same-sex loving individuals were accorded respect as hosts of spirits.

To contend that there were no same-sex relationships among some traditional Africans is to make a tenuous ideological and nonhistorical claim (Chitando 2015). Some men and women definitely engaged in same-sex relationships. More critically, there were very few reported cases of individuals who were punished for their involvement in such interactions. Two possible conclusions are, therefore, possible. First, one could argue that individuals who engaged in same-sex relationships were extremely effective at disguising their activities in order to avoid detection. Second, it is likely that communities knew of such individuals but had devised strategies of tolerance, acceptance, and containment. It is this second conclusion that is more plausible and appealing.

The argument that only a functional attitude toward sex prevailed in traditional Africa (meaning that sex is only for the purpose of conceiving children), as many colonial-era anthropologists maintained, is unrealistic. As with all other human societies, in traditional African communities individuals engaged in diverse sexual activities for the sole purpose of deriving pleasure and expressing or fulfilling emotional desires. Although sexuality was policed because of its perceived potential danger, it remains critical to highlight that sex and pleasure have been constantly conjoined in Africa as across diverse human cultures. While there were spiritual overtones, it remains true that sex and sexuality were also associated with pleasure. The presence of sexually explicit praise poetry in different African communities confirms that men and women derived pleasure from sex.

**African LGBTQI Activists and Ubuntu**

As noted earlier, religious and ideological arguments have been marshaled to deny the
rights of African LGBTQI activists. Some of the critics have deployed the idea that homosexuals can be characterized as lacking ubuntu or its variant unhu (Makamure 2015). In this regard, a full member of the community is one who is willing to abide by the dictates of ubuntu. These dictates are associated with a narrow worldview that is pushed by African cultural nationalists. By extension, ubuntu lays the boundaries of who can/must be included or excluded from the community. Thus, the concept of ubuntu must be read as a heavily contested one. It can be, and has been, used to exclude individuals who do not subscribe to heteropatriarchy. Furthermore, some African women scholars have critiqued how it marginalizes them. Although she identifies some positive aspects, the Zimbabwean scholar of religion Molly Manyonganise (2015) contends that ubuntu has been used to marginalize women.

Despite the deployment of ubuntu to silence LGBTQI activists in Africa, there have been efforts by scholars to reflect on the extent to which ubuntu can be appropriated to promote the rights of LGBTQI individuals and communities in Africa. This has been motivated by the realization that as long as the dominant ideas relating to the struggle for LGBTQI rights in Africa are framed in predominantly Western terms, it will be difficult to present these as legitimate African concerns. The memory of colonialism and Africa's marginalization in globalization have created a siege mentality among many African intellectuals and politicians. This has generated an ultra-vigilant state whereby all concepts and ideas that are deemed “foreign” are jettisoned immediately. In the quest to protect African identity, sovereignty, and cultural purity (despite these being loaded concepts), there has been a tendency to resist externally derived notions.

As was argued earlier, some African politicians and intellectuals have framed the quest for LGBTQI rights as a form of cultural imperialism. Although their arguments are fraught with fallacies and inconsistencies (for example, insisting on being “authentically African” while speaking fluently in foreign languages and accessing all the products of modernity), there is a need to acknowledge the rhetorical impact and emotive value of their pronouncements. They present Africa as a vulnerable and regularly abused member of the global family. Not only do foreigners pillage African resources and enslave Africa's children, they also want to impose their “un-African” and “un-Christian” sexual practices on Africans. The discourse ceases to be one concerning the rights of some Africans and instead focuses on all Africans against their erstwhile oppressors, the West.

By using ubuntu to promote LGBTQI rights in Africa, scholars and activists are seeking to provide an indigenous basis for supporting these rights. There is a need, however, to acknowledge the danger of romanticization and self-indigenization in such an undertaking (Chitando and Mateveke 2017). The appeal to ubuntu is motivated by its centrality to African traditional religions and philosophy. When one argues that every person's rights must be recognized because this is enshrined in the traditional worldview, one stands a better chance to interface with African cultural nationalists who would be willing to
consider an indigenous African concept. One can, therefore, argue that the turn toward ubuntu by scholars and activists in the struggle for LGBTQI rights in Africa is a strategy meant to deflect the argument that the whole discourse is foreign and driven by external interests. By anchoring the struggle on a dearly held African concept, they seek to gain ideological mileage.

Musa W. Dube of Botswana has been a passionate defender of LGBTQI rights in Africa. From her earlier work with the World Council of Churches on HIV and AIDS, as well as her firm commitment to ubuntu as a valuable resource for fighting stigma and discrimination, she has maintained that every individual’s rights must be upheld. For Dube, ubuntu must not be reduced to an empty declaration. Neither must its meaning be restricted, she argues. She insists that every generation has the responsibility to work out what it means to say, “I am because we are and we are because I am”:

The concept of community, the Botho/Ubuntu/Buthu paradigm, should become the cornerstone for propounding the African philosophy of justice and liberation by constantly revisiting what it means to be community and live in community, what violates community, and how to live in community in the new and hybrid twenty-first century contexts. Being community is not set. It is a process that must be continually cultivated by its members. Relationships should be constantly assessed. Any that are oppressive should be reviewed. Only when society is healthy can it be claimed that “I am because we are and we are because I am.”

(2009, 202)

Other scholars and activists who have used the concept of ubuntu in an endeavor to secure LGBTQI rights in Africa include Marc Epprecht (2013), Kapya Kaoma (2016) and Elias Kifon Bongmba (2016). While a longer narrative is required to do justice to how each of these scholars appropriates ubuntu in his specific reconstruction efforts, their efforts can be viewed collectively. Essentially, they contend that homophobia is antithetical to ubuntu. Their main contention is that ubuntu upholds the rights and dignity of all members of the community. To harm, hate, kill, or ostracize any person on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity is to fail to recognize that person’s inherent dignity, these scholars maintain. Kaoma and Bongmba additionally contend that ubuntu is consistent with the tenets of Christianity. In other words, they argue that neither ubuntu nor Christian teachings on the integrity of each created human being support homophobia.

**Ubuntu and Human Rights in Africa**
Scholars and activists who appeal to ubuntu to support LGBTQI rights in Africa seek to undercut the argument that the quest for human rights is informed by external players, using foreign idioms. Essentially, they are insisting that there is no tension between human rights and indigenous African notions of upholding the integrity of every member of the community. Theirs is an effort to Africanize, indigenize, localize, and vernacularize the discourse on sexuality and gender identity in contemporary Africa. They seek to provide an African flavor to the quest for LGBTQI rights in Africa.

The central argument is that both ubuntu and human rights have the goal of protecting life. No individual should be harmed because of his or her sexual orientation and gender identity. It is also argued that ubuntu is consistent with the emerging emphasis on human rights. It is envisaged that by appealing to ubuntu, the reservations that some critics have regarding human rights will be negotiated. As outlined above, such critics contend that there are double standards in the discourse on human rights globally. The same countries that pose as champions of human rights have not hesitated to disregard them the moment that their interests are threatened. It is further argued that it is only the Global South that is made accountable for not upholding human rights. The powerful disregard human rights with impunity, critics charge.

By positing that both ubuntu and human rights are premised on protecting life, scholars and activists pressing for LGBTQI rights in Africa have sought to apply an old concept to new realities. It is clear that, although sexual diversity was characteristic of traditional societies, organizing on this basis is a new and emerging phenomenon. It is the visibility, voicing, and organizing of the LGBTQI individuals and groups that have generated tension. As indicated earlier, traditional communities in Africa had devised strategies for accommodating and accepting individuals who did not fit the socially defined ways of self-presenting. Scholars and activists who put forward ubuntu as a resource for furthering LGBTQI rights in Africa seek to apply an old concept in a new context. The overarching goal is to uphold life in contexts characterized by denial, stigma, discrimination, and outright hatred.

The struggle for LGBTQI rights in Africa has become quite contentious. Religion, culture, and tradition are at the heart of this struggle. Conservative interpretations of religion, culture, and tradition have appealed to those who would deny LGBTQI rights in Africa. At the same time, however, some scholars and activists have sought to locate redemptive windows in the African religion, culture, and tradition to promote LGBTQI rights in Africa. Through the appeal to and appropriation of ubuntu, they have sought to promote more life-giving and liberative readings of an old concept in a new setting.

SEE ALSO Gender, Flexible Systems, in Africa; Marriage, Woman-Woman, in Africa

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Uganda

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A historical and contemporary look at the LGBTQ community in this East African nation.

Uganda is a diverse community with forty-three living languages, forty-one of which are indigenous and two nonindigenous (Ethnologue 2017). There are sixty-five ethnic groups recognized in Article 10(a) and the Third Schedule of the Constitution of Uganda (1995). These ethnic groups can be subdivided into four large language groupings: the Bantu, the Nilotics, the Sudanic people, and the Kuliak pockets (Lewis 2009). With such diversity, traditional attitudes toward homosexuality vary from group to group.

It is important to note that traditionally what are now referred to as LGBTQ issues were regarded as behavioral peculiarities rather than questions of sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex determination (Epprecht 2008). With regard to homosexuality, some scholars, such as Apolo Kagwa (1905) have denied the existence of same-sex relations before the arrival of the Arabs into Buganda, the largest kingdom in the area that was brought together by the British to form present-day Uganda. The Arabs preceded the Europeans, and the first Arab into Buganda is said to have arrived around 1848 during the reign of Kabaka Ssuuna II (r. c. 1832–1856) (Gray 1947). The first European, John Hanning Speke (1827–1864), arrived in 1862 during the reign of Mutesa I (r. 1856–1884). Yet, there is enough evidence that same-sex sexuality existed in Africa, including in Buganda, before the arrival of foreigners (Epprecht 2008). John F. Faupel (1984) states that homosexuality was rife at the Kabaka’s court by the time the colonialists arrived. Homosexuality was also acknowledged among the Bahima (Mushanga 1973). Among the Lango, mukodo dako males (men who behaved liked women) were accepted and even allowed to marry men (Murray and Roscoe 1998). Homosexuality was also observed among the Sebei (Goldschmidt 1967).

Although each community had its own specific attitudes toward homosexuality and gender-bending, the attitudes can best be summarized as follows: that homosexuality was neither entirely accepted nor fully condemned (Tamale 2003). What is clear is that there was a veil of secrecy surrounding such practices, just as there was for all matters concerning sexuality. In terms of criminalization, homosexuality and gender-bending were not criminalized even though well-elaborated systems of punishing deviant sexual behaviors.
existed. There are numerous instances of prescribed punishments for sexual transgressions among traditional communities in Uganda. For example, among the Bakiga, a girl who became pregnant before marriage would be punished by being pushed off a cliff (Edel 1996). Among the Baganda, adultery was punished by death or, in cases where the sentence was reduced, by mutilation or fines (Roscoe 1911). No known punishment existed, however, for homosexuality or gender-bending. The lack of punishment, far from suggesting that homosexuality did not exist in these communities, suggests that it is an issue that was rather not dealt with within the public discourse.

Apart from the clear nonpenal approach toward homosexuality, for cross-dressing and gender-bending, there was acknowledgment of their existence. Among the Baganda, men who behaved like women or women who behaved like men were acknowledged, and sometimes the behavior would be frowned on but not punished. They were regarded as kyakulassajja (male-like woman) or nakawanga (she-cock) for women who behaved like men, and ekikazikazi (womanly male) for men who behaved like women (Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2009). Indeed, gender-bending by women of high status, such as the king’s mother and daughters, was required and they would be allowed to do what only men could do and would also be addressed as men (Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2009). Music also shows that women and men could be allowed to exchange roles. For example, the royal Bakisimba dance is an erotic dance in which males can act out roles of women and where men can dance with men in a visibly erotic way (Nannyonga-Tamusuza 2005). Among the Bagisu, transvestism was acknowledged and considered normal (La Fontaine 1959). Among the Banyoro, during certain cultural rites, a man would be required to behave as a woman (Needham 1973). Among the Iteso, effeminate men were accepted, and they could do work traditionally reserved for women and take on women’s names (Lawrance 1957). Among the Lango, mukodo dako (alternative gender status) men were seen as part of the social fabric and were accepted (Driberg 1923).

The Impact of Colonialism, Capitalism, and Religion on Attitudes toward Homosexuality

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Traditional attitudes toward homosexuality, cross-dressing, and intersex persons have undergone transformation through religion, colonialism, and capitalism. Uganda is a predominantly religious country with Christianity and Islam being the dominant religious groups, even while traditional beliefs continue to influence how Islam and Christianity are practiced (Kassimir 1999). Both Islam and Christianity have teachings against homosexuality and cross-dressing. Religious leaders are at the front line of opposing homosexuality and usually preach against it (Jjuuko 2013). Because these teachings influence peoples’ perceptions of homosexuality and cross-dressing, the majority of Ugandans feel that homosexuality and crossdressing are wrong, despite a hitherto more
KABAKA MWANGA (1866–1901)

Danieri Basammula-Ekkere Mwanga II was the thirty-first Kabaka (king) of the Buganda kingdom of central Uganda. He reigned from 1884 to 1888 and again from 1889 to 1897. He is most known for ordering the killings, between 1885 and 1888, of more than fifty of his pages who had converted to Christianity, forty-five of whom are now celebrated by the Christian community as the Uganda Martyrs. It is important to note that such killings were, in fact, not out of place in precolonial Buganda. He reigned at a time of European incursion into the Great Lakes region of Africa along with the introduction of Christianity. Therefore, most of his reign is characterized by struggles between religion-inspired warring factions and an increasingly loosening hold on power. He was deposed twice, first by religious factions in 1888 and later by the British in 1897, who exiled him to the Seychelles islands, where he died in 1901.

Intertwined in the political story of Kabaka Mwanga is the issue of his sexuality. It is alleged that he engaged in same-sex relations with his subjects. In a country where it is persistently claimed that homosexuality is un-African and was a colonial import, he stands out as a prominent challenge to that assertion since he came to power before Buganda was declared a British protectorate. The main author of the claim about Kabaka Mwanga's sexuality is the Reverend John P. Faupel, who in his telling of the story of the Uganda Martyrs claims that the main reason why the young men were killed was because they had denied sexual favors to the king, who was an absolute monarch (Faupel 1984). Apolo Kagwa, who is famous for his chronicles on Buganda's precolonial history, and who was Mwanga's katikiro (prime minister), confirms that indeed the practice of homosexuality was known in Buganda at the time, having in his view been introduced by the Arabs before Europeans reached Buganda. But he was silent as to whether the Kabaka was involved in it or not (Kagwa 1971).

Other scholars, however, are of the view that the story about Mwanga's homosexuality is a fabrication or at best a misunderstanding of what was actually happening. Those who contend that it was a fabrication argue that Mwanga was married to more than sixteen women and was not involved in homosexual acts as alleged. It was the missionaries, Mwanga’s political enemies, who started the allegation with the aim of demonizing him and making him unappealing to his subjects (Lwanga-Lunyiigo 2011). Those who argue that this was a misunderstanding state that what was taking place at the time could not accurately be described as a matter of sexual orientation but rather a show of political power or a matter of rituals (Hoad 2007). One of the justifications for this argument includes the reference to the Kabaka by both men and women as Bbaffe (our husband) (Nsimbi 1956). Theoretically, therefore, he could have sex with both men and women and that would be acceptable.
Today, Mwanga’s alleged homosexuality stands as an example of homosexuality in precolonial Uganda, and as such his story is used by some LGBTQ activists to show that same-sex practices were not alien to precolonial Uganda (Rao 2015). However, it has not been as exploited by LGBTQ activists in Uganda as much as would have been expected. This is perhaps because of the fear of alienating the Baganda, who revere their kings, and, in light of current homophobia, would be uncomfortable with one of their late kings being described as a homosexual. Another reason is because Mwanga’s alleged homosexuality was largely practiced with young boys and could now be regarded as pedophilia, something that antigay groups purport to be part of the LGBT movement’s agenda (Rao 2015).

Antihomosexuality factions have also tried to use Mwanga's story for their campaigns, with religious leaders such as Martin Ssempa, a pastor and activist, using it to demonize homosexuality. From 2004 onward, Uganda Martyrs' Day celebrations have had pastors focus on Mwanga’s alleged homosexuality as an example of negative behavior that should not be tolerated (Rao 2015). Other persons also use it against Muslims, who were alleged to have introduced homosexuality in Buganda (Kagwa 1971). Mwanga’s alleged homosexuality therefore remains controversial and polarizing in modern-day Uganda.

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Colonialism led to the adoption of an antagonistic sentiment toward homosexuality, harbored by the English at the time, into Uganda’s national laws. Using the powers granted to the governor under the 1902 Order in Council, the 1930 Penal Code Ordinance was specifically made for Uganda, modeled after the 1901 Griffith Code of Queensland. Its 1950 version is still the reigning law in Uganda and has been amended only a few times since its enactment. Although the laws criminalizing same-sex sex were barely enforced during colonial times, the official colonial policy was against homosexuality and, when combined with religion, resulted in the ostracism of homosexuals that continues into the twenty-first century. This has led to the argument that what was imported into Africa was homophobia rather than homosexuality (Hoad 2007; Tamale 2013).

This colonial legacy can then be said to have partly inspired the postcolonial developments, as there was a blueprint and the necessary attitudes to build on in further ostracizing LGBTQ persons. In 1990 the penal code was amended to increase the punishment for the offense of having carnal knowledge against the order of nature from fourteen years’ imprisonment to life imprisonment. This was at the height of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Uganda. In 2005 the constitution was amended to specifically prohibit same-sex marriages (Mujuzi 2009). The reason for this action was partly concern that the South African courts were about to allow same-sex marriages using the constitutional provisions (which they soon thereafter did), and this could easily be done in Uganda. In 2007 Section 15(6)(d), which stopped the Equal Opportunities Commission from investigating matters regarded as immoral or unacceptable by the majority of the cultural groupings in Uganda, was inserted into the Equal Opportunities Commission Act, clearly to stop homosexuals from accessing the Equal Opportunities Commission (Tamale 2014). In 2014 the Anti-Homosexuality Act (AHA) expanded the definition of homosexuality beyond penetrative sexual acts to acts such as touching with the intent to commit homosexuality; prohibited “aiding and abetting” and “promotion” of homosexuality; described all houses where homosexuals would have sexual contact as brothels; made homosexuality an extraditable offense; and gave immunity to anyone who committed any crime while protecting themselves against homosexuality. In August 2014, however, the nation’s Constitutional Court nullified this law, as it had been passed without the constitutionally mandated quorum. In 2016 the NonGovernmental Organisations Act included vague provisions stopping nongovernmental organizations from engaging in activities that could be regarded as prejudicial to, among other things, the “dignity” of Ugandans. In November 2016, the Constitutional Court nullified section 15(6)(d) of the Equal Opportunities Commission Act, 2007 in the case of Jjuuko Adrian v. Attorney General, Constitutional Petition No. 1 of 2009. Antineocolonialism sentiments have played a big role in promoting some recent negative
developments, since protection of LGBTI persons is perceived as one of the new ways in which the West is engaging in neocolonialism.

Capitalism was also introduced as part of the colonial package, promoting industrialization, independence, individual freedoms, and freedom of trade. This increased individualism (as opposed to communalism) in some respects introduced more tolerance for and discussion about homosexuality than before, because capitalists are more concerned with profits than morality. The human rights discourse, which is also based on the capitalistic model as it emphasizes individual rights, has unsurprisingly become the main route through which the recognition of LGBTQ persons is being sought in Uganda (Jjuuko 2013). Ideas such as ubuntu, which is the South African--developed world viewpoint that one is because the others are, is rarely employed with regard to LGBTQ rights in favor of human rights discourse. Indeed, in situations in which the economy is increasingly becoming more capitalistic, the demand for individual rather than communal rights makes sense.

What is clear, therefore, is that the current attitudes toward homosexuality and cross-dressing in Uganda are a result of multiple factors with resistance attributed more to religion and colonialism, and liberation attributed more to capitalism and the emergence of the human rights movement. Therefore, the move from tolerance to oppression and now the gradual move back to tolerance seem to be influenced by these different developments.

**Attitudes toward Homosexuality Today and the Current LGBTQ Struggles**

Socially, the community is generally opposed to homosexuality and transgender issues. Opinion polls have consistently shown disapproval ratings for these in the 90th percentile (Pew Research Center 2013; Dulani, Sambo, and Dionne 2016). These opinion polls should, however, be taken with a pinch of salt, because they may not actually represent the views of the majority, especially those in rural areas who have not interacted with LGBTQ people and therefore have no basis on which to give a satisfactory answer, as well as those who are most likely to say they are homophobic because it seems to be the fashionable thing to say. Patrick Awondo, Peter Geschiere, and Graeme Reid (2012) call for new ways of viewing and understanding homophobia in Africa, as there is a bias toward Africa being homophobic. In practice, not many LGBTQ people in Uganda are out and visible. However, where people come out as openly gay, bisexual, lesbian, or transgender, they are most likely to be ostracized and may not easily access education or employment. There is occasional violence against LGBTQ persons, which is usually in the form of violent evictions from rented premises, family rejection, police arrests leading to forced anal examinations and HIV tests, and forced parading before the media (HRAPF et al. 2016). There is limited access to specialized health services, although the Ministry of Health supports specialized clinics dealing with health matters concerning LGBTI persons under the Most at Risk
Populations Initiative. Severe stigma is also exhibited within the communities and in mass media, both traditional and social media. There is witch-hunting and ostracizing from religious leaders. Worse still, there is little protection from law enforcement agencies and even extortion and blackmail when these violations occur (CSCHRCL and HRAPF 2013). Although attempts are made to document these violations, it is acknowledged that many more occur than are reported (HRAPF et al. 2016).

In response to these violations and the need for legal recognition and protection, the Ugandan LGBTQ community has come out strongly to struggle for equality. The first nascent steps of the movement were taken by spirited individuals speaking out about their sexual orientation and gender identity (Jjuuko 2013). One of the earliest efforts toward visibility and recognition was a press conference in 2007 organized by Sexual Minorities Uganda (SMUG) which included LGBTQ persons wearing masks to hide their identities (BBC News 2007). SMUG was founded by, among others, the human rights activist Victor Juliet Mukasa. In 2005 Mukasa’s house had been raided, and a visitor who was in the house at the time, Yvonne Oyoo, was arrested and subjected to degrading treatment. This led to the first court case on LGBTQ rights in Uganda, Victor Mukasa and Yvonne Oyoo v. Attorney General (2008).

The victory in this case galvanized LGBTQ efforts to struggle for equality but also spurred a backlash in the form of harsher reactions from the state and religious leaders. The efforts toward visibility were met with exacting responses from religious and political leaders coming out strongly against homosexuality, including the president, the minister of ethics and integrity, and prominent religious leaders (Jjuuko 2013). The police also joined the fray, and members of the community who wanted to be admitted to an HIV/AIDS conference were arrested (Uganda Radio Network 2008). An anti-LGBTQ conference was organized by the Family Life Network, headed by Pastor Stephen Langa, and it was addressed by, among others, the notorious American antigay minister Scott Lively (Nyanzi and Karamagi 2015). The conference castigated homosexuality, and the parents in attendance were informed of the “gay agenda” and how to bring up children who will not be swayed into homosexuality. The minister of ethics and integrity then promised a tougher law against homosexuality (Namutebi 2009).

The Anti-Homosexuality Bill (AHB) was subsequently introduced in the Ugandan parliament in 2009. The LGBTQ community and mainstream supporters came together under the umbrella of the Civil Society Coalition on Human Rights and Constitutional Law (CSCHRCL) to oppose the bill. The CSCHRCL’s efforts attracted international attention to the AHB, and Uganda soon became a key site for the global cultural wars (Kaoma 2009). The CSCHRCL’s major victory was the nullification of the AHA through court action on 1 August 2014.

The fight against the AHB occurred on all fronts: legal, political, social, and intellectual. On
the legal front, Ugandan LGBTQ activists filed eight cases before Ugandan courts, at the regional East African Court of Justice, and in the United States. The Ugandan courts ruled in favor of the LGBTQ community in four out of the six filed before them; only one case was lost, and the other was still pending as of 2017. The case at the East African Court of Justice was dismissed as the court found it to be academic because the AHA had been nullified by the Ugandan Constitutional Court, although indeed the point was made that Ugandan LGBT activists were ready to go the whole way, including using regional and international courts to protect the rights of LGBT persons. A case brought by SMUG in the United States was dismissed but only because Lively was protected by the US Constitution. The court made it clear that his actions constituted persecution, which is a crime under international law, scoring a major symbolic victory for SMUG and thus leading to a strange appeal by Lively on this point.

Politically, the CSCHRCL persuaded its allies, which included other governments, to lobby and engage Uganda’s president and cabinet on the bill ([Jjuuko 2013](#)). Socially, LGBTQ people became more visible and were able to organize pride parades for the first time while also engaging the public on social media, particularly Facebook. The murder of David Kato, an LGBTQ activist considered the father of Uganda’s gay rights movement, in 2011 further galvanized the community and attracted more international attention, and criticism, to the bill.

Intellectually, the CSCHRCL involved itself in scholarly writings and studies and encouraged writings from its members and supporters. In 2013 the CSCHRCL together with the Human Rights Awareness and Promotion Forum (HRAPF) published a report on the enforcement of Section 145 of the penal code, which, as of 2017, still was the existing law criminalizing consensual same-sex conduct. The CSCHRCL also developed and presented a twenty-page memorandum to the Ugandan parliament’s Committee on Legal and Parliamentary Affairs during the public hearings on the Anti-Homosexuality Bill. The HRAPF also published violations reports showing how the rights of LGBTI persons were violated during the time the bill was being debated. Sylvia Tamale, Joe Oloka-Onyango, and Stella Nyanzi, scholars at Makerere University, also produced a great deal of scholarly writing on the bill and act, as did the activists Paul Semugoma, Adrian Jjuuko, and Andrew Karamagi, among others. Ugandan scientists, at the invitation of the president, also wrote the first-ever official report on the causes of homosexuality, which the president then misinterpreted as concluding that homosexuality was a matter of nurture rather than nature, and thus used it as a basis to sign the AHB into law.

The CSCHRCL and its members also gave interviews to foreign authors, who have also published widely on the issue of the AHA and on LGBTQ rights generally in Uganda. All this information helped to challenge widely held homophobic views and myths and contributed in different ways to the struggle against the bill. These various efforts were recognized through a number of international awards, including the US Department of State’s Human
Rights Defenders Award, given to the CSCHRCL in 2011; the 2010 Human Rights First Award to the Ugandan intersex and transgender activist Julius Kaggwa; the Rafto Prize, awarded to SMUG in 2011; the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award, presented to SMUG executive director Frank Mugisha in 2011; the Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, given in 2011 to the LGBTQ activist Kasha Jacqueline Nabagesera (Jjuuko 2013); the 2016 Vera Chirwa Award by the University of Pretoria’s Centre for Human Rights to Jjuuko; and Jjuuko’s nomination as one of five finalists for the European Union’s Human Rights Defenders Award in 2017.

With the nullification of the AHA, the trends of violations against LGBTQ persons in Uganda changed from being state led to being led by the common people. Incidences of evictions from rented premises and villages, beatings and other forms of violence, including burning with gasoline, increased (HRAPF et al. 2016). Many LGBTQ leaders were forced to flee the country and seek asylum elsewhere, and these included pioneers such as Victor Mukasa, Val Kalende, John Abdallah Wambere, and Robert Karemire. International attention also largely moved away from Uganda, and the LGBTQ movement was weakened. Conversations, discussions, and debates continue, however, with social media continuing to serve as a major communication platform, and there seems to be a marked degree of tolerance at least among civil servants and print media and online commentators.

SEE ALSO Ubuntu

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The Ugly Law (1961–1965; Denmark)

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A law intended to crack down on male prostitution in Copenhagen, which was successfully challenged by Danish gay rights advocates.

The Ugly Law was a Danish anti-prostitution law specifically targeting homosexual customers of the increasing population of male prostitutes in the capital of Copenhagen in the early 1960s. The stated goal was to protect young men from homosexual seduction, which was thought to make them antisocial, parasites on society, and, indeed, homosexuals themselves, as well as to send a signal to gay men that they should stick to equal-age partners among themselves. The law, however, had the unintended effect of uniting certain centrist and left-wing politicians, progressive doctors and psychiatrists, and the few homosexual activists who dared stand in opposition to the law; together, they turned significant sections of public opinion, including two major newspapers, against what they saw as oppression and harassment of a minority. In 1965, only four years after its enactment, the law was repealed, an event celebrated among homosexuals and their allies as a major victory, effectively becoming the tipping point toward gay rights rather than gay prosecution in Denmark.

Homosexual relations had been legal in Denmark since the revision of the penal code in 1933. However, the age of consent was eighteen for homosexual relations and fifteen for heterosexual, both having a three-year-higher age limit for cases of abuse of authority. Male prostitution was completely prohibited, whereas part-time female prostitution had been legal since 1906.

In the 1950s growing concerns were voiced over male teenage prostitution in Copenhagen. Young men—mainly conscripted soldiers, but also younger teenagers—would offer themselves to men for money around City Hall Square and the Latin Quarter. Copenhagen at the time had several gay bars and other gay venues that seem to have been respected (though still under surveillance by the police), and male teenage prostitution seems to have been an integrated aspect of gay male culture at the time. The men could get prosecuted for having sex with a minor under eighteen, but the police could not prosecute the men in cases in which the prostitute was above eighteen. The police suggested that a law prohibiting the buying of sexual services from same-sex persons under twenty-one would effectively end the market for male prostitutes.
The law was introduced in 1961, but the debate that had been going on since the mid-1950s had already turned several opinion makers against what they saw as unfair discrimination against a minority. The day after the law had been voted through parliament, a leading Danish newspaper criticized it under the headline “An Ugly Law,” giving the law its name both in the debate at the time and in history since. The newspaper stipulated that the law would lead to blackmail and violence against gay men.

While only a few gay men were actually prosecuted under the law, the concomitant police campaign largely did manage to eradicate the market for male prostitution in Copenhagen for a decade or two. Much more important was that the law had put gay rights on the public agenda and that those who had advocated rights for homosexuals successfully campaigned for change. When outspoken and activist “American-style” gay and lesbian liberation came to Denmark in the early 1970s after the Stonewall riots in New York City, the public and the politicians were already much more sympathetic, because Denmark had already had its own “Little Stonewall.”

SEE ALSO *The Wolfenden Report*

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The role that urban milieus play in the production of queer culture, identity formation, and modes of socialization.

This entry discusses the rise of a modern queer urbanity in the early twentieth century, traces the consolidation of LGBTQ quarters in North American and European cities during and after the liberation period that started in the 1960s, and covers the complex relation between queerness and urbanism up to the current day, arguing that sexual and gender diversity are salient features of the urban world, but so are ongoing forms of discrimination, violence, and intersectional division lines. Variegated geographies of sexualities extend beyond the conspicuous “gayborhoods” that are located in metropolitan cores in the Global North. This complicates the narratives that equate the cultural globalization of sexualities to processes of diffusion and homogenization. The entry provides examples of specific cities in certain times. These have been selected for their singularity (e.g., Berlin between the two world wars and San Francisco in the 1970s) or because they illustrate broad trends of evolving urban queerness, as is case with Miami Beach, an example of the territorial dilution of LGBT enclaves and de-gaying. A broader scope is adopted to cover the contested emergence of spaces of inclusion and exclusion in cities throughout Latin America, the Asia Pacific region, and other locations where the emergence of a “gay-friendly” circuit is conjoined with processes of urban regeneration and global gentrification in the early twenty-first century. The entry makes reference to historical sites and legendary establishments, some of which have not left traces in the academic literature but are remembered in community narratives and media records. It concludes with discussion of the centripetal pull that major cities continue to exert in the age of global migration and the relation between urban and digital queer spaces.

The Invention and Survival of Queer Urbanity

The gay and queer histories that have been written for world cities such as New York (Chauncey 1994) and London (Ackroyd 2017) indicate the long-standing nexus between sexual dissidence, gender diversity, and urbanism. Evidence of a queer presence in cities dates from antiquity and is substantial since as early as 1600 (Aldrich 2004; Higgs 1999). Increased visibility in cities including London in the nineteenth century was met with repressive state reactions, such as the criminalization of “gross acts of indecency” in 1885
(Cook 2003). Yet, this hostility could not prevent the growth of a scene and the early formation of a community that began to make political claims for recognition (Houlbrook 2006).

Few cities in history rival Berlin in the creation and consolidation of modern forms of queer culture and socialization in the early twentieth century. During the Weimar Republic period (1919–1933) in Germany, the city gained international recognition for its permissiveness but also its liberationist politics and cultural creativity. In the so-called Golden Twenties, Berlin boasted a hedonistic nightlife. Visitors from throughout Europe and the United States were attracted in no small measure to the ease of sexual encounters in the city. In addition to conspicuous forms of male and female prostitution, blurrier entanglements of sex work and intimacy were observed in the context of international economic expansion and Germany's war repayment worries (Beachy 2015). The scene also comprised liberationist print media and research-based activism against criminalization, and both fed off and energized Berlin's creative milieu for cultural production and sex-social experimentation (Beachy 2015). Christopher Isherwood's 1939 novel Goodbye to Berlin is one of the best-known portrayals of this milieu.

The 1933 Nazi takeover of power in Germany brought Berlin's queer scene to a screeching halt. Violent repression ensued, and gay men were targeted as deviants and enemies of the regime; some were imprisoned in concentration camps. Among the few able to escape, sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) continued spreading his science-based liberationist discourse internationally (Beachy 2015). Amid the harshness of the wartime period, gay men and lesbians from Allied countries found unlikely openings for socialization and self-awareness in military operations. Particularly for the United States, a country engaged on two different international fronts, massive drafts brought people together and out of their previous rural and small-town isolation, even if the military imposed homophobic rules, and the risk of dishonorable discharge was pervasive (Bérubé 2010). American writer John Horne Burns's best-selling autobiographical novel The Gallery (1947), set in and around a covered shopping arcade in occupied Naples, depicts some such openings and the queer interactions between Allied soldiers and local populations. Even more, by the time the war was over, as Randy Shilts (1982) speculated, the so-called blue discharges that removed suspected homosexuals from the military had fueled the initial clustering of known gay men in garrison and port cities such as Chicago, New York, and especially San Francisco. This process of urban clustering and enclave formation continued and multiplied in the years after the war.

The Roles of Cities and Neighborhoods in the Liberation Movement

Countries in North America and Western Europe experienced prolonged prosperity after
World War II. LGBT visibility grew during decades of large-scale industrialization and metropolitan expansion. Institutionalized homophobia continued in the postwar period, and at least for London there is evidence that the planning mechanisms to rebuild war-torn cities included explicit measures to suppress urban queerness (Hornsey 2010). Yet, gay- and lesbian-oriented subcultures continued to thrive in cities big and small, as well as in vacation resorts such as Fire Island in New York (Newton 1993). In the decades following the war, gay and lesbian bars emerged in numerous US cities. John D’Emilio (1983) documents their presence in cities such as Worcester, Massachusetts; Buffalo, New York; Columbia, South Carolina; and Des Moines, Iowa. Cities also saw the rise of other types of establishments dedicated to socialization and the pursuit of sexual satisfaction. Whereas bathhouses have a well-documented historical presence in the city (Bérubé 2003), sex clubs and fetish bars multiplied and gradually replaced the “tearoom” culture of public cruising that had developed in earlier times (Edelman 1994). Outdoor sites for sexual encounters continued to exist, but these would receive less political support from the community over time in the face of ongoing policing and social pressures to disband them. Public pursuit of sex was more heavily stigmatized when it involved trade (exchange of cash for favors), which implicated trans women and other vulnerable groups, such as runaway queer youth. As a result, these groups began to organize around their own issues. In Paris, a preventive health organization focused on the transsexual community, Prévention Action Santé Travail pour les Transgenres (PASTT; Prevention Action Health Work for the Transgendered), began offering support in the form of clinic referrals and condoms at organizations and public places used by the community, including the Bois de Boulogne, a park well known for sex trade (Namaste 2009).

The urban clustering of queerness grew to include daytime activities and more places for socialization, such as community centers and dedicated bookstores (a famous example being Gay’s the Word in the Bloomsbury area of central London), and artistic expressions in public spaces, including graffiti. Thus, initial clusters grew into fully fledged neighborhoods, which came to be at the forefront of local and national struggles of the liberation movement. They would transform the standing of sexual and gender diversity in US cities and the broader society through the late 1960s and 1970s. The 1969 Stonewall riots in New York City’s Greenwich Village are now remembered as a major inflection point in the gay liberation movement and have inspired LGBTQ+ pride parades that are now held in cities around the world. As the liberation movement continued, the Castro neighborhood of San Francisco became a paradigm of the gay enclave. The territorial approach to concentrating in a given city district was intended to free everyday life from violence and prejudice but also to gain political and economic footholds into American mainstream society—a history that was mirrored in several other advanced industrial countries (see Wotherspoon 1991 for the case of Sydney, Australia). The Castro and its satellite neighborhoods have been studied in terms of identity-based urban social movements (Castells 1983), property-appreciation strategies in urban land markets (Knopp 1990), and
more recently, urban cultural tourism based on queer identity (Howe 2001).

Residents of the metropolitan Los Angeles area took the strategy of territorial clustering and control further with the 1984 municipal incorporation of West Hollywood, a city that would be shaped by LGBT interests and whose population at the time was estimated to be 30 to 40 percent gay and lesbian (Forest 1995). But local backlashes, such as the movement against the Dade County antidiscrimination resolution in Florida, led by conservative political activist Anita Bryant (1940–), indicated the limits of the territorial approach. Therefore, LGBT interests began pursuing nationwide economic campaigns and political lobbying. For example, gay and lesbian activists organized a boycott of Florida orange juice, for which Bryant served as a brand ambassador, from 1977 to 1980, when she was fired by the Florida Citrus Commission. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s there were community responses to the HIV/AIDS crisis on multiple levels. Neighborhood-based networks of care and service provision joined with organizations at the city, state, and national levels to press for more satisfactory governmental support for medical research and drug development.

The Castro Neighborhood in San Francisco. The Castro neighborhood of San Francisco became the most paradigmatic example of the gay enclave approach to territorial organization, which was intended to free everyday life from violence and prejudice but also to gain political and economic footholds into American mainstream society.

Gayborhood Exclusions, the Rise of Homonormativity,
and Gaytrification

Early commentators already noticed the underrepresentation of women since the initial stages of gayborhood development. Linda Peake (1993) critiqued gayborhood research itself as patriarchally focused on gay men, and Heidi J. Nast (2002) has claimed that male-oriented gayborhoods, such as Chicago’s Boystown, betray complicity with heteropatriarchy. Yet, a few communities, such as Northampton, Massachusetts, and Brighton in Sussex, United Kingdom, are more decidedly mixed or lesbian-oriented. Other critics of gayborhood research have sought to bring attention to the less-conspicuous urban landscapes, and pointed to income differentials and ideological divergences vis-à-vis material consumption (Adler and Brenner 1992; Binnie and Valentine 1999). Intersectional critiques of gayborhoods mention their whiteness, cisgenderism (preference for people whose presented gender matches the sex identity assigned at birth), and lack of support for, if not overt repression of, homeless queer youth, many of whom are low-income, nonwhite, and gender-nonconforming (Irazábal and Huerta 2016). Petra Doan (2007) discusses why the gendered nature of gay and lesbian villages results in continued levels of harassment and violence for transgender and gender-variant people.

Exclusionary dynamics played out similarly in different locations and on multiple scales. In Los Angeles, the now-defunct Jewel’s Catch One nightclub catering to queer black patrons flourished in a location away from the West Hollywood scene. In New York, diverse queer communities developed beyond the white middle-class Manhattan scene. Jennie Livingston’s 1990 documentary Paris Is Burning chronicles the ball culture that African American, Latinx (a gender-neutral way of rendering Latino/a), and trans communities created in the 1980s amid various hardships and violence. In the United Kingdom, London’s Club Kali has a history that spans over two decades, but in Birmingham the Asian gay club scene has been more unstable and subject to complex negotiations with club owners for its survival (Bassi 2006). In São Paulo, Brazil, reports that commercial establishments oriented toward gays, lesbians, and sympathizers (allies/supporters) do not consider travestis (a gender and sociopolitical identity specific to Latin America of femme or female-identified persons who were male-assigned at birth) and trans people as part of the clientele/community prompted antidiscrimination actions, such as the Blitz Trans event organized during the 2004 pride parade (França 2007). Fault lines between gay men and trans women also appear in more subtle forms. An ethnographic study in Tel Aviv demonstrated how tensions surface and separations take place within the microgeography of the dance floor at a mixed nightclub (Misgav and Johnston 2014).

Sometime in the 1990s, LGBTQ+ involvement in national US politics began to show an explicitly conservative dimension (Duggan 2003). Departing from the earlier days of liberationism, a so-called homonormative discourse was emerging with a focus on social conformity and advancement in the neoliberal and increasingly unequal economy.
Sarah Schulman (2012) has drawn attention to the implications of this shift for paradigmatic urban places of political dissent, such as Manhattan's Lower East Side. Since the late 1980s, activist queer creativity has been evicted and replaced by much tamer, politically demobilized, economically elitist, and socially conservative sexual identities. On the other side of Manhattan, the more uniformly gay neighborhood of Chelsea exemplifies these trends.

Gentrification not only brings higher rents and transformed demographics but also impinges on cultural production, community cohesion, and solidarity. Juan Miguel Kanai and Kai Kettamaa-Squires (2015) reported that the short-lived LGBT community center of South Beach in Miami was replaced by a tourism-oriented visitor center, which is now the community's most visible institution. As these processes play out in a larger number of cities, researchers have begun to use the term gaytrification to refer to processes of neighborhood change in which the influx of gay residents and businesses has played an upgrading role but also contributed to ongoing real estate and rent appreciation that causes original residents to be displaced. Gaytrification has been studied comparatively in Francophone cities such as Paris and Montreal (Giraud 2010).

Beyond Metrocentrism: Diverse Queer Urbanities

The focus of literature on queer urbanities has broadened in recent years, recognizing that engaging homonormativity in gaytrified spaces and premium city districts is not sufficient. Such a singular focus implies a metrocentrism that ignores numerous other “ordinary” queer lives in working-class, ethnic, and immigrant neighborhoods, expansive suburbs, regional cities, small towns, and even places that retain rural feel (Phillips et al. 2000). Moreover, a relational turn has led to the realization that cities exist in larger queer, multiracial, international, and imperial contexts, where dialectical relations between queer urbanity and other geographies of sexuality imply that multiple, overlapping stories constitute a key feature of every city (Potter 2014). Spatial relations are complex and flow in different directions; they are not limited to a diffusionist model that flows from metropolitan queer cores to heteronormative peripheries in the countryside. Larry Knopp and Michael Brown point out that “queer cultural and political interventions in small and nonmetropolitan areas are not necessarily dependent on the successful adoption of innovations, or procurement of resources, from elsewhere. Nor are big cities necessarily uninfluenced by the interventions and resources of their ‘hinterlands’” (2003, 422).

Commercially oriented nighttime scenes in the city still matter. LGBTQ establishments may be facing an uncertain evolution in North America and Europe (Collins 2004; Ghaziani 2014), but they continue to emerge in cities of Latin America (such as Mexico City’s Zona Rosa, Buenos Aires, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro), South Africa (particularly Cape Town), the Asia Pacific region (initially in Bangkok and Manila but also increasingly in Hong Kong, Singapore, Seoul, and older enclaves, such as Tokyo’s Shinjuku Ni-chôme), and more
timidly in India’s largest cities. In cases such as Beijing’s burgeoning lesbian-oriented scene, interactions between *lalas* (a colloquial term used by women-loving women in mainland China since the 1990s) evince the tensions between expanding personal freedoms associated with economic prosperity and urban growth, the constraints that political authority places on civil society, and, as Elisabeth Engebretsen puts it, “[the] rigid system of social and familial norms that continues to define dominant ideals pertaining to family, gender, and desirable Chinese culture writ large” (2013, 5). More generally, if there is a model for the queer Asian city (and by extension, other cities beyond the West), it does not necessarily align with the Western progression of liberation, acquisition of rights, equality, and assimilation. Instead, Audrey Yue and Helen Hok-Sze Leung posit the concept of “disjunctive modernities” whereby “legislation, economic and cultural policies, activism and social movement, and the myriad quotidian practices of queer subjects do not align neatly but rather contradict or complicate one other” (2017, 261).

The globalization of queerness is not a linear process of diffusion, and the negotiation of Western and non-Western queer identities needs to be explored in detail (Oswin 2006). Sofian Merabet’s (2014) engagement with Beirut’s queer space brings to the fore the city’s class and sectarian structures. Alongside colonial history and wartime scars, these give shape to contested identities of sexual difference. Gavin Brown (2008) argues that different identities and forms of socialization exist in Chengdu, China, and these would be missed in analyses solely focused on self-identified gays. In the early 1990s, Michael Warner warned that “as the rights discourse of internationalism is extended to more and more cultural contexts, Anglo-American queer theorists will have to be more alert to the globalizing—and localizing—tendencies of our theoretical languages” (1993, xii). Peter Jackson’s (2011) edited book on Bangkok constitutes a contemporary application of this principle in its carefulness to engage the city’s variegated LGBT and queer cultures beyond the layers most conspicuously on offer to English-speaking visitors.

Internationally oriented gay scenes modeled after their North American and European counterparts represent only a portion of the urban queer population and tend to cater to elite interests. A case in point is Rio de Janeiro’s tourist-oriented Farme de Amoedo quarter of Ipanema, with its adjacent Posto 9 beach. The city’s places of visibility and socialization, both for locals and visitors, have shifted over time. In Copacabana, the now-extinct Galeria Alaska was the LGBT community’s epicenter in the early days of homosexual liberation of the 1970s and 1980s; up to the twenty-first century, the Posto 6 beach area was a well-known meeting point for tourists and so-called *michê* (young male sex workers). In earlier decades, sites for travesti sex trade and male same-sex cruising included the Lapa and Cinelândia areas of downtown (Higgs 1999). In contemporary metropolitan Rio, various manifestations of queer urbanity abound and include young people of color from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, such as those who organized a local pride parade in the Maré favela for the first time in 2012.
Queer visibility has increased dramatically in the contemporary Latin American metropolis. The 2017 Academy Award–winning film *Una mujer fantástica* (A fantastic woman) by Sebastián Lelio depicts a trans woman protagonist leading a life worth living with the gleaming landscape of Santiago de Chile as spectacular background to her everyday activities. But the film also reminds the viewer of her fragility and ongoing forms of discrimination when tragedy strikes. Diverse and oppositional queerness is present in metropolitan peripheries beyond the “gay-friendly” circuits that city governments not only tolerate but have come to sponsor in their pursuit of urban regeneration and international visibility (*Kanai 2014*). The social and cultural activism of queer youth, many of whom express nonbinary and genderfluid identities, is particularly visible in São Paulo (*Ayerbe 2018*). Kanai (*2015*) discusses tensions within the internationally oriented scenes developed in city centers and the challenges that even inclusionary initiatives such as the queer tango movement of Buenos Aires face in bridging metropolitan divides. Yet it is important not to preclude the possibilities of transformative practices. Writing in the regional context of postapartheid South Africa, Xavier Livermon (*2014*) draws attention to the creativity shown by queer black nightlife expressions in Soweto to construct livable lives. These strategies and formations should resonate with activists and researchers in Latin America and elsewhere.

**The Remaking of Queer Urbanity: Migration and the Digital**

The social and spatial boundaries of queer urbanity are in flux. Gayborhoods, gay villages, and LGBT enclaves that consolidated with the liberation movement have evolved over time and are undergoing major transformations in the twenty-first century. The relaxation of social mores allows a broader range of locational options to queer residents while regeneration policies and real-estate shifts make it harder to claim a stake in city centers. Yet, the push-and-pull factors reconstituting queer urbanity are multiple and complex.

The city, and its imaginary of sexual freedom and diversity, continues to exert a major role in the international migration of gay men (*Carrillo 2018*) and queer migrations in general (*Luibhéid and Canó 2005*). Cities often present harsh economic conditions for people starting over, but they also offer multiple resources and potentials for transnational and local connections for queer migrants, as Martin Manalansan’s (*2003*) vivid ethnography of Filipino immigrants in New York City exemplifies. In addition to a greater prominence in US cities, there is growing visibility of queer migrants in cities worldwide, including LGBTI refugees in cities from Berlin to Rio de Janeiro. Integration processes are challenging and full of friction—a theme treated in Tomer Heymann’s 2006 film *Paper Dolls*, which portrays the intersectional complexities in the lives of a group of Filipino transgender migrant workers in Israel.

Digital technologies are implicated in the reworking of urban queerness. Catherine J. Nash and Andrew Gorman-Murray (*2016*) point out that LGBTQ engagement with information
and communication technologies in everyday life seems to be leading to the demise of traditional gay villages and the overall de-gaying of the public sphere. Yet, they argue, these transformations need to be understood relationally and in terms of the networks of online and offline spaces that queer users of digital platforms, new media, and mobile devices inhabit. These are geographically uneven and co-constituted with existing characteristics of places. Their hybridity enables new forms of queer appropriation of the city by affording greater mobility, but also by cementing the reputation and use of specific quarters and sites as queer-friendly. Important new questions about this digital remaking of queer urbanity will need to be addressed. This work should be vigilant of the pitfalls associated with place selectivity and intersectional neglect in research design, and more attention will have to be paid to how the digital is mobilized for urban activism around sexual rights and gender diversity. This is one of the topics Nicola Döring (2009) has identified as central to the research agenda on the internet’s impact on sexuality. The world of queer urbanity is broad and diverse. Emerging digital entanglements are potentiating, not diminishing, this reality.

SEE ALSO Bars and Cabarets in Europe; Bars, Workingclass, in Mexico; Bookstores; Cape Town; Cruising and Cruising Grounds; Gentrification in Europe; Metelkova Mesto (Slovenia); Migrant Queer Communities, US; Migration to Europe; Rural Queerness

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El Vampiro de la Colonia Roma (1979; Luis Zapata)

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Novella that was one of the first in Mexican literature to feature a gay protagonist.

El vampiro de la colonia Roma (also known by its full title, Las aventuras, desventuras y sueños de Adonis García, el vampiro de la colonia Roma) is the second novella of Luis Zapata (1951–). It was published by Editorial Grijalbo in 1979 after winning the prestigious Juan Grijalbo prize for literature and sold around 25,000 copies in its first two months of publication. In 1981 it was translated into English as Adonis García: A Picaresque Novel. Zapata has written around two dozen novels, story collections, and critical works and has been hailed as the most prominent and prolific gay Mexican writer. He is often compared to Fernando Vallejo (Colombia) and Manuel Puig (Argentina).

Plot

The novella comprises seven taped interviews with a gay protagonist who goes by the name Adonis García. Through dreams and memories, García recounts his childhood in a peripheral pueblo and his first years in Mexico City, whence he begins to earn a living through sex work (or el talón in contemporary gay slang). García’s narrative details constant movement between the city and the provinces and between domesticity and desire. The text is framed by themes of appetite, space, desire, memory, and identity.

A solitary son of an ill mother and a preoccupied father, before long García is an orphan who ultimately abandons this natal identity by moving to the capital with a friend and taking the name Adonis. The space of Mexico City becomes the narrator-protagonist’s sensual playground as he pursues both labor and pleasure. As the title suggests, the fashionable districts of the Roma and Cuauhtémoc colonias (neighborhoods) are the primary setting for García’s adventures. There, he explores public baths, fabulous parties, cafés, hotels, shabby bedrooms, and Sanborns, the ubiquitous department store that caters to the city’s middle class, where he meets some of his most memorable tricks. During the day, impious García is often drunk, and he languishes in bedrooms located on well-known streets in the Roma. But at night, he ecstatically pursues tricks and trade for work and pleasure. In his nighttime exploits, García often barely skirts danger. Clients, jealous partners, and city authorities threaten him. Yet he is particularly lighthearted in his
discussion of what he estimates to have been around thirty-two bouts of gonorrhea, a risk that, he says, “cannot be avoided, no, especially when one fucks a lot” (Zapata [1979] 2014, 69; translated by Heather Vrana). García strolls the city’s sidewalks but is not quite the flaneur or peripatetic voyeur theorized by scholars such as Michel de Certeau (1984) and Walter Benjamin (1999). Indeed, he would rather sell his body and time than buy the city’s delights.

Although cast as a gay Adonis and a vampire, García challenges dominant depictions of both archetypes. He lives for the night and for libidinal delights but is not a lonely, tragic vampire. Nor is he a pathetic, marginal underworld gay man slinking to dark movie theaters and bathhouses after dark. On the contrary, García is a gay protagonist who is neither ashamed nor repentant; his discussion of sex acts is almost clinical, and his celebratory use of gay slang invites readers into the “in crowd.” Even when he undergoes psychotherapy for addiction and ultimately leaves the hardscrabble Roma for the more reputable residential Cuauhtémoc, García refuses to renounce pleasure.

Source: GRIJALBO

Cover of the First Edition of El Vampiro de la Colonia Roma (1979), by Luis Zapata. Zapata's novella focuses on the character of Adonis García, who makes a living as a sex worker in the urban landscape of the
García’s Mexico City is caught between two watershed moments: the 1968 massacre at Tlatelolco that ended the so-called soft dictatorship (*dictablanda*) of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI; Institutional Revolutionary Party) and the onset of neoliberalism in the early 1980s. Zapata plays with this tension by recasting iconic intersections, department stores, museums, and monuments through García’s eyes. Bathroom stalls in Mexico City’s consumer paradise, Sanborns, permit acts of corporeal consumption that their designers did not envision. In García's imaginative narration, the Torre Latinoamericana (a skyscraper) becomes an appetizing phallus and the Palacio de Bellas Artes (a cultural center), ample buttocks. He reflects, “Well, the Torre seemed to me like the biggest phallus in Latin America and the Palacio de Bellas Artes the fattest ass in the entire continent—heh—and the whole city was like this, no? Every little corner had a very particular, very sexual enchantment” (*Zapata* [1979] 2014, 200; translated by Heather Vrana). Intersections become more than just Xs on a map; they signify the potential for encounter. As the body becomes a map of desire in a sexual encounter, so does the Roma become “a metonymic extension of homosexual experience” through the narration of Zapata’s protagonist (*Gutiérrez 2010, 245*; translated by Heather Vrana). If sexuality is a social construction shaped by space and time, then Zapata’s novella suggests that 1970s Mexico City propagated gay desire at the gritty, rough fringes of bourgeois opulence and cosmopolitanism.

**Structure**

The text’s formal queerness is its most obvious feature: punctuation is all but absent, syntax and vocabulary are given free rein, and memory’s circumlocutions replace chronology. The text is divided into seven sections, called tapes (*cintas*), which open with epigraphs from well-known Spanish picaresque novels. Each section is written as if García were sharing stories or memories with an interviewer whose presence is barely noted. Some critics have noted that the text was based on taped interviews between Zapata and a hustler that Zapata later edited. This account of the text’s creation certainly explains the tension between textuality and orality that is one of the text’s most striking hallmarks. The same critics have noted that while editing the interviews Zapata was struck by the similarities between the man’s story and the picaresque novel, so he decided to explore and exploit those similarities.

*El vampiro* takes the impoverished masculine picaresque hero of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish countryside and places him in the twentieth-century Mexican metropolis. Like other *pícaros* (rogues), Adonis García was orphaned at a young age and had to make his own way in the world. However, Zapata trades the traditional narrator for a tape recorder held by an unnamed interlocutor, replacing the textual formalism of the
“lettered city” with a sort of postmodern orality. *El vampiro* appears spoken, rather than written. Other features of the traditional picaresque novel that are present in *El vampiro* include the episodic structure of the narrative, the use of colloquial language, and the *pícaro* protagonist. Yet where other picaresque novels ultimately condemn their willful protagonists, Zapata celebrates García’s rejection of the status quo. For some critics, the fluidity of the narrative suggests fugitive spaces within the capitalist metropolis. The text’s engagement with the picaresque novel is directly invoked in its English translation, which bears the subtitle “A Picaresque Novel.”

**Reception and Significance**

When it was published, *El vampiro* joined a rather short list of Mexican novels that featured gay themes or protagonists. Generally, it was a period of exciting growth in the Mexican gay rights movement. Around 1978, the Frente de Liberación Homosexual (Gay Liberation Front) and the Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria (Homosexual Front for Revolutionary Action) went public and allied with other leftist groups. Yet the novella attracted fierce criticism when it was first published, perhaps because of its frank portrayal of gay desire and because of one particularly provocative scene of group sex with two police officers. Mexico City, likely the home of the novella’s largest audience, was undergoing decades of vertiginous growth in population, consumerism, and the culture industries, especially film and rock ‘n’ roll. These were the years of the “Mexican miracle” or “golden age”—a much-celebrated period of economic growth and self-sufficiency that barely masked deep social inequalities. Many of these contradictions are visible in García’s narrative. Indeed, as Gilbert M. Joseph, Anne Rubenstein, and Eric Zolov have noted, “This cultural-political construct was shaped, resisted, and ultimately negotiated by a multitude of actors and interests, and lo mexicano came to serve counterhegemonic impulses as well as regime projects” (2001, 8).

Critics generally locate the text within two concurrent literary movements, La Onda and the Latin American Boom. The novella combines the experimentation with form and preoccupation with sex and other social taboos that are generally associated with La Onda, Mexico’s countercultural movement, and the playfulness with narrative, nonlinear time, use of slang, and the characteristic melding of the fantastical and the real of the Boom. Still other critics have located Zapata’s writing in the post-Boom and postmodern canons. More recently, critics have emphasized the novella’s contribution to alternative cartographies of urban space and gay utopias.

*El vampiro* was translated into English in 1981 by E. A. Lacey as *Adonis García: A Picaresque Novel* and published by Winston Leyland’s San Francisco–based Gay Sunshine Press. Even as it has found a place within certain canons of Mexican and Latin American literature, *El vampiro de la colonia Roma* continues to challenge audiences. In Mexico, where editor Ariel Rosales estimates it has sold around 300,000 copies, the novel is commonly read, debated,
celebrated, and decried. More broadly, throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, it is
lauded as one of the first novels to explore gay lives and queer subjectivities. Its success has
made Zapata one of the most famous contemporary Latin American novelists.

SEE ALSO Antes que Anochezca (1992; Reinaldo Arenas); El Beso de la Mujer Araña (1976;
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1979 by Editorial Grijalbo.
The Costa Rican–born Mexican singer Chavela Vargas (1919–2012) is an icon of Latin American popular song, and she remains a beloved performer after her death. Acclaimed by the public for her radical renditions of vernacular music, she is also a polemical figure that evoked lesbian butch eroticism, as she played with markers of masculinity on stage (and off): alcohol, cigars, and a style that fit the silhouette of a male campesino, or rural Mexican farmer. She is renowned for her singular performance of Mexican rancheras and pan-Latino boleros, songs about amorous defeat and anthems of desire, respectively. Rancheras, especially, are predominantly rendered from a male perspective, singing to and about their love of and betrayals by women; her renditions of these were as enticing as they were scandalous. Her songbook, however, also consisted of a varied set of Latin American rhythms, including Cuban son (a hybrid of Spanish song and African rhythms and percussion), Mexican corridos (narrative ballads typically sung from the perspective of the popular classes about folk heroes or historical events), Yucatecan trova (romantic music from the Mexican Yucatán Peninsula composed for a guitar trio), and Argentine milonga (a popular song and dance of African origin, precursor to the tango).
Chavela Vargas Performing at Carnegie Hall in New York City in 2003. An iconic Mexican singer, Vargas’s style echoed a male campesino, or rural Mexican farmer, while wearing her signature traditional Mexican poncho. Her song choices, their gender politics, and her masculine sartorial style combined to exude an exquisite lesbian tension in her extraordinary performances.

Nevertheless, her performance did not replicate traditional styles of any of these genres. From the outset of her professional singing career in the 1940s, Vargas defied the standard style of the repertoire she chose to perform by creating a melodic sound based on guitar and often slowing the tempo of the song. Wearing her signature jorongo, or traditional Mexican poncho, she modeled her voice in ways that distinguished her from her contemporaries, including Jorge Negrete, Amalia Mendoza, and Pedro Infante. Moreover, Vargas ventured to perform without the mariachis or trios typical of ranchera or bolero performance. Her singing voice fluctuated between tender headvoice, vigorous vibratos, and rough texture, this last characteristic especially evident later in her career. She also conveyed lesbian desire by retaining the lyrics of classic songs directed toward a feminine beloved, particularly in the rancheras and boleros that typically elicited a heteronormative politics in the work of the songwriters José Alfredo Jiménez, Cuco Sánchez, or Agustín Lara. Her song choices, their gender politics, and her masculine sartorial style combined to exude an exquisite lesbian tension in her extraordinary performances.

Vargas first sang in small venues in Mexico and throughout the Americas. Eventually, after a long pause during the 1970s, she reached the global stage and became the subject of countless tributes and honors throughout the Spanish-speaking world, from the written
(Yarbro-Bejarano 1997; Cisneros 2015) and the sung (Mexico City’s Teatro de la Ciudad concert, 2009), to the national (Spain’s Orden de Isabel la Católica, 2000).

**Life History**

Born in Costa Rica on 17 April 1919, Vargas immigrated to Mexico City in her teenage years. Her memoirs refer to her time in Costa Rica as painful because of her family’s rejection of her owing to her *rareza*, or queerness. At the time of her arrival, postrevolutionary Mexico City’s effervescent nightlife was at its peak. The capital featured numerous entertainment venues, most notably cabarets. Vargas began performing as part of *Lotería Nacional* (National Lottery) radio features, and she eventually starred in cabarets such as El Quid, El Patio, and La Taberna del Greco, to mention but a few. Her early career also included stints across the Americas, including Acapulco and New York City, where she entertained and mingled with the elite and intelligentsia.

Despite the uniqueness of her artistic offering, Vargas remained underrated. In her remarkable style, she began recording contemporary songs, mentored by the major singer-songwriter of Mexican rancheras, Jiménez. Supported by Jiménez, her first album, *Noche de Bohemia* (1961; Bohemian night), featured a mélange of rancheras, boleros, corridos, and milongas. Such eclecticism was a hallmark of her work, which offered a radical curation of styles that, though they may be categorized as popular “Latin American music,” have distinct genealogies and histories. Vargas, however, did not necessarily consolidate these songs as folk music. She was an astute song selector, choosing boleros of high sensual tension and rancheras that ponder existential themes, in a language laced with romanticism. Vargas did so while also reinventing their sound. For example, her rancheras do not include the trumpets or *guitarrónes* (a type of bass guitar) typical of the genre, nor the flourishes of the violin—only a guitar played with dexterity. Her famous “Macorina” is included in this first effort. Vargas transformed the lyrics of “Macorina” by the Spanish-born Cuban poet Alfonso Camín into a sensual *son* celebrating a woman’s body and beauty, a daring performance that scandalized some listeners. The lyrics compare corporeal voluptuousness with luscious tropical fruit, the treats sung with ecstasy:

*Put your hand here, Macorina*
*your breasts, flesh of custard apple*
*your mouth a blessing*
*of ripe guanavana*

*(TRANSLATION BY LORENA ALVARADO)*
Jiménez was also the composer of some of Vargas's most piercing selections, including "Las ciudades" (The cities) and "Un mundo raro" (A strange world)—haunting rancheras she continued to sing until her last album.

She continued recording throughout the decade, until a hiatus in the 1970s that she attributed to alcoholism. With the support of fellow artists and activists Jesusa Rodríguez and Liliana Felipe, Vargas returned to the stage in 1991 at El Hábito, a political cabaret bar in Mexico City. El Hábito was a chapel-turned-stage where numerous performances were held that tackled controversial political and social issues, satirizing the political and intellectual class with music, humor, and alcohol. Her residence there led her to Spain. In that country, she performed live to great acclaim—one of her concerts was later released as a live album, La llorona (1996; The weeping woman). Moreover, her music was a key feature in several of Pedro Almodóvar's films of that decade, including Kika (1993), La flor de mi secreto (1995; The flower of my secret), and Carne trémula (1997; Live flesh). This was a period of accolades for Vargas—she was the recipient of numerous notable awards across two continents. In 2000 she was granted the Order of Isabella the Catholic, a civil order that recognizes services to Spain. Universities, including the Complutense University of Madrid and the University of Alcalá, granted her the honorific “Excelentísima e Ilustrísima Señora” (Most Excellent and Illustrious Lady). She also received keys to cities, including Buenos Aires and Mexico City.

Subsequently, she published her autobiography with a title taken from the lyrics of one of her most memorable rancheras, Y si quieres saber de mi pasado (2002; And if you wish to know about my past), a testimonial that is especially significant given that it was here where she publicly discussed her lesbianism for the first time. While she always cultivated a butch aesthetic in her sartorial and lyrical politics, Vargas had never previously spoken about her sexuality so openly. The first chapter is staged in the Reserva Ecológica Nanciyaga, an ecological reserve in Veracruz, Mexico, where she lived for many years. Moreover, she equates her queerness—what she calls her rareza (rarity)—with sexual virtue, nature, and spirituality. This autobiography was published the same year of the release of the film Frida. In that American biopic about the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo, Vargas represents death who, singing “La llorona,” pays a visit all too early to Kahlo.

In her final years, Vargas was similarly active, recording and reconceptualizing the classics she always sang (Cupaima [2007]) or working on productions featuring duets with other singers (¡Por mi culpa! [2010; Because of me!]). Her final work, La luna grande (2012; The big moon), was a tribute to the Spanish poet Federico García Lorca (himself a queer icon). It combined the melodies of some of her songs with his poetry. Vargas died in Cuernavaca, Mexico, on 5 August 2012.

**Cultural and Artistic Significance**
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**Cultural and Artistic Significance**

Vargas is simultaneously a symbol of Mexican music, a queer icon in popular culture, a referent of Latin American and US Latina/o popular music, and a lasting influence for a new generation of singers. Her style has been carried forward in the work of Los Macorinos, her two former guitarists who continue to record new music with artists such as Natalia Lafourcade and Tania Libertad, using the same technique of bare, languid guitar playing. Moreover, Vargas’s voice began to acquire legendary status, a standard that some media use in describing the timbre of other singers. Vargas has also influenced the work of the Spanish singers Buika and Martirio, as well as the Mexican American singer Lila Downs, and she has inspired songs by Café Tacuba, Joaquín Sabina, Lhasa de Sela, Martirio, Sara Baras, and Liliana Felipe, among others.

Vargas’s simultaneous positionalities suggest both her profound influence across various communities and the impact of her vision in music history. Vargas’s prodigious innovations disrupted commonplace practices of Mexican music, even as she herself became a famed symbol of mexicanidad (that is, of Mexican identity), as well as of the nation itself and of Mexican culture. Such contradictions were evident early on. An extract from the liner notes in her first album, Noche de Bohemia, reads: “Her art is reduced to a guitar and a voice. But the way in which she enunciates the meaning of each melody is notable for its professionalism and exceptionality.” Quite accurately, these remarks prime the listener for a rare musical experience that contrasts with the usual sounds and vocal qualities of Mexican artists performing the same tunes.

Vargas eliminated the mariachi and its embellishments and engaged unorthodox techniques. The mariachi is the typical music band that plays rancheras and is usually made up of guitars, the aforementioned guitarrón, violins, and trumpets. Only the guitar had a
place in Vargas’s versions of musical genres. Without violin flourishes or the accent of the
trumpet, her versions were both an innovation on and departure from such genres as the
ranchera; it was her way of finding the song's core—the essential message and melody.
Accompanied by the guitarist Antonio Bribiesca, a renowned artist in his own right, Vargas
manipulated her potent voice, a voice often criticized for its seemingly uncouth and
untrained quality. She produced brilliant, trilling vibratos, took dramatic pauses, and made
daring use of chest voice and larynx. It was Bribiesca’s guitar and Vargas’s vocal technique
—departing strongly from the sound of a mariachi band—that imbued her songs with
emotional, peculiar intensity. These arrangements implied a radical departure from the
cultural nationalism and politics embedded in the making and marketing of the ranchera
and the bolero.

In addition, Vargas’s sartorial selection embraced the clothing style typical of a traditional
campesino: calzón de manta (crude cotton pants), huaraches (sandals), and eventually her
iconic jorongo (a type of poncho). These choices did not coincide with any of her ranchera
contemporaries, men or women. She left her face unadorned by cosmetics and pulled her
hair back tightly—choices that gave her a masculine profile as she sang—and, earlier in her
career, she smoked and drank on stage. She performed, and expanded the boundaries of,
masculinity in evoking the humble male campesino, not the imperious charro (Mexican
cowboy) attuned to the cultural nationalism of the time. Even as she claimed a Mexican
identity, Vargas stripped the canción ranchera from the emerging tradition of charro
ornamentation and mariachi glorification in favor of wringing a song’s emotional center
while embodying working-class, rural identities. It was an operation that left many
listeners surprised and seduced, wanting more.

Her art was also subject to much scrutiny and harassment, from criticisms about her lack of
training or technique to the many misogynistic (and homonormative) epithets that decried
her appearance and public persona. And yet, her maneuvering of the musical texts also
entailed radical transgressions. As is typical in rancheras and boleros, several of the songs
she sang speak to a female subject, a condition she did not alter but rather embraced. Her
gestures while performing one of her most enduring songs, “Macorina,” a sensual
declaration of desire, openly portrayed the ambiguous lyrics of “ponme la mano aquí” (put
your hand here), directed toward a woman: Vargas on stage would place her hand over her
crotch teasingly. She kept singing to and about desire into her nineties. This was an added
transgression on her part: the geriatric voice and aging butch body singing about love and
lust, death, and tenderness.

Impact in Academic and Popular Production

Since the 1990s, when Vargas was making a comeback, there have been increasing efforts
to engage with her work in various media of cultural production and in academic discourse.
She has been especially influential in theoretical elaborations of Latin American and
Latina/o sexualities, as the work of Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano (1997) and, more recently, Laura G. Gutiérrez (2010) and Sofia Ruiz-Alfaro (2010) attest. Yarbro-Bejarano, in particular, pays special homage to Vargas as an essential voice who speaks to her own identity as a queer Chicana.

Such tributes occur beyond the essay form. Vargas’s work has left a lasting impression on an entire generation of singers from across the Spanish-speaking world. Vargas has been the subject of numerous paeans, including documentaries, musical projects, theater productions, and works of literature. While she enjoyed some of these tributes during her lifetime, many more have taken place posthumously. Among the latter is the film Chavela by the American filmmakers Catherine Gund and Daresha Kyi. Their award-winning work premiered in 2017 at the Berlin International Film Festival and features newly released twenty-year-old footage of Vargas in her seventies when she had yet to make her second comeback. Another of the posthumous works is the artist Eloisa Aquino’s “Chavela Vargas” zine, which is part of a series titled The Life and Times of Butch Dykes.

Vargas claimed her rareza through her daring artistic proposals, reinventing popular Mexican and Latin American song genres in the process and challenging restrictive gender patterns. She embodied a liberated method of performing music so often restricted to the world of heteronormative romance, as well as a freedom to explore the poignancy of life’s pleasures and pain using the tools of voice and guitar. As she herself told an adoring crowd in a public concert in the Mexico City Zócalo (main square) in 2010, she wished to bequeath her sense of freedom, her daring spirit, saying, “Les dejo de herencia mi libertad” (I leave you my freedom as your inheritance).

SEE ALSO Bars, Working-class, in Mexico; Cabaret Theater in Latin America and the Caribbean; Performance Artists in Latin America

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Vietnam War

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American, Australian, and Vietnamese LGBT participation in the war and their impact on gay liberation movements in those countries.

This entry analyzes the gay liberation movement and associated antiwar, feminist, and civil rights movements during the Vietnam War (1955–1975) in the contexts of the United States, Australia, and Vietnam, as well as the diffusion of LGBT culture, politics, and social movement activism. These areas are examined in three sections: (1) masculinity, femininity, sexuality, and defense force service in each country; (2) the exclusion and inclusion of homosexual personnel in the draft; and (3) the causal effects of the diffusion of social movement activism on LGBT culture and politics in these countries. Notably, the diffusion of gay liberation that occurred in the United States and Australia during the Vietnam War was less evident in Vietnam, where commercial accommodation of LGBT desires was tolerated but not politicized and public. The agency of actors and the structure of their societies enabled and constrained this diffusion.

Masculinity, Femininity, Sexuality, and Defense Force Service

This section briefly surveys the culturally situated gender roles that informed the service of personnel in each country. Gender permeated conceptions of duty, service, and honor, as well as conceptions of the enemy and the “other.” Each country was characterized by the dichotomization of gender into masculine and feminine roles (Connell 2005), but this demarcation also reflected cultural difference regarding the essentialism of gender and sexuality. Particularly prominent was the figure of the soldier hero, an idealized masculine figure. As Graham Dawson notes, “Military virtues such as aggression, strength, courage, and endurance have repeatedly been defined as the natural and inherent qualities of manhood, whose apogee is attainable only in battle” (1994, 1). These norms informed the ideals of the Western personnel serving in Vietnam, as well as their relationship with their Vietnamese allies and enemies.

The United States Dennis Altman (1971) describes a Vietnam War–era United States that was sexually repressed and heteronormative. The country's puritanical religious tradition institutionalized feelings of guilt regarding sex—and especially sex that fell outside
prescribed norms. These norms included the utilitarian view of sex for purposes of procreation in the context of a heterosexual nuclear family and a negative view of any sexual urges and acts that fell outside heterosexual genital intercourse. The normalcy of heterosexuality was also informed by science, as American psychiatry had institutionalized its “naturalness” and homosexuality’s treatment as an “illness” (Herek 2010, 694).

These norms informed ideas about the appropriate gendered acts of US service personnel in Vietnam. Heather Marie Stur argues that for US personnel, this involved a Hollywood masculinity, informed by the figure of the actor John Wayne, who embodied American values of “martial prowess, ... patriotism, courage, Christian faith” (2011, 4) and the protection of femininity. US femininity was epitomized by “the American ‘girl next door’—white, middle class, and pure” (3).

Homosexuality was the pervasive antonym in this conception of gender, representing the lack of masculine aggression that was drilled into US soldiers in boot camp (see Levy 1971). The US military argued that the inclusion of homosexual personnel “would seriously impair discipline, good order, morals and the security of our armed forces” (quoted in Shilts 1994, 65). Violating essentialized gendered roles thus carried significant risk of exposure and dishonorable discharge for US service personnel. A “John W.” serving in Vietnam wrote of the pervasiveness of rigid gender dichotomization and of their inability to find space to cross-dress: “Imagine what it is like not to have any contact at all with femininity.... To not even see, much less wear the things, the symbols of femininity that I love” (Transvestia 1970, 56). It was clear, then, that failure to meet the military’s demarcation of gender and sexuality was unacceptable for personnel.

**Australia** Western gender norms were similarly dichotomized and essentialized in Australian martial narratives during the mid-twentieth century but were also characterized by local variation. The image of the “digger,” the Australian soldier of World War I (1914–1918), was central to Australian conceptions of masculinity. The masculine digger had “given birth” to the Australian nation at Gallipoli during the failed Dardanelles Campaign of 1915–1916. The digger represented a complex of masculine folk- and state-orientated Australian values: mateship, antiauthoritarianism, irreverence, and sardonicism, but also honor, duty, bravery, and selfless sacrifice. Women were maternal, and marginal, figures, selflessly offering their sons for sacrifice (see Lake 1992; Altman 1987; Seal 2004).

Australia was also influenced by the hegemony of church and science, which decried or pathologized homosexuality; sex between men remained illegal in all Australian states and territories until South Australia’s first law changes in 1975 (Smaal 2012). Furthermore, police harassment and entrapment of homosexual men, and the publishing of the names of offenders in the press, remained a strategy of enforcing heterosexual and gender norms (Wotherspoon 2016).
These gendered and heteronormative discourses of nation were strictly enforced by the Australian military during the war in Vietnam. Australian soldiers expressed hostility toward homosexuality, and the close quarters of military life regulated its open occurrence (Hart 1975). Military anxieties about femininity and lesbianism also saw Australian servicewomen disciplined for behavior and appearance that was not decidedly feminine and heterosexual (Ford 1996). So, while Australian gendered norms had a local inflection, their effects were similarly dichotomized and constraining as in the United States.

**Vietnam** Vietnamese conceptions of gender and sexuality displayed far more complexity and pluralism than Western norms during this period, reflecting patterns historically prevalent in Southeast Asia. Some, especially rural, Vietnamese accepted transgendered and same-sex relations and practices that would have been pathologized in a Western context. This included toleration of same-sex relations if filial responsibilities to procreate were fulfilled, the prevalence of transgendered shamans in rural Vietnam, and closer physical platonic contact between members of the same sex.

The French established colonial control over the area now known as Vietnam during the nineteenth century and quickly found themselves “confounded by the Vietnamese sex/gender system, in which virtually all of the signs that they took for natural and universal attributes distinguishing male from female were disrupted or inverted” (Proschan 2002, 436). Frank Proschan (2002) argues that this inversion involved the French colonials viewing Vietnamese men as androgynous and effeminate, and Vietnamese women being simultaneously masculine and hypersexualized. Relatedly, Michael G. Peletz contends that Western religious and scientific ideas regarding gender and sexuality also informed the attitudes of Southeast Asian elites during the period of Western colonialism, and these elites espoused these discourses as they sought to “modernize” (2009, 120). Significantly, then, Western conceptions of gender and sexuality had begun to penetrate the colonized urban centers of South Vietnam by the time of the war, and gender and sexual pluralism was less tolerated (see Peletz 2009; Heiman and Van Lê 1975; Forrest 1971).

The Vietnamese violation of Western norms of strict gender difference and heterosexual puritanism disorientated Western personnel deployed in Vietnam. Charles J. Levy notes:

*The [US] marines heard lectures about Vietnamese men expressing friendship among themselves and with other men through physical contact. But this behavior became all the more inexplicable as a result of the lectures. For if handholding between men was a custom, it meant—as far as the marines were concerned—that these gestures were not aberrations within the Vietnamese society: rather the whole society was an aberration.*

(1971, 20)
This “aberrant” behavior led some US personnel to distrust and abhor their South Vietnamese allies. This distrust was gendered and heteronormative; the South Vietnamese personnel did not conform to appropriate Western gender norms and were thus “queer,” “other,” and suspicious.

**Homosexuality and the Draft**

Both the United States and Australia used conscription during the Vietnam War, and both militaries actively excluded LGBT persons from service. This policy was used as a means to avoid service by both straight and LGBT draftees, but it also had the effect of ensnaring LGBT persons who willingly and proudly served, too. Furthermore, higher burdens of proof for homosexuality were required as the war progressed, meaning that some LGBT persons were knowingly enrolled in their country’s military, despite suspicions that would have excluded them in less pressing times (see Shilts 1994; Dapin 2014; Suran 2009).

In the United States, declaring one’s homosexuality during recruitment was a straightforward task, requiring only the checking of the box asking about homosexual tendencies on the medical history report. But doing so entailed admitting to desires that were illegal in every US state, except Illinois, in the 1960s. Furthermore, admitting, or feigning, homosexuality was far from confidential, especially in small communities, and had consequences for those seeking civil service employment (Shilts 1994).

Similar medical screening of recruits was conducted in Australia to weed out those too unhealthy, too mentally incapacitated, or too homosexual. A pamphlet titled “How Not to Join the Army: Advice for 20 Year Olds,” published by Resistance, Sydney, advised draft resisters, “Don’t answer any questions on homosexuality, just smile ... learn to touch the fellow you’re talking to suggestively. Be a little pathetic” (Wallace 1968, 13). Those brave enough to admit to, or feign, homosexuality in Australia faced similar social taboos if word leaked out regarding the reason for their draft rejection (Dapin 2014). Feigning or confessing to homosexuality when selected for the draft therefore had significant continuing consequences in both countries.

**The Gay Liberation Movement and Diffusion**

This section surveys the emergence of the gay liberation movement in the United States, its interaction with other social movements, and the success and failure of its diffusion to Australia and Vietnam. It employs the theoretical framework of social movement diffusion to provide a causal explanation of these shifts. Social movement diffusion refers to the spread of movements that seek to change social attitudes and public policy from one site to another, frequently internationally. Diffusion spreads in a multidimensional manner, via
the “what” of diffusion (interpretative frames that construct and interpret issues, as well as any attendant protest tactics), the “how” of diffusion (relational and interpersonal, nonrelational and nonpersonal, and mediated and third-party contacts), and the “impact of diffusion” (especially the effects of agency and structure on the impact of gay liberation) (see Givan, Roberts, and Soule 2010). While this section does not purport to offer a definitive delineation of gay liberation's various groups and actions, it does note some of the more significant events to highlight its diffusion.

This entry focuses on the United States, Australia, and Vietnam, but it should be noted that the emergence of gay liberation and culture was also occurring in western Europe and Southeast Asia during this period. Early gay liberation activism was evident, if peripheral, to the May 1968 events in France, notable for their independence from the New York Stonewall riots of June 1969. While this quickly disappeared after calm was restored in France, gay radicalism reemerged in France in 1971 and adopted the frames and tactics of US gay liberation (see Sibalis 2009). Also inspired by the US movement, the British Gay Liberation Front began in October 1970 and adopted disruptive tactics and consciousness-raising as strategies (see Lent 2001). In Southeast Asia, according to Peter A. Jackson (2009), local queering began before the diffusion of US gay liberation frames and tactics in the 1970s, with the dynamics of local capitalism and urbanization being the crucial causal factors in the emergence of a local queer culture and sex work in Thailand as early as the 1930s. Bugis Street in Singapore was also a center for queer culture and sex work during the mid-twentieth century, emerging in the 1950s and catering to Western clientele and soldiers on leave during the Vietnam War (Ho 2012). This complexity points to the limitations of simple Westernized causal explanations that center on the diffusion and impact of American gay liberation activism of the late 1960s and 1970s. These local dynamics are crucial to note when assessing the Vietnam War's impact on Vietnamese queering, discussed below.

**The Emergence of Gay Liberation in the United States** The gay liberation movement sought societal transformation, moving beyond the liberal demand for rights that had characterized the homophile movement of the early 1960s. A two-step causal process facilitated the emergence of gay liberation: (1) gay liberation drew inspiration from the counterculture’s framing of dominant American social mores (Altman 1971); and (2) the draft’s requirement to prove homosexuality forced homosexual men to assert their homosexuality and aided their formation of a publicly gay identity, as opposed to a closeted, private, homosexual identity (Suran 2009).
Gay liberationists groups “piggybacked” the protests of the antiwar movements, both to oppose the war and to advance their own cause. Gay liberation existed in a dialectical relationship with the other social movements of the counterculture (Altman 1971). Opposition to the war in Vietnam provided one link, and gay liberationist groups “piggybacked” the protests of the antiwar movements, both to oppose the war and to advance their own cause (Suran 2009). Gay liberationists also learned from the Black Power and women’s liberation movements, borrowing notions of pride in identity from radical African American thought and tactics of consciousness-raising, diffuse structure, and personal politics from women’s liberation (Altman 1971). The shared opposition to the war in Vietnam held these disparate groups loosely together, but also masked the differences in their goals and levels of agency in a racist and patriarchal society, which curtailed further coordinated action as the Vietnam War ended.

Dennis Altman, a gay liberation scholar and participant, noted in 1977 that the movement had lost much of its radicalism as economic factors took over. More gay men were attracted to the flourishing commercial world of gay life, including gay bathhouses and saunas, clubs and bars, theaters, and restaurants, than to politics. Politicized LGBT persons, lacking the counterculture’s impetus for radical social change, soon found themselves co-opted into the
structures of US pluralism, with tempered goals of interest group formation and incremental policy change. The commercial world of gay life thus took over the facilitation of identity formation during this period (see Altman 1979, 1989).

The Diffusion of Gay Liberation to Australia The Australian gay liberation movement adopted the frames, and some of the tactics, of its US cousin. The first openly homosexual and political organization in Australia, the Campaign Against Moral Persecution, or CAMP (a play on the locally preferred parlance), emerged in the mid-1970s. CAMP was initially reluctant to mobilize in public, and their first public protest in October 1971 was not an antiwar action but instead opposed a Christian fundamentalist who was challenging for preselection for the conservative Liberal Party of Australia (Altman 1987; Reynolds 2002). This type of campaigning against the curtailment of homosexual rights is a rough gloss of CAMP’s activities.

Early CAMP contained the breadth of Australian homosexuality: gay men and lesbians, rights-seeking politicos, transformational liberationists, and those who used the organization to connect with their community. Tensions quickly arose, and radical liberationists split from CAMP in January 1972 to form a group called Gay Liberation. Lesbian women soon began to leave too, “as they felt pressured by male demands for social and sexual space” (Altman 2013, 98; see also Reynolds 2002). Gay Liberation was more influenced by American and British theory and praxis of liberation than CAMP, adopting the frame of utopian liberation from heteronormative hegemony and employing the tactics of consciousness-raising (Reynolds 2002). This was primarily nonrelational, as the United States and Australia's shared Western values, and liberal democratic political institutions aided their common understanding of the world. Some relational links were evident, with Altman (1987, 2013) being an activist and scholar who shared ideas across the movements.

As in the United States, Gay Liberation in Australia was also influenced by other movements: women’s liberation’s theories of patriarchy and personal politics, as well as notions of pride drawn from African American politics (Johnston 1980). However, a survey of local literature and archives failed to uncover a Gay Liberation alignment with the analogous Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander struggle for liberation and self-determination. Furthermore, though Gay Liberation and elements of CAMP were unquestionably part of the counterculture, the late 1970 drawdown of Australian deployments in Vietnam meant that the impetus for antiwar radicalism had been somewhat negated by the time CAMP conducted its first public protest the following year.

Altman’s incisive critique of US gay liberation was echoed in Australian developments in commercialization and politics. As in the United States, the gay economy exploded in Australian capital cities in the late 1960s and into the 1970s, with drag shows, gay bars and pubs, and bathhouses facilitating the spread of gay culture and identity (see Wotherspoon 2016; Smaal 2012). Gay politics also soon found itself interacting with Australian
democratic structures of trade union politics and the attendant influence of Marxism, a crucial difference from the US movement (Altman 1989; Johnston 1980). Writing in 1980, Craig Johnston argued that the Australian gay movement of the 1970s had fragmented, had achieved “dramatic” but not “earthshattering” advances in consciousness-raising and public opinion, and had created “liberated zones” (28) for homosexuals.

The Diffusion of Gay Liberation to Vietnam

The frames and tactics of gay liberation did not diffuse to Vietnam as they did from the United States to Australia. However, the commercial world of gay life that was evidently growing in the West was also tolerated in Vietnam during the war and catered to Western, Chinese, and local LGBT persons. Gay liberation failed to diffuse because of the historical moment, the structures of Vietnamese culture, economics, and politics, and the agency of those Vietnamese who did have limited relational and nonrelational contact with Western gay liberation.

That said, there is significant evidence to suggest that LGBT relations and sex in Vietnam were prevalent during the war, despite Vietnamese enculturation into Western gender and sexual norms and American and Australian attempts to eliminate homosexuality from the ranks. A 1970 survey of 488 Australian male personnel deployed to Vietnam found 3 percent of them admitting to homosexual experiences while in Vietnam itself (Hart 1975). Randy Shilts states that “by 1971, a vast gay subculture existed within the American military stationed in Vietnam. Six years of intense U.S. presence had been time enough to establish huge networks of gay servicemen throughout Southeast Asia” (1994, 149). This seems confirmed by contemporary sources such as Philip Marnais (1967) and the International Guild Guides of 1968–1973 that contained listings of gay venues catering to a Western clientele and GIs in Vietnam, Thailand, and Singapore. It should be noted, however, that the Marnais source (written under a pseudonym) was a salacious and questionably factual account of sex and sin in Saigon and should, therefore, be treated with caution (Copyright Office 1971). The International Guild Guides, in contrast, were guidebooks with the explicitly stated purpose of accuracy, thus making them an arguably more useful source.

There is, however, little evidence to suggest that the utopian ideals of gay liberation spread to Vietnam during this period. The commercial toleration of Western LGBT individuals in Vietnam echoed colonial patterns of subjugated acquiescence to Western hegemony, as the economic service of queer desires was catered for, but the politics of gay liberation was not. This is not surprising; the war hardly provided the structure of liberal freedoms that the Western movement exploited. There were also significant cultural differences between the countries that curtailed nonrelational connections; the Vietnamese emphasis on Confucian values, combined with sympathy for communism and the struggle for national freedom, emphasized collectivism over individualism.

There were some brief relational contacts between Western movement activists and the
Vietnamese. Judy Tzu-Chun Wu (2013) has analyzed the 1971 Indochinese Women’s Conferences that gathered antiwar feminists from North America, Laos, and South and North Vietnam. But these conferences were characterized by significant identity-based conflict between factions of the North American movement, and racial, sexual, and national lines of opposition were drawn among attendees. The individualism that characterized the North American participants in the conferences, as well as their conflicts, failed to gel with the Vietnamese participants’ collective worldview. A question asked of North Vietnamese women and their answer to it illustrate this disconnect:

Q: In the U.S.A., there is disunity between the several kinds of anti-war groups, revolutionary groups, and oppressed groups (Third World Peoples, unemployed, poor people, youth, women’s groups).... We can’t find a basis for unity but we believe we should. What is your opinion?

A: You have raised the single-issue versus the multiissue question, to use American terminology.... We believe there are no multi-issues, only the single issue of the struggle against imperialism.

(PEDESTAL 1971, 10; EMPHASIS ADDED)

The Vietnamese distaste for Western identity politics was further evidenced by one participant’s recollection that some Indochinese women had walked offstage when questioned about Vietnamese lesbian sex by radical lesbian participants (Wu 2013). So, the North American and Indochinese women may have shared antiwar political goals, but they did not share the Western frame of individualism and self-liberation that had sustained the gay liberation movement in the United States and Australia.

Postwar Vietnam provides further evidence for the failure of gay liberation diffusion. Richard Quang-Anh Tran’s 2014 survey of Vietnamese news articles, literature, and government reports between 1986 and 2005 found no usage of the Western language of homosexuality (gay, lesbian, LGBT, etc.) before the 1990s. Ethnographic research during this same period reveals the Vietnamese belief that homosexuality was introduced by the French and Americans (Aronson 1999). Vietnamese socialism during and after the war decried the Western undermining of Vietnamese morality, and left little room for the liberation of LGBT persons. As such, the politics of gay liberation failed to diffuse to Vietnam during the period, and Western-style queering of culture and economics had limited continuing impact after the war’s end.

The Vietnam War was a crucial framing event for the emergence and diffusion of gay
liberation. The operation of conscription in the United States, combined with the US military's exclusion of LGBT individuals from service, radicalized LGBT Americans. They quickly framed their own liberation as part of the counterculture's challenging of hegemonic gender and heteronormative social mores and operationalized tactics borrowed from other social movements.

These frames and tactics diffused to Australia, a Western, liberal-democratic country that was also fighting in Vietnam and employing conscription. This diffusion was aided by the obvious political, economic, and cultural similarities between the countries, but there was also local variation and relative caution in Australia.

These enabling mechanisms were less evident in Vietnam. North and South Vietnam did not offer the liberal-democratic freedoms or the cultural belief in individualism that underpinned gay liberation in the West. Despite tentative relational contact between North Americans and the Vietnamese, these differences proved too difficult to bridge. Thus, the globalization of LGBT culture and politics emerged much later in the Vietnamese context.

SEE ALSO Australia and New Zealand; Black Freedom Movement and Sexuality; Cold War and Sexuality in Latin America; Marches on Washington; Military Law and Policy in the United States; Sex Tourism in Asia; Vietnam War, LGBTQ+ Veterans

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One challenge when looking to history has been the silences surrounding LGBTQ+ military service, both in the records and from veterans themselves. Work on World War II (1939–1945) shows that LGBTQ+ people served in all theaters of war and came from all walks of life. The war was a formative experience for these men and women, as it was for that entire generation. Because so many men and women served in all combatant nations, not surprisingly many members of the homophile movements of the 1950s and 1960s were veterans. An even larger percentage of them remained guarded about their sexuality, though, whether choosing to marry and start families, to visit public places to cruise for sex (“beats” in Australian parlance), or to live quiet lives in relationships. Indeed, one of the state presidents of Australia's premier veterans' organization, the Returned and Services League, was a World War II veteran with a same-sex partner; this came out only posthumously when there was a fight over his will. Much the same silence surrounds veterans of the Korean War (1950–1953) and the Malayan Emergency (1950–1960).

**Medical Issues**

The Vietnam War affected a different generation and was the first conflict in which societies seriously grappled with not only the physical scars of war but also the mental and emotional traumas plaguing veterans. LGBTQ+ veterans faced trials common to all Vietnam War veterans, yet in many ways their stories diverged from the dominant Vietnam veteran narrative. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a common challenge experienced by many Vietnam veterans from Australia, New Zealand, and the United States, although there are differences in individual veterans’ symptoms and in how the nations’ veterans’ administrations responded. LGBTQ+ veterans, like straight and cisgender (those whose gender identity aligns with their sex at birth) personnel, often turned to alcohol, experienced flashbacks, and were prone to fits of anger. Veterans who were trying to repress or hide their homosexuality or gender identity only compounded the mental distress.
Vietnam Veteran Leonard Matlovich with His Honorable Discharge Papers, 1975. Matlovich, a highly decorated US Air Force sergeant, was discharged from the military in 1975 after he came out to his superior officer. He challenged the ban on homosexual service members and eventually settled with the air force in 1980.

The majority of LGBTQ+ service personnel who received honorable discharges retained their entitlements to pensions and medical services. Even so, many seeking medical treatment chose not to disclose their sexuality for fear of being discriminated against, and for decades support services did not cater to the different needs of LGBTQ+ veterans. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, the veterans’ administrations have become more attuned to the needs of LGB veterans. In the second decade of the twenty-first century, as there has been an increase in transgender visibility globally, so, too, have veterans’ establishments had to consider transgender needs. In the United States, a 2011 Veterans Health Administration directive mandated medically necessary care for transgender veterans. In Australia and New Zealand there have not been transgender-specific directives from the respective departments of veterans’ affairs, but antidiscrimination legislation since 2013 and 1993, respectively, protects transgender veterans’ rights to health services.

**Service Bans and Activism**

After the war, many Vietnam veterans stayed in the armed forces, where they had to continue living a closeted double life. In Australia, which did not have a tradition of
rights-based legal challenges, there are no known cases of service members challenging the ban on LGB service until 1990. (The government lifted the bans on LGB service in November 1992 and on transgender service in September 2010.) In the 1970s and 1980s the few gay and lesbian rights organizations in Australia and New Zealand focused primarily on law reform, and Vietnam veterans did not play significant roles in these groups. In the United States, though, there was a period of gay and lesbian activism in the mid-1970s that targeted the military establishment. The most famous challenge to the ban came from Leonard Matlovich, an air force sergeant. Matlovich did three tours of duty in Vietnam, was awarded a Bronze Cross and Purple Heart, and was discharged in 1975 when he came out to his superior officer. Matlovich appeared on the cover of Time magazine and had a high-profile battle with the air force, which he settled in 1980. Matlovich died of AIDS in 1988. The epitaph on his tombstone famously reads: “When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one.” Matlovich’s high-profile example was the exception, rather than the norm; Vietnam veterans largely were not involved in American activism against the LGB military ban.

Most LGBTQ+ Vietnam veterans in all three countries avoided both veterans’ and gay rights activism. Of course, some did become involved in grassroots movements, and this is most discernible during the AIDS epidemic, which took the lives of many gay Vietnam veterans. For instance, one of the cofounders of the New York organization Gay Men’s Health Crisis was the decorated Vietnam veteran Paul Popham (1941–1987). Ken Jones, portrayed in the television miniseries When We Rise (2017), fought in the 1970s for the gay liberation movement in San Francisco to be inclusive of people of color. Jones became the first black person to chair what was then called the San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade and Celebration Committee, worked with homeless LGBTQ+ young people, and pushed for needle exchange programs during the AIDS epidemic. The Australian Army veteran David Bradford was a sexual health doctor who was running Melbourne’s public sexual health clinic during the early years of the AIDS epidemic. Bradford treated patients and sat on numerous community, state, and national bodies that formulated Australia’s public health response to the epidemic.

**Commemorative Events**

Many LGBTQ+ veterans had little interest in participating in events commemorating the Vietnam War. This is partly attributable to the homophobia of key veterans’ organizations from the 1970s to the 1990s, such as the Returned and Services League in Australia. It is also not surprising that national narratives and commemorations of war avoided the topics of homosexuality and transgender identity. In early 1982 a group of disgruntled ex-servicemen in Melbourne, including the Vietnam veteran Max Campbell, formed the Gay Ex-Services Association (GESA). GESA planned to lay a wreath at Melbourne’s Shrine of Remembrance on Anzac Day, which is Australia and New Zealand’s public holiday to
commemorate military service, past and present. The ribbon accompanying the wreath read: “For all our brothers and sisters who died during the wars. Gay Ex-Servicemen’s Association.” A group of five GESA members climbed the steps of the shrine, but the guards refused them access and escorted the men off the premises. Campbell alone returned on Anzac Day in 1983 and 1984 and successfully laid wreaths on behalf of GESA. GESA folded shortly thereafter.

The United States and New Zealand did not have similar moments of LGBTQ+ service commemorations, but those nations, too, excluded LGBTQ+ people from dominant narratives of military participation. LGBTQ+ veterans of more recent conflicts such as the Gulf War, Iraq War, and Afghanistan War, as well as peacekeeping missions such as those in Somalia and East Timor, have been leading the push for LGBTQ+ inclusion in the respective militaries. The first known post-Vietnam LGBTQ+ veterans’ group in the United States was the Gay, Lesbian and Bisexual Veterans of America (GLBVA), founded in 1990 and renamed American Veterans for Equal Rights in 2005. Whereas GESA in Melbourne had focused on commemorations and social meet-ups, the GLBVA focused primarily on defending servicepeople under threat of discharge and advocated for the repeal of the infamous “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy. Transgender veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan have also been playing active roles contesting the ban on transgender service in the United States.

**Partner Benefits**

One final topic of significance for LGBTQ+ Vietnam veterans is partner benefits. When an LGBTQ+ service member died in the Vietnam War, there would be no notification for same-sex partners, whose identities were unknown to military authorities. That said, oral histories from the United States and Australia suggest that rarely did service members have same-sex partners when they went to Vietnam. Later in life, though, when many LGBTQ+ veterans did enter into lasting relationships, federal laws in both Australia and the United States denied access to partner benefits, including partner service pensions, counseling services, and education assistance. The Australian government passed legislation in 2009 to remove eighty-five areas of discrimination against same-sex couples. Among those reforms was the extension of veterans’ partner benefits to same-sex couples. In the United States, when the Supreme Court struck down part of the Defense of Marriage Act in 2013, spouses of LGBTQ+ veterans gained access to the same family entitlements.

Many LGBTQ+ Vietnam veterans remain guarded about their sexuality or gender identity, and many “out” veterans have long since cut ties to their military compatriots. One significant silence is also around South Vietnamese LGBTQ+ veterans; as homosexuality is still culturally taboo for many Vietnamese from the war generation, studies into both LGBTQ+ service and South Vietnamese refugee experiences have yet to come across LGBTQ+ veterans. From a 2015 oral history interview with Noah Riseman, the words of the Australian veteran Bradford are a fitting way to summarize openly LGBTQ+ veterans’
reflections on military service: “I think that LGBTI people can make an equal contribution, and that their contribution is as good and as solid as anything, any contribution made by heterosexual people.”

SEE ALSO Defense of Marriage Act (1996); Military Law and Policy in the United States; Vietnam War

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Since the reunification of Germany in 1990, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf has gained international fame as a queer icon who survived the brutally repressive regimes of Nazi Germany and socialist East Germany. Born in Berlin in 1928 as Lothar Berfelde, von Mahlsdorf changed her name after World War II (1939–1945) and consistently referred to herself using she/her pronouns, although she made clear in her autobiography that she was “not a transsexual,” explaining that she was not “self-conscious about [her] male sex organs” (von Mahlsdorf 1995, 43). Though difficult to categorize using contemporary identity terms, von Mahlsdorf nevertheless became a modern queer icon with the publication of her acclaimed 1992 autobiography Ich bin meine eigene Frau (I Am My Own Wife: The True Story of Charlotte von Mahlsdorf), the release that year of a film with the same name directed by acclaimed gay filmmaker Rosa von Praunheim, and Doug Wright's successful Broadway production I Am My Own Wife, which premiered in 2003, one year after von Mahlsdorf's death.

Early Life and Furniture Collection

From an early age, von Mahlsdorf developed an interest in furniture and decor of the Gründerzeit (founders' period), dating approximately from the foundation of the German Empire in 1871 to the turn of the twentieth century. Her interest was facilitated by her work with furniture dealer Max Bier, and she began collecting small pieces in the course of her employment with him. With the onset of the Holocaust, Bier and von Mahlsdorf were often tasked with clearing out the homes of Berlin Jews who had been sent to concentration and death camps. Addressing this troubling connection to the Holocaust, von Mahlsdorf claimed in her autobiography that she felt “a kinship with those who live at the edge of society” (von Mahlsdorf 1995, 30) and referred to instances when she attempted to return pieces to their rightful owners after the war.

Adding to the complexity of her life story, von Mahlsdorf wrote in her autobiography that she sometimes wore feminine clothing in public under the Third Reich, making her one of the few who dared to do so in the face of dire legal consequences. Recounting how she and her friend Christian were arrested for breaking curfew while dressed in their mothers' clothing, von Mahlsdorf surmised that their quick release was due to the officer's assumption that they were two “rascals” playing a joke (von Mahlsdorf 1995, 42).

In the years immediately after the war, von Mahlsdorf stored the pieces of furniture she had collected with items from the estate of her aunt—who, according to von Mahlsdorf,
was also gender-nonconforming—in abandoned houses in Berlin in the partially destroyed Friedrichsfelde Palace. It was not until 1958 that von Mahlsdorf was able to move into the condemned Mahlsdorf manor house on the edge of East Berlin where, in 1960, she opened a museum of Gründerzeit furniture and decor that later became the Gründerzeit Museum.

Charlotte von Mahlsdorf in 1993. A famous German transvestite, von Mahlsdorf was a queer icon who survived the brutally repressive regimes of Nazi Germany and socialist East Germany.

**Homosexuelle Interessengemeinschaft Berlin**

The Gründerzeit Museum served an unexpected function in the 1970s. The founding of the Homosexuelle Interessengemeinschaft Berlin (HIB; Homosexual Interest Group Berlin) was very much the result of the permeability of the Berlin Wall, and both East and West German forces influenced the group’s activities throughout the duration of its existence. Founded by Michael Eggert and Peter Rausch, the HIB’s official founding date was 15 January 1973, the day von Praunheim’s *Nicht der Homosexuelle ist pervers, sondern die Situation, in der er lebt* (1971; It is not the homosexual who is perverse, but the society in which he lives) first aired on West German national television. Eggert, Rausch, and several close friends watched the film from Moccabar, one of the few gay bars in East Berlin, and formed a group
that would provide community to isolated gay men and lesbians, educate a society that invisibilized homosexuality, and engage with the socialist state to advance homosexual rights (McLellan 2012).

Although male homosexuality had been decriminalized in East Germany in 1968, HIB activists had to contend with both a hostile government and a dearth of places in which to meet. Von Mahlsdorf quickly provided a solution to the latter problem. Beginning in 1974, von Mahlsdorf hosted regular meetings, gatherings, and parties of the HIB in the basement of her museum, which had been furnished with the interior fittings of the legendary Weimar-era bar Mulackritze, originally located in Berlin's Scheunenviertel (Giersdorf 2006).

Despite its location, the neighborhood of Mahlsdorf then quickly became a center for gay life in East Berlin, existing in a tense space between the emphasis on individualism under new general secretary of the Socialist Unity Party Erich Honecker (1912–1994) and resistance to nonstate groups (McLellan 2017). The HIB did apply for state recognition, having never conceived of itself as antistate; however, its petitions were denied. The beginning of the end of the HIB came in 1978, when the East German government prevented von Mahlsdorf from hosting a party for lesbians and subsequently banned her from hosting any gatherings at all. After this point, it became impossible for the HIB to find a suitable venue, and in 1979, following a discouraging meeting with the East German Council of Ministers, the HIB disbanded (McLellan 2012).

**Stasi Controversy**

Although banned from hosting meetings of the HIB, von Mahlsdorf was permitted to continue running her museum. By the early 1980s, gay organizing in East Germany had found a new home under the auspices of the Protestant church, beginning in 1982 with the creation of the first church-hosted gay group in Leipzig. By 1989, there existed twenty-three similar church groups and twelve to fifteen state-sponsored groups across East Germany (Giersdorf 2006). In 1988 the age of consent was equalized for homosexual and heterosexual contact, and on 9 November 1989, the day the Berlin Wall came down, the first state-sponsored gay film, *Coming Out*, was released; von Mahlsdorf played a minor role in the film, which was also notable for its English-language title. After the reunification of Germany in 1990, there was a brief period during which von Mahlsdorf was lionized as a queer hero of two repressive regimes. In 1992, the year von Mahlsdorf released her autobiography, she also was the subject of the von Praunheim documentary and was awarded the Federal Cross of Merit by the German government (Hightberg 2009).

The following year, however, it was reported that von Mahlsdorf had been a willing informant for the East German secret police, the “Stasi” (Staatssicherheits-dienst). Although there was no evidence that von Mahlsdorf had informed on the HIB, some in the
international press reasoned that her testimony had led to the imprisonment of her friend and fellow antiques collector Alfred Kirschner (McLellan 2012; Giersdorf 2006). While the Stasi file itself was far from consistent, making it difficult to discern to what extent von Mahlsdorf had acted willingly, it did cause some to doubt whether von Mahlsdorf’s autobiography could be trusted (Schiavi 2006). Because of the negative press, von Mahlsdorf closed the museum in 1995 and moved to Sweden in 1997 where she lived until her death in 2002 while on a book tour in Germany. Nevertheless, Wright’s play I Am My Own Wife, which investigates the controversy as well as von Mahlsdorf’s biography, achieved great commercial and critical success when it premiered the following year.

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W v. Registrar of Marriages (2013)

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Landmark court case granting transgendered persons the right to marry in Hong Kong.

W v. Registrar of Marriages is a case of a transgender person living in Hong Kong who sought to marry through the Hong Kong legal system. In 2010 and 2011 the Hong Kong Court of First Instance (CFI) and Court of Appeal (CA), respectively, rejected the appellant, a “Miss W,” who, as a certified male-to-female transgender person, wished to marry her boyfriend, a biological male. Undeterred, W took this case to the Court of Final Appeal (CFA), which eventually overturned the previous judgments and declared the obstruction of a transgender person’s right to marry unconstitutional. By the time the CFA issued its ruling in May 2013, this first-ever transgender marriage rights case in Hong Kong’s legal history had already stirred considerable debate in society and within legal circles. Because the judicial apparatus of Hong Kong after the handover to the sovereignty of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) remains adhered to the British/European system under the Basic Law (see Chiang 2017), the adjudication of this case will not only enjoy wide recognition in other countries (especially those under British Commonwealth law), it will be a valuable reference point for the PRC’s legal treatment of transgender rights.

Very little is known about W directly, and even the courts admitted that their order for nondisclosure of W’s identity to the public and the media reflected the stigma attached to being a transgender person in Hong Kong (W 2011, para. 24). In October 2009, after being refused permission to register their marriage by the Registrar of Marriages, W and her boyfriend sought legal action to demand from a Hong Kong court: (1) a recognition that both the Marriage Ordinance and the Matrimonial Causes Ordinance should include in the purview of the definitions of “man,” “woman,” “male,” and “female” an “updated” inclusion of postoperative transsexual persons in their acquired sex; and (2) a declaration that a denial of such recognition constitutes a violation of the freedom and right of marriage as expressly provided by both the Basic Law and the Hong Kong Bill of Rights. A year later, on 5 October 2010, the CFI squashed W’s judicial challenge; the judge held that Hong Kong laws would not permit—more precisely, did not enjoy the “societal consensus” to recognize—the marriage right of a transgender person.
At this point, W took her case to the CA. In the appeal, her legal team raised several legal challenges to the decision of the CFI, including the latter’s use of an outdated 1970 court case (*Corbett v. Corbett*) as a primary statutory reference. In the *Corbett* case, the court was asked by a husband to grant a declaration that his marriage was null and void on the grounds that his “wife” was in fact a postoperative male-to-female transsexual person who was, additionally, incapable of consummating a marriage (because she had only an artificial vagina). The court, which was able to rely only on the (limited) medical evidence of the time, restricted “sex” to chromosomal, gonadal, and genital factors (to the exclusion of psychological, social, or cultural factors), and thus construed the validity of a marriage as dependent on only biological criteria. W’s legal team also argued that the court’s view of gender did not keep up with advances in medical technologies, and that its view of marriage was not in accordance with advances in international family and marriage laws. But despite those challenges, on 25 November 2011, the CA upheld the original decision.

**Sociolegal Contexts**

In Hong Kong, marriage is governed by the Marriage Ordinance. It was enacted in 1875 but remains in force today statutorily, despite vast historical, social, and medical changes since its framing. According to its preamble, the ordinance is to provide for “the celebration of Christian marriage or the civil equivalent thereof, and for matters connected therewith.” Part 2 of Section 40 goes on to clarify that this form of marriage “implies a formal ceremony recognized by the law as involving the voluntary union for life of one man and one woman to the exclusion of all others.” Legally, the introduction of Christian marriage (or its civil equivalent) into Hong Kong at the time of British colonial rule—known as “registry marriage”—was “particularly natural given that otherwise, in those days, marriages were mostly conducted according to Chinese customary law” (*W* 2010, para. 114). Traditional marriage up to the early twentieth century was commonly known as “Chinese customary marriage,” which was likely to be an outcome of parental arrangement and was often polygamous in nature. After the introduction of the 1931 Civil Code in the mainland, people in Hong Kong contracted marriages by following the marriage provisions contained in the code, and those marriages, when formalized in Hong Kong, became known as “Chinese modern marriages.” No registration was required of a Chinese modern marriage, but an open ceremony was necessary. And, unlike a Chinese customary marriage, a Chinese modern marriage was bound by the code of monogamy.

Reforms in 1970 and 1971 did away with both Chinese customary marriage and Chinese modern marriage in Hong Kong. With the enactment of the Matrimonial Causes Ordinance (a direct adoption of the United Kingdom’s Nullity of Marriage Act of 1971), a marriage that took place after 30 June 1972 would be void if “the parties are not respectively male and female” (*Pegg 1994, 8*). The restriction of marriage to a monogamous heterosexual relationship is a direct inheritance of dogmatic stipulations by the Church of England.
Andrew Cheung, the judge who heard the W case in the CFI, made a forceful assertion: “According to the doctrine of the Church of England, marriage is in its nature a union permanent and life-long, for better or for worse, till death them do part, of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others on either side, for the procreation and nurture of children” (W 2010, para. 116). Therefore, a whole Judeo-Christian dogma was laid out by the judge, in which marriage was put in lockstep with heterosexuality, monogamy, procreation, and even the preferred form of intimacy. But he did acknowledge this: “There is, however, no relevant definition of ‘man,’ ‘woman,’ ‘male,’ or ‘female’ in either of the Ordinances [Marriage Ordinance and Matrimonial Causes Ordinance]. The matter is therefore left to the interpretation of the court” (para. 54).

Over the years, there was no legal challenge to the restrictive gender provisions of the two marriage ordinances (that is, until the groundbreaking W case), although there have been many challenges to inheritance rights and challenges arising from disputes between traditional customary marriage and modern registry marriage (see, e.g., Leung Lai Fong v. Ho Sin Ying [2009]). Neither have there been any policy changes to update those statutes to reflect changes brought about by new understandings of gender, family, and marriage. But, in fact, vast changes have occurred in Hong Kong outside of the court.

Transphobia in Hong Kong Culture

In Hong Kong, two primary terms are commonly used to label the transgender person in public discourse: bin tai and yan yiu. The term bin tai is a common lexicon referring to all real or imagined perversions seen as a deviation from reproductive, heterosexual, familycentered norms of the body, gender, and sexuality (Erni 2016). Yet the term’s basic meaning is rather innocuous: bin refers to change, whereas tai means a state of affairs, a condition, or a position. But when transposed into an insult to the cross-dresser, the pedophile, the polygamist, the same-sex lover, the masculine woman, the sissy boy, or the transgender person, bin tai exposes its ideological preference for reproductive, heterosexual, family-centered norms. As such, it achieves cultural ubiquity in a conservative society such as Hong Kong.

Yiu is possibly the unifying term that refers to the “transifying” gender and sexual identities and practices, something that the term queer has always tried to approximate in more global contexts. Seen in this way, yan yiu (literally translated as “human ghost,” “human monster,” or “freak”) is a term that arguably exceeds a narrow reference to transgender people. Like the term queer, yan yiu seems to gesture toward a larger realm of liminal sociosexual practices: all queerly sexed people are members of the “yan yiu family.”

Terms such as bin tai and yan yiu command a kind of cultural ubiquity that produces a sensation of shame and humiliation; they can mortify an individual into withdrawing from sociality (Cheung 2012). Even though the government of Hong Kong has been providing
counseling and sex reassignment surgery since the mid-1980s, and despite the existence of a growing transgender rights movement since the first years of the twenty-first century (Emerton 2006), transgender people are almost entirely invisible in Hong Kong and continue to experience discrimination in the civil and criminal arenas (Erni 2013). As is the case in Taiwan and many other countries, however, transgender visibility typically arrives as a shock after the (sensationalized) death of a transgender person. This happened in Hong Kong in 2004 when, within a single week, two transgender women—Louise Chan and Sasha Moon—committed suicide. When Moon leaped from her high-rise apartment to her death, her plunge was captured in a morbid sequence of photographs published in the following morning’s local newspapers. “The media used to treat us like a freak show. Today, we’re seen as [ironically] a genuinely good story,” laments a friend of Moon and a member of the rights group Transgender Equality and Acceptance Movement (quoted in Watkins 2004).

It should be noted that transgender people in Hong Kong do not fully lack legal rights in the civil law domain. Records show that the first sex-change surgery for a transgender person in Hong Kong was performed in 1981 by an ad hoc group of doctors in a government hospital. In the following years, more transgender patients came to government hospitals to ask for the surgery. To treat these patients according to internationally acceptable standards, a gender identity team (GIT), composed of psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, medical social workers, geneticists, gynecologists, surgeons, and lawyers from both the public and private sectors, was formed in 1986 within the sex clinic of Queen Mary Hospital (Ma 1997). Between 1991 and 2001, thirty-four persons were assessed by the GIT (Cheung 2006). In spite of the GIT’s achievements, however, the Hospital Authority in Hong Kong closed the unit in 2005, citing budget deficits. As a result, transgender patients turned to private clinics, where many of the doctors they saw had little or no experience treating transgender patients (Cheung 2010; Ng et al. 1989).
Michael Vidler, Lawyer for W. Vidler speaks to the press outside the Court of Final Appeal in Hong Kong on 13 May 2013 after winning a landmark case on behalf of W, a transsexual woman petitioning for the right to marry her boyfriend. The ruling forced the government to rewrite the city’s marriage laws.

In addition, in her 2004 study of transgender rights in Hong Kong, Robyn Emerton discusses the administrative concessions that the Hong Kong government offers to transgender persons in an attempt to comply with international legal trends. The concessions include a transgender person’s ability to change his or her name and sex identification on his or her identity card, driver’s license, passport, and education certificates once that person has provided adequate evidence of a successful transition. The reissuance of the identity card is important because Hong Kong residents are required to produce their identity card at all times, even though the card does not establish a person’s sex for legal purposes. The latter can be established only by one’s birth certificate. Laws in Hong Kong do not allow for the alteration of the birth certificate for postoperative transgender persons as of 2017, a legal restriction that has a negative impact on rights related to marriage, custody of children, and use of public spaces (e.g., a public toilet or changing facility).

**Sociolegal Implications**

When the CFA judgment was handed down on 13 May 2013 declaring victory for W, the public expressed sympathy with her plight. The public debate throughout the three years of the case may have helped illuminate the moral argument that recognizing the right of a transgender individual to marry another person in a voluntary heterounion will not diminish the validity or dignity of conventional marriage, any more than recognizing the right of an individual to marry a person of a different race or nationality devalues the
marriage of a person who marries someone of his or her own race or nationality. In the CFA judgment, the judges on the bench did not refute the validity of Corbett but ruled that its approach to confining transgenderism to merely biological realities reinforced by the fulfillment of “Christian duties”—to the exclusion of social and psychological facets of transgenderism—was inadequate for the purpose of determining the marriageability of a transgender person. They also rebuffed the argument that the meanings of man and woman should be read merely through “ordinary, plain meanings.”

Thus, the landmark case of W v. Registrar of Marriages has successfully reworked the statutory constructions of transgenderism to encompass sociopsychological and cultural-interpretive dimensions. This dealt a major blow to the statutory framework advanced in the lower courts; more importantly, it sent a strong message of antidiscrimination to society. Another significance of W’s case lies in challenging not only the established marriage laws by setting a legal precedent but also the underlying cultural biases against nonnormative intimate relationships. Yet the judges in the CFA ruling made a strong declaration that their judgment was to be strictly confined to transgender marriage rights and therefore was not to be applied to, or confused with, same-sex marriage rights (W 2013, para. 2). Pitting one kind of rights against another kind, this distinction complicates the long-term struggle for the rights of all sexual minorities. Potentially negative impacts on same-sex marriage rights may arise in the future, paradoxically, because of the “success” of transgender marriage rights.

SEE ALSO Marriage, Same-Sex, in Taiwan; Section 377 in South Asia; Transgender Organizations in Mainland China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan

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Waria

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The historical and contemporary position of male-to-female transgender subjects in Indonesia.

In 2016 Indonesian politicians alongside religious leaders announced to a listening media that LGBTQ people were incompatible with Indonesia’s cultural and religious tradition. LGBTQ Indonesians were accused of being part of a proxy war funded by Western powers and blamed for bringing moral degradation to the nation. What these politicians and religious leaders left out, and what the media failed to investigate, however, was the incredible role of LGBTQ Indonesians not only in making Indonesia the country it is today but also in ensuring that Islam, and not Christianity, became the dominant religion in provinces such as South Sulawesi.

This entry discusses the position of one group of LGBTQ Indonesians, waria. After defining the term and providing a general outline of waria subjectivity, the entry provides details of the history of waria within Indonesia. The entry then fast forwards over the history of waria under authoritarian rule to provide a snapshot of waria in contemporary Indonesia.

Definition

Waria is a composite word derived from wanita (woman) and pria (man). As this amalgamation suggests, waria are a subject position that combines elements of women and men. While waria is the most commonly used, and most polite, word used to describe male-to-female transgender subjects, many other words are in use in Indonesia. Some of the words used to describe this subject position, which are more or less respectful and have waned in favor of waria, include banci, bencong, wadam (from wanita and Adam, or Eve and Adam), and walsu (from wanita palsu, or false woman). There are also indigenous languages with their own terms for waria, such as calabai (etymologically derived from the words for “false woman”) in South Sulawesi. Areas such as South Sulawesi also have a tradition of gender-androgynous priests known as bissu (Peletz 2009). While neologisms such as waria have been in use for only a few decades, there are documents from the sixteenth century that talk about the subject position of bissu. As many waria claim a contemporary stake in Indonesian society by drawing on this rich history of gender and sexual diversity, it is worth briefly considering the historical aspect.
History of Waria in Indonesia

While the subject position waria is relatively new, Indonesia has a much longer history of supporting gender and sexual diversity (Davies 2010). There are numerous ritual traditions across the archipelago emphasizing the generative power of a combination of masculine and feminine aspects (B. Andaya 1994; Oetomo 1996). One of the traditions for which there is good evidence comes from South Sulawesi. Origin narratives mentioning gender plurality began to be composed orally between the ninth and fourteenth centuries (Pelras 1996). Then in the fifteenth century writing developed among the Bugis ethnic group in South Sulawesi, and there are early documents mentioning bissu (Noorduyn 1965). For instance, the La Galigo cycle, which is a kind of cultural encyclopedia for the Bugis, discussed the role of bissu within the royal courts (Macknight 1993). In these documents bissu are described as combining female and male aspects and then using the resulting power of such a combination to take lead roles in battles against enemies, such as against the Dutch between the sixteenth and twentieth centuries (L. Andaya 2004). La Galigo manuscripts also provide advice on developing fulfilling marital sexual relations, the crucial role of foreplay, and how women can maintain a dry vagina to increase the pleasure of both wife and husband (Hadrawi 2016; Idrus 2003).

Information about bissu also comes from the letters and documents of various travelers to the region. In 1544 a Portuguese missionary and merchant, Antonio de Paiva, came to the island of Sulawesi (Pelras 1996). De Paiva recorded the significant influence bissu had over the king:

Your Lordship will know that the priests of these kings are generally called bissus. They grow no hair on their beards, dress in a womanly fashion, and grow their hair long and braided.... They marry and are received, according to the custom of the land, with other common men, and they live indoors uniting carnally in their secret places with the men whom they have for husbands.  

(QUOTED IN BAKER 2005, 68)

De Paiva went on to record his frustration with bissu interfering in state affairs. Indeed, de Paiva held bissu responsible for the fact that the king converted to Islam rather than Christianity. De Paiva’s accounts of bissu are supported by a wealth of other evidence provided by other foreign travelers, including James Brooke (1848), B. F. Matthes (1872) and H. Th. Chabot ([1950] 1996). What all of this evidence shows is that Indonesia has a long history of supporting, and indeed at times celebrating, gender and sexual diversity.
A Waria and Child at Her Home in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. This house was host to Indonesia’s first Islamic school set up specifically for waria, or male-to-female transgendered persons in Indonesia. While some of Indonesia’s Islamic provincial governments have passed legislation that discriminates against them, the waria actually played an important role in the establishment of Islam in Indonesia.

Waria in Independent Indonesia

Following World War II (1939–1945) Indonesia declared independence, and just two subsequent presidents ruled the archipelago until 1998: Sukarno (ruled 1945–1967) and Suharto (ruled 1967–1998). During these decades, the position of waria and other LGBTQ subjects experienced both highs and lows. While waria often were able to live under the radar, there were a few times when government or religious groups specifically targeted them. One of these times was during the 1950s when the Kahar Muzakkar religious movement targeted a number of waria and bissu in South Sulawesi. Another time of overt persecution was during the communist purges of the 1960s when waria were seen as a potential threat to national security.

While the Indonesian state during the leadership of Sukarno and subsequently Suharto was definitely not supportive of homosexuality, it could be framed as a heteronormative state, whereby the focus of the government and others was on ensuring that people openly conformed to a vision of the heterosexual family, rather than persecuting private practices (Boellstorff 2005; Davies 2015). People who had homosexual relationships but who did not
publicly flaunt these were often not paid punitive attention. Moreover, there was a recognized position for waria. For instance, almost every sitcom aired on television included waria characters who provided comic relief. Waria also legitimately worked as organizers of weddings and in beauty salons as hairdressers. More recently, Indonesian president Joko Widodo (in office starting in 2014) appeared on television in 2014 alongside trans woman Dorce Gamalama (1963–).

**Waria in the Twenty-First Century**

In 1998 Indonesia moved from authoritarian rule to a period of democratic reform. While democracy enabled many progressive laws to pass, such as press freedom laws, and enabled the development of centers such as the National Commission on Human Rights, democracy also permitted antiprogressive forces to emerge. For instance, while Islam had been suppressed to an extent under authoritarian rule, this was no longer the case in the democratic era. While religious freedom was welcomed by many, it also enabled the extremist Front Pembela Islam (Islamic Defenders Front) to emerge. The Front Pembela Islam took particular issue with LGBTQ Indonesians and promoted the passage of homophobic and transphobic laws. The process of decentralization that Indonesia experienced during the move to democracy meant that provincial governments had the power to pass homophobic laws. In 2002 South Sumatra implemented the Provincial Ordinance on the Eradication of Immoral Behavior, which classified anal sex between men as immoral and illegal. Two years later, the city of Palembang (the capital of South Sumatra) issued the City Ordinance on the Eradication of Prostitution, which conflated homosexuality with prostitution (**Allen 2007**). In 2008 an anti-pornography law was ratified at the national level prohibiting the depiction, production, and distribution of pornography; same-sex sexuality may be considered pornography. The province of Aceh in 2015 implemented the Qanun Jinayat, an Islamic criminal code bylaw penalizing homosexuality (**Simanjuntak 2015**). Sexual freedoms were thus being progressively dismantled as the democratic reform was carried out. The position of waria within Indonesia became increasingly precarious.

In early 2016 Zulkifli Hasan (1962–), chair of the People’s Consultative Assembly, said, “As a movement, the existence of LGBT must be opposed. We must limit its room to move. However, as individual people, they must be protected like any other citizen” (quoted in **Nurbianto 2016**). Hasan’s comment is interesting given that it implies that as individual citizens who abide by the norms of the nation and marry heterosexually, LGBTQ persons, including waria, must be protected. But if LGBTQ people as a movement begin to claim rights to collective citizenship, such as the right to marry, then this must be prohibited. A key feature of this hatred has been that it is directed at waria and LGBTQ individuals more generally as a visible collective group attempting to stake a claim as national subjects (**Boellstorff 2016**). What seems to be the issue is that sexual and gender diversity can be
tolerated but only as long as LGBTQ people remain invisible (Davies 2016).

The history of waria positionality in Indonesia is thus complex. The fortunes of waria have waxed and waned according to political and religious will. Nevertheless, Indonesia has a long history of supporting gender and sexuality diversity. As such, when political or religious leaders state that waria are incompatible with Indonesia, history demonstrates that such a claim is not always the case. Indeed, if it were not for the power and influence of waria forebears, namely bissu, the region of South Sulawesi might have been persuaded to accept Christianity rather than Islam. As such, it remains clear that Indonesia is indebted to waria for their contributions to multiple histories of the region—and not least the continued embrace of Islam.

SEE ALSO Hijras; Kathoey

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“We Demand” Protest (1971)

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The first major public demonstration by the Canadian gay and lesbian liberation movement, including an explanation of the ten demands made by the protesters.

In Ottawa, Canada, on 28 August 1971, more than 100 gay men, lesbians, and their supporters marched through the rain to Parliament Hill to mark the second anniversary of the proclamation of Bill C-150 (which was enacted as the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1968–1969). In addition to marking this anniversary, the protesters presented a list of ten demands based on a brief submitted to the federal government by members of the August 28th Gay Day Committee, a coalition of twelve gay and lesbian liberation groups of which the Toronto Gay Action (TGA) was one. In solidarity with the Ottawa protest, a group called Gay Alliance toward Equality (GATE) simultaneously demonstrated in front of the courthouse in Vancouver, British Columbia. What became labeled as the “We Demand” protest was the first major public demonstration mounted by the Canadian gay and lesbian liberation movement.

Herb Spiers, a founding member of the TGA and one of the main authors of the brief submitted by the August 28th Gay Day Committee (McCaskell 2016), was also a board member of the Community Homophile Association of Toronto (CHAT) and a member of The Body Politic collective, a Toronto gay and lesbian newspaper published from 1971 to 1987. Spiers was supposed to be one of the main speakers at the 28 August protest in Ottawa but was involved in a car accident en route from Toronto and missed the opportunity. Instead, Charlie Hill, a founder of the University of Toronto Homophile Association (UTHA), delivered the main speech (penned by Spiers and David Newcombe) while standing on the front steps of the Parliament of Canada's Centre Block underneath the Peace Tower. The ten “demands” detailed in the original brief included a call to repeal gross indecency laws, end police oppression and the national security campaigns against queers, and fight against the higher age of consent for same-gender erotic practices. Other speakers included George Hislop and Pat Murphy from CHAT, Pierre Masson from the Montreal-based Front de Libération Homosexuel (FLH; Homosexual Liberation Front), and John Williams, an activist from the United States. The complete text of the brief was published in The Body Politic in its inaugural issue.
The catalyst for this landmark protest was the partial decriminalization of homosexuality and the privatization of queer sexualities in the 1968–1969 Criminal Code reform. Contrary to claims made by the Liberal government of Liberal prime minister Pierre Trudeau, the 1968–1969 reforms did not legalize homosexuality; instead, they functioned to maintain sexual regulation along the lines of differentiating between public and private sex and sex between consenting adults. This liberal strategy was adopted in the United Kingdom’s Wolfenden Report (1957) and became the basis of the Canadian approach to the partial decriminalization of homosexuality. The Wolfenden Report argued that the role of the criminal in society was to protect public decency and not impose moral judgment on private acts (Kinsman 1996). Essentially, the Wolfenden Report helped establish a distinction between the state’s interest in regulating sex in public and sex acts taking place in private. The Wolfenden Report helped shape both law reform in Canada and the approach to reform strategies by gay and lesbian liberation activists (Kinsman 2013).

In the Canadian context, the Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1968–1969 helped institute the distinction between the public and private spheres of sex by limiting the legal regulation of sex between consenting adults (defined as people aged twenty-one or over) in the private sphere—that is, behind closed doors. The 1968–1969 reforms entrenched Trudeau’s now famous statement made in December 1967: “There’s no place for the state in the bedrooms of the nation.” With these words, Trudeau supposedly drew the government’s attention away from the nation’s sexual activities in the private sphere, while effectively directing police work toward public sexual practices such as same-sex erotic exchanges in parks, restrooms, and bathhouses. The 28 August 1971 protest organized by the August 28th Gay Day Committee and the brief that accompanied it were the gay and lesbian liberation’s response to what was seen as continued injustice regarding and discrimination against homosexuals.

### We Demand and the Road toward a Legal Agenda

In their cover letter that accompanied the brief, TGA members Brian Waite and Cheri DiNovo framed the document as a demand that the government “redress” the grievances “homosexual men and women” endured in their daily lives (Gentile, Kinsman, and Rankin 2017, 4). However, Waite and DiNovo also considered the brief and the 28 August 1971 protest as “the opening of a continuing public campaign until the just and reasonable reforms in the enclosed brief are achieved, and until the day when homosexual men and women are as free and equal as our heterosexual brothers and sisters” (Waite and DiNovo 1971, 4). While Canada’s first major protest and the brief to the federal government cannot be defined as a national mobilization, they did garner considerable support from several organizations, including CHAT, FLH, GATE, UTHA, the University of Guelph Homophile Association, the University of Western Ontario Homophile Association, the Vancouver Gay Activist Alliance, the Gay Liberation Front (Vancouver), Gay Sisters (Vancouver), University
of Waterloo’s Gay Liberation Movement, and the York University Homophile Association. This level of support and coordination between the TGA and eleven other prominent gay and lesbian liberation organizations was unprecedented and therefore instrumental in creating the momentum for a larger and more expansive movement across the country, including sparking the birth of *The Body Politic*. By the mid-1970s, the gay and lesbian liberation movement in Canada would expand and solidify as a political force through a multitude of activities, including pride celebrations in several major cities, such as Toronto, Vancouver, Montreal, Ottawa, and Winnipeg; the founding of Gay Alliance toward Equality–Edmonton in 1972; the publication of the first Canadian lesbian journal, *Long Time Coming*, by the organization Montreal Gay Women; the establishment of the Community Homophile Association of Newfoundland; and the organization of a lesbian conference in Montreal in January 1974, followed by the National Gay Rights Conference in June 1975 in Ottawa, to name only a few examples (Jackson and Persky 1982).

One of the central motivations behind the emergence of these pride celebrations, conferences, organizations, and publications was the fight to end discrimination against homosexuals, especially in the legal arena. Consequently, the radical politics of resistance based on coalition building between the gay and lesbian liberation movement and other movements, such as the feminist movement, the antiwar movement, or organizations to end poverty, began to wane. The push toward identity politics, initiated by the tone and tenor of the 28 August 1971 protest and the brief that inspired it, translated into the movement’s trajectory toward an equality rights platform, also known as a human rights strategy.

**Homosexuality and We Demand Activists as Security Threats**

Based on an interview with Waite, members of the UTHA began an investigation into state policies in 1970 and 1971. This led to an exploration of whether recommendations made based on Paragraph 100 of the Canadian federal government’s *Report of the Royal Commission on Security* (1969) had been applied to the public service. Paragraph 100 of the Royal Commission report (also known as the Mackenzie Commission Report) stated that “homosexuals are special targets for attention from foreign intelligence service” and that “certain types” seemed to be more vulnerable to being compromised than “non-deviate persons” (Kinsman and Gentile 2010, 216–217). While the members of the TGA and the August 28th Gay Day Committee would not have understood then the extent to which the Canadian government and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) had established an elaborate antiqueer security campaign lasting from the early 1960s to the late 1980s, this particular subsection of the Mackenzie Commission Report led them to include in their brief several demands about the employment and security measures taken against queers. Demands #5 and #8 reflect a vague knowledge of and suspicion about the activities of the
RCMP against homosexuals within the public services. Here, the authors of the brief insisted on the right of equal employment and promotion across all government levels for homosexuals (demand #5) and the right to know if it was the policy of the RCMP to identify homosexuals within any area of government service for the purposes of questioning them about their sexuality and the sexuality of others (demand #8). These particular demands reveal some understanding of how the security campaigns against queers were linked to larger issues around security clearances, police investigations and surveillance, and national security ideology that labeled homosexuals as suffering from “character weaknesses” that rendered them vulnerable to blackmail by foreign intelligence officers.

Extensive research conducted by the sociologist Gary Kinsman and the historian Patrizia Gentile—published in their 2010 book *The Canadian War on Queers*—demonstrates that the suspicion and preliminary knowledge of national security state policies against queers raised within the brief was well founded and even prescient. Ironically, as the activists gathered for the “We Demand” demonstration on Parliament Hill calling for the end to police surveillance and the right to equal employment and promotion of homosexuals at all government levels, the RCMP appointed a surveillance detail and produced security reports about the protest. Through its surveillance of the League for Socialist Action (LSA) forums and meetings in Toronto, the RCMP learned of the Ottawa demonstration. Evidence based on documents obtained through the Access to Information Act shows the RCMP took great interest in the August 1971 protest because of the involvement of LSA members in the newly formed TGA. The RCMP report describes the event as follows:

> The demonstration marched in front of the Peace Tower carrying signs and chanting slogans. The banners and signs displayed by the demonstrators carried various messages and slogans such as “Canada—True North Strong and Gay,” “Equal Rights for Gay People,” and “Smash Heterosexual Imperialism.” … After marching … the group gathered in front of the Peace Tower and were addressed by several speakers. The first speaker was [redacted] from Ottawa, [redacted] claimed the protesters represented groups from Toronto, Waterloo, Guelph, London, Montreal, and New York State.

>(QUOTED IN KINSMAN AND GENTILE 2010, 267)

Included in the report was the list of demands read to the protesters. In their study of the antiqueer security purges, Kinsman and Gentile uncovered how national security ideology and police surveillance were organized and structured to help sustain the heterosexist state for over thirty years, directly affecting the lives of queers working in the federal government and the military.
The Vancouver “We Demand” protest led by GATE was also under surveillance by the RCMP. The event included twenty activists who addressed a crowd of about 150 to 200 people at the courthouse in Robson Square (now the Vancouver Art Gallery). Speakers included Roedy Green, then chairperson of GATE-Vancouver, who read out the brief, as well as speakers from Gay Sisters and the Gay Liberation Front (GLF). One of the central aims of the Vancouver protest was to focus demands for an amendment to the British Columbia Human Rights Act to include sexual orientation. These demands were presented to the then-labour minister, William King of the New Democratic Party, who did not respond positively. The RCMP report of the event reveals that the federal police were not familiar with GATE before the demonstration but the “investigator’s comments” do mention that surveillance of GLF and the Canadian Gay Activists Alliance was a habitual practice taking place earlier than the 1971 event. Indeed, in the case of Vancouver, the RCMP seemed to focus on the participation of activists they would have considered radicals, such as the “gay faction” of the “Women’s Liberation Front.”

The Demands behind “We Demand”

The demands presented in the August 1971 brief included an array of issues beyond questions concerning surveillance and employment rights (such as demands #5 and #8), demonstrating the scope of social and political injustices against queers in the early 1970s. Activists involved in writing the brief also focused on the Immigration Act and the Canadian Armed Forces in demands #4 and #7, respectively. In both instances, a close reading of state policies related to the Immigration Act and against homosexuals serving in the armed forces helped build an understanding that led to related demands. For example, in his capacity as a member of the UTHA, Hill in January 1971 wrote to Otto Lang, then serving as minister of manpower and immigration, expressing disagreement with the antigay clauses of the Immigration Act. The August 1971 activists demanded that any references to the words homosexuals or homosexualism be removed from the act, arguing that denying immigration to Canada based on someone’s sexuality was “inconsistent” with the Criminal Code of Canada. In an important counterlogic, the authors of the “We Demand” brief argued that because “homo-sexualism” is not an illegal practice between consenting adults in private, the Immigration Act discriminated against a “minority group.”

Under demand #7, the authors of the August 1971 document included a short paragraph explaining its significance. In that explanation, activists drew on their knowledge of several state policies, including sections 103.25 (“Scandalous Conduct by Officers”) and 103.26 (“Cruel or Disgraceful Conduct”) of the Queen’s Regulations and Orders for the Canadian Forces and Paragraph 6 of Canadian Forces Administrative Order 19-20 (“Sexual Deviation —Investigation, Medical Examination, and Disposal”), to construct their arguments. The authors understood these documents as effectively contravening the Criminal Code in the case of the Queen’s Regulations and Orders sections mentioned above and the
uncompromising dismissal of all homosexuals from service based on the idea that they were “sexual deviates.”

Arguably, the first three demands presented in the “We Demand” brief were considered the most important and critical for the protest organizers. These demands sought the removal of the terms gross indecency and indecent act from the Criminal Code and their replacement by a specific listing of offenses; the removal of “gross indecency” and “buggery” as grounds for indictment as a “dangerous sexual offender” and for vagrancy; and a call for a uniform age of consent for homosexual and heterosexual acts. For the authors of the brief, the fact that terms such as gross indecency and buggery were largely undefined left queers open to the personal biases of enforcement officers, with these biases being, they argued, largely “antihomosexual.” Consequently, they demanded a concise listing of public offenses related to these terms in order to circumvent these biases. The authors were specifically critical of the way that Sections 147 and 149 of the Criminal Code were invoked to discriminate against same-sex practices, suggesting that they were applied differently to heterosexuals engaged in public sex as opposed to queers. These subsections of the Criminal Code also applied to how Section 661 was invoked upon indictment, which meant that a person arrested under gross indecency would be labeled a dangerous sexual offender and thus denied access to places such as school grounds, bathing areas, or public parks. They viewed this application as “excessive,” especially because it entrenched the already widely held belief that all homosexuals were potential child molesters.

Changes to the age of consent were part of this larger debate. It is no surprise then that demand #3 included a call for a uniform age of consent for all sexual practices, whether they involved premarital heterosexual sex or queer sexual practices. Interestingly, it is under this demand that the issue of same-sex marriage is first mentioned. Here, the authors reveal the arbitrary decisions regarding federal laws concerning age of consent and legal age for entering into a marriage contract for heterosexuals and queer sexual practices. The failure to recognize same-sex marriages meant that queer sexual practices would always be subject to Sections 138, 143, and 144 of the Criminal Code.

Of the ten demands listed in the brief to the federal government and included in the speech read by Hill on 28 August, only demand #6 was listed without an explanation. In this demand, the authors called for the Divorce Act to be amended so as to omit references to homosexuality as grounds for divorce and to insist that homosexuality not preclude the equal right of child custody. While little research has been conducted on the impact of the Divorce Act on queers, this issue played a major role in the lives of gay men and lesbians who lived “double lives” throughout the 1950s and 1960s only to come out of the closet in the 1970s.

As a set, demands #9 and #10 were meant to capture and explain the broader inequalities that shaped the lives of queers in the early 1970s and to push for cultural and social
changes in the way queers were perceived and treated by public officials and law
enforcement agents. Demand #9 was a demand for “all legal rights for homosexuals which
currently exist for heterosexuals,” with the brief including a list of seven points highlighting
various categories that were seen as discriminatory and as continuing evidence of the
“inequities with which homosexuals must contend.” In the broad parameters of demand #9,
the authors emphasized the inability of queer couples to file joint income tax returns
because they could not legally marry, the obstacles to benefiting from public housing, the
ways in which the education system fostered narrow views on homosexuality, the
problems faced by queer couples wanting to adopt children because they could not legally
marry, the employment discrimination faced in the private sector and the exploitation by
landlords, the direct and subtle harassment by police officers, and the exclusion of
homosexuality in the Canadian Bill of Rights. Under this sweeping demand, the authors
called for ending the “second-class citizen” status of homosexuals, an objective also voiced
by the feminist movement in the 1970s.

Finally, demand #10 insisted on changes in social attitudes toward homosexuals from
public and law officials, including “negative attitudes” and expressions of discrimination
and prejudice born out of these attitudes. Under this demand, the authors of the brief called
on public officials to “transcend prejudicial attitudes,” foster a system that is conducive to
“democratic principles,” and be leaders in promoting the “principles of human rights.” In
their final call, the authors and activists who penned the “We Demand” document asked
that government officials meet with Canadian “homophile groups” to discuss the demands
laid out and to support the “purpose of this brief.”

Small but Significant: “We Demand” as Springboard for
Change

Despite the significant place the “We Demand” brief and the protest it provoked on 28
August 1971 hold in what is now called Canadian queer history, there exist inconsistencies
as to how the event is remembered. In his 2011 obituary for Spiers, Ed Jackson, a Toronto-
based activist and original member of The Body Politic collective, wrote that the “We
Demand” brief was “a kind of strategic blueprint for the Canadian movement.” Rick Bébout
(2003) echoes other activists in calling it “the first manifesto of Canada's nationwide gay
liberation movement.” However, the activist Green recalled in an interview given on the
fortieth anniversary of the “We Demand” protest that the event was not necessarily
considered at the time “one of the biggies” (quoted in DiMera 2011). Jackson commented
that gay liberationists were “too busy pushing for action,” but that the importance of the
event loomed larger by 1981 (DiMera 2011), the year of another major gay and lesbian
liberation flash point ignited by a massive raid on bathhouses in Toronto (Hooper 2016).
The 28 August 1971 event is considered a founding moment in Canada’s gay and lesbian
history. While it did not involve the coordinated and national mobilization associated with
the 1981 bathhouse raids, the significance of what is now known as the "We Demand" protest is squarely based on the ten demands articulated by gay and lesbian liberationists. The demands read out on that rainy Saturday afternoon to protesters stand as a reminder of the long road and struggles these activists endured as they fought against the heterosexist character of the state and its discrimination against queers.

SEE ALSO Bathhouse Raids, Toronto (1981); The Body Politic; Stonewall Riots, International Effects of; The Wolfenden Report

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The Well of Loneliness (1928; Radclyffe Hall)

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A novel about a sexual invert, which was subject to obscenity charges upon publication.

Radclyffe Hall (1880–1943; born Marguerite Radclyffe Hall; preferred to be called “John”) was a British novelist at the height of her career when she decided to stake her name and “literary reputation in support of the cause of the inverted” by penning The Well of Loneliness (Hall 2007 [1934], 325). As she told her publisher, she aspired to write “the life of a woman who is a born invert” with “sincerity and truth” while avoiding “all unnecessary coarseness” (quoted in Baker 1985, 202). Arguably, it was the first English novel to focus on female homosexuality without disdain, irony, satire, salaciousness, or evasion. In an era when female homosexuality was emerging as an identity category in medical and sexological discourse, Hall’s earnest depiction was targeted by conservative media and purity organizations, resulting in legal trials and censorship. This backlash discouraged further open queer self-representation in English literature; at the same time The Well entrenched the figure of the “mythic mannish lesbian,” influencing Western constructions of female homosexuality for decades to come (Newton 2001 [1989]). As a work of literature, the novel has been debated as a (flawed) lesbian classic, an emancipatory plea, a conservative embarrassment, and a proto-transgender narrative.

The Sexual Invert in The Well of Loneliness

Hall claimed three didactic purposes in publishing The Well: (1) to encourage inverts to come out publicly; (2) to inspire inverts toward good citizenship and moral living in the face of an intolerant society; and (3) to promote “a more tolerant understanding” of inverts among “normal” (i.e., normatively sexed and gendered) readers. Undertaking the “task of a pioneer” (Hall 2007 [1934], 326), Hall expected to endure a “storm of antagonism” (325).
Radclyffe Hall, Author of The Well of Loneliness, in 1928. Hall’s classic 1928 work is regarded as the first English novel to focus on female homosexuality without disdain, irony, satire, salaciousness, or evasion. It drew the ire of conservatives, who targeted it for legal trials and censorship.

Hall’s choice of the term sexual invert speaks to the medico-historical terminology of the period and to Hall’s own sexological interests and identifications (although the novel is not a fictionalized autobiography). Well-read in British and German sexology, Hall supported the World League for Sexual Reform and hoped her novel, informed by lived experience, would extend sexological knowledge to the general public. Hall secured an endorsement by the British sexologist Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), which prefaced the first edition. The narrative mimics the case studies in Ellis’s Sexual Inversion (1897), directly cites the German sexologists Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902; author of Psychopathia sexualis [1886]) and Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825–1895), and draws on Edward Carpenter’s (1844–1929) championing of the “intermediate sex.” As an identity category, sexual inversion linked same-sex desire with cross-gender (or transgender) identification: congenital female inverted were considered “inverted” in both their sexual object choice (desiring women) and their gender identity (masculine identification). Hall selectively adapted sexology and even elements of psychoanalysis to present inversion as a benign natural variation rather than a sin, vice, crime, or pathological degeneration. While the novel includes a variety of sexual and genderqueer characters who do not conform to the invert medical model, the
protagonist’s overdetermined combination of homosexual orientation and masculine identification has precipitated ongoing debates over how to assess the novel’s sexual and gender positions and politics.

Written in a sentimental realist style, *The Well of Loneliness* follows the development of Stephen Gordon, who is assigned female at birth but morphologically and psychologically presents as masculine, and exclusively desires women. An upper-class aristocrat devoted to her pastoral family estate, Stephen embodies idealized British masculinity: wealthy, educated, refined, Christian, skilled in fencing and riding, conservative in values, chivalric, patriotic, and self-sacrificing. Endorsing the norms of British citizenship to legitimize Stephen as a noble protagonist, the novel also enlists a range of international references—including racial, national, colonial, and religious stereotypes—to stage both Stephen’s sexual/gender difference and her essential Britishness. Thoroughly conventional in all but her sexuality and gender, Stephen is a reluctant and tragic misfit.

Stephen’s childhood and youth include her strained relationship with her mother; her identification with her father, whose hidden sexological knowledge bolsters his acceptance of her difference; her first crush, on a housemaid; a friendship with a Canadian that derails when he confesses his love; a loyal bluestocking governess; the sudden death of Stephen’s father; betrayal by a married bisexual American actress; Stephen’s discovery of her invert identity in her dead father’s sexology books; and her exile from home. Stephen then achieves literary success in London; moves to Paris and joins an international expatriate community of artistic but socially maligned inverts; and serves in the Great War (World War I) as an ambulance driver, where she meets Mary, her central love interest. Unable to provide Mary the protection and social respect afforded heterosexual married couples, Stephen sacrifices Mary, driving her into the arms of her Canadian friend. The novel ends with Stephen, bereft and brokenhearted, as an invert martyr begging God for “the right to our existence!”

**Initial Reception and Trial**

Hall had trouble finding a publisher, but early reviewers were unfazed by its content. Indeed, they praised the novel’s courageous subject matter, while criticizing its artistic weaknesses. Within weeks of publication, however, the novel was the target of an inflammatory article by James Douglas, editor of the *Sunday Express* (London), who had likewise attacked the work of D. H. Lawrence and James Joyce as obscene. In response, Hall’s publisher, Jonathan Cape, consulted the Home Secretary, who recommended withdrawing the novel. Cape then printed the novel in Paris and imported it to England until it was confiscated and charged under the 1857 Obscene Publications Act and the accompanying 1868 Hicklin rule. As this obscenity legislation disregarded literary merit or intended readership, all expert witnesses for the defense were dismissed by the magistrate. Although the novel contains no graphic or salacious prose, it was banned for its positive
portrayal of sexual and gender variants and its appeals for their social acceptance. Indeed, the magistrate judged that the novel’s literary qualities and admirable, long-suffering protagonist made it more attractive, and thus more “poisonous,” to young readers. The novel was also tried for obscenity in the United States in 1929 at the prompting of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. The defense, led by Morris Ernst (who later successfully defended Joyce’s novel *Ulysses*), lost the initial trial but won on appeal.

*The Well of Loneliness* trials galvanized modern censorship debates, raising questions about the legitimacy of the Home Office to regulate literature, the appropriateness of Victorian obscenity laws in modern times, the censoring of sexological knowledge, and the right of popular journalism to influence legal and artistic standards. Prominent writers on both sides of the Atlantic defended the novel’s right to publication but tended to avoid defending homosexuality or the novel’s literary qualities. Widely publicized by its legal scandals, *The Well* became a best seller in the United States and a popular import to England by travelers to Paris. Hall claimed she received 10,000 fan letters. Never out of print, it was finally published legally in England in 1949.

Hall actively promoted *The Well’s* translation, and by her death in 1943 it had been translated into fourteen languages, with more to follow in the latter twentieth century. In some countries it encountered censure or suppression, but it also was defended and promoted. For example, references to inversion were excised in its 1933 Polish translation, but it was enthusiastically prefaced and publicly championed by an outspoken feminist journalist, Irena Krzywicka (*Pająk* 2017). While Western literatures from Germany, France, and Italy had their own lesbian literary histories prior to and contemporary with Hall’s novel, *The Well* maintains an iconic status within and beyond English-speaking countries, as evidenced by its use as a subcultural lesbian code in magazine personal ads by Czechoslovakian women during the communist era (*Sokolová* 2014).

**Ongoing Reception, Influence, and Criticism**

Considering that female homosexuality, unlike male homosexuality, has rarely been criminalized or subject to legal scandal, the trials of *The Well* constitute exceptional, widely reported legal events that focused popular attention on the question of female same-sex desire and crossgender practices. Because the novel’s ban discouraged other English writers from directly and sympathetically addressing similar content, it remained one of the only available novels on the subject in the era prior to the Stonewall riots in New York City in 1969, which is often regarded as the beginning of the gay rights movement. The novel and its trials have been credited with a range of cultural impacts: popularizing the figure of the masculine lesbian; rendering stylish women’s masculine fashion a lesbian signifier; shifting Victorian notions of socially accepted romantic female friendship toward lesbian suspicion; generating greater social and medical interest in female homosexuality; and advancing the transnational spread of sexological knowledge.
The Well is a common touchstone in twentieth-century accounts of lesbian and queer coming-out. Both postwar working-class butches and early transsexuals seeking gender reassignment identified with Stephen, whose relationship with Mary is also a model for midcentury butch/femme dynamics (see Nestle 1992b; Califia 1997). In the post-Stonewall lesbian feminist era of the 1970s and 1980s, the novel came under attack for Stephen’s masculine, patriarchal, and normative identifications. By the 1990s queer studies revived critical interest in the novel, reading it intersectionally within discursive histories of sexuality, while trans and other gender-sensitive readings variously defined Stephen as transsexual or transgender; invoked Stephen as a figure of female masculinity, butchness, or masculine femininity; and analyzed the secondary characters in relation to femme lesbianism.

An iconic text in Anglophone queer literature, The Well also influenced global readers, as evidenced by a Holocaust survivor’s claim that its 1933 Polish translation inspired her survival in a concentration camp: “I wanted to live long enough to kiss a woman” (quoted in Nestle 1992a, 4). In terms of transnational sexual discourses, whether a non-Anglo country has a well-established lesbian literary history, its own locally distinct and historically embedded discourses of female same-sex sexuality, or a limited and emergent literature of lesbian/queer self-representation, The Well of Loneliness and the Western sexological model it popularized are often invoked in literary and cultural comparisons. More research remains to be done on the novel’s global impact, but The Well of Loneliness stands as the most influential twentieth-century lesbian novel in English.

SEE ALSO Scandals in Europe

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The works of the nineteenth-century Irish author Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) were first introduced into China in the first decade of the twentieth century. In 1909 Lu Xun and his brother Zuoren Zhou translated Wilde's works and selected them for their co-edited *Yuwai xiaoshuoji* (1909; Collection of foreign fiction). From 1915 to 1923, almost every year, important periodicals and literary magazines such as *Xin qingnian* (Youth magazine), *Minguo ribao* (Republican daily), and *Xiaoshuo yuebao* (Fiction monthly) translated and published different works (mostly plays) by Wilde. Among them, Dafu Yu's introduction to *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890) was published in the 1922 inaugural edition of *Chuangzao jikan* (Creation quarterly). In the same year, Wilde's prose poetry, essays, and treatises on literature “were splashed across all manner of newspapers and magazines” (Yue 2016, 145–146). At the end of 1922, Shangwu Yinshuguan (The Commercial Press) published a collection of his essays under the title *Yuzhong ji* (Diary in the prison), including *The Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898) and *De Profundis* (1905). In 1924 Shen Hong adapted Wilde’s play titled *Lady Windermere’s Fan* (1893), which garnered rave reviews after it was performed under the title *Shao nainai de shanzi* (The young lady's fan). The period from 1919 to 1923 was the peak in the wave of Wilde-mania. Almost all of Wilde’s major works were repeatedly translated. His four comedies and his play *Salome* (1893), his fairy tales, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, *De Profundis*, and *The Ballad of Reading Gaol*, along with his essays and prose poems, sparked intense interest among intellectuals both in Wilde himself and in the aestheticist and decadent movements in vogue in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century.

It should be noted that, unlike in the West, the study of comparative literature in China did not originate in academic institutions; instead, it was closely related to political and social reform movements and was an integral part of those activities, as Zhouhan Yang (1990) has argued. Therefore, Wilde’s influence in China has never been simply literary or aesthetic. Instead, it has been entangled with China’s modernization. As noted by Daiyun Yue, the birth of Chinese comparative literature is inseparable from the desire to revive the nation and to renew and develop its literature: “It started with the introduction of foreign literature, and strove for a rediscovery of the Self in the light of foreign literature, seeking a
new path for development,” which was the main agenda of the era’s cultural movements (2016, 4).

**Wilde-Mania and the Decadent Dandies of Shanghai (1909–1949)**

Chinese intellectuals of the early twentieth century were eager to get rid of entrenched Confucian conventions, and they identified their own revolutionary desires with Wilde’s Bohemian contempt for bourgeois virtues in Victorian Britain. Wilde’s influence was mostly felt in Shanghai, because of its geopolitical situation as a metropolitan treaty port, and was limited to the intelligentsia and the upper class. He was most popular among intellectuals who had studied in top universities overseas. Xunmei Shao (1906–1968), for instance, a Cambridge University alumnus, was the most glamorous literary dandy in Shanghai’s polite society. Born into an upper-class family, Shao was a handsome, fashionable young man and a true connoisseur of art, according to accounts from his contemporaries collected by Leo Ou-fan Lee (1999). Shao—along with Zhimo Xu, Dafu Yu, Han Tian (the first translator of Wilde’s *Salome* into Chinese), Lingfeng Ye, and other nonleftist members of the Chuangzao She (1921–1929; Creation Society)—was a vocal advocate of aestheticism in China. However, his foppish lifestyle and liberal attitude toward sex attracted heavy criticism from the League of Left-Wing Writers and from revolutionaries, such as Lu Xun (Lee 1999).

Another dandy who enraged Lu Xun was the bold Lingfeng Ye (c. 1905–1975). Although not as handsome and rich as his friend Shao, Ye was an aspiring trendsetter, painter, collector, decadent writer, and sexologist. After he fell in love with Wilde’s *Salome*, Ye actively promoted and imitated its illustrator, Aubrey Beardsley (1872–1898), earning himself the sobriquet of “China’s Beardsley” (Lee 1999). While the social ethos of the time was to rebel against tradition, Ye pushed the boundary further with his daring attempt to write a homoerotic love story, *Jindi* (1931; Forbidden zone). The male protagonist, who is evidently modeled on Wilde’s character Dorian Gray, is an incredibly beautiful college boy who starts to lose interest in women while he develops a strong passion for literature and is attracted to a like-minded male friend. This ambitious work was left unfinished, however, and ends just at the point at which the male friend bashfully praises the hero’s effeminate and beautiful looks. The reason for this sudden end to the narrative has remained a mystery; some scholars have conjectured that Ye lacked the fictional technique to proceed, but Lee (1999) suggests the reason for the work’s failure may have more to do with Ye’s “cultural memory” of the androgynous hero from classical Chinese literature—namely, Jia Baoyu from *Honglou meng* (1791; Dream of the red chamber). The Baoyu character bequeathed the aesthetic ideal of a Chinese dandy in the image of a young, handsome, and extremely sensitive “pale-faced” scholar (*baimian shusheng*) who is “neither defiant of social convention nor debauched in pursuit of wanton depravity” (Lee 1999, 261).

Therefore, the Chinese dandy is ultimately very different from Dorian Gray in terms of
ideology; and Ye thus could not proceed further into the forbidden zone suggested by the story's title. Had Ye finished the work, a more decadent character might have emerged, and the mania for the fin de siècle aestheticist and decadent movements might have had a deeper impact in China's modern literary history.

The mania for Wilde and his aestheticist and decadent ideas continued into the late 1940s. Xiaoyi Zhou's 2000 account of Wilde's reception clearly documents that by the end of the 1940s there had been at least seven translators of Wilde's fairy tales, seven translations of Salome, seven of Lady Windermere's Fan, four of An Ideal Husband (1895), and two of The Picture of Dorian Gray, as well as translations of A Woman of No Importance (1893), De Profundis, The Importance of Being Earnest (1895), and The Ballad of Reading Gaol. This proliferation of translations clearly demonstrates Wilde's popularity in China.

**A Period of Censorship (1949–1970s)**

China witnessed two spikes in the translation of Wilde's plays: between the 1910s and the 1940s and from the 1980s to the twenty-first century. However, Wilde's works disappeared from the public eye in the period between 1949 and 1966 and maintained a marginal position until the late 1970s, which reflects a changing national consciousness.

With the establishment of the Communist regime in 1949, China's literary and educational spheres came under the purview of the League of Left-Wing Writers. The league basically adopted the ideological position of Soviet Marxism, which consistently denounced artistic decadence as corrupt and unhealthy—as anathema to socialist realism (Lee 1999). What Wilde represented was in conflict with the communists' social ethos. Additionally, while Wilde's conceited personality was deemed courageous and revolutionary in the pre-1949 period, in the Communist period, his flamboyant personality and his extravagant taste for luxurious commodities were disdained as features of capitalism.

Finally, Wilde's “unusual” sexual orientation was deemed as the “deadly sin” of capitalism, which was believed to be subtly played out in his works. Communist scholars considered his “unusual” relationship with “Bosie”/Lord Alfred Douglas (Wilde's lover) even more distasteful than his conceited personality. The government closely kept his relationship with Douglas a secret from the public for a long time through censorship. To English-speaking Chinese scholars, Wilde's sexual orientation was understood as a taboo subject, especially during the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). It was not until the end of the twentieth century that his history with Douglas was finally disclosed to the Chinese public through a bibliography written by Wilde's friend Frank Harris, translated by Cai Xinle and Zhang Ning, and published in 1996 by Henan Renmin Press. To guide the Communists away from the “leprous sin of the capitalism” (homosexuality), scholars of the Cultural Revolution managed to demonize Wilde. His image in the eyes of the Chinese Communist scholars consequently became synonymous with the bad influence from the West. His name was essentially deleted from the collective memory of almost three generations of
the Chinese people, with only his collection of stories for children, *The Happy Prince, and Other Tales* (1888), as an exception. Remarkably, high school textbooks in both English and Chinese during this period featured the Chinese version of "The Happy Prince" story.

**The Revival Period (1980s Onward)**

A backlash against the political censorship of literature and art in the 1980s followed the silencing of Wilde's voice. With Deng Xiaoping’s economic reform plan (1976), China expanded its contact with the outside world. Literature and other cultural trends were imported. Large groups of Chinese youths lined up to buy literary works, films, and other cultural products from all around the world, and especially from the West. These young adults became the earliest version of Chinese hipsters and were dubbed *wenyi qingnian* ("literary and artistic youth" or "cultured youth") by the general public of that period. Scholars gradually brought Wilde's works back into the public eye. Wilde's works became popular again, leading to the revival of the academic study of Wilde in the 1980s and 1990s. Jie Zeng, for instance, from Southwest Minzu University, was the first to call for scholars to study Wilde from an unbiased perspective (*Zeng 1988*). The most important Wildean scholar of that time, Xiaoyi Zhou, based at Peking University, contributed valuable criticism, such as the influential essay "Wilde, Dandies, and the Aesthetic Way of Living" (*1994*). "The Happy Prince" story was translated again and was dramatized as an audio play produced by the celebrated Shanghai Film Dubbing Studio.

The circulation of Wilde's works surpassed the levels of the 1920s and 1930s. More people from different areas of China became familiar with his works. In the twenty-first century, adaptations of Wilde's work include Liming Zhou's production, *Buke erxi* (*2015; The Importance of Being Earnest*), which incorporated China's current popular culture into Wilde's play, linking Wilde to China's “national husband”—the super-rich businessman Sicong Wang—and the extremely popular and notorious queer novelist Jingming Guo, both of whom have contributed to Chinese society's commodity fetishism. Zhou, the play's director and producer, stressed that China's current social milieu allowed the general public to truly understand Wilde's works because the rise of an affluent middle class and the awakening of a consumer culture were beginning to resemble the Victorian society of the nineteenth century (*Southern Weekly 2015*).

Indeed, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, interest in Wilde began to extend beyond literature. Affluent middle-class Chinese, with a desire to exhibit their economic and cultural capital, began to adopt Wilde as a guide to a glamorous and refined Western lifestyle. Among all the Western writers known in China, Wilde is viewed as the one who most perfectly combines inner talent and outer beauty. Unsurprisingly, Wilde the writer has become Wilde the fashion guide to a dandyish lifestyle, much desired among young affluent Chinese.
Oscar Wilde in Advertisements Targeting the Chinese Market

Oscar Wilde's status as an icon of physical beauty can readily be seen in the number of advertisements for beauty products targeted at young mainland Chinese consumers that feature his image. For example, the website Red Scarf, the most popular British lifestyle website in Mandarin Chinese, included a few images of Wilde in an advertisement for hydrating masks in 2014. Interestingly, this ad had been specifically modified for the Chinese market from the original ad targeting the UK market, with Wilde replacing an image of a young lady with East Asian physical features peeling off the beauty mask. Red Scarf's subscribers are mostly Chinese bobos (short for bourgeois bohemians) born in the 1990s. The marketing company had clearly understood Wilde's popularity among them. While the female model in the original ad represents conventional advertising strategy—appealing to consumers' narcissistic (mis)identification with a same-gender model—the original ad limited its target group to women only. In the Chinese ad, however, Wilde is able to attract not just heterosexual women, but also metrosexual and homosexual men. (Metrosexual is a term for heterosexual male urbanites who are meticulous about their appearance and are devoted to fashion, although bisexual and homosexual men can also be included in this category.) Wilde's image, given his association with a queer identity, speaks to a wider range of customers with different gender identities. Wilde’s own sexual orientation and his aestheticized body blur the gender boundary of the ad, opening up the otherwise tightly policed barrier of gender separation in the cosmetic industry. His aestheticized body is a manifestation of a more tolerant and inclusive commercial environment.

Deeply influenced by the Japanese fujoshi culture (a term for the young female fans of yaoi, a genre of malemale romance narratives) that has entered China in the form of animation and manga, bobos born in the 1990s are not only tolerant of but also zealous in welcoming gender and sexual diversity. Although this group represents only a fraction of the Chinese population, it is a major component of this ad’s target group, for the fujoshi phenomenon in China is largely class based. Fujoshi fandom requires participants to be active in commercial events such as cosplay (a contraction of the words costume and play, a performance art in which participants called cosplayers wear costumes and fashion accessories to represent a specific character from a work of fiction or film franchise), comic cons, and trade shows, where attendees can collect exclusive action figures. All the costumes, bric-a-brac, and books are expensive and available only in specialized stores in big cities; hence, only those from urban bourgeois families are likely to be able to afford such a frivolous hobby. Within the same social class, Chinese students who subscribe to Red Scarf overlap with the fujoshi group. Moreover, even with those who do not self-label as active fujoshis, Red Scarf’s subscribers are more or less influenced by a fujoshi youth culture that is omnipresent in Chinese social media. The original British version of the ad
does not target queer consumers, and neither does the Chinese version, at least not per se. Yet the inclusion and appropriation of Wilde’s aestheticized body have enabled more possibilities for the representation of this marginalized group in mass media. To those who know Wilde’s queer identity, this ad can be read as a welcoming gesture to LGBT individuals. Whether intended or not, the ad exploits Wilde’s position as a gay martyr. Based on this, the tragic aura of a fallen hero amplifies the beauty of Wilde’s image in the ad. Therefore, while Wilde’s flamboyant aesthetic costume hooks viewers’ attention, the immaterial charisma of this tragic talent immediately enhances the attractiveness of the beauty product itself. To potential customers, the beauty masks are no longer just masks boasting a hydrating function, like those of other brands. Instead, this brand of beauty mask takes on the allure of the star-crossed romance between an artistic talent and the beautiful young aristocrat Lord Alfred Douglas. This feature is more attractive than the pragmatic hydrating function to LGBT individuals and the bobos’ romantic souls.

Similarly, a French perfume house named Jardins d’Écrivains has manufactured a perfume named after Wilde. This perfume was also introduced in China on a website dedicated to perfume appreciation. The writer of the perfume advertisement, Hao’er Zhang, retold the story of Wilde’s tragic life trajectory. The Chinese version is gripping in its emphasis on the carnation at the heart of the scent. As stated on the perfume’s official website, this eau de parfum’s olfactory pyramid is as follows: “top notes are bergamot and grape; middle notes are fig, carnation, and tea; base notes are oakmoss and vetiver.” The selection of ingredients wonderfully captures Wilde’s signature. The tropical fruits in the top notes represent Wilde’s fascination with the Hellenistic culture in his early style. The inclusion of carnation in the middle note is an obvious reference to the mysterious green carnation, a famous symbol for homosexual affiliation in nineteenth-century England popularized by Wilde (Stetz 2000). However, this reference to green carnations has not been established among Chinese customers. Hence, to make this perfume more appealing, the Chinese ad emotionally introduces the meaning of the flower, asserting that this carnation note added a strong sense of rebellion and also hints of homosexuality. The green carnation is the totem of a bohemian lifestyle in Robert Smythe Hichens’s infamous 1894 eponymous novel (The Green Carnation) based on Wilde’s life, which encourages defiance and contempt for bourgeois conventions.

Yet Wildean dandies and Wilde himself would not give up the glistening commodities and artifacts that encapsulate a glamorous lifestyle. This is particularly evident in the eleventh chapter of Wilde’s novel The Picture of Dorian Gray. This amalgamation of spiritual pursuit and material enjoyment comfortably, if not perfectly, matches the lifestyle standards that current Chinese bobos enjoy and aspire to. The Chinese ad interprets the green carnation as an uncompromising gesture that homosexuals hold against the heteronormative establishment, as well as art connoisseurs against philistine social confines. Wilde in the perfume ad becomes a heroic figure, conferring charisma on the product in question. The company sells its product by using Wilde’s identity as a gay martyr and his courageous
gesture of living life “against the grain.”

The key point of a perfume ad is what the smell represents. Therefore, those sections of Chinese society who want to express their nonconformist attitude and their sympathy with Wilde may be tempted to buy this perfume. Thus, it has a symbolic value in terms of self-representation. This perfume’s original French ad is simply the perfume bottle pictured with a Greek goddess, lending it a classical but unimaginative feeling. Yet, in the Chinese version, Wilde’s photograph is again adopted to speak for the product. Wilde’s buttonhole flower has been digitally changed to the color green to symbolize the green carnation. Clearly, the color green creates a link with the green liquid in the perfume bottle. The intermediary object—Wilde’s buttonhole flower—in representing an intransigent attitude toward social norms, becomes attached to the perfume. Judith Williamson (1978) insightfully decodes ads, emphasizing that something represents a value, and its interchangeability with other things gives them “value” too, which is currency in advertisements. Because of this currency, Wilde’s immaterial charisma is securely attached to the otherwise meaningless bottle of perfume. When customers purchase the perfume, they purchase, in essence, a piece of Wilde’s identity.

Wilde’s charisma, perceived as that of a persecuted gay writer, becomes a surprisingly attractive selling point. His gay identity appeals to the LGBT community and to those who have a rebellious nature and wish to manifest their contempt for social conventions. It also appeals to those who feel compassion for the unfortunate genius. The tragic figure molded both by the public’s imagination and the advertising industry’s rhetoric is exploited to sell both the beauty masks and the perfume.

**Wilde as Hero to China's LGBTQ Community**

LGBTQ+ groups in China consider Wilde a hero. On the website Fridae: Chuanlian Yazhou Tongzhi (Fridae: Connecting Asian queers), a 2007 article titled “O, Wangerde!” (Oh Wilde!) emotionally narrates the author Wenfeng Ouyang’s admiration for Wilde’s courage to fight for the “love that dare not speak its name” in his trial for “gross indecency” a century ago. Ouyang, who is queer himself, commented as follows: “But now I don’t fear anymore because I know that I’m not alone. I know Oscar, a great man, made the same choice. He is with me, and I know if little boys or girls somewhere in the world after reading my article will stop fearing their identities, I can stop crying but smile and have a sweet dream.” Many different websites and social media platforms in China, such as the WeChat public platform Beijing Gay Center, the avant-garde website VICE China, and the Mtime film rating website, have published homages to Wilde by queer authors, who consider him a spiritual guide. Apart from the inspiration that Wilde’s martyrdom provides to the Chinese LGBTQ+ community, Wilde’s identity as a literary master also attracts cultured youth who adore his witty words and sensual descriptions. On the aforementioned websites, for instance, all the articles praised Wilde’s language genius and paradoxical philosophy.
SEE ALSO Aestheticism and Decadence, Nineteenth-Century; Boys Love (Yaoi) Manga; Wilde Trials, International Significance of

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In spring 1895 the Irish-born wit and playwright Oscar Wilde (1854–1900), then at the peak of his fame, underwent a pair of criminal trials for homosexuality. The trials helped set negative public images of gay men and thereby heightened their social ostracism and legal repression.

**Background**

In February 1895 Wilde received a card at his club in London from the Marquess of Queensberry, sent “to Oscar Wilde, posing as a somdomite [sic].” The card marked the climax of a campaign of harassment by Queensberry, who was disturbed by Wilde’s long-standing and relatively public love affair with his son Lord Alfred Douglas. Enraged by the card and egged on by Douglas, Wilde sued Queensberry for libel.

The Queensberry libel trial opened on 3 April 1895. The defense introduced evidence that led Wilde to abandon the case and resulted in his arrest shortly thereafter on charges of “gross indecency” (easier to prove than sodomy). The prosecution brought in two young men, who testified that they had had sex with Wilde for money and presents. Edward Clarke, Wilde’s counsel, introduced doubt as to the men’s reliability and moral character; one was revealed as a blackmailer, another a perjurer. When asked on the stand about a line in a poem by Douglas, “the love that dare not speak its name,” Wilde responded with an eloquent defense of platonic (and intergenerational) same-sex love. In the end, the jury was unable to agree on a verdict. Wilde was brought to trial a second time on 22 May. This time, he was convicted, and on 25 May 1895 he was sentenced to two years at hard labor. Wilde’s reputation was destroyed and his health shattered by his imprisonment. After his release in 1897, he moved to France, where he died three years later.

The case attracted widespread coverage both in Great Britain and beyond. In one sense, it was not homosexuality as such for which Wilde was judged, but his ideas and personality. As a leading figure of the Aesthetic movement, Wilde had proclaimed that art and artists could not be judged by common moral standards: he dressed eccentrically and acted in a
theatrical manner, while his writings boldly satirized social hypocrisy and sexual double standards. Furthermore, Wilde was an Irishman from a prominent Nationalist family. Nonetheless, his sexuality was central to the hostility he inspired, as his homosexual practices were the visible sign and proof of his “decadence” and of the threat he posed to the social order. As in the case of Sir Roger Casement a generation later, British critics used Wilde to associate (Irish) political dissidence with sexual deviance.

European Coverage and Reaction

Public attitudes toward Wilde were both reflected and fueled by the daily accounts of the trials that filled the British press. Although a few papers, such as the Manchester Guardian, merely printed short descriptions of events on its back pages, the London Times daily printed lengthy front-page descriptions of the testimony. Meanwhile, other, more “popular” newspapers devoted extensive reportorial and editorial coverage to the affair and maintained a steady stream of invective against Wilde. Following his conviction, the Westminster Gazette, praising the verdict, claimed, “It will undoubtedly do much good, not only in punishing actual criminals and putting the fear of the law into others, but in checking unwelcome tendencies in art and literature” (quoted in Gay 1986, 203). The St. James Gazette went even further. Calling Wilde a “perverted criminal” and the sentence “heavy but well-deserved,” it decried the overuse of tolerance and claimed that intolerance
was the only thing that could save society. “The painful and scandalous exposure of these weeks may do something to bring back a dash of wholesome bigotry into our art, our literature, our society, our view of things in general” (quoted in Gay 1986, 204). The Wilde case reinforced existing social taboos against homosexuality and placed gay men in danger of blackmail and prosecution. In E. M. Forster’s 1913–1914 novel Maurice (unpublishable when written because of its homosexual theme), a gay man describes himself as “an unspeakable of the Oscar Wilde sort” (Forster 1981, 159).

The Wilde trials attracted coverage across Europe. Dutch and German newspapers discussed the Wilde affair at length. Social Democratic theorist Eduard Bernstein, living in exile in London, wrote articles in Neue Zeit defending Wilde and denouncing laws against homosexuality (Bernstein 1977). German sexologist and militant Magnus Hirschfeld, who decried Wilde’s conviction as a case of judicial injustice, was directly inspired by it to help found the Wissenschaftlich-humanitäres Komitee (Scientific-Humanitarian Committee), a gay rights organization, two years later. Interest was especially high in France, where Wilde was well known, and public opinion was likely influenced by his Francophile reputation. Paris newspapers mixed condemnation of Wilde’s sexual crimes with sympathy for Wilde as a victim of the hypocrisy of British society. Le Radical proclaimed:

The outrageous trial of the symbolist poet Oscar Wilde has raised an obvious indignation in England. The virtuous Albion, very indulgent toward this kind of debauchery which she routinely practices, is only sorry when her mask of false modesty and Protestant hypocrisy is snatched from her.... Oscar Wilde is not a monstrous, abnormal Englishman, unrivaled in the British Isles; he is simply an awkward Englishman, who has let himself be caught.

(MONTMARTRE 1895; TRANSLATIONS HERE AND BELOW BY GREG ROBINSON)
British Press Coverage of the Oscar Wilde Trial. The front page of the Police News from 4 May 1895 illustrates scenes from Wilde's first trial. Accounts of the trials filled the British and international press, the coverage of which slanted heavily against Wilde.

Furthermore, the harshness of Wilde's prison sentence provoked a storm of French condemnation. In March 1896 the Mercure de France reported that Wilde’s French-language play Salome had been performed in Paris and that “the name of Oscar Wilde was acclaimed with all the admiring enthusiasm multiplied by indignation” (Mercure March 1896). The Mercure de France subsequently reported, “All free spirits are agreed in denouncing the English justice system in the condemnation of the unfortunate Wilde” (Mercure July 1896). On 4 June 1895 the conservative journal XIXe siècle stated, “Oscar Wilde, English writer who was sentenced to two years of ‘hard labour’ for having dreamed of ancient loves,” was “deranged in his senses and his brains, [and] was worthy of confinement in Charenton [a French mental hospital]…. He deserved two years in a cell making shoes or lampshades.” Yet its editors insisted that the British government, by its excessive sentence, had awakened universal sympathy for Wilde.

The first extended study of Wilde's trials was a chapter in a French book, Marc-André Raffalovich’s Uranisme et uniséKualité (1896; Uranism and unisexuality). Curiously, Raffalovich (lover of Wilde's friend John Gray) defended homosexuality (“unisexuality”) but stridently denounced Wilde as a criminal and public danger: “I do not mean [for] the sexual
acts for which he was reproached, but the role he played” (224). Wilde, he pronounced, had been so flattered in his vanity by his popularity in English society that he thought he could act with impunity and not disturb social relations.

**Reporting from North America and Elsewhere**

The Wilde case also attracted particular attention in the United States, where Wilde was a well-known personality as a result of a successful lecture tour in 1882, and where his writings were popular. To be sure, the news did not reach all sectors of the American public. Mass-market weeklies such as the *Nation*, *Harper’s*, and *Puck* ignored the Wilde trials in their pages. The British scholar Bertrand Russell later noted that when he visited the United States in 1896, nobody he spoke to seemed to know anything of the Wilde affair (*Katz 1976*).

Still, many US newspapers reported on the trials, especially New York City papers. Apart from the sensational weekly *National Police Gazette*, which published its own correspondent’s reports, all the journals made use of United Press dispatches from England. The coverage of the trials was almost universally hostile toward Wilde. (The anarchist militants Emma Goldman and “Lucifer” [Moses Harman] were among the few to defend Wilde publicly.) That said, there were variations in newspaper coverage that reflected cleavages in public attitudes across class and ethnic lines in regard to the “unspeakable” subject of homosexuality. A striking feature of the lengthy *New York Times* coverage of the Wilde trials is its failure to state clearly the charges against him or the nature of the illegal conduct at issue. Jonathan Ned Katz later argued that such delicacy “either left readers quite in the dark about Wilde’s transgression, or forced them to use their imaginations to make sense of the reports” (*1976, 258*). For example, on 6 April 1895 the *Times* described the young men who testified for the prosecution. “The ages of these men varied from eighteen to twenty-three years. They were of the class of servants and valets, not of Mr. Wilde’s station in life, not interested in literature or art, yet they addressed this distinguished dramatist by his first name.” Although the *Times* did not describe Wilde’s precise offense, readers could be trusted to grasp the connection between intimate cross-class relations and immorality.

Reports in popular newspapers such as the *New York Sun* contained rather more free discussions of the more delicate (or lurid) portions of the trial testimony. These articles were also sharply moralistic in tone, mixed with a fair amount of calculated sensationalism. Because of Wilde’s Irish origins and renown as a social critic and socialist, the popular press was more balanced in its assessment of his life and achievements. Yet, one journalist admitted that he attacked Wilde even more harshly because his crimes discredited by association the social reforms he espoused.

Wilde’s trials were also reported in Canada (which had its own highly publicized “Oscar
Wilde” case that same year, when three men in Regina, Saskatchewan, were indicted for “gross indecency”; see Dick 2009). The most diverse coverage was in the cosmopolitan city of Montreal, where comment broke down along linguistic and class lines. The Montreal Daily Star and the Quebec Daily Mercury, which served a largely elite and Anglophile clientele, covered the trials in great detail, relying primarily on dispatches from London. Neither took any editorial position on Wilde. Montreal’s other mainstream English-language daily, the Montreal Gazette, carried only a few brief reports on the Wilde affair. The French-language newspapers, such as La Patrie, La Minerve, and La Presse, reacted more ambiguously to the trials. Like their counterparts in France, French Canadian editors were venomous regarding Wilde’s homosexuality but also expressed sympathy for him as a victim of British hypocrisy over “le vice anglais.” On 20 April 1895 the drama magazine Le Passe Temps included an article by a pseudonymous critic, “Silvio,” who deplored Wilde’s “turpitudes” and lack of manliness:

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He tried all over to bring about a reform of male dress, in the name of “écectisme.” He only wanted effeminate men. It was long thought that this mania concealed absurdity, before it was realized that it resulted from a shameful passion. As debauched as the residents of ancient Sodom, Oscar Wilde wilted the golden youth of London with whom he had relations.
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(82–83)

Nine days later, on 29 April 1895, La Patrie commented, “One need not believe that the impure and pagan morals which this quintessential litterateur boasts are very common in England, although they are more common there than in central Europe.”

News of Wilde’s case passed on to other parts of the globe. In particular, British newspapers distributed in India and Africa offered significant coverage of the trials. The Australian daily press offered front-page attention to cabled dispatches from London about Wilde’s trials (even as performances of Wilde’s plays were enthusiastically received). It is unclear how much lasting impact Wilde’s case had in these regions, although it is fairly certain that they did nothing to inspire protest against British colonial antisodomy laws. Outside the British Empire, reactions to Wilde’s trials appear to have been more sporadic.

Wilde’s trials represent a rare moment of international attention to questions of (homo)sexuality. While Wilde’s challenge to established mores in his writings and friendships with young men provoked the most furious denunciations of him, his prosecution led foreign commentators to use Wilde as a stick to beat the British for their hypocritical prudery.
SEE ALSO  Blackmail; Scandals in Europe; Wilde in Sinophone Culture

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The practice of demonizing African LGBTQ individuals by associating same-sex practices with witchcraft and the occult.

In many African countries, the moral panic about the supposed proliferation of homosexuality is increasingly translated in a pervasive vocabulary of occultism, malevolence, and devilry (Pierce 2016; Tonda 2016; Geschiere 2017). Indeed, across Africa, alarming rumors and frightening stories, often echoed by local media, now frame gays and lesbians as dangerous sorcerers or witches who reportedly congregate at night to indulge themselves in unnatural sexual practices, including same-sex acts (Izugbara 2011). Popular urban folktales also describe homosexuality as a new form of sexual vampirism permitting some powerful gays and lesbians to rob vulnerable and powerless people of their vital energy in order to reinforce their own power. In addition, homosexual people are said to use their alleged mystical and invisible sexual organs to infect their victims with dangerous diseases or to dispossess them of their good fortune and blessing (Abega 2002; Geschiere 1997; Mather 2005). It is widely believed that careless or unscrupulous people who consent to have sex with these so-called dangerous sexual vampires could experience misfortune in their lives (Abega 2002). Some men have reportedly lost their sexual organs as a result of such intimacy (Mather 2005).

Some ethnographic works on witchcraft in southern and West Africa indicate that many people strongly believe that members of homosexual sects not only mystically undermine their victims’ reproductive potentials and good luck, they also allegedly destroy their own procreative capacities in order to free themselves from the moral obligations to reproduce for the well-being of society (Auslander 1993). A study of Igbo cosmology revealed that these populations from the southeastern region of Nigeria believe that wizards and witches, who are widely believed to have proclivities for homosexual practices, “dance naked at night around big mystical trees or large bonfires deep in the heart of impenetrable forests, while drinking or eating their and others’ semen and wombs respectively, or engaging in sexual orgies among themselves” (Izugbara 2011, 545). That is why in many West African societies where homosexuality is generally associated with barrenness and infertility, middle-class unmarried men and women as well as childless adult persons are often viewed as selfish pédérastes sectaires (sectarian pederasts) and sorcières lesbiennes (lesbian witches).
Although in a number of African countries the political and social rejection of same-sex relations is increasingly backed by both nativist and culturalist ideologies (Ndjio 2012, 2013), one should be cautious about the temptation of exoticizing Africa, and especially of reducing the occultization of same-sex eroticism to a so-called African superstitious and irrational mentality, because both official and popular discourses on the occult sexualities often take up Pentecostal/Charismatic Christian moral concerns with “devilish sexual practices” (Kaoma 2009, 53). For example, in a 2014 article titled “Homosexuality, Politics and Pentecostal Nationalism in Zambia,” Adriaan S. van Klinken argues that the framing of Zambia as a Christian nation (by the former Zambian president Frederick Chiluba) has given rise to what he refers to as “Pentecostal nationalism” in which homosexuality is viewed as a threat to the purity of the nation, and is especially associated with the devil.

**Homosexual: The Witch of the Village**

The association of homoeroticism with sexual vampirism or evil is not something new in Africa, as contemporary narratives about so-called homosexual witchcraft only update the old nativist discourses that initially associated deviant sexual behavior with devilry (Rachewiltz 1964). Indeed, previous ethnographic accounts of witchcraft beliefs in Africa have pointed out the general tendency in most traditional African societies to interpret sexual inversion in terms of “occult sexuality” (Niehaus 2002). For example, in the traditional Azande society studied by E. E. Evans-Pritchard (1970), lesbians were generally regarded as witches who supposedly gave birth to cats and monstrous creatures. Because of these popular beliefs, homosexual women could be executed, flogged, or expelled from their households and the community at large.

The traditional Beti society from the forest region of Cameroon provides another example. Beti society was marked by deep-seated fear and prejudice concerning homosexual practices, which were generally seen as a kind of witchcraft that not only compromised both masculinity and femininity but also induced infecundity in women and impotency in men. According to the Beti cosmology, homosexual persons were involved in the “sorcery of evu”—that is, a kind of mystical cannibalism or vampirism of other people’s sexual potency and procreative power (Abega 2002; Ombolo 1990). The Beti believed that a homosexual person possessed an “invisible double” whose sex is generally different from that of his or her visible body. For example, female homosexuals allegedly possessed masculine doubles, while male homosexuals were said to have feminine doubles. That is why homosexuality was generally conceived of as the “heterosexuality of doubles” that typically took place in the mystical realm of sorcery (Abega 2002). The Beti also shared the belief that lesbian witches are endowed with an invisible virile and prominent phallus with which they sexually take possession at night of the bodies of their innocent victims while the latter are sleeping (Abega 2002).

This seemingly dystopian account of same-sex relations in precolonial Africa at large
should not obscure the fact that not all traditional Bantu societies developed homophobic prejudices and stereotypes about homosexual persons or strongly believed that homosexuality was a dangerous sexual practice. In some cases, these traditional societies proved to be more tolerant of same-sex desires than many contemporary African societies that are marked by sexual intolerance (Epprecht 2014). For example, in his Sexe et société en Afrique noire (1990), which discloses the experience and imagination of sexuality in traditional Beti society, Jean-Pierre Ombolo noted that even though Beti culture tended to discourage same-sex relations, people tended not to ostracize their fellows who displayed homosexual proclivities. The same was true of socially unapproved sexual practices such as masturbation and hermaphroditism, characterized by Ombolo as “sexual perversions,” but tolerated by the local population. In addition, in Beti society, as in many Bantu communities, the social tolerance toward sexual inverts often took a form of strategic silence, feigning unawareness, and duplicitous dissimulation of deviant sexual behavior by their fellow villagers (Ombolo 1990).

Ombolo’s comments echo the observations made by the German ethnographer Günter Tessmann in the early twentieth century about the Bantu-speaking Pahouin from the southern region of Cameroon, northern Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea (Tessmann 1921b [1913]). According to Tessmann, these slash-and-burn farmers were not ashamed of engaging in homosexual acts generally considered either as “a medicine for health” (Tessmann 1921a, 133; translated by Murray and Roscoe 1998) or a funny game for both adults and youth (see also Murray and Roscoe 1998). The same author has noted greater understanding of same-sex relations, notably adolescent males’ reciprocal sodomitical intercourses among the Bafia from the central region of Cameroon (Tessmann 1934).

As in the past, contemporary Cameroonian society is also permeated with popular beliefs in homosexualité occulte (occult homosexuality), although current forms of “sexual occultism” are widely believed to originate from outside the country, notably from French neocolonialism and Western cultural imperialism, unlike the previous forms that were said to breed within Cameroonian society. For example, S. N. Nyeck’s work on the popular imagination of what she refers to as “invisible eroticism” points out the crucial role played by the well-known French colonial administrator and medical doctor Louis-Paul Aujoulat (1910–1973) in the spread of so-called esoteric homosexuality among postcolonial Cameroonian elites (Nyeck 2013, 153; see also Nken 2014). Contemporary nativist discourses on occult sexualities also relate their emergence and expansion in Cameroon to presentday global capitalism (Ayissi 2009; Ndjio 2015).

**Homosexuality, Mokoagne Moni, and Sodomite Power**

One of the most notable changes in the African imagination of homosexuality is the linking of same-sex sexuality with the sorcery of wealth, and especially what some anthropologists have termed “occult economies” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). The popular
representation of homosexuality as a mystical sexual practice enabling some people to gain riches and power in society has induced the general perception of homosexuals as rich sorcerers who allegedly accumulate what is commonly known in Cameroon as *mokoagne moni*—that is, wealth obtained through occult means that often involves engagement in satanic or devilish sexual practices (*Ndjio 2008*). Across Africa, common beliefs assume that some people are involved in homosexuality in order to get “magic money,” which is reminiscent of the “juju money” known by many Ghanaians (*Mather 2005*). It is also widely believed that the local big men (members of the political and bureaucratic class who enjoy privileged positions within the society) become rich and powerful not only as a result of their predatory actions with regard to the state’s resources but also because of their connections with the so-called growing homosexual sects (*L’Anecdote 2006, 4*; translation by Basile Ndjio; see also *Nouvelle Afrique 2006*). In a number of African countries, there are widespread alarming rumors about prominent state officials and successful businessmen who are said to indulge in homosexual practices for magical ends, most notably, to achieve their political and economic ambitions. In Gabon, some popular homophobic and antigovernmental chants often depict the Gabonese political and bureaucratic elites indulging in pederastic relations with underprivileged young men (*Aterianus-Owanga 2012*). It is also alleged that to maintain their dominant positions in the society, these big men regularly perpetrate or condone the ritual killings of young girls, whose body parts are used for magical purposes (*Tonda 2016*).

In Cameroon, where decades of stark economic meltdown and deep social malaise have caused many Cameroonians to dub the authoritarian, corrupt, and clientelist presidentialist regime of Paul Biya (1933–) a *pouvoir sorcier* (sorcery power) (*Ndjio 2015; Toulou 2007*), popular rumors now relate members of the politico-bureaucratic elites to what the Cameroonian populist intellectual Charles Ateba Eyene (*2012*) called *loges et sectes magico-anales* (lodges and magico-anal sects), which are believed to be on the rise in the country. Growing popular worries about the elites’ perverted sexuality have led over time to the denunciation of their alleged implication in *homosexualité occulte*, and to speculation about the existence of a *nébuleuse sectaire* (nebulous world of sects) in which some so-called *pédérastes sectaires* defile the bodies of innocent and vulnerable youths in degrading homosexual acts (*Toulou 2007*). That is why the popular literature in Cameroon generally characterizes the current Cameroonian government either as a *pouvoir sodomiseur* (sodomite power) or an *anusocratie* (rule of the buttocks). The first expression makes reference to a wicked and villainous power that makes the anus of the weak a place for perverse sexual pleasures. The term *anusocratie* refers to the promotion of an “anal politics” that sublimates the practice of pederasty and sodomy either as the sanctioned way to achieve upward mobility and social promotion, or as the means to gain access to the state’s resources (*Kenmogne 2006*).

Since the outburst of the collective homophobic hysteria in early 2006—which had been triggered by an antihomosexual homily given on 25 December 2005 by Victor Tonyé Bakot
(1947–), the then archbishop of the Yaoundé metropolitan area—the local press in Cameroon has portrayed some influential members of the bureaucratic and financial elite as the *pédés de la république* (gays of the republic), who now embody the despised image of devilish homosexuals (*L’Anecdote 2006; La Météo 2006*). In the twenty-first century, there has been a general tendency among Cameroonians to link these so-called gays of the republic with mystical societies such as the Freemasonry, the Rose Croix, and the Illuminati, members of which are said to occupy high positions within the state apparatuses (*Geschiere 2017; Bambou 2006*). These esoteric organizations reportedly promote homosexual promiscuity among their members as part of their initiation rites.

### Homosexual: A Dangerous Witch Offender

However, it is not only ordinary Africans who view homosexual persons as malevolent witches and wizards. In many African countries, state or government authorities also actively use a rhetoric of devilry and occultism as part of a new political imagination of same-sex relations by the postcolonial African state. Indeed, in their desire to crack down on homosexual persons, some judges have no scruples about incorporating into the procedural artifices subjective and biased notions such as “sexual bewitchment,” “devilish and satanic sex acts,” or “homosexual sorcery” (see *Toulou 2007*).

A case of three lesbian women from the locality of Ndikinimeki in the central region of Cameroon, who were charged in February 2006 with homosexual offenses and witchcraft-related practices, provides a good illustration of the political invention of “bitch witches” by Cameroonian authorities. Like the forces of law and order that first profiled the accused as *sorcières lesbiennes*, the prosecution associated the alleged engagement of the three young women in same-sex relations with involvement in witchcraft-related practices, considered by the Cameroonian penal code a criminal offense liable to serious penalties, including five to ten years’ imprisonment or hefty fines. The prosecutor reportedly declared that “only women driven by evil spirits could engage in homosexual relations, whereas there were many virile men in the village, who could satisfy their sexual desires” (*La Météo 2006, 5*). One can understand why the gendarmes had few scruples about locking up in a cell one of the accused women who was accompanied by her nine-month-old child. In their eyes, the alleged lesbian woman was nothing but a dangerous sorcerer who deserved no compassion (*Le Messager 2006*).

The official antihomophobic rhetoric is backed by the hate speeches of some religious leaders who often use apocalyptic terms to depict the threat homosexual persons allegedly pose to the whole community. For example, in the homily alluded to earlier, the former archbishop of Yaoundé accused homosexual persons of plotting to “turn Cameroon into a Sodom and Gomorrah.” As he put it:
Without, however, insinuating that we are in the last days, we are nevertheless experiencing these difficult times when men are increasingly fond of dissolute pleasures and of counter-values such as homosexuality. Homosexuality is an infamy and deserves to be condemned. No society is built on homosexuality, but on values of honesty, the sense of duty, the sense of sacrifice, tolerance, and goodness. The pseudo modernity, otherwise called liberalism, must not lead the African to disown himself/herself to infamy. The so-called modernity cannot lead us to give away our values.

(L’EFFORT CAMEROUNAIS 2006, 3–4; TRANSLATION BY BASILE NDJIO)

He concluded his homily by urging “the people of God” to not let themselves be “overwhelmed or invaded by the powers of evil, at the risk of becoming a country or a society without benchmarks,” and by calling on them “to resolutely fight on many fronts for a spiritual and moral rearmament” (L’Effort Camerounais 2006, 3–4; translation by Basile Ndjio).

Overview of the Three Discourses Fueling Homophobia in Africa

Previous Africanist discourses on occult homosexuality could be viewed as part of the collective effort to prevent the expression of certain forms of sexual behavior and practices that transgress local sexual norms or destabilize the sexual order of the traditional African society at large. Contemporary narratives on evil sexuality, meanwhile, express a moral panic triggered by an upsurge in a much more active and publicized form of homosexual identity that is said to exacerbate the crisis of masculinity and femininity, as well as aggravate the “gender trouble.”

It is also important to distinguish elite from popular occultization of homosexuality in contemporary Africa. Although they both endorse moralizing discourses on occult sexualities, the elites and the masses have different views about those profiled as dangerous. For many ordinary Africans, the “gays of the republic” or the “sectarian pederasts” are always the big men, whereas for government officials it is the popular section of society that breeds sexual perversity and malevolence.

Acknowledging that popular nativist discourses on occult sexuality primarily target the big men and that the “invention” of the categories of pédés de la république and sodomiseurs en chef (chief sodomites) is above all the work of ordinary Africans, it is tempting to read these popular narratives as a “weapon of the weak,” and especially as a form of subtle bio-resistance against the alleged state’s institutionalized anusocratie or homocratie. In
addition, the official discourses on the devilish homosexuality of the poor might be seen as the expression of a “bio-power,” because such mandarin narratives have been instrumental in the state’s bid to scapegoat homosexual persons for its other manifest failures of governance.

Between these two narratives are the religious discourses of some prominent church leaders that warn the masses against the danger of homosexuality, while formulating a sharp critique about the political instrumentalization of the alleged sexual evil by the ruling classes, as the comments by the archbishop of Yaoundé show. But whatever their nature, all three discourses, which often fuel both political and social homophobia (Currier 2010; Ladô 2011), present serious challenges to those who are engaged in the promotion of human rights or rational arguments for public health in Africa.

SEE ALSO Gangs and Street Kids in Africa; Ubuntu

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The Wolfenden Report

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Influential report published in Great Britain in 1957 recommending that homosexual behavior between consenting adults no longer be considered a criminal offense.

On 24 August 1954 the British Conservative government of Winston Churchill (1874–1965), upon the initiative of the home secretary, David Maxwell Fyfe (1900–1967), set up the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution. This committee was charged with assessing the state of the law on both of these perceived social evils, recommending changes, and considering appropriate treatment for homosexual offenders. The government was reacting because it thought it had a growing problem of public disorder on its hands. Female prostitution was not illegal, but soliciting was, and prostitutes seemed to be more numerous, visible, and shameless than ever before, especially on London’s streets. Sex between men was illegal in all its guises, in public or in private, and prosecutions for homosexual offenses (buggery, gross indecency, and indecent assault) had increased more than sixfold in England and Wales in the previous quarter-century, from 390 in 1931 to 2,504 by 1955 (Wolfenden Report, appendix I, table II, 131). This surge owed much to more targeted policing, but many preferred instead to blame a collective moral breakdown brought on by the wartime dislocation of family and society.

Some high-profile cases—particularly the trial and conviction in March 1954 of two upper-class landowners, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu and Michael Pitt-Rivers, and a journalist for the Daily Mail (London), Peter Wildeblood—shone a spotlight on the question of homosexuality. But it was not simply legal cases that focused attention. By the 1950s there had been several decades of scientific, medical, and religious discussion about homosexuality, reinforced by an increasing openness in the popular and the serious press. Some of the coverage continued to be hostile, treating sexual minorities as criminal or sick, but other commentary—such as a 1954 report commissioned by the Church of England Moral Welfare Council—called for reform, recognizing that at least some homosexuals were born that way and should not face criminal charges for sex in private with consenting adults. Maxwell Fyfe did not favor a relaxation of the law, but, in pitching to his cabinet colleagues the idea of an official inquiry, he recognized the “considerable body of opinion which regards the existing law as antiquated and out of harmony with modern ideas” (National Archives, CAB 129/66/10, memo by home secretary, 17 February 1954). This, in
effect, left it up to the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution to recommend either a punitive or a reformist solution to the threat posed to public morals and family values by the marginal sexual figures of the prostitute and the homosexual.

**The Committee**

John “Jack” Wolfenden (1906–1985) chaired and gave his name to the departmental committee. He was a philosopher and educator and, starting in 1950, vice-chancellor of the University of Reading. He was joined by eleven male and three female committee members, all high-profile representatives of the law, medicine, religion, education, and government, with the women focusing in particular on the prostitution side of the mandate. The committee met periodically over the next three years in two locations: the Home Office in Whitehall, London, and the Scottish Home Department at Saint Andrew’s House, Edinburgh. More than 200 individuals and organizations presented written evidence to and/or appeared before the committee, and a principal part of the committee’s work involved the “oral examination” of these “witnesses.” The interviews were typed up by a
team of stenographers and are now preserved at the National Archives at Kew, London. This material provides by far the most detailed information available on the range of opinions regarding homosexuality in mid-twentieth-century Britain.

Representatives of the armed forces and of the law enforcement community, ranging from the lord chief justice through the director of public prosecutions to ordinary constables on the beat, tended to prefer the status quo. Members of the medical and scientific professions, as well as representatives from the churches, morality councils, and ethical societies, were much more likely to treat homosexuality as a psychomedical problem rather than a legal problem. Certain specialists failed to see it as a problem at all: the biologists in particular, plus those impressed by the findings of the American sexologist Alfred Kinsey (1894–1956; who himself was interviewed by members of the committee), preferred to talk instead of a perfectly normal spectrum of natural variation in human sexuality as in the rest of the animal world. Others, variously drawing on sexologists such as Havelock Ellis (1859–1939) and Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), classified homosexuals into different types produced by a range of etiologies. Some homosexuals, they claimed, were “true inverts” whose homosexuality was innate and fixed; some acquired their homosexuality in early childhood, possibly through seduction; others experienced arrested development along the “normal” psychosexual path toward heterosexuality. The latter two groups might be coaxed back to the “correct” path through environmental changes, the intake of hormones, psychotherapy, or other forms of behavior modification.

In addition to the expert witnesses, three self-identifying homosexual men appeared before the committee: the journalist Peter Wildeblood, shortly after his release from prison; the London ophthalmologist Patrick Trevor-Roper; and Carl Winter, the Australian-born director of the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. All three were masculine-presenting, well-educated, professional, well-connected, “genuine inverts”—identical to the male members of the committee in all respects except for their sexual orientation. As Winter eloquently pointed out in his memorandum, many homosexual men had reached the highest offices in church and state and received the honors and rewards of a grateful nation, but they could be imprisoned and their reputations and careers ruined if the law discovered that they had departed “from a rule of total chastity that it demands of no other body of citizens.” Let the homosexual “be in every other respect the ablest, most honourable, and trustworthy of human beings, he is to be totally disabled and untrusted in the one single matter which, of all others, is to all of us our most private concern” (Wolfenden Papers, HO 345/8, “Memorandum by Mr. C. W.”).

The Report

The Wolfenden Report, which was published in September 1957, reflected the plea for acceptance of the discreet, respectable homosexual. After filtering all the competing arguments, it concluded that there was no single cause of homosexuality and that
homosexuality was not a disease, illness, or pathology—though it did call for more research into the etiology of homosexuality and on the efficacy of different types of treatment. Its principal recommendations were “that homosexual behavior between consenting adults in private should no longer be a criminal offence” (Wolfenden Report, para. 62) and that street prostitution should be more strictly regulated. All but one of the committee members (James Adair, a Scottish lawyer and prosecutor who wrote a minority report) were persuaded by the logic of a strict private/public distinction that would have been familiar to any reader of On Liberty by the Victorian philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873). As the report put it, “Unless a deliberate attempt is to be made by society, acting through the agency of the law, to equate the sphere of crime with that of sin, there must remain a realm of private morality and immorality which is, in brief and crude terms, not the law’s business” (para. 61). It was the law’s job to preserve public order and decency, not to police morals. There was no evidence, so far as the majority report could see, that male homosexual behavior was more damaging to the nation and to the family than adultery, fornication, or lesbian sex, none of which was criminalized; that allowing sex between adult males would encourage pedophilia; or that decriminalization would open the floodgates to unbridled license—so each of the arguments against the suggested reform was dismissed in turn. A majority on the committee preferred to set the age of consent at eighteen (it was sixteen for heterosexual sex), but Wolfenden, from a combination of caution and calculation as to what might be politically acceptable, persuaded them to adopt the age of twenty-one.

The report made quite clear the limits of toleration. It did not intend, in any way, “to condone or encourage private immorality” (para. 61), and there should be no relaxation in the policing of public misconduct, such as homosexual importuning: “It is important that the limited modification of the law which we propose should not be interpreted as an indication that the law can be indifferent to other forms of homosexual behaviour, or as a general licence to adult homosexuals to behave as they please” (para. 124). As one member of the committee, the Marquess of Lothian, later made clear,

I am certain that, without exception, we took the view that homosexual acts are wrong and harmful—some very gravely so—and, therefore, to be deplored.... From this, two things follow: first, that the young and the weak must be protected; and, secondly, that homosexuals must, so far as is practically and medically possible, be assisted towards cure.

(PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES, LORDS, 5TH SER., VOL. 266 [1965], COL. 136)

The message was that a certain type of domesticated homosexuality was tolerable, but public displays—queer sociability in pubs and clubs, flamboyance, male prostitution, and
promiscuity—were not.

**Impact**

The higher-brow national press tended to support the Wolfenden Report’s recommendations on homosexuality, whereas the lower-brow, Scottish, and provincial press did not. The Church of England’s Church Assembly voted narrowly in favor. The Conservative government accepted the proposals on prostitution by implementing the Street Offences Act of 1959, which drove sex workers off the streets through increased fines and imprisonment and into brothels and call-girl agencies. But neither the government nor the Labour Party opposition was prepared to support the suggestions regarding homosexual offenses, fearing a backlash from their supporters. The home secretary R. A. Butler’s stated belief in the House of Commons was that, because so many people regarded homosexuality as “a great social evil,” it would take “education and time” before the report could be implemented (Parliamentary Debates, Commons, 5th ser., vol. 596 [1958], cols. 369–370).


Scholars have understood the Wolfenden Report in contrasting ways. One interpretation sees it as part of a liberal, progressive narrative heralding the more permissive era of the 1960s. However patronizing, condescending, and limited the report might be, it paved the way for the long march to freedom that followed: decriminalization, the gay liberation movement, and the raft of twenty-first-century reforms culminating in gay marriage and legislative equality. Another explication is much more critical. It sees the report as helping to create “the homosexual” and to crystallize a homosexual/heterosexual binary. By proposing a very limited toleration for this stigmatized class of congenital inverts, it hoped to eliminate manifestations of sexual and gender fluidity in the rest of the population, the better to control nonnormative and destabilizing desires. A third point of view accepts the premise of the second but insists that the Wolfendenian attempt at containment failed. The competing discourses swirling around the Home Office committee room could not be boxed into a single, hegemonic interpretation. As the moral conservatives feared, far from eradicating homosexuality to the greatest extent possible, the report and the 1967 Sexual Offences Act facilitated sexual minorities in breaking out of their newly legitimated space into a very visible, vibrant, and politically charged associational and commercial gay culture in the 1970s. And a fourth take credits Wolfenden’s strategy with at least some
success, in that the straight-acting, respectable homosexual, given powerful shape by the report, has never disappeared. When the British prime minister David Cameron (1966–) gave his support to marriage equality in 2011, he famously insisted, "I don't support gay marriage despite being a Conservative. I support gay marriage because I'm a Conservative"—an eminently Wolfendenian principle.

SEE ALSO Sexual Revolution in Europe; The Ugly Law (1961–1965; Denmark)

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Zheng He (1371–1433)

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Famed admiral and explorer in China’s Ming dynasty who was also a eunuch.

Zheng He, the renowned imperial eunuch and oceanic explorer, was born in 1371 in China’s Yunnan Province, a southwestern frontier region adjacent to Myanmar (Burma) and Laos. His original name was Ma He, and he came from a devout Arab-Mongol Muslim family. His family claimed descent from Saiyid Ajall Shams al-Din (1211–1279), an early Mongol governor of Yunnan, and both his father and grandfather made the pilgrimage to Mecca. However, Zheng He’s own religious beliefs became eclectic in his adulthood, as he embraced Buddhism, Daoism, and other popular religious traditions.

Statue of Zheng He at His Grave Site in Nanjing, China. Zheng He was both a renowned imperial eunuch as well as a famous Chinese admiral who conducted seven naval expeditions on behalf of the Ming government.
Following the overthrow of Mongol rule by Ming (1368–1644) troops in Yunnan in 1382, Ma He was taken prisoner and castrated for imperial service as a eunuch, as were many other indigenous boys. Soon after, he was assigned to Prince Zhu Di (1360–1424) in Beijing. As Ma He grew into adulthood, he proved his military skills and won Zhu Di’s favor by participating in campaigns against the Mongols along China’s northern border. After Zhu Di usurped the throne in 1402 to become the Yongle emperor, he conferred the surname “Zheng” on Ma He in recognition of his contribution during the civil war that brought Zhu Di to power.

From 1405 until his death in 1433, Zheng He commanded a series of seven naval expeditions sponsored by the Ming government to Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. Comprising as many as 250 ships and 27,000 men, most of whom were soldiers, in a single voyage, Zheng He’s armada dwarfed the Portuguese fleets that reached India almost a century later. During the final voyage, the Ming fleet even reached the eastern coast of Africa. The establishment of the colossal Ming navy not only contributed to the state-directed commercial expansion but also stimulated unprecedented circulation of people and goods in this oceanic world. Some scholars even contend that Zheng He’s expeditions accelerated the process of Islamization in Southeast Asia, but convincing evidence is still lacking. Nevertheless, given that in the early twenty-first century legends related to and many cultural structures dedicated to Zheng He—including a museum in Melaka (Malacca)—are scattered across Southeast Asia, it is indisputable that the many Chinese Muslim and overseas Chinese communities still keep alive the memory of his expeditions. However, for some overseas Chinese intellectuals, like Singaporean playwright Kuo Pao Kun (1939–2002), who authored a play called Descendants of the Eunuch Admiral (1995), Zheng He stands for the cultural anxiety of rootlessness and posterity that has been associated with overseas Chinese.

The Role of Eunuchs in the Chinese Court

Historians disagree about the details of Zheng He’s voyages, such as their nature and purpose, the size of the fleet, and the countries visited. One reason for scholars’ endless debate derives from the scarcity of original materials on Zheng He and his expeditions, a scarcity which, in turn, testifies to eunuchs’ marginality in imperial Chinese historical writing. Under the Ming, eunuchs were consistently associated with the most negative traits; after the Ming, eunuchs were even blamed for the dynasty’s fall.

A eunuch’s unsavory reputation can partially be explained by his biological transformation: his emasculation made him incapable of procreation and continuing the patriarchal line, thereby challenging the Confucian tenet of filial piety. Nevertheless, because impotent, the eunuch was allowed to live on intimate terms with the emperor and his harem and
therefore enabled to influence imperial politics. For Confucian scholar-officials, eunuchs thus became direct rivals in the competition for imperial favor. This rivalry is probably the most important reason for the permeation of anti-eunuch rhetoric in the dynastic histories, which constitute the most authoritative sources for the period.

However, of the estimated 1 million Ming eunuchs throughout the dynasty, only a few actually rose to power and influence. For the majority, eunuchism was merely one road to survival, as indicated in the prevalent yet illegal practice of self-castration during the Ming. Additionally, in spite of being described as biologically un reproductive and ideologically antifamilial, Ming eunuchs achieved sociocultural reproduction via adoption—Zheng He, for example, adopted as his heir a son of his brother—and played pivotal roles in constructing kinship organization among their relatives, implying that their masculinity remained intact as they continued to embrace Confucian family norms.

**Zheng He in Late Sixteenth-Century Vernacular Literature**

During the late sixteenth century, tales of Zheng He’s expeditions became a popular topic of a flourishing vernacular literature. In 1598 an obscure author known as Maodeng Luo published the famous novel *Sanbao taijian Xiyangji tongsu yanyi* (Popular romance of eunuch Sanbao’s journeys in the Western seas), a highly fictionalized account of Zheng He’s voyages. At the time, Japanese expansion in the Korean Peninsula aroused tremendous anxiety in Chinese society. Luo lamented the military weakness of his time and intended to use Zheng He’s maritime feats to inspire moral renewal by imagining a harmonious, China-centered suzerainty.

While Luo’s portrayal of Zheng He is generally so idealized as to lack individuality, at least in one episode the reality of castration is highlighted. In the fantasized Country of Women, Zheng He is depicted as sympathetic to women there who suffer from sexual starvation. However, when the queen attempts to seduce him, she fails to find his penis. Frustrated, she attempts to execute him for his impotence. The incident symbolically draws a connection between Zheng He’s absent phallus and late Ming China’s impaired national prestige, underscoring the association between anxiety of emasculation and the force of female sexuality.

**The Modern Revival of Zheng He's Story**

After the Ming, Zheng He and his voyages were largely forgotten until 1900. By then, Chinese nationalists attributed China’s recent humiliations at the hands of Western powers to their country’s maritime weakness. Against this background, they rediscovered Zheng He to boost national morale, underscoring his naval achievements as no less praiseworthy than those of Western explorers like Christopher Columbus (1451–1506). Since the late 1970s, the Chinese Communist government has picked up this thread and attempted to
manipulate the story of Zheng He's expeditions to reconstruct the nation's maritime tradition, a propaganda campaign that reached its climax in 2005, the year that marked the 600th anniversary of Zheng He's first voyage. Depicting Zheng He as an “ambassador of friendship” and imperial China as an intrinsically peaceful maritime power, Beijing aimed to justify its claim in the South China Sea and reorient its citizens toward the sea.

Meanwhile, the narrative is contested by many Southeast Asian scholars who argue that Zheng He’s missions were intended to obtain, either through actual or threatened force, control over the main port-polities along the major southeastern Asian maritime trade network, thereby constituting a form of maritime proto-colonialism before the arrival of European forces in this region. As Zheng He’s role as a maritime explorer, either peaceful or not depending on one’s perceptive, rose to prominence in recent decades, his identity of being castrated was played down, which further attests to the long-lived negative image of eunuchs in historical writing.

SEE ALSO Eunuchs

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Zhongxing Phenomenon

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A popular movement of gender ambiguity among women in postmillennial East Asian Chinese-speaking societies in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.

Zhongxing literally means “middle gender/sex” or “neutral gender/sex” in the Chinese language. Zhong means “being middle or in between,” and xing implies both sex and gender. The latter is the result of a historical quirk in the twentieth century that saw sex translated from Western medical literature as xing in Japanese texts, and gender later translated as xingbie—literally, “sex difference”—in Chinese feminist texts (Min 2008; Rocha 2010). The zhongxing phenomenon is a substantial mediated and gendered phenomenon referring to the discourse and embodiment of gender ambiguity, in particular among women, in postmillennial East Asian Chinese-speaking societies in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. Although the same written characters are used, transliteration differs across locales: zung sing in Cantonese spoken in Hong Kong and chunghsing in Mandarin in Taiwan.

The zhongxing phenomenon cannot be subsumed under the concepts of queer or LGBT both because of its sociocultural peculiarity and because it has been mainstreamed and practiced beyond the LGBTQ communities. Hence, it offers a unique lens for understanding the transformational contours of gender and sexuality in relation to media culture in East Asian Chinese-speaking societies. Zhongxing is neither an identity category nor a sexual practice. Instead, it is a liminal state of performing nonnormative gender without claiming a gender or sexual identity position within the binary system of masculine/feminine, male/female, and heterosexual/homosexual (E. Li 2015). Since the late 1980s, zhongxing has become a generic term for the expression of gender ambiguity associated with both individualism and homosexuality. It has proliferated by means of popular culture and, in particular, has been heightened by a generation of androgynous female idols in transnational Chinese-language popular culture. The linguistic ambiguity of zhongxing has provided a space for individuals to negotiate normativities and maneuver marginality. Nonetheless, such ambiguity is highly contested and gendered. In general, female zhongxing is more mainstreamed and tolerated in comparison with male zhongxing.

Peculiarity of Zhongxing

Zhongxing is socioculturally peculiar because of its linguistic ambiguity, mundanity,
nonidentitarian inclination, and depoliticized overtones. There are no existing academic concepts in the English language able to sufficiently encapsulate it (E. Li 2015). Unlike androgyny, which celebrates the union of femininity and masculinity in one body, zhongxing is defined by negation—the lack of masculinity in the male sexed body and the lack of femininity in the female sexed body—captured by the Chinese expression bunan bunü (neither man/masculine nor woman/feminine), which expresses disapproval of a gender expression that is undecidable. Zhongxing also does not equate with queer, which is a derogatory term taken up by nonheterosexuals to destabilize categories and resist normalization politics. Zhongxing implies depoliticized overtones because of its surface meaning of “middle/neutral.” Furthermore, the Chinese translation of queer, ku’er, which literally means “cool (kid),” is seldom used outside of activist circles and academia.

Because zhongxing does not intrinsically refer to a particular sexual orientation, the term T-style does not capture its ambiguity and inclusiveness (Kam 2014). T, short for “tomboy,” refers to butch lesbians in China and Taiwan. In a similar vein, the concept of female masculinity only partially captures the peculiarity of zhongxing. In addition, the concept has been critiqued for lacking clarity and overlooking constraints of embodiment (Francis and Paechter 2015). Terms modeled on it, such as tomboy femininity, have similar issues (Yue and Yu 2008). “Gender neutrality” appears to be the closest and most direct translation (Hu 2017a); yet this may cause confusion with the Anglo-American postgenderism movement, which originates from distinct sociopolitical backgrounds.

The position of neither directly translating zhongxing nor subsuming it under “queer” because of its sociocultural specificity is not intended to essentialize a homogeneous Chinese culture. Instead, it acts as a point of departure to reveal the mutual transformation of transnational and local practices and norms in the process of modernities, hybridization, and globalization (Martin et al. 2008). The ambiguity of zhongxing opens a contested and contradictory space for exploring gender repertoires and negotiating alternative modes of subjectivity. This can be seen as an ongoing critical engagement with Western theories and local practices mediated by a transnational mediascape.

**Historical Relevance**

As Michel Foucault (1972) points out, the emergence of a new discursive formation does not imply the disappearance of an old one but rather signifies a transformation of relations between the concepts, objects, and enunciations within those formations. That said, although zhongxing is socioculturally and spatiotemporally specific, there are ample historical examples of ambiguous gender performance that provide a glimpse into the changing meaning attached to nonnormative gender performance in contemporary Chinese-speaking societies.

Chinese opera has been a significant site of gender crossing. The gender of roles on stage
was recognized by costumes and bodily movements (shenduan) instead of the player's biological sex. Male players impersonating female roles (dan) can be dated back to the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE); this practice had been predominant in theatrical performance until the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368) when Mongolian military rule undermined the Confucian ideology of gender and sexual division (Tian 2000). During that period, the phenomenon of female players cross-dressing to play leading male roles (sheng) was significant. Sometimes, the female sheng acted in fight scenes that were regarded as exclusively masculine (Chou 2004). During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) and Qing dynasty (1644–1911), Confucian ideologies were restored and vigorously enforced, which led to the prohibition of female players performing in public. Nonetheless, theatrical male impersonation was maintained by private allfemale Kunqu troupes owned by male literati (S. Li 2003). The general ban on female players on stage during the Ming and Qing dynasties had resulted in the fetishization of the male dan's cross-gendered body in Beijing opera, and its cultural obsession culminated in the 1920s and 1930s; in the postwar years, however, the cultural significance of male dan declined as a result of the mainland Chinese state’s suspension of male dan training (S. Li 2003). On the contrary, theatrical performances of the female sheng have been sustained by the popular all-women Yue opera troupes in Shanghai from the late 1930s through the 1980s. The popularity of all-women Yue opera troupes among female audiences is considered unique evidence of women rising to public culture in modern China (Jiang 2009).

Theatrical performances aside, female cross-dressing was also considered an expression of class distinction and/or individuality in particular. It was documented that during the Tang dynasty (618–907), women cross-dressing as men were popular among nobles and the gentry class (Huang 1994; S. Li 2003). During the republican era in the early twentieth century, female gender-crossing reemerged when fashion became a symbol of modernity and the contested site of gender performance (Chou 2004). Actresses who cross-dressed in everyday life were considered fashionable, and women intellectuals such as Jin Qiu (1875–1907) and Zhang Zhujun (1876–1964) who passed as men in public were later seen as pioneers of the Chinese women’s liberation movement (Chou 2004; Luo 2008).

During the postwar era, different forms of female gender ambiguity have been observed. In Maoist China, female Red Guards, known as the “Iron Ladies,” were allowed to act as violently and brutally as men in public (Honig 2002). Nonetheless, this form of “socialist androgyny” served the particular political purpose of maintaining gender difference; women were required to be genderless workers in public and sacrificing wives at home to support the revolutionary work of their husbands (Young 1989). Outside Maoist China, women’s ambiguous gender performance emerged in popular culture in Hong Kong, a British colony between 1842 and 1997. Among numerous examples, during the 1940s and 1960s the Cantonese opera and film stars Leung Mo-sheung (Liang Wuxiang; 1930–?) and Yam Kim-fai (Ren Jianhui; 1913–1989) were widely acclaimed for their interpretation of cosmopolitanism, gentleness, and masculinity. This earned them the reputation of “ideal
men,” which is a good demonstration of Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity (Chan 2016; Butler 1993).

**Proliferation in Popular Culture**

During the 1980s and 1990s, zhongxing was largely regarded as a positive in popular culture despite occasional concerns about its implications for female sexuality. At that time, the discourse of female zhongxing was mostly centered on fashion aesthetics, which were attached to the desirable qualities of individuality, authenticity, and cosmopolitanism. In Taiwan, toward the end of the martial law period (1949–1987), the female singers Julie Su (Su Rui), Jessie Lin (Lin Liangle), and Eagle Pan (Pan Meichen), who were known for their masculine outfits and vocal quality, were distinctively featured by the local press and entertainment industry as “zhongxing” for their individualistic style and unique personalities (Kuo 2010; Lu 2015). In parallel, gender ambiguity blossomed in Hong Kong cinema and popular music during the 1980s and 1990s. This was showcased in a spring 2017 exhibition titled *Ambiguously Yours: Gender in Hong Kong Popular Culture* at the M+ museum in Hong Kong. Female and male stars such as Anita Mui (Yanfang Mei), Roman Tam (Luo Wen), and Leslie Cheung (Zhang Guorong) were transnationally renowned for their glamorous and ambiguous performances. The utopian discourse of zhongxing as cosmopolitan individuality was succinctly stated in Hong Kong’s *City Magazine* (January 1991 issue), which defined and translated zhongxing as the symbol of progressiveness, open-mindedness, cleanliness, and decency (Lai 2007).

In the twenty-first century, in addition to the utopian values celebrated in the 1990s, zhongxing has increasingly been seen as a euphemism for nonnormative gender and sexuality—female lesbianism and problematic singlehood. The proliferation of zhongxing in media representations, as well as self-representation among Chinese women, was heighten by a new generation of female idols in transnational Chinese popular culture during the century’s first decade (E. Li 2015). The usage of zhongxing to refer to ambiguous gender and sexuality in everyday life proliferated. According to an analysis of newspapers in WiseNews, the internet’s Chinese-language news archive, the number of news reports in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan that used zhongxing in relation to gender and sexuality saw a sixfold increase, from 200 in 2000 to more than 1,200 after the middle of the first decade of the twenty-first century.

This new generation of female idols has been popularly categorized by the entertainment industry, media, and audience as zhongxing. Most of them rose to fame from reality talent shows (Au 2012). Their onscreen debut was typically characterized by a short and trendy hairstyle, unisex fashion such as jeans and rock ‘n’ roll accessories, and sharp bodily gestures (E. Li 2015). Well-known examples include Li Yuchun (also known as Chris Lee) of China, who won *Super Girl* in 2005 by receiving more than 3.5 million votes out of 8 million from audience mobile phone text messages and attracted the largest personal cult
following in post-Maoist China (Xiao 2012). She appeared on the cover of *Time Asia* in October 2005 as one of Asia’s heroes of the year and remained popular a decade later. Other examples in China include Bichang Zhou (also known as Bibi Zhou), Gao Yayuan (also known as Seven Gao), and Liu Liyang. In 2017 the popularity of zhongxing female singers seemed to be continuing through Acrush, billed as “all-girl boy band,” which drew widespread attention with the release of several photos and a music video. In Hong Kong, Denise Ho (He Yunshi; also known as HOCC), a mentee of the Cantopop diva Anita Mui, is among the best-known zhongxing stars in the territory. She was one of the best-selling singers of the first decade of the twenty-first century and was selected as a trailblazer in Cantopop by *Time Out Hong Kong* in July 2011 (E. Li 2015). In Taiwan, well-known zhongxing singers include Jing Chang (Zhang Yunjing), champion of *Super Idol* in 2007; Ella Chen of the girl band S.H.E; and the girl band Misster, which consisted of five handsome young tomboys who emphasized that they were zhongxing rather than lesbians.

These zhongxing idols attracted considerable numbers of followers both domestically and transnationally, facilitated by new technologies such as mobile phones, internet discussion forums, and satellite television. This simultaneous popularity of zhongxing singers in China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in the first decade of the twenty-first century can be seen as largely unconnected because of their respective market structures, the local gender and sexual norms, and the media policy of the state (if any). Nonetheless, there are parallels in terms of the situation faced by the local entertainment industry. During the twenty-first century’s first decade, the Chinese entertainment industry as a whole was still recovering from decreased revenue resulting from piracy and digitization, and those within the industry were motivated to experiment with new marketing strategies. After learning of the fervent audience response to female idols who did not embrace normative femininity, the industry quickly realized that marketing them as zhongxing appealed to a wide audience of both heterosexual and queer women and that, by emphasizing the values of individuality and authenticity, the social taboo of homosexuality could be sidestepped.

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Li Yuchun, winner of China’s *Super Girl* (2005). The success of Li Yuchun follows the pattern of a new generation of zhongxing singers, most of whom rose to fame as contestants on reality-television talent shows and featured a look characterized by a short and trendy hairstyle and unisex fashions.
The popularity of zhongxing idols has unleashed heated speculation about their enigmatic sexual orientation. The utopian values of zhongxing, such as individuality, were frequently used as the justification for nonnormative gender performances. For example, on the television show Lady Guagua broadcast by Star TV in China on 21 February 2011, the zhongxing idol (Moraynia Liu [Liu Xin]) stressed that being zhongxing means to feel comfortable in her own skin and to ignore others’ criticisms. Over the years, some of the zhongxing idols, such as Ella Chen of S.H.E, have been openly heterosexual. There is also a dramatic example from Jing Chang, who publicly announced her change of sexual orientation from queer to heterosexual in 2014 and subsequently stirred up heated debate in Taiwan. A few others, such as Denise Ho and Jin Tai (Dai Anna) of Misster, subsequently came out as lesbians in public, whereas some others, such as Li Yuchun, remain enigmatic regarding their sexuality.

Aside from popular music, zhongxing has also become a recurring theme in television shows, where an ambivalent oscillation of meaning between lesbianism and individuality can be observed. For example, on two episodes of Wocai wocai wocaicaicai (Guess guess guess) on 28 July 2007 and 1 December 2007, broadcast by CTV in Taiwan, several tomboyish girls were given a makeover to “reembody” normative femininity and then presented to a group of teenage boys, who were presumably heterosexual. The hosts of the show described the tomboyish girls using the words zhongxing and shuai (handsome) interchangeably. A more explicit association of zhongxing with lesbianism is observed in an episode of Bama jiong hen da (About sex/Straight talk with parents) titled “My daughter is very zhongxing; how could she get married (to a man)?” which was broadcast by PTS on 22 June 2010. The show featured concerned parents and their zhongxing daughters. The relationship between zhongxing gender expression and lesbianism is implicitly drawn throughout the show. These examples suggest that the zhongxing phenomenon has paradoxically opened new space for discussing sensitive topics of gender and sexuality on the one hand, while perpetuating heteronormativity on the other (E. Li 2015; Hu 2017a).

In contrast with the contested mainstreaming of female zhongxing, male zhongxing remains relatively marginalized. Although the Japanese style of bishonen (beautiful boy), the Korean style of kkonminam (flower handsome man), and the burgeoning industry of male cosmetic products and aesthetic surgery in East Asia have contributed to the emergence of a new Pan–East Asian soft masculinity that has reshaped masculinity ideals in Chinese societies (Miller 2003; Holliday and Elfving-Hwang 2012; Jung 2011; Chua 2004; Louie 2012), everyday stigmatization of male gender ambiguity prevails, as evidenced by derogatory adjectives such as niang (sissy) and yao (monstrous), the latter being a term that has been associated with male same-sex sexuality (Chiang 2014). Therefore, the experiences of and implications between female and male zhongxing are not directly comparable. It has also been argued that attributing the mainstreaming of female zhongxing to the rise of Pan–East Asian soft masculinity is male-centric and overlooks the diverse subjectivity of female zhongxing (Hu 2017b).
Implications

Although female zhongxing idols have received much acclaim from their audiences, the zhongxing phenomenon has attracted a homophobic backlash from those concerned about the self-representation of zhongxing among young women (E. Li 2015). The reception of the zhongxing phenomenon also varies across locales. Whereas zhongxing is relatively well tolerated in Hong Kong and Taiwan, where it is more incorporated into the mainstream consumerist culture, the phenomenon remains relatively controversial in China.

On the one hand, the ambiguity of zhongxing renders it an at least less derogatory label for nonnormative gender performance by replacing negative terms such as nanrenpo (mannish women) in everyday life. Its discursive ambiguity has also opened an ambivalent space to verbally articulate and visually represent the desire to loosen gender norms. By associating zhongxing with individuality and cosmopolitanism, the phenomenon has normalized nonnormative gender performance and potentially expanded the socially acceptable repertoires of gender expression and embodiment for Chinese women.

Moreover, zhongxing as a space of in-betweenness has allowed individuals to question gender norms without taking up stigmatized identity positions, especially in a context where the concept “queer” is accessible to only a few within academia and social activism.

On the other hand, however, it is questionable whether the zhongxing phenomenon has yielded an actual transformation in the everyday lives of heterosexual and queer Chinese women or, to an even lesser extent, Chinese men. There is evidence that the increased social visibility and public awareness of lesbianism as a result of the zhongxing phenomenon have ambivalent consequences. The phenomenon has simultaneously improved social tolerance and nonnormative gender expression (Kam 2014; Hu 2017a). Yet, when zhongxing is presented as an individual aesthetics and is commodified by the entertainment industry, it raises doubts regarding the potentiality and resistance of everyday cultural politics.

In short, since the late 1980s, the zhongxing phenomenon has revealed the entanglement of subjectivity and hybrid normativities in Chinese societies within a transnational mediascape and local gender and sexual norms undergoing transformation. From the representations within popular culture to the self-representation of young women who are questioning gender norms, whether the zhongxing phenomenon has improved the actual terrain of the everyday lives of Chinese women is subject to further examination.

SEE ALSO Dissidence in Singapore; Otaku Sexualities in Japan

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In contemporary Zimbabwe, issues of same-sex relationships, as well as the rights of gay and lesbian people, have come to the fore of academic, sociopolitical, and religious debates. Most of these debates have illustrated that LGBTQ issues are contentious and always invite questions. The majority of Zimbabweans, including religious and political leaders, criticize minority sexualities on the basis that they are “un-African” (read: not Zimbabwean) and informed by Western concepts that aim to demean “authentic” Zimbabwean cultural values and traditions. Archetypal examples of such attacks on homosexuality include the former Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe (prime minister, 1980–1987; president, 1987–2017), who described homosexuals as “worse than dogs and pigs” on multiple occasions.

Serious questions regarding the place and applicability of minority sexualities in the Zimbabwean context have arisen. In most cases, there has been a combination of sociocultural, political, and religious rhetoric seeking to police and contain minority sexualities. These attempts at policing and containing minority sexualities have manifested in contentious rulings, such as the Zimbabwean government’s Criminal Codification and Reform Act, effected in July 2006. The law basically criminalizes sexual intercourse or any other “indecent” acts involving physical contact between consenting males. Those found guilty of the act of sodomy could face imprisonment or a fine.

Zimbabwean history has classically been illustrated based on a tripartite model constituting its precolonial past, the colonial era under the British rule, and the postindependence context. Although this version of Zimbabwean history is problematic in the sense that it suggests that history is linear and progressively moving from savagery to civilization, it remains useful in the current study, which seeks to illuminate issues of same-sex practices and the ways in which these three stages of Zimbabwean history affected these practices.

**Same-Sex Practices in Precolonial Zimbabwe**

Research on precolonial sociocultural and religious systems is scarce, and this can be explained in terms of the complexities of oral storytelling as a vehicle of historicizing.
Researching precolonial sexual practices has consequently proven to be difficult because most aspects were lost during the processes of passing information from generation to generation. The subject of sexuality was and still remains characterized by silence and secrecy; it was not a subject that could be discussed openly, and this secrecy has also contributed to the overall difficulties in research. Marc Epprecht (1999) also concedes that anthropological records of homosexuality before the coming of whites were vague and flawed by the moral prejudices of the past. Even after colonialism, records on homosexuality continued to be vague and even repressed because, in Zimbabwe, sexuality is a subject that is wrapped up in silences, taboos, and privacies.

The major theme that has emerged from precolonial historical and scholarly accounts is that people who took part in same-sex practices occupied a marginal position in society; this theme has, to this date, remained a constant reality. The reason for this marginalization is that sociocultural and religious systems in precolonial Zimbabwe exalted the link between the act of having sex and reproduction. Sexuality that did not conform to heterosexual standards was regarded as a curse that could bring misfortunes, such as famine and diseases. Sex between a man and a woman was celebrated and viewed from deeply mystical and sacred lenses. The general belief was that if sex were “misused,” evil would befall the society (Mudavanhu 2010). Any sexual initiation rites that were performed on young boys and girls were meant to prepare them for their ultimate responsibility of producing children. Children ensured the longevity of the familial line, so precolonial Zimbabwean sexual systems were grounded within heteronormativity. In that context, homosexuality was not tolerated.

This does not mean that there were no cases of same-sex practices; rather, there were different ways in which the society dealt with and conceptualized homosexual practices. For instance, same-sex practices were tolerated among adolescent boys who experimented with one another. This experimentation was seen as a sort of “rite of passage” or a learning process. Adolescent boys could experiment sexually with other boys away from home, typically in the bush as they herded cattle. Adolescent girls had similar experiences when older girls gradually socialized younger girls into adult female roles and sexual relationships. As the boys and girls grew into adulthood, they were expected to outgrow these experimental phases (Epprecht 2004). These same-sex practices by adolescent boys and girls should thus not be construed as the society’s acknowledgment of a different sexual orientation, because society expected them to outgrow these “childish” tendencies.

In cases where an adult individual exhibited sexual attraction to a person of the same sex, traditional culture generally had more benevolent ways of dealing with and accepting such individuals than is exhibited in present-day Zimbabwe. For example, being sexually attracted to a person of the same sex could be understood in terms of spirit possession; as noted by Jannet Mudavanhu (2010), spirit possession was not necessarily regarded as evil. When conceptualized in terms of spirit possession, these same-sex practices could be seen
as respectable attributes, because spirit possession overturned generally accepted gender roles and gave possessed individuals an unusual degree of status, allowing them to exercise authority inside and outside the natural context. There were also occasions when same-sex practices were encouraged for medicinal purposes, such as curing impotence, mental illnesses, and other ailments (Goddard 2004). Epprecht (2004) also provides examples of male ancestral or water spirits who would occupy a female body and not allow the body they occupied to have sex with a man. These possessed individuals were not shunned by society, but their families looked for ways to exorcise the spirit. Although heterosexuality was the ideal, precolonial Zimbabwean traditional cultural beliefs were sophisticated and exhibited open-mindedness when it came to individuals who failed to meet the heterosexual ideal.

**Colonialism and Homosexuality**

The colonial era (1890–1980) illustrates the complexities of the colonial experience for the homosexual individual in Zimbabwe. On the one hand, the colonial administration, in collusion with Christianity, affected the precolonial systems of handling homosexuality. Although African social systems afforded some status and even influence to the same-sex–practicing individual, these were completely eroded during the colonial era. Administratively, the colonial government criminalized the practice (Mudavanhu 2010). Religiously, the growing Christian religion was and remains overtly and unapologetically hostile to homosexual practices, with the standard argument being that God did not create men to marry other men or women to marry other women. Christian teachings and colonial laws were therefore hostile to homosexuality and encouraged hostile attitudes toward homosexual individuals.

On the other hand, the colonial government expected certain things from African men, mainly, their labor in the colonial farms, mines, and cities. With growing urbanization and a cash economy, African men were compelled to leave their families behind in the rural areas while they trekked the colonial spaces looking for jobs. Sex imbalances became more noticeable in such colonial spaces because African women’s presence was not tolerated. Such contexts augmented the chances for homosexual encounters, because African men lived in communal accommodations. The first generation of these migrant workers predominantly came from Nyasaland, which is now known as Malawi. These were then followed by Zimbabwean men, whose livelihood in the colonial reserve areas had rapidly deteriorated. Thus, whether it was because of sexual deprivation or long repressed sexuality, colonial urbanization provided what Mudavanhu describes as an “enabling environment to an already existing practice” (2010, 101). Male migrant labor, plus prisons and single-sex boarding schools, may also have enabled new forms of gendered sexual relations, as has been argued in other colonial contexts, such as South Africa (see, e.g., Gay 1985; Moodie with Ndatshe 1994; Epprecht 2004).
**LGBTQ Issues in Postcolonial Zimbabwe**

Zimbabwe gained independence from colonial rule in 1980, suggesting the potential for transformation and more tolerant handling of LGBTQ issues. However, for the LGBTQ individual, independence was characterized by disappointment because it was not all inclusive. Initially, LGBTQ organizing and advocacy were instigated by white Zimbabweans, who in 1990 formed the local gay and lesbian organization known as GALZ (Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe). GALZ offers critical explanations of the conditions of sexual-minority individuals in Zimbabwe. Its activities include publishing, counseling, and advocacy. The organization advocates for social changes that will make it possible for LGBTQ people to lead more fulfilling lives. GALZ's efforts have consistently been constrained by the hostility of the Zimbabwean government. This hostility culminated in the infamous Book Fair saga of 1995, when President Mugabe’s antihomosexuality rhetoric resulted in the government’s banning of GALZ from exhibiting its work at the Zimbabwe International Book Fair.

The Book Fair saga propelled issues of homosexuality in Zimbabwe onto a more public forum, including the local and global media. There are multiple angles from which the subject has been debated. Media reports increased in the late 1990s when Zimbabwe's first official president, the Reverend Canaan Banana (1936–2003), was brought to trial for, and found guilty of, eleven counts of sodomy. Banana was accused of abusing his presidential powers to sexually assault several men who were part of his staff. Banana’s trial and subsequent imprisonment afforded multiple discourses on homosexuality. The most insistent are discourses of abnormality and morality that continue to be informed by the colonial legacies of Christianity.
A Member of Gays and Lesbians of Zimbabwe (GALZ) Commemorates the International Day against Xenophobia and Transphobia in Harare, Zimbabwe, 2012. Efforts by GALZ to advocate for LGBTQ people have consistently been constrained by the hostility of the Zimbabwean government.

Debates on homosexuality are also rife with issues of politics and enactments of power. For example, links have been made between the repressive Zimbabwean government and the repression of sexual minorities. Cases in point include Mugabe's late 1990s attacks on British prime minister Tony Blair’s government as a government of “gay gangsters” and Mugabe’s 2015 jab at US president Barack Obama's support of the US Supreme Court's ruling in favor of gay marriage. Mugabe mockingly insinuated that he would travel to the rainbow White House to ask for Obama's hand in marriage. Molly Manyonganise (2016) argues that Mugabe’s virulent attacks on homosexuality were used to provide him with a rallying point to appeal for political legitimacy. Manyonganise insists that Mugabe’s homophobic statements were almost always uttered when campaigning for power or when Zimbabwe’s economic situation was deteriorating.

In light of the 2017 “resignation” of Mugabe as president of Zimbabwe, the future of LGBTQ people's rights remains hazy. First, Mugabe’s replacement, President Emmerson Mnangagwa, expressed rigid antihomosexual sentiments when he was vice president. So, it seems what has changed is the person but not necessarily the attitudes. Second, the major political opposition party, Movement for Democratic Change–Tsvangirai (MDC-T), appears
to be ambiguous when it comes to its vision for the status of LGBTQ people. For example, the late MDC-T president, Morgan Tsvangirai, had this to say about homosexuality, it is “a controversial subject.... My attitude is that I hope the constitution will come out with freedom of sexual orientation, for as long as it does not interfere with anybody.... To me it’s a human right” (BBC News 2011).

Tsvangirai’s statement exhibits concealed aversion for homosexuality but tactfully insists on the human rights of LGBTQ people so as to sustain the moral integrity of his political party and its respect of democracy as an ideal. While this ambiguity renders the future of LGBTQ advocacy and organizing difficult, GALZ has been and continues to be resilient in the face of hate and brutality. The organization’s Affinity Groups Programme has led to an increase in membership and awareness of LGBTQ issues beyond the boundaries of Harare, Zimbabwe’s capital city. Although the state is generally considered homophobic, it implicitly considers the public health arguments surrounding homosexuality. In 2015 the state’s Ministry of Health confirmed its efforts to protect homosexual men having gay sex in prison from HIV, a move that was applauded by the LGBTQ community (Zimbabwe Today, 2015).

SEE ALSO Activism in Africa South of the Sahara; Christianity in Africa: Anglican; Colonialism in Africa South of the Sahara

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Zuqaq al-Midaq (1947; Naguib Mahfouz)

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Egyptian novel that employs a judgmental colonialist gaze in its portrayal of a character who engages in same-sex sexual activity.

Middle East queer studies, as Hanadi Al-Samman and Tarek El-Ariss (2013) have poignantly argued, is often constricted by a premodern East/modern West binary where the East is viewed as mired in tradition while the West is seen as free and modern. In their examination of literature and culture, Al-Samman and El-Ariss propose an engagement with the intricate sites of multifarious meanings and transformations that move beyond viewing queer identities in the Middle East through the colonialist and imperialist gaze. Some scholars have attested to the fluid gender spaces and sexualities that existed in the Middle East in medieval times, before it was drastically altered by Western imperialism. In

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Crossing Borders: Love between Women in Medieval French and Arabic Literatures (2008), Sahar Amer explores the formative role that Arabic eroticism through intertextuality had in influencing alternative sexualities in Old French literary texts, sexualities that otherwise would have been not noticed. Her study shows that while same-sex sexual practices were considered taboo and silenced in the medieval West, this was not the case in the medieval Middle East. Amer’s study explicates the debt that the Old French tradition owes to the Arabic literary homoerotic tradition. Indeed, at the time, the West was imbued with negative judgments of the nonnormative sexualities that existed in the East. Joseph Massad argues in Desiring Arabs (2007) that Edward Said could easily have added “sexual deviant” to his long list of Orientalist tropes, due to Western perceptions of sexual depravity in the East. In his monumental study, Massad shows that the Orientalist fantasy once viewed the Arab world as degenerate due to homoeroticism, licentious sex, and the fluidity of gender spaces. Yet, with the colonial gaze, the West turned that framework around and instead judged the Arab world as backward and oppressive of the rights of homosexuals.

Massad expounds on how in the Arab world, some writers from the middle of the nineteenth century

were overcome with a sense of crisis concerning the Arab present, its “culture,” its “language,” its political and economic order, its “traditions,” its views of its own “heritage,” even “Islam” itself, in short, a malady that afflicted the whole of Arab Islamic “civilization.” The diagnosis would echo Orientalist judgment of the Arabs, including “backwardness,” “decadence,” “moral decline,” “irrationality,” and most of all, “degeneration,” resulting from centuries of Ottoman rule characterized by stasis at best or retardation of things Arab (and sometimes Muslim) at worst.(2007, 8)

Naguib Mahfouz's Zuqaq al-Midaq (1947; Midaq Alley [1966]) is one such novel in which the novelist incorporates the judgmental colonial gaze in its queer subjectivities.

**Mahfouz's Novel**

The story commences in the early 1940s and examines a rapid transitional phase of Egyptian history. The novel’s characters struggle to overcome the confines of opportunities determined by one’s birth and search for upward mobility, often through work with the British army. The central character is the alley, which indifferently observes the difficulties that befall its inhabitants. It is in this context that we are introduced to Kirsha, the owner of the popular, albeit dilapidated, café on Midaq Alley. He is married with six unhappily married daughters and a son, Hussain. From the first pages, Kirsha is portrayed in a highly
negative manner, as we see “Kirsha's unpleasantness” and his “angry exasperation” (Mahfouz 1992, 5) at an old man's recitations in his café.

Early on, we learn that Kirsha is not only unpleasant but also addicted to hashish. “Kirsha, the café owner, followed him with his heavy eyes, enjoying the numbing stream from the hashish flowing into his stomach and giving himself over to its delicious power” (11). His drug addiction is clear from the outset, and there is suggestion of scandal too:

> The hashish robbed him of any will to resist. He was a poor man, however, unlike the majority of café proprietors, not because his business was unprofitable, but because he was a squanderer, wasting his profits and throwing his money about with nothing to show for it. In fact, he gave free rein to his desires and passions and especially to that one unwholesome weakness of his. (45)

This quote is the first subtle reference to his homosexuality, which becomes more apparent as the scene continues and he slips out of the café, disguised in a black cloak, without telling anyone where he is headed. “His heart was throbbing violently. Strange as it seems, Mr. Kirsha had always lived a most irregular life, and he had rolled in its dirt so long that it appeared to him a perfectly normal one” (45). We then learn that he was a narcotics dealer and that it was during the night that he conducted his business. “Normal life had eluded him and he had become a prey to perversions. Thus, his submission to his vices was complete; he neither regretted them nor was he repentant” (45).

Once his moody demeanor and drug addiction is established, we learn more details of his “other vice” (46). He enters a shop and eyes a handsome young boy and engages him in conversation, asking him to wrap up six pairs of socks for him. After he leaves the shop he lurks around the corner, and when the boy leaves the shop he follows him. Taking advantage of the boy’s poverty, he promises him better fortune in his merciful hands. Then he invites the boy to his café and says that day should be remembered as a day of good fortune, the day the boy’s luck changed.

In “Out of the Closet: Representations of Homosexuals and Lesbians in Modern Arabic Literature” (2008), Al-Samman illustrates how modern representations of male homosexuality in the Arab world are often instrumentalized to show the Arab male’s loss of manhood and disempowerment by the state. Khalid Hadeed (2013) argues that representations of homosexuality in modern Arabic literature have sought to contain its menace through what he calls “epistemic closure.” He analyzes this essentialist paradigm of
closure that identifies male homosexuality with passivity and femininity as inferior to a sexually dominant masculinity in Saʿdallah Wannous's *Tuqus al-isharat wa-al-tahawwulat* (1994; Rituals of signs and transformations) and as a result of abnormal development in Alaa al-Aswany's *Imarat Yaʿkubian* (2002; *The Yacoubian Building* [2004]). They are examples of constructionist closure, where gender anxieties caused by the heightened presence of homosexuality create a narrative of developmental deviance. Epistemic closure often cites a traumatic childhood experience as the cause for homosexuality, which is likened to an illness. In *Zuqaq al-Midaq*, the poor boy who is the object of Kirsha's flirtations clearly fits into Al-Samman’s analysis of instrumentalization of homosexuality to show the pressures on masculinity. Clearly, the young, impoverished boy sees no way out of his situation and thus submits to Kirsha’s advances. The boy is in a passive role, and we know nothing of his own preferences and pleasures. However, people in the alley gossip and refer to him as an immoral sexual deviant.

With respect to Kirsha, there is no reference to childhood trauma or another reason that has “caused” Kirsha’s homosexuality, as suggested by epistemic closure. But we are quickly informed that he is depraved and addicted to hashish and has homosexual tendencies, which supports the colonial view of sexual deviance in the Arab world. Massad (2007) recounts how writers themselves reproduced the European colonial gaze, because they had internalized it and felt inferior due to Western portrayals of Oriental debauchery. Massad delineates how the homoerotic poetry of Abū Nuwās (d. c. 814 CE) was judged harshly by the colonial gaze, and in turn, Arab historians experienced anxiety as they internalized the colonial gaze and deplored debauchery. This internalized critique is present in *Zuqaq al-Midaq*. When Kirsha asks the boy if he will visit his café, he responds, “Only a fool refuses generosity” (50). Back at his café, throughout the evening Kirsha looks absentmindedly at the door as he engages in lackadaisical conversations until even onlookers notice his face light up as the boy enters the café.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Kirsha realizes that Kirsha is back to what she calls “that filthy disease” (72). She is aware that everyone knows of his scandals. While Mrs. Kirsha is tormented, his son Hussain refuses to intervene: “The ‘sin’ itself did not bother him in the slightest. Indeed, when news of it first reached him, he merely shrugged his shoulders in indifference and said unconcernedly, ‘He is a man and men don’t care about anything’” (74). But he does resent that his family is the subject of cruel jokes and scandal. With respect to Mrs. Kirsha, “In fact, she was really proud of him, proud of his masculinity, of his position in the alley, and of the influence he had over his associates. If it were not for that abominable shortcoming of his, she would not have a single complaint against him” (75). When she sees she cannot influence him, she goes to Radwan Hussainy, who is known for his wisdom, and asks him to speak to her husband: “Every time I think he has given up his sinful behavior he brings a new disgrace upon me. He is completely immoral and neither his age, his wife, nor his children can cure his lechery. Perhaps you may have heard about that brazen boy he has with him every evening in the café? Well, that’s our new disgrace” (91).
There is a reductionist approach to homosexuality, which is depicted as a vice similar to drug abuse. While the characters speak, Mahfouz makes no attempt to redeem Kirsha. Mrs. Kirsha continues her conversation with Mr. Hussainy: “The brazen immoral fellow has disgraced us all. By God, if it were not for my age and the children, I would have left his house long ago and never returned. Do you approve of his disgusting business, Mr. Hussainy? Do you approve of his filthy behavior?” (91–92). Although Hussainy is not eager to get involved in the situation, he reminds himself, “The man who reforms a profligate does better than the man who sits with a believer” (93).

When Hussainy approaches Kirsha and tells him of the gossip, Kirsha remarks that people have been like that from the beginning of time. He asks if they are gossiping because they are shocked or because they are envious. Hussainy is appalled at the suggestion that people would envy “that filthy practice” (96). He tells Kirsha that everyone is talking about the immoral boy and that Kirsha’s wickedness will prevent him from attaining salvation. Hussainy asks Kirsha, “Doesn’t your lust for this filthy conduct make you ashamed?” (97). Later, during a fight between Kirsha and his wife, everyone stares in shock. Kirsha’s lover—again in a passive, weak role—runs off in fear. As his father’s scandals grow, Hussain wants to leave Midaq Alley because his sister has run off with someone and now everyone says his father will run off with someone, too. Kirsha’s wife laments that the “hashish addict” has passed his illness on to his son. In spite of his parents’ protests, Hussain says he wants to lead a different life. Kirsha is furious that his son wants to work for the British in order to secure electricity, live a “modern life,” and marry a respectable girl; he slaps Hussain and exclaims that in his eyes, his son is dead. When his son returns near the end of the novel, laid off, destitute, and married, Kirsha is full of hatred and refuses to accept him. It is only when he sees his new daughter-in-law’s young brother that Kirsha’s face lights up and he welcomes them into his home. The reader is left to imagine the later affair in which Kirsha will take advantage of the boy’s abject poverty.

The negative portrayal of Kirsha’s personality, his drug addiction and illegal dealing, and his attraction to poor, young boys all serve to demonize his homosexuality. Furthermore, he is portrayed as a hypocrite who had turned from patriotic activities in his youth to accepting bribes for his vote:

*He excused his renunciation by pointing to the corruption in political life. He would say, “If money is the aim and object of those who squabble for power, then there is clearly no harm in money being the objective of the poor voters.” Now he was content to be corrupt, absentminded, and beset by his own passions. All the spirit of the old revolutionary was gone, except for those vague memories that return occasionally when he huddled over his warm brazier.*
had rejected respectable life and now he cared only for the pleasures of the flesh.

(151–152)

**Film Adaptations**

Sixteen years after the publication of *Zuqaq al-Midaq*, Hassan El-Imām directed Saad el Din Wahba’s film adaptation of the novel. Starring Shadia as Hamida, another resident of Midaq Alley, the film centers on her desire to leave the alley for a better life and on the various contenders for her hand. In the film version, Kirsha, an unabashed, hashish-smoking, homosexual café owner, is relegated to the background; while he openly engages in same-sex relations, he maintains social respectability because he has the active (i.e., penetrative) role in these relationships. In one of the opening scenes, Kirsha sits at a table in the café, his arms around a young, soft-looking boy even as his friends look on and laugh. His strong masculinity is conveyed by his appearance, which features a large mustache, and also by the aggressive way he talks and throws people out the café. By contrast, the male belly dance instructor Susu appears in a loose flowing outfit halfway through the film, apparently for comic relief. He represents the effeminate form of masculinity devoid of respectability. While the original novel had placed queer subjectivities at the heart of the novel, the filmmaker focuses on Hamida’s story at the expense of the development of other characters, who appear as stereotypes.

Queer subjectivities in the original *Zuqaq al-Midaq* travel transnationally, with different interpretations according to context. Kirsha’s homosexuality is at the heart of the original *Zuqaq al-Midaq*, and thus the story commences with his affair with the poor young merchant and ends with the possibility of a new affair with his daughter-in-law’s young brother. Queer subjectivities in the novel are woven with discourses of authenticity and colonialism throughout the plot. The Mexican cinematic adaptation of *Zuqaq al-Midaq*, *El Callejón de los Milagros* (1995), is set in a downtrodden neighborhood in Mexico City. It also has a cast of characters who dream of escaping the narrow confines of their lives to attain a better future, but as in *Zuqaq al-Midaq*, the future looks inevitably bleak. The Mexican film begins with a scene in the café where the owner Rutillo publicly humiliates his son, Chavo, and his best friend, accusing them of being queer rather than “real men.” Although Rutillo’s companions in the café tell him to be easier on his son, he is intolerant of his son’s behavior, and clearly prejudiced against homosexuality. Though we are led to believe, briefly, that Chavo is gay, we quickly see that this is not the case. Next is a scene where Rutillo’s wife begs him for intimacy and reminds him of how they made their babies. With a look of displeasure and aversion on his face, he turns out the lights and agrees to have sex with her.
The next day, sparked by the pleasures of the flesh, he goes to the barber and has his haircut, but it is clear he is not rejuvenating himself for his wife. Newly groomed, he enters a shop and flirts with a young man (Jimmy) as he buys socks and boxer shorts. Whereas the young boy in *Zuqaq al-Midaq* is portrayed as a passive recipient of Kirsha’s advances, manipulated into acquiescence with promises of a better future, Jimmy appears to be confident in his homosexuality and welcomes Rutillo’s advances. Rutillo invites Jimmy to his café and soon they engage in an open love affair, which is cut short when Rutillo’s son attacks them together in the shower, nearly killing Jimmy. Thus, the opening scene, when Rutillo taunts Chavo for his close relationship with another man, is meant to suggest Rutillo’s confusion over his own sexuality. Although he comes “out of the closet” with Jimmy, the failure of their romance stifles Rutillo’s burgeoning desires, and afterward he is reintegrated into his heterosexual union. It is noteworthy that Rutillo is not depicted as a drug addict, dealer, or hypocrite with regard to politics. Also, Jimmy is portrayed as a young man in control of his own desires and sexual inclinations, rather than the manipulated boy of *Zuqaq al-Midaq*. In the nude shower scene, it is clear that both of the men enjoy the pleasures of the love affair.

Having escaped after nearly killing Jimmy in the shower, Chavo later returns with his wife and infant and eventually is accepted back into the family. At this point, there are no more hints of Rutillo’s homosexual leanings; the heterosexual family union has dominated queer desires. Rutillo’s story line is subsumed in the framework of the Mexican movie, which presents three separate story lines—Rutillo’s, Alma’s, and Susanita’s. The original Arabic novel links homosexuality with moral depravity, sexual license, drugs, and ill humor, and begins and ends with these themes, while the Mexican film relegates queer subjectivities to scenes secondary in importance to central plot development. Hussain’s reaction to his father’s homosexuality reinforces the colonial view of a sexually fluid Middle East, while Chavo’s violent reaction conveys a repressive, Western Catholic view of homosexuality. In the Mexican film, Rutillo’s same-sex sexual activity is not ignored and homosexuality is not judged negatively as in *Zuqaq al-Midaq*, though the Rutillo story line eventually fades into the larger plot and into a heteronormative marriage framework. Rutillo’s affair with Jimmy is cast as a midlife crisis and then disappears into an accepted Catholic family union in the context of the larger plot.

**SEE ALSO** *HIV/AIDS in Egyptian Cinema; Imarat Ya’kubian (2002; Alaa al-Aswany); Iskandariyya … Leh? (1979; Youssef Chahine); Jannāt wa-Iblīs (1992; Nawal El Saadawi); Sharaf (1997; Sun’allah Ibrahim)*

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